Alternative Pathways into Higher Education Open Access Annotated Bibliography: Enabling, Foundation, Access & Bridging Education

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Welcome to this open access annotated bibliography, which has been curated by a collective of scholars who share an interest in enabling education as a form of alternative entry into higher education studies (often referred to as ‘tertiary preparation’, ‘foundation studies’, ‘bridging programs’ and ‘university preparation’ programs). This annotated bibliography primarily has an Australian focus, although we have also included relevant literature written from other international contexts, such as New Zealand and the UK. This bibliography offers a snapshot of some of the available literature that relates to the following areas of scholarly and practitioner interest:

- Enabling education
- Alternative pathways
- Academic literacies
- Attrition
- Equity
- Pathways
- Retention
- Social justice
- Student experience
  - Indigenous students
  - Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
  - Regional, rural and remote students
  - First-in-family students
  - Mature age students
  - Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students
- Teaching and learning
- Widening participation
These resources are intended to be shared with the international community of researchers, students, educators and practitioners who work with, or are interested in issues relating to equity, widening participation and recognitive/alternative pathways into university study for people who are traditionally under-represented in higher education and/or are educationally disadvantaged.

A note on methodology

These resources have been sourced, read and annotated over a period of five years and have been written by scholars who are all Australian-based. There is, therefore, a strong Australian presence in the bibliography, which should not be read as a deliberate positioning of Australia and the work of Australian scholars as more prominent or important than any other national context.

These annotations should not be read as ‘the reading’ of any piece — rather they reflect the interpretive lens of a small number of people and should therefore be used as a ‘way in’ to the academic and grey literature. Hyperlinks have been provided to each entry (where possible) so that you may be able to access the original texts (although many of these will be hidden behind pay walls, which we cannot override for copyright reasons).

Furthermore, it is important to note that these resources are not a ‘finished product’; rather, they are reflective of an on-going, iterative engagement with the inter/national literature that critically engages with issues relating to alternative entry, widening participation, equity and pathways, evidenced by this being the second edition of this annotated bibliography. As such, there are unintentional omissions in these resources — if you see a gap in the literature, please feel free to make this clear, or offer an entry for inclusion.

Please do not print this! Think of the trees!!

Thanks for your interest.

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**Annotation**

**Context:** Australia’s proportion of adults aged 24-35 with a tertiary level qualification has declined over the course of a decade, which has corresponding impacts on economic standing. The Bradley Review identified significant under-representation of certain groups in higher education, such as Indigenous peoples, people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those residing outside of metropolitan areas. The Bradley Review’s targets and governmental funding to increase participation of these groups into higher education has created an environment where pre-undergraduate education providers including TAFE and VET.

**Aim:** To provide strategies to educational providers that provide pre-university programs will ultimately increase the participation of under-represented groups in higher education in Australia. Understanding and addressing these barriers to education for such groups is necessary from a social equity perspective and to improve the workplace skills of Australia’s population.

**Methodology:** Literature review commissioned by the Adult Learner Social Inclusion Project – 2009-2011. Federally funded, and facilitated by QUT and Griffith.

**Findings:** It is important not to simply relegate some barriers to participation, like work commitments, to individual responsibility; rather such factors relate to larger scale economic issues. Much of the current evidence related to barriers to participation and factors related to attrition are from non-peer reviewed documentation, such as government reports. It is important that future research is conducted independently and undergoes the rigors of the academic process. While care needs to be taken to remove barriers to participation in higher education, correspondingly care needs to be taken to ensure that the life choices of individuals are respected and valued, including the choice not to undertake further education. The challenges students experience are not homogenous, and students face barriers to access and to completion (and these are not always the same). It is integral that collaboration exists between higher education providers and the VET sector; that information is provided to students and their families that meaningfully articulates pathways and their perceived risks of engagement; and that credentials build in a clear way so that students are encouraged to enrol in high level VET credentials that have a clear pathway into and through higher education.

Importance in a general sense of, “eight key domains where improvements could be made including: course relevance and design, staff attributes and behaviours, teaching and learning practices, access to courses, facilities and services, assessment practices, learning resources, equipment and materials; initial information provision, and administration and learning support services” (p. 19). The value of transition programs relates not simply to academic qualification or employability but to the whole person, their confidence and identity, the ripple effect into their families and communities and so on. These impacts are difficult to measure via typical success metrics but are no less significant. Other factors aside from completion should be used when measuring the success of these programs then, like other quality of life measures and intergenerational impacts.

Students discontinue study because of a range of multi-causal reasons that are both structural and
They include: course content and organisation (for example, courses that are not interesting, useful, stimulating or aligned to expectations, that are expensive, that are dissatisfactory); course delivery and learning environments (including the ways that students are engaged with, a lack of support or care from teaching staff, and the mode); finances or work commitments (students who work long hours are more likely to withdraw and hours worked correlates to other risk factors for withdrawal including age, location and first in family status); other individual factors (for example, family commitments, uncertainty, changing circumstances, health). Universities need to reconsider the first year curriculum including making the hidden curriculum visible and making support and resources readily available to help retain students. Universities also need to consider and validate the diverse pathways into undergraduate study. There are also barriers particular to distinct learning groups. Adult learners: are more likely to zig zag than take a linear pathway through study; are more likely to experience external constrains on their participation; want to study close to home. High withdrawal rates are likely to relate to these external factors, perceptions about the difficulties in catching up on missed work, and these factors were compounding for women rather than men. There are institutional factors related to poor information, guidance and course choices, and difficulty forming relationships with students and teachers, and lack of learning support. Research into the barriers experienced by Indigenous students has often failed to translate into improved outcomes for these students and has not necessarily been culturally sensitive and homogenised the diverse experiences and cultures of Indigenous peoples. A range of factors were barriers to ongoing educational engagement across a range of educational levels, including factors pertinent to the legacies of explicit and covert racism (for example, hostility of teaching staff to Indigenous students and Indigenous content, lack of representation of Indigeneity amongst teaching staff, or the curriculum, lack of care to represent Indigenous methods of teaching and learning and so on). Issues within communities and families may have a compounding impact on students’ participation and are likely to reduce aspirations for higher education, reduce available information and the perception of this pathway as relevant and available. Students from low-SES backgrounds tend to be more reliant on government income support, underperform in their first year and have difficulties adjusting to academic life and workload, and experience challenges to their identity regarding their family/friends and lack of engagement with university life. Likewise those students from rural areas are more likely to have difficulties adjusting to university and experience financial stress when compared to urban students, which can be compounded by isolation. The evidence used in these studies is limited by unsophisticated data (for example, students who transfer rather than withdraw from programs is not accounted for, nor are measures of student success other than completion such as students achieving their own personal goals), lack of causality, and low response rates. There is a need for more peer reviewed and longitudinal research that uses larger samples when students are actually studying.
**Core argument:** “In the quest for equity in higher learning, what is most important is to ensure that those who wish to avail themselves of the opportunity to pursue HE should not be stopped in their endeavours by the circumstances of their birth such as geographic location, indigeneity and ethnicity, and SES” (p. 49). Financial imperatives alone do not account for the lack of participation in higher education by under-represented groups, and the nuances of these barriers need to be understood in order for effective strategies to be implemented to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate and succeed in higher education if they choose to do so as one of many valid educational and employment choices.

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<td><strong>Context:</strong> Explores the Murina (means ‘pathway’) Indigenous-specific enabling program (in The Riawunna Centre) at UTAS and the use of narrative and imagery to achieve a ‘whole-person’ approach. Paper is located in context of under-representation on Indigenous students in Australian higher education, due to myriad factors (e.g. financial, living away from home, health). Cites the Behrendt report’s call for Indigenous culture and knowledge to be embedded throughout curricula, and the clashes that occur because it was (is) not, leading to exclusion and isolation. UTAS = low enrolments, high achievements. Increase in student numbers from 259 in 2010 to 368 in 2013 (success rate = 30%)= imperative to make changes. Aboriginal culture = core “The program focuses on promoting a positive sense of identity through affirmation of Indigenous student’s culture… as complete preparation for university studies must also include the development of a mindset and resilience to enable students to cope with the longer term goal of completing their degrees” (p.4). [Check discourse of individual strength in use of ‘resilience’, but see p.6]</td>
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<td><strong>Theoretical frame:</strong> Based on Kovach’s (2010) ‘conversational methodology’. Imagery = “descriptive language in a literary work and or images collectively, to engage the students” (p.5).</td>
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<td><strong>Methodology:</strong> Based on deep listening and yarning with two academics in Murina program, drawing also on observations with staff and students and documentation such as student feedback sheets, reflective journals and staff reports.</td>
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<td><strong>Findings:</strong> Stories used as aid to understand concepts and for sharing experience. Also, journal writing = used for students to respond to content/news/learning – not always textual; some students drew pictures and images used to encourage students to tell their stories. Students created art works and portfolios, artist statements and an art calendar. All exhibited in public space and some student artwork used in marketing materials. Vignettes of 4 students offered.</td>
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<td><strong>Core argument:</strong> Program helped to develop community of practice, “to share our knowledge, skills, tools and resources to build our capacity to teach in this space and to form intercultural collegial relationships” (p.9).</td>
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**AUS**
Annotation written by Sally Baker

**Keywords:** Aboriginal education, enabling, pathways, support

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<td><strong>Context:</strong> Explores achievement levels of TEP (La Trobe), following evaluation conducted by authors. <strong>Aim:</strong> Seeks to isolate and examine contextual factors so as to be able to offer insight into how strong academic results can be achieved in La Trobe context (multi-campus/ uni &amp; TAFE combination). The study aims to isolate and examine the contextual factors within the TEP that may affect academic achievement. <strong>Background:</strong> The Tertiary Enabling Program at La Trobe University underwent expansion in 2012. The program was provided in conjunction with TAFE and provided academic and student support via 1 hour</td>
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optional tutorials provided twice a week, dedicated student and staff mentors, and integrated service models incorporating counsellor visits. The evaluation was undertaken against the background of the Higher Education Base Funding Review and the development of sub-degree qualifications. The researchers focused on the contextual factors such as campus, institution, disciplinary area, and geo-demographic cohort, which may impact academic performance. Article contains a very thorough explanation of enabling programs in Australia.  
**Methodology:** Draws on evaluation of TEP: analysed TEP data (enrolment numbers/student demographics/withdrawal rates/marks)  
**Procedure:** Internal university evaluation using institutional data, including enrolment numbers, student demographics, withdrawal rates, course weighted average marks, and subject marks.  
**Findings:** Achievement and retention rates for the cohort were encouraging. Retention within the course was relatively high (only 8 withdrew). There were students who disengaged however leaving 65% active until the final exam. The evaluation noted the overall academic achievement was high indicating that teaching and support strategies were effective. It was noted that there was variation in the achievement levels across disciplinary areas and locations and demographic groups. This highlighted the need to ensure consistency with entry standards and pedagogical practice across subjects and institutions.  
**Core argument:** The evaluation noted that in general the performance of the students was high and the program ‘may be uniquely placed to benefit some student cohorts who are currently under-represented in tertiary education.’ There is variability with the delivery within disciplines and locations and this was claimed to possibly reflect broader ‘sectoral issues around curriculum, standards and expectations’. Substantial variation in achievement between subjects/campuses and student groups. Relatively low achievement from Indigenous students; relatively high from NESB/refugee students (p.52). Variation confirms “the need for ongoing measures to ensure consistent entry standards and pedagogical practice across subjects and institutions” (p.52). Retention rates were relatively high (65%); achievement levels were high (55% passed all four subjects; 30% passed all four with 70% or higher) – p.59. Significant subject variability: Soc. Sc achieved highest average marks; Science achieved the lowest. There were also significant differences in marks across 5 campuses.  
**Core Argument:** Discussion of funding/policy context (Base Funding Review)/Discussion of participation and academic achievement of equity groups, particular reference to NESB & refugee students.

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**Context:** Study of confidence levels among enabling students enrolled in science courses at University of Newcastle. Article based on assumption that “An important aspect of encouraging diversity is to make sure that students have the skills to succeed in their academic pursuit” (p.81)  
**Aim:** The paper aimed “to quantify student confidence levels in male and female students using the third person effect as a reference” (p.85)  
**Theoretical frame:** confidence as optimism, self-efficacy, self-concept  
**Methodology:** Used ‘third person effect’ to measure confidence levels in comparison to peers; survey used; males/females compared (n=142: 91f, 51m)  
**Findings:** Disparity between students’ perception of own confidence compared to how they rated the
Baker, S. & Irwin, E. (2015). *Students’ reading and writing 'in transition': what lessons can be learnt from a case study of A-levels to university transitions to help enabling educators to 'bridge the gap' into undergraduate study?* Paper presented at UniSTARS conference

**Aim:** Conference paper reported on findings from qualitative ethnographic longitudinal study investigating students’ transitions with language and literacy as they move from high school to university level study. The paper also aims to provide language practitioners and enabling educators with 3 suggestions related to informing practice.

**Procedure:** Qualitative, ethnographic longitudinal study (Author 1’s PhD study). Research followed the experiences of 11 students moving from A-level study into the first and second year of university. Students were tracked for 2 ½ years.

**Findings:** Assessment is one of the main drivers of academic reading and writing. The study also found that there is a vast difference in the way that knowledge is treated in high school as compared to university level study. Three suggestions relating to practice are to:

1. Create and sustain pathways of meaningful dialogue between enabling educators and the faculties, with regards to the kinds of language, texts and assessments that are valued
2. Forge working partnerships with language practitioners to ensure that required reading and writing tasks and practices are comprehensible.
3. Explore the happy medium with assessment: to be congruent with undergraduate practices but no assessed writing without careful consideration.

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**Aim:** To explore the provision of ALL across enabling programs and the way in which it is conceptualised within curriculum and via practitioners.

**Methodology:** “Qualitative, interpretive methodology…which seeks to blend the emic (insider) view and the etic view of the researcher/outsider.” (p. 492). 26/27 universities offering enabling programs (and 35 enabling programs in total including TAFE and sub-degree programs) participated in components of the research which included a desktop audit, telephone survey/interview, and review of curriculum documents. Data was analysed thematically, factually in order to develop key typologies of enabling programs and according to Ivanić’s framework of six writing discourses (skills, creativity, process, genre, social practices and socio-political discourses).
Findings: There are 5 models for the position of ALL in enabling programs: 1. “ALL sits at the heart of the enabling course” and curriculum mapping ensures that it is threaded through core and elective units; 2. ALL exists as a distinct unit but is not mapped throughout, and this is the most common model; 3. ALL core unit sits alongside undergraduate credit bearing units; 4. ALL units sit alongside disciplinary units; 5. One program that includes ALL as part of the program. Argues in favour as Model 1 and potentially 5 as the optimal ways to incorporate ALL in enabling programs. “There is very little explicit support available for LBOTE students, and even less specific support for students from refugee backgrounds” (p. 495); there is also a general lack of differentiated provision for international and domestic LBOTE students. Using Ivanič’s framework the general view of ALL in enabling programs is that “writing is a product and that academic writing is a genre of writing of which the characteristic linguistic features may be explicitly taught” (p. 497). When asked how they understood academic literacies participant responses revealed that they are “understood as a multi-faceted, complicated and expansive set of practices” (p. 497). They most commonly discussed writing, along with reading and critical thinking, which are umbrella terms for a wide range of other practices; however it may also suggest a more complex unpacking of what is meant by the term ‘academic literacies’. The implications of this research relate to the needs to: 1. Gather an evidence basis to support models of ALL provision that work; 2. Arrive at consensus about what ALL entails and what practices matter in its provision across the enabling field; 3. Undertake curriculum renewal that positions ALL at the centre of enabling provision.

Core argument: ALL is often placed at the periphery of enabling curricula and are often understood simply as neutral skills or practices that can be transmitted to students. Students and teachers would be served by developing a shared understanding of ALL that sees it as at the centre of the enabling curricula.


Context: Explores TPP program at USQ and students’ perceptions of success factors/ factors that influenced their studies. Dropout rates of TPP students at USQ = approx. 50% from 2000-2005, leading to USQ funding study

Aim: To explore factors impacting on students’ continuation or drop out in TPP

Methodology: Quantitative: self-report questionnaire used (n=93); Instrument developed from previous study (Taylor & Bedford, 2004) and monitored by psychologist (e.g. wording) = asked about factors relating to students’ impacting on (dis)continuation with study (general environment, interaction between student and university, individual student characteristics, expectations, course design and materials).

Findings: General environment of student (e.g. competing demands on time and advice of friends/ family) = most influential, followed by:
- Individual student characteristics
- Inability to remember information
- General interaction between the student and the university
- Feeling of not belonging to the University community
- Course and study materials design and content
- Not knowing what was required to obtain a pass in the course(s)

Annotation written by Sally Baker

**Context:** Explores attrition in enabling education through lens of neoliberalism – meaning that “enabling educators struggle to fit with dominant discourses that often reduce success to a comparatively narrow definition concerned with completion rates” (abstract, p.141). Draws on Hodges et al. (2013) OLT project into retention and attrition. Argues that neoliberal logics focus on reductive versions of why students attrit, which often poorly capture the diverse and different shape of enabling education: ‘one simple model’ of success or failure is inadequate for enabling education. Focuses on benefits of enabling education: “As enabling educators we argue that the provision of multiple pathways is crucial in working for equity and inclusion within higher education” (p.143)

**Aim:** To explore challenges that Open Foundation students face in the context of hard (attrition/ failure) and ‘soft’ (nuanced, contextualised understandings of drop out).

**Methodology:** 734 students (OF, on campus, Callaghan, enrolled ‘with load on day 1 of semester) asked to take 2 surveys: Initial/ Concluding questionnaires. 522 students initially surveyed. Q’naires administered in-class (week 2 and week 12). Two versions of exit survey sent to early leavers (Exit Survey A = for students who dropped out pre-week 4; Exit Survey B for students who dropped out later) and followed up with phone calls. Difficult to ascertain when students drop out (because = non-HECS). 189 dropped out by week 12. 53 students completed (partially or fully) Exit Survey B. 269/307 completing students answered ‘Completion’ survey.

**Findings:** Open Foundation has 50% attrition rate (low end of scale proposed by Muldoon of 55-58% - 2011, p.292; cited on p.146). 2/3 = female; 71% = 20-30 years old, 17.5% = 31-40. 32% identified as living in low SES area. 38% had not studied for 6 years or more; 23% had studied in recent 2 years. 254 students = FinF and slightly more likely to drop out. Most students who had dropped out indicated that the time needed for study was more than expected, and family responsibilities also featured significantly for 46% of respondents.

**Core Argument:** Study highlights areas of difference with undergraduate studies. “What at first looks like a ‘negative’ experience in ‘hard’ attrition data terms, on further ‘softer’ exploration of circumstances may be seen to be ‘positive’ for the student who has experienced a significant shift in aspiration, opportunities and education as an outcome of engaging in enabling education for a period of time even though they did not complete” (p.143)

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**Context:** Examines the experiences of a specific cohort of adult ‘return’ students studying aspects of a Foundation degree online in the UK. Challenges the belief that online or eLearning is a simple solution to increasing access to higher education for those with work and family obligations.

**Aim:** To explore the experiences of new students in the foundation degree Pre-16 Learning and Teaching Support where an online learning environment, Merlin, is used to deliver some of the modules of the program as well as learning support. More specifically, the project sought to: identify the learning needs of non-
traditional learners and the subsequent implications for elearning; use the results of the study to revise the program; and provide a set of recommendations.

**Methodology:** Focus group (n=16) of staff (lifelong learning practitioners) involved in more traditional face-to-face teaching and learning with adult returners. This focus group with staff was followed by a case study investigation into one module of online learning in a foundation studies degree program as well as online support. The following methods were used to gather data: student questionnaires; evaluation of existing course design; focus group with staff involved in the teaching of the online module; and focus groups with students.

**Findings:** Students valued the opportunities for social learning, peer-to-peer support and group learning activities. Students reported issues with skills/technology; feedback and response times (too slow, hampering abilities to move on to the next task); and organisation of their own time around other obligations while studying. Most students enjoyed the flexibility of space, place and time that came with online learning; however, others missed the structure offered by traditional face-to-face teaching and learning. Access to and the cost of, technology and the internet was an issue for many students, who in 2003 often had only one computer in the home and dial-up internet service. Some ISPs charged by the minute of internet usage, also causing issues. Instructional and content language was an issue for students who had to independently decipher jargon and unclear instructions online. Students reported challenges using the technology, but appreciated the opportunity to use new ICT skills as they progressed through their unit. Staff reported the need for adequate training before commencing teaching online. The authors provide proposed modifications to the unit under examination based on the findings listed here. These include embedding skills development, paying more attention to social spaces for learning, using multiple media to deliver content, and providing additional training for staff.

**Core Argument:** While online or elearning provides access to higher education for return adult learners, pedagogy and curriculum must be tailored specifically to these learners and to the elearning context in which they learn in order for elearning to be truly a widening participation measure.

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**Context:** Examines funding and patterns in enrolments in one enabling education program (‘second chance education’) in Australian higher education sector – makes connections between enabling education and welfare economies/ economics of education/ human capital theory and concept of ‘merit goods’. Cites Hodges et al. = 35 universities offering enabling programs [different from finding in Baker & Irwin, 2015]. Cites DET data that suggests 320% growth in enabling enrolments between 2004 – 2014 [unclear if full time or part time enrolments] – notes Andrewartha & Harvey’s (2014) comment that the effectiveness of enabling education is unclear, and authors also note absence from AQF

**Aim:** To examine archival data from 2001-2011 from CQU; to analyse enabling education through ‘an economic lens’

**Theoretical frame:** Human capital theory; rationale = based on assessing value for money against students’ articulation into undergrad studies: “Acceptance of the pathway notion means that economic efficiency of an Enabling Program can be evaluated by rates of completion and student’s articulation into undergraduate study”
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| **Context:** High attrition rates in Australian enabling programs as a matter of concern.  
**Aim:** To explore attrition from the ‘insider’ perspective.  
**Methodology:** Draws on larger ‘exploratory sequential, mixed methods’ project (focus groups then survey).  
**Participants:** Enabling and undergraduate students who had previously studied in enabling programs (n=72).  
**Overview of participants on p.64–65.** |
| **Findings:** Themes derived from analysis = mutual obligation (deductively imposed), maturity matters (inductively emerged), spousal fear (inductively emerged).  
**Mutual obligation** = extrinsic motivation (e.g. commitment with Centrelink for welfare benefits). Other types of obligation were also evident in the data: “levels of obligation (1) to the taxpayers funding the programs, (2) to themselves, and (3) to the other students in the class” (p.68).  
**Maturity matters** = perception that younger students were less motivated than older students, which authors argue is significant because school leavers are becoming larger group in the national enabling enrolments. Mature students perceived they were more committed because younger students had parental pressure to attend.  
**Spousal fear** = “gendered phenomenon, which was perceived to be affecting exclusively females with male partners” (p.72): pressure on some women by male partners which resulted in withdrawal or poorer performance. |

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| **Context:** Examination of ‘falling standards’ and plagiarism in context of increased international student populations in Australia.  
**Aim:** To explore academics’ views of ‘falling standards’ and plagiarism.  
**Methodology:** Qualitative interviews with 14 academics from 10 universities. |
| Annotation written by Sally Baker | Core argument: Discussion of English Proficiency tests (IELTS): international v. NESB. Half of the academics/participants reported feeling pressure to pass students because of the commercial implications of not passing. Flawed appeals procedures for plagiarism cases (in the majority of the cases reported by the participants, the cheating student had either got off lightly or had won their appeal due to intervention of senior staff). Calls for universities to set linguistic standards appropriate to level of study (p.19) – less international students could lead to less foreign money/ more funding from federal government |
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| Context: Looks at the ‘double transition’ of enabling education, looking specifically at enabling students moving from Open Foundation into teaching UG courses |
| Aim: To examine the ‘double transition’ – into and out of enabling programs. |
| Methodology: Mixed methods: enabling educators and UG education lecturers sharing of Blackboard sites/ attending a lecture of the other/ input from counselling + focus group interviews with past OF students and separate focus groups with 20 staff (enabling/ UG education) |
| Findings: Cross-level communication helps staff at each level to understand better what the other is doing and to better support students through the double transition (p.23-4) |
| Core Argument: Double transition/ blue-print for collaboration between enabling-faculty |
| Context: Authors premise that higher education is experiencing ‘disruptive change’ – displacement of existing markets/ customers, and that enabling programs were created to respond to market change. Participation in higher education adds ‘national intangible capital’. Authors argue that enabling education = part of global education market. Authors offer summary table of stakeholders recorded in literature, who include students, family, university, government, funding bodies, local community, wider region, media. |
| Methodology: ‘Stakeholder theory’ (Freeman, 1984), based on Rosalie’s PhD data |
| Findings: Authors identified 14 stakeholders: Market stakeholders students, university decision-makers/ administrators, unions, industry/employers Non-market stakeholders: family and friends, local/ regional community Combined market/non-market: enabling teachers, support staff, enabling association, government compliance bodies, funding bodies, university partners, media. Authors identify competing discourses between stakeholders (p.68): |

UK

Keywords: widening participation; marginalisation; adult education; power; socio-political contexts

Context: Adult learners in UK Access to HE courses in Further Education (FE) colleges; learner identity/ies. Describes mature age students in this space in terms of lacking confidence with education, in a process of re/construction, lack belief in habitus to support studies. Gives background information about Access courses (p.801), noting the explicit link with widening participation agenda

Aim: To explore how Access students explored the 'project of the self' (Giddens, 1991) in order to enhance capital (Bourdieu, 1990), and how their project are impacted by discourses (Foucault, 1977) and interactions with powerful agents (teachers) and whether these generate communities of practice (Wenger, 1998); to investigate “the perspectives of marginalised adult learners, who were students on Access to HE courses, on their past and present learning experiences, on the transformation of their views of themselves as learners during the Access to HE courses, and on the impact on their learning of their socio-economic contexts and their relationships with their families, friends, Access to HE tutors and fellow students” (p.805).

Theoretical frame: Draws on community of practice (Wenger, 1998); Bourdieu (capital and habitus), postmodern identity theory (Bauman, 2000), discourse (Foucault, 1977); organisational culture; choice (Ball, 1987)

Methodology: Social constructivist (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and linked case-study: 7 FE colleges across East Midlands between 2012/13, using mixed methods: questionnaires (pre-/post-course) and focus groups x 3 with students. Access teachers interviewed (individual or small group). Questionnaires (n=365) = 70% female; analysed for 'simple descriptive statistics'. Interviews = grounded theory analysis + visual data (concept maps) showing students’ perceptions of transitions

Findings: Four main themes: significant others/ developing self; sense of community; student self-development; facilitating learning through community

Significant others/ developing self: variety of processes, policies and discourses had to be navigated/negotiated, partly as a result of having to adapt to full-time load of Access course (e.g. working part-time/ negotiating with employers). ‘Agencies of the state’ (e.g. Job Centre) = inflexible. Financial constraints = challenging. Students
| Context: Set against the backdrop of discourses about the changing 'character' of universities and their cohorts (more mature-aged students entering via 'non-traditional' methods such as enabling programs) in the 1990s and early 2000s. Uses 'equity' as a way to frame these changes.  
Aim: To compare “the performance of undergraduate students from three non-traditional entry modes with that of students from the traditional mode.” (p. 222)  
Methodology: Statistical analyses/comparison of cohorts from three ‘tertiary prep’/enabling courses: Open Foundation and Newstep at the University of Newcastle; Tertiary Preparation Course offered by TAFE (Technical and Further Education) system; and ‘traditional’ students entering via the high school system (Higher School Certificate) who all entered the University of Newcastle between 1996 and 1998 (N = 8503).  
Findings: Analyses of ‘achievement’ showed that females performed better than males; older students performed better than younger students; and Newstep students performed significantly worse than students who came directly from the HSC. All three cohorts of students performed worse than students from an HSC background. Further, area of study affects achievement: Business and Science students achieved lower while Engineering students achieved higher. Socio-economic status was not a significant predictor of achievement. The analyses also showed that older students take a lower load than younger students; that Open Foundation students take a lower load than other students; that female students take a lower load than male students and that overall students take lower loads in the earlier years of their degrees than the later years. Business students take a lower load, while Education and Health students take higher loads.  
Core Argument: Because students who enter university via enabling programs likely have no other entry pathways, their slightly lower performance indicates the utility of the program. Non-traditional entry (via an enabling program) combined with maturity is successful, yet, combined with youth, is relatively unsuccessful. “Equity objectives and academic objectives relating to the admission to university of adults through non-traditional modes have been largely achieved.” (p. 233). This work suggests that rather than the entry pathway... | appeared to be parroting state-driven neoliberal discourse (development of self; be better people/ get a better career). Consternation that Access courses = not free.  
Student self-development: tutors perceived as different from teachers at school; perception that students = treated as adults/ tutors = facilitators. Tutors’ supportive relationships perceived as helping students to see strengths and weaknesses and viewed as “car[ing] for the whole person and not just the academic aspects of student development” (p.809). However, the power dynamic was clear through practices such as taking the register.  
Sense of community: Access courses = important sites for transition because of possibilities for social networks. Sense of being part of a group and peer-to-peer support = significant.  
Core Argument: Students’ struggles provided motivation to start Access course: “strengthened their resolutions to do something with their lives that contributed to the social wellbeing of their society” (p.815), but central government = impediment to success; Access course helped to develop identity as a learner; tutors play important periphery/ boundary role (but impact of power/ hierarchy). |

**Context:** Explored self-efficacy, self-concept, approaches to learning, causal attributions and self-regulatory control at the beginning and end of first semester of study of 3 groups of students: Newstep, Open Foundation and TPC (TAFE). Notes previous research that showed that OF students = no differences in terms of GPA with HSC students, slightly lower GPA for TPC students and significantly lower GPA for Newstep students (see Cantwell et al. 2001) – suggesting that age/maturity is a significant determiner of ‘success’. Bases exploration of self-efficacy on idea that for OF students, prior (negative) educational experiences “are either too distant or too limited to be immediately powerful in effect” (p.295), but for Newstep students = past educational experiences = more immediately relevant (and powerful). Hypothesis = Newstep students are more likely to express negative self-efficacy judgments.

**Aim:** “to examine the possibility that students may enter enabling programmes with different psychological and metacognitive pro. les, some of which may be more functionally appropriate to undertaking university level study” and cognitive/meta-cognitive change over a semester (p.94). Older female learners = more likely to attribute sense of self as learner to ‘internal controllable factors’ while younger students are more likely to perceive it as ‘fixed ability or luck’ (p.295)

**Methodology:** 5 surveys were disseminated in 2 phases: 307 students in phase 1; 207 in phase 2. Surveys included: self-esteem scale, academic self-efficacy, causal attributions, study process and strategic flexibility. All 5 surveys completed in normal class time (early and late in semester)

**Findings:** Data = generally not conclusive. Confidence higher in females across 3 groups. No sense of lower self-confidence for Newstep students. NS and TPC students differed in approaches to learning with OF students: NS/TPC = more surface; OF = deeper approaches


**Context:** Starts with ‘representative anecdote’ of Education tutor commenting that enabling students in her course ‘got it’ better than ‘traditional’ students. ”Foundations courses must, then, go beyond any simple notion of “training” for university study to incorporate a deeper socio-educational sense” (p.356). ‘Getting it’ = process of transition (p.357). Enabling programs should be: 1) goal directed (“defined quality of end point that is appropriate to the transition to the next level of education”, p.358); 2) curriculum should be reflective of broader goals of program; 3) pedagogy should recognise role of active learner and complexities of learning in 3 domains. Developmental = “what does it mean to be "ready" for undergraduate study, and what assumptions can we make about entry into the enabling programme?” (p.359). Author acknowledges diverse student body and asserts ‘developmental distance’ can vary depending on student = not a level playing field (p.365).

**Aim:** To propose developmental framework for enbling program curriculum and assessment regimes in terms of curriculum alignment and situational and developmental ‘quality’ = ‘positioning the bar’

**Methodology:** Essay

**Discussion:** 3 domains:

*Developmental* = “what does it mean to be "ready" for undergraduate study, and what assumptions can we make about entry into the enabling programme?” (p.359). Author acknowledges diverse student body and asserts 'developmental distance' can vary depending on student = not a level playing field (p.365). 'The bar' = “capacity to reason at the higher end of… concrete symbolic mode of reasoning” (p.372)

*Curriculum:* what kind of curriculum can facilitate transformations? According to Brophy, it needs to have intellectuality at its core, for structure and form of curriculum – so that the curriculum is site of profound intellectual change. Centrepiece = coherence “generated by the use of powerful and embracive ideas as the focal point of curriculum planning” (p.367). “Basic to good assessment is the recognition that meaning is multilayered” (p.369). Assessment regimes need to be carefully considered (see p.370-1) so that when assessment “recognises the possibility of different levels of constructive activity yielding qualitatively different outcomes, certain inferences may then be drawn regarding the state of readiness of individual students (p.372).

*Learner:* learning involves journey from known to unknown (p.373) and involves risk (p.380). Learning happens at intersection of 3 domains =cognitive (real-time learning), metacognitive (intention and planning) and affective (self-judgement: self-concept, self-efficacy, self-esteem).

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**Context:** Examines impact of peer assessment on student experience in enabling program. Introduction notes that 50% of enabling students failed to finish secondary school (Whannell, Whannell & Lynch, 2010) and that peer relations are important (Whannell, 2013). Examined impact of a peer assessment task that was embedded into two units: 1) compulsory computer skills course; 2) optional humanities course – presented via Blackboard: “The tool enabled the anonymous peer review of online submissions by two peers and a self-assessment” (p.75) with 2 stages: submission of responses to questions covering weeks 1-5; 2) students evaluated two peer submissions and their own, using co-created rubric (between students and teacher) – see p.75.

**Aim:** “to examine the impact of this assessment approach on student social relationships and the overall assessment experience… [and] whether peer assessment provided a valid and reliable method of assessment at the tertiary bridging level and whether students were equipped to be able to engage with this form of assessment” (abstract)

**Methodology:** 107 students from 2 enabling programs (1 university) participated in a custom-designed questionnaire (45% response rate): 67% female; 54% finished high school. Questionnaire explored: task experience, feedback, peer relationships and process understanding using a Likert-scale

**Findings:** Students did not report a particularly positive orientation to any of 4 dimensions of questionnaire: “The mean for the overall task experience (=13.7) indicates that the participants did not view the peer assessment task with great enthusiasm” (p.80) and participants suggested reservations about reliability of peer assessment results (45.6% did not feel peers are qualified to assess other students' work). Authors note challenges to trial could have affected results: timing of trial (in first half of semester = work given to students who subsequently dropped out meaning some students did not get feedback – if done in-class, anonymity

**Context:** Future competitiveness in the labour market; returning to education (25% mature age enrolments in 2014/ less than half enter undergrad on basis of school results (Watson, Hagel & Chesters, 2013). Financial rewards for graduates remain stable [but see Li et al., 2016; Richardson et al., 2016 for alternative view]. Authors draw on Hodges et al. (2013) – enabling = 2nd chance education. 1/4 of all students in 2013 admitted on basis of higher education qualification and 10% articulate via VET award. Strong correlation between VET articulation and low SES and/or FinF. 21% of students = admitted on basis of mature age pathways. Authors note literature on equity and drop out: low SES students = less likely to graduate and have less. Also, students who enter university with low ATAR = less likely to persist, but participating in an enabling course first = associated with higher retention rate

**Aim:** To “analyse data from one Australian university to examine the association between pathways into university and achievement and retention” (p.225); to “examine the association between pathways into university and subsequent retention and achievement for a cohort of students attending a small metropolitan university in Australia” (p.232)

**Methodology:** Analysis of de-identified institutional data (presumably Uni Canberra) from S1, 2017 (n=1738) –first degree only (aka not Honors or students who already had one degree): categorised into seven pathways. Control variables for students = sex; birth cohort; socio-economic status (SES); and grade point average (GPA) at end of 2008 (see p.233 for detail). Seven pathways:

1. completed Year 12 at secondary school;
2. completed Year 12 at another institution such as a VET provider;
3. completed a VET Certificate Levels I - IV;
4. completed a higher education or VET diploma/advanced diploma;
5. completed the university’s on-campus enabling program;
6. completed an enabling program at another institution; and
7. mature age / other basis

**Findings:**
23% of students dropped out before the first semester of 2009

| Keywords: pathways into higher education; diversity; attrition | could not be guaranteed). Collaborative creation of assessment rubric = useful and helped students to ‘understand assessment’ (p. 84) – but this was not explored in questionnaire. |
Similar rates of males and females dropped out.

Older students (born <1971) = more likely to drop out, followed by those born in 1976–1980.

Mature age = most likely to drop out (38%), followed by other enabling (32%), and VET Diploma (28%). Least likely to drop out = on-campus enabling program (19%).

Low SES = marginally more likely to attrit (25%, compared to 23% for both mid- and high-SES).

Students with low GPA (3 or less) = much more likely to drop out (45%) compared with GPA of 5 (14% = lowest). Highest GPA = more likely to withdraw (21%).

Authors note that personal/contextual factors behind withdrawal = not available in the data set.

Core Argument: Students who enter undergraduate studies via an enabling pathway are less likely to drop out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathway</th>
<th>n=1738</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 completion at school</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 completion at non-school institution</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET certificate</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET diploma</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling program on Campus</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Enabling program</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature age/ Other</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Context: Widening participation initiatives have opened opportunity for higher education engagement for diverse cohorts of students, increasing the number of mature aged students and students entering university via ‘non-traditional’ pathways such as enabling programs, RPL and VET. ¼ of domestic students are aged over 24 when they enrol (p. 226), <50% enter using high school admissions qualifications (p. 227). Provides short literature overview of alternative pathways, focusing on factors contributing to retention and success. Suggests that prior research indicates that these ‘non-traditional’ students are less likely than ‘traditional’ students to be retained throughout their degree (EG: risk factors for attrition relating to admission via alternative entry, vocational qualification, low ATAR).

Aim: To explore the impact the pathway into University may have on the achievement and attrition of students, using administrative data from a domestic commencing undergraduate student cohort.

Methodology: Quantitative data analysis. Data source: administrative data for one cohort of commencing undergraduate students (domestic) (n=1738). At this university 51% of students enter via ATARs following high school completion and 16% via an on-campus enabling program. Variables = “pathway into university, academic achievement and progress” (p. 232).

Findings: Students entering undergraduate study via an ATAR after Year 12 completion have a higher
average GPA than those entering via other pathways (those entering with a VET qualification have the lowest average GPAs). Attrition is more likely in older students. Attrition is higher for students entering via mature-age/other pathway and VET than an on-campus enabling program. Attrition rates are higher amongst students with lower GPAs. Attrition was 1.7x likely amongst the Year 12 completer cohort and 2.5x more likely amongst the mature aged/other pathway than the on-campus enabling cohort.

**Core Argument:** Students entering undergraduate study via an on-campus undergraduate program are more likely to be retained on average than those entering via other pathways and high school, although they are likely to have lower GPAs on average when compared to those entering from high school with an ATAR. Therefore it does not necessarily correlate that students who come from ‘non-traditional pathways are more likely to discontinue their study or perform poorly.

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AUS

Annotation written by Sally Baker

**Context:** Explores ‘realities’ and practical challenges of inclusive teaching in Foundation Studies course at UNISA – considers needs of increasingly diverse student body. In 2006-8, 55% of Foundation Studies students were from one of the six identified equity groups and 77/403 in 2011 were NESB. Detail/discussion of Foundation Studies program/composition of student body/ aims and purposes = p.845. Foundation Studies designed “as an inclusive, student-centred program in order to develop academic literacies” (p.846)

**Core Argument:** NESB students encounter additional challenges related to language and cultural backgrounds, which impact on acquisition of academic literacies. UNISA have specific course for ESL students. Notes challenges that students from refugee backgrounds face: worrying about family back home, emotional distress, trauma. Also, university staff can also face challenges from supporting this cohort.

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AUS

Annotation written by Sally Baker

**Keywords:** inclusive policy and practice, widening participation, Australia, foundation studies.

**Context:** Explores/ discusses enabling programs (specifically Foundation Studies at UniSA) as a “strategy that universities employ to engage students from traditionally underrepresented groups” (abstract) for widening participation to meet 20% Bradley review targets. Raises issue of overexploration of access (due to neoliberal focus on quality) into higher education at the expense of participation, engagement and success. Transition from Foundation Studies to undergraduate studies = 50-55% in 2012 (p.26). Two thirds = FiF (p.27). Had retention rate of 79% in 2012 (compared with national average of 50%) – p.33.

**Aim:** To explore realities of implementing widening participation policy (aka Bradley reviews and Transforming Australia’s Future) through a case study of Foundation Studies.

**Theoretical frame:** Draws on work of Gidley et al.’s (2010) framework of social inclusion - different discourses of social inclusion: neoliberalism, social justice, human potential

**Methodology:** Case study

**Findings:** Authors claim Foundation Studies meets inclusion/ engagement needs of students by (p.26–):

- College staff being aware of student diversity
- Dedicated space on campus for learner identity development/ develop peer networks
- Students encouraged to build relationships with broader university services
- Providing “an authentic university experience” on city campus (p.27)
- College staff aim to get to know students; are highly accessible to students; organise and attend ECAs;
model values such as “empathy, endeavour and tolerance” (p.28)
Challenges: Discusses issues that students with low proficiency in Academic English have (specifically NESB; compares lack of English test on enrolment with entry requirements for International students: “therefore it is reasonable to conclude that a proportion of NESB students are disadvantaged with basic levels of language proficiency, so that they have little chance of passing the Foundation Studies program, let alone gaining entrance into undergraduate studies” (p.29). Issues are not apparent until teaching starts. Foundation Studies does have ESL option, specifically designed for NESB students – but all NESB grouped together, no streaming possible, focus perhaps on ‘literacy skills’ or ‘fundamental reading and writing tasks’ (p.30). Students required to self-identify for support but not doing so led to frustration; therefore a Diagnostic Writing Exercise has been implemented and “Students found to have critically low English proficiency levels from the Diagnostic Writing Exercise have been advised to undertake English language bridging programs before enrolling in the Foundation Studies program” (p.30). Authors also discuss plagiarism and communication etiquette. In this context, authors make the argument that “minimal entry requirements for access… may encourage those with low English language proficiency to develop unrealistic expectations of undergraduate success” (p.32)

Core argument: Awareness of student diversity = “opens dialogue between students and teachers and actively informs teaching, resulting in inclusive practice” (p.28) = social justice view of social inclusion (Gidley et al. 2010)


Context: Examines an enabling course (STEPS at CQU) according to how it engages with/ builds on students’ diversities. Authors argue that enabling education constitutes “a distinctive and vital dimension of “the first year experience” of university education” (p.29). Authors comment on the collaborative nature of STEPS, both for students in terms of sharing experiences and for staff, sharing research and good practice. Previous research has suggested that “the program is largely successful in its strategies to maximise life and learning support in order to mobilise the students’ diversities in ways that enhance their current and prospective learning outcomes” (abstract)

Theoretical base: Key foci = transformative learning and capacity building; “This view recognises the specific literacies, skills and other specialised knowledges that underpin capacity-building (Patrick & Ijah, 2012) and that are crucial to grounding transformative learning and giving it momentum” (p.29)

Methodology: Exploratory case study: semi-structured focus groups with enabling students and reflections from staff members. Note that students are usually nervous about being interviewed but “soon become willing to share their thoughts and feelings with regard to the learning journeys that they have chosen to undertake” (p.30)

Findings: Students’ interview data suggests themes such as: significant previous academic/educational strife transforming into subsequent successes (PhD candidate, GP, child protection officer), opening up of worldview and exposure to diversity, intergenerational impact. “As the research data have revealed, a particular element of this empowerment relates to an increasing freedom of choice and opportunity” (p.32):

Core argument: There are “complex, critical and compelling set of connections among the three principal aspects of this paper: life and learning support; transformative learning and capacity-building; and the
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| **Context**: Explores the UPP program at UTAS from the perspective of past students (reflecting from current undergraduate studies). Argues that “High attrition rates and default measures of success (such as reports on numbers of students per unit, withdrawals, retention, and pass/fail rates), often eclipse the positive outcomes of enabling programs” (p.15)

**Methodology**: Qualitative: interviews/focus groups. Students recruited on basis of having completed a core UPP writing unit the previous semester. 9 students participated

**Findings**: Enabling programs have “multi-layered benefits, influences and flow-on effects, which students carry into their degrees, benefiting other students and the university, as well as potentially influencing their families, friends, and communities” (abstract)

Major (expected) themes: development of academic skills, confidence and connections, and understanding the expectations and demands of the university culture. Unexpected findings = assuming leadership in new studies, changed attitudes towards other cultural backgrounds.

**Academic skills**: participants described having learnt ‘academic skills’, including essay writing, critical thinking, time management, oral communication and referencing.

**Confidence**: most participants noted confidence in skills and were ‘ahead of the ball’ (participant). Differences in relational positioning evident (one participant noted ‘kids struggled a lot with essay writing’, while another noted that ‘some of the young ones are really switched on’ – p.21).

**Connections**: participants comfortable asking for help from peers to avoid isolation and for emotional support

**Leadership**: prior experience in UPP positioned some students as more knowledgeable than newly starting peers. “This theme of leadership or peer mentorship could be viewed as a ‘positive spin-off’ or ‘value-adding’ for the university” (p.24)

Multicultural awareness: students from rural areas unexpectedly talked about positives of mixing with more diverse cohort (including refugee students) – one student commented that “Uni is an exception to the rule. If you want interaction with ethnic groups, go to uni – it’s allowed. A little pocket of westerners interacting with ethnic groups – doesn’t hold the rule of what happens in mainstream. An education for us.” (p.25)

**Core argument**: The benefits of enabling programs are ‘multi-layered and profound’ (p.27) and as such necessitate a reconceptualisation of notions of ‘success’ and ‘quality’ in higher education. Enabling education has ‘flow on effects’ - data in this study suggests that students go on to do more than is/was expected of them (e.g. peer leaders): “They are the catalysts for flow-on effects on the university, and potentially for their families, and communities, thus illustrating that in addition to creating a level playing field, enabling programs ‘value-add’ for the university” (p.26)

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| **Context**: Studies have demonstrated the prevalence of mental ill health amongst university students, and that the challenges of university study can compound mental challenges amongst student populations. Universities have typically responded to the rise of mental health challenges amongst student populations by: establishing centralised units of student support; focusing on first year pedagogies and embedded support for this transitional period; establishing a “settings approach” that seeks to embed wellbeing frameworks holistically

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and in an all of institution fashion (e.g. Southern Cross University); embedding concerns for wellbeing and mental health within curriculum using teaching and learning strategies. The nature of enabling cohorts means that many face personal challenges, and research has highlighted the importance of a range of embedded supports for these students, although how this is enacted differs across the sector. This article examines the provision of and perception of support within UTAS Pre-degree Programs.

**Aim**: The nature and extent of student support provided by academic staff appears to be under-recognised and misunderstood. This article aims to address that and explore the experiences of academic staff in UTAS Pre-degree Program in terms of types of support they provide, how they are equipped to provide this support and how support provision impacts upon them.

**Methodology**: Pilot research project using qualitative methodology (one-on-one, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with academic staff regarding their experiences and perceptions of their support provision to students within UTAS Pre-degree Programs. 13 out of 34 staff responded to invitations and were interviewed. Interviews were coded and analysed for themes.

**Findings**: Academic staff saw student support as part of their role, regardless of their actual role or position. The relationships of trust and care they build with students enrolled in their programs or courses is integral to why students seek them out for this support; students may also not have the support of family or friends, feel unable to see a counsellor, and feel that non-academic issues impact upon their studies and/or wellbeing is already discussed in their unit of study. Support could be viewed as incidental or officially provided. What support meant varied depending on role: some interviewees saw it as listening to students and picking up cues that they might need assistance but student coordinators were more likely to discuss coordinated advice approaches to at risk students. For this latter group of staff student support is a requirement of the role and “was described as ‘personalised, holistic and ongoing’” (p. 7). A central theme was the nature of the cohort, which is “complex and diverse” (p. 7), and required greater support than other cohorts. Staff had clear triage processes for managing student support that allowed them to maintain appropriate and professional boundaries. Students sought support for a range of academic and non-academic issues, which could be compounding, mutually informing, inextricably linked, and difficult to pin down. This holistic approach that considers the whole student and doesn’t seek to compartmentalise academic and non-academic issues was core to staff perceptions. Whether staff felt equipped to handle these challenges varied, some felt that they were both equipped and ill-equipped. Staff who felt ill-equipped also felt that they were not required to attempt to resolve cases beyond their capacity because they have a referral point. Interviewees did feel that this type of work impacted them, and negative perceptions of impact were higher amongst student coordinators. These negative impacts included physical and emotional impacts, which were managed via collegiality, humour, exercise and relationships outside of work. Staff also identified positive impacts in helping students. Strategies identified that would assist staff were: more professional development, more time to communicate, greater exchanges between academics and counsellors in order to improve both the referral process and counsellor’s understanding of the academic sphere, and more embedded support. Interviewees also pointed to the importance of having staff with the right attitudes, approaches and pedagogies.
**Core argument:** "The academic role needs to be reconceptualised to incorporate the 'support' dimension, thereby making explicit, and acknowledging and valuing the role and benefits of supporting 'the whole student' (p. 14). Academics in enabling contexts are distinguished by the "time and attention paid to teaching, learning and support. At the core of these enabling educators' teaching philosophies and attitudes is care" (p. 16). Prioritising the wellbeing of students is essential to improve the outcomes of students and to destigmatise mental ill-health, but it is also important for “ethical and moral reasons” and “it also has longer-term economic benefits to institutions because it impacts on retention and attrition” (p. 17).

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| Curtis, E.; Townsend, S. & Airini (2012). *Improving Indigenous and ethnic minority student success in foundation health study*, Teaching in Higher Education, 17(5), 589–602. | **Context:** Describes 'Success for All' research project that investigates teaching and learning (non-lecture) practices in a foundation degree (Certificate in Health Sciences; CertHSc) specifically for Māori and Pasifika students that help and hinder Māori and Pasifika student success in non-lecture settings with UG health at University of Auckland. **Aim:** To answer two research questions: 1. What teaching and learning practices in 'non-lecture contexts' (defined as activities with less than 50 students) help or hinder Māori and Pasifika success in foundation-level study? 2. How can this information guide teaching and university practices in order to best support Māori and Pasifika success in preparing for or completing degree-level studies? (p.590) **Theoretical frame:** Anti-deficit/ focus on workforce development and organisational change **Methodology:** Kaupapa Māori' methodology in 3 phases: 1) needs analysis, 2) intervention, 3) evaluation Interviews using Critical Incident Technique with 28 Indigenous students **Findings:** 798 critical incidents identified under 4 themes: "(I) use effective practices for teaching and learning, (II) grow independent learners, (III) support the empowerment of the learner and (IV) harness the positive cohort effect" (abstract) **Core argument:** Study reinforces importance of learning that happens outside of lecture theatre Questions raised by students about how much support is needed in foundation program (see p.598) Participants value bonding opportunities, having culturally specific/ safe space and provision of food and study initiatives/ peer mentoring = aided sense of belonging. Inclusion of Māori and Pasifika content = helped to motivate students |

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| Cuthill, M. & Jansen, D. (2013). *Initial results from a longitudinal impact study focusing on a higher education 'widening participation' program in Australia*, Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 15(1), 7–21. | **Context:** Reports on 5-year study of impact of 'young achievers' program on students, families, schools and community. This program was established in 2009/10 and is a 6-year program with the aim of “building and support[ing] the tertiary education aspirations of educationally disadvantaged state secondary-school students” (p.9). Students start in Year 11 & 12 (most intense phase) and are supported for a further 4 years while they complete undergraduate studies. The aim is to take 100 students each year who receive: on campus experiences (inc. residential), $1000 bursary per year in Years 11 &12, mentoring, assistance and advice, scholarship support up to $6000 per year for UG studies and a guaranteed place (via QTAC). Eligibility requirements for program = ‘financial hardship’, ‘geographic isolation’, ‘Indigenous’, and ‘first in family’. **Aim:** The impact study addresses three interrelated questions. 1. How successful is the Young Achievers Program in recruiting and transitioning young people from low socio-economic background? |
aspiration.

socio-economic backgrounds to tertiary study at ‘this university’? (Data sourced primarily from Program enrolment records.)

2. How do specific initiatives within the Young Achievers Program contribute to overall Program success and outcomes? (Data sourced from both interviews and population level surveys.)

3. What are the impacts of the Young Achievers Program for participants, their families, schools and community? (Data sourced primarily from interviews and triangulated against other Program data to check for similarities and differences.) – all p.10

**Methodology:** Longitudinal tracking approach/ qualitative methods = in-depth interviewing, workshops, observations + demographic data collection. Total of 35 participants (23 = f, 12 = m): 11 students (interviewed annually), 11 parents, 13 school staff from 4 (out of 27) selected schools (interviewed biannually). Interview questions around 5 themes: aspirations, barriers to participation in tertiary education, impacts, civic responsibility as potential outcome, disadvantage and higher education.

**Findings:** Draws on interview data collected in 2011 (researcher travelled to 4 schools: 15 min with students, 25 with parents/guardians, 40 with school staff)

Four key ‘impact’ themes: ‘Recognition’, ‘Raised awareness’, ‘Relief’ and ‘Social connections’

**Recognition:** “Their effort with school studies is now seen as more worthwhile and appropriately rewarded” (p.14) and increased sense of family pride. Recognition extends to school and community: “it’s almost like throwing the rock in the pool and [the ripple effect] ... (teacher)”

**Raised awareness:** all young achievers expressed desire to go to university but there was a lack of understanding/ awareness of expectations and opportunities. Program helped to raise awareness of “course options, career pathways, and support services, and more broadly the practicalities involved with being a university student” (p.15). Also raised awareness for parents (preparing for departure of children: ‘having to let go’). Also evoked parents’ aspirations (‘older achiever dreams’)

**Relief:** relating to cost/ admissions/ entrance requirements for students and parents

**Social connections:** through meeting like-minded peers and through mentoring. School staff noted enhanced connections between schools and university

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UK Annotation written by Sally Baker

Keywords: Non-traditional, Foundation Degree, work-study balance, participation, higher education, further education.

**Context:** Part time foundation degree in Sunderland College, UK: exploring student experience and employment while studying in broader ‘area of concern’ of attrition, especially for non-traditional students in context of WP. Employment commitments = one main reason for attrition. Non-traditional = defined as “non-traditional circumstances include a range of factors including economic status, age, gender, ethnicity, disability, marital and family status and geographical location, that prevent access to HE” (p.55) and many = hold ‘non-traditional vocational qualifications’ and are working class. Employability = large reason for choosing p/t foundation degrees in FE colleges. Author cites Tett (2004) = non-traditional students place themselves outside HE and construct HE as alien place. Foundation Degrees (FD) = ‘arguably most successful’ widening participation strategy between HE and FE = ‘integrated education code’ (Bernstein, 1971), democratic, reflexive curricula, practical content (vocationally focused): “FDs are the ‘curricula of employers’ gives currency to the traditional FD learner: they choose the FD, as they are known to have currency in the job
**Aim:** “to develop an understanding of the personal and demographic characteristics of [FD students]” (p.57)

**Methodology:** Case study (Sunderland College, School of Leadership and Management). Survey instrument used to collect demographic information, course title, social class (problematised and discussed on p.58) and how much they worked. Survey piloted on 14 students (quality of scales checked using Cronbach’s alpha test).

In total, 92 students took part in main survey: 70% = female, aged 19-56 (average age 35), 70% = married, 65% = had children (37% more than one child). One third had not studied for a while; just over a quarter had recently studied. 83% = self-identified as working class

**Findings:**
- Half = prioritised work (more likely for working class students)
- 46% = gave equal importance to work and study
- 5% = prioritised study
- 97% = stated that working = experience relevant to study
- 50% = working helps to organise time
- Having money (less stress) = positive for studying
- Working = travelling = more hours per week (average 31-40 per week)
- Students who work long hours = more likely to be late for classes/miss deadline/ not feel well prepared for assignments
- 43% students found it difficult to balance work and study commitments
- 33% had considered dropping out
- 2% had no help from family, friends or colleagues
- Most positive = when employers are supportive
- “FD students certainly do not readily signify the ‘time-rich’, traditional experience of student life with ample opportunities for reflecting on learning, reading widely around the subject or engaging in leisurely discussion with peers” (p.62)

**Core argument:** Foundation Degree students = significantly different reasons for studying: less prepared, less time than needed, less productive study time. Balancing work and study = positive and negative. Employer support = fundamental. Employers "should understand that learning involves socialisation or integration of the individual, social roles and rewards" (p.65). Institutions should develop better understandings and respond better to needs of part time working students (e.g., greater flexibility, consider timing of classes, availability of staff)

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**Context:** Explores impact of enabling (‘tertiary entrance program’) education from perspective of UG/honours student and her lecturer.

**Aim:** To offer a literature review of mature women engagement with tertiary education/entering tertiary education, read through biographies/ perspectives of two authors. 3 aspects considered: motivations to study, first assignment and 'course encounters', as well as looking at wider effects on self, family and friends. “Our main aim was to survey and test the literature about enabling in general, and about the Open Foundation in
Methodology: Draws on autobiographical methods within interpretive humanistic paradigm — paper grew out of sustained conversations between authors.

Literature review: Considers the literature that explores why women return to education, intertwined with autobiographical accounts (Jenni — as a mum not coping well with motherhood and looking for ‘escape’ but fearful of balancing family and studies; Jo — ‘disorienting dilemma’ (Mezirow, 1997) = brush with death. Jo always starts with new cohorts by telling her own story and deliberately not ‘massaging away’ the complexities and difficulties). First assignment = “the first milestone in an enabling program for both students and lecturers is the submission and return of the first assignments” (p.89) — very little written about ‘pivotal’ part of returning to education = characterised by anxiety. Cite Cantwell, Bourke & Archer (1997) who claimed that enabling students have low self-efficacy. Jenni’s experience = helped in one course by connecting with lecturer, by connecting with Learning Skills Centre and connecting with peers. She did well (was ‘ecstatic’) and was validated when she was contacted to request permission to use her assignment as model of ‘good writing’. Jo = aware of significance of feedback (receiving and giving) on first assignment. Impact on personal worlds: connections with identity and transformational learning (Jenni = imposter syndrome/ increased confidence = ‘socially at odds with my friends and family’ (p.97). Jo echoes some of the tensions (family responsibilities etc.) and adds two new relationships: to knowledge (becoming a “confident, lifelong, passionate and respectful learner” and to the university, p.99)

Core message: “Mature women’s engagement with enabling is variously about embarkation, challenge, change, growth, journey, initiation, transformation, making new connections, opening up, re-birth, coming into self, and leaving the old behind. The emotional tenor of the movement seems to involve polarities of negative and positive states: doubt and confidence, joy and grief, fear and bravery” (p.101).

**Context:** Reports on initiative to use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in enabling education (UniSA), in context of widening participation to Australian university and post-intentions to deregulate student fees (Lib-Nat coalition policies in 2014). UDL = set of principles for curriculum development that recognises multiplicity: 1) multiple means of representation, 2) multiple means of action/ expression, 3) multiple means of engagement (offering flexibility), but needs significant curriculum reform. UDL = piloted on Foundation Studies enabling unit: Information Skills. Discussion of communication strategy (p.9-10): staff need to have access to professional development/ set clear expectations and make them clear to students

**Aim:** To outline the process of implementation and discuss 2 key principles: cultivation of trust through consultation with teaching staff, students and CTL support teachers, and effective use of technology

**Methodology:** Discussion

**Findings:** Communication: elements of program identified for adjustment, then workshop for teachers on UDL principles and intentions — information to be presented in multiple ways. Communicative strategies consistently employed via variety of modes, with regular feedback loops included. Multiple means of representation: teaching materials (lecture, feedback forms) provided via multimedia (PPT, podcast, PDF) – assessment templates and models of successful work offered via MOODLE Multiple means of action/ expression: interactive clickers in lectures, collaborative and discussion-based tutorials, online tools for reflection and movement between classroom and online discussion boards. Multiple means of engagement: students asked to develop own research topics Evaluation suggests UDL = useful for enabling programs (as seen through student grades and student satisfaction)

**Core argument:** UDL = “readily implementable, progressive cultural shift in HE pedagogies” (p.15) which can support inclusive teaching

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**Context:** This paper focuses on identifying students’ partial mathematical ability on entry into Bridging Mathematics through the use of a computer-based, self-administered diagnostic test which is then used to direct students to “appropriate remediation strategies” (p. 390). The test encourages students to reflect on their own mathematical position, therefore ‘empowering’ them. Bridging students tend to underestimate their mathematical ability, are anxious and have low self-esteem. Acknowledges that diagnostic testing is seen by some Bridging educators as ‘punitive’ and may run counter to the purpose of Bridging education, however, the computer test was developed with reference to research and tested on users to avoid this ‘negative approach’. The Maths Fitness Test provides adaptive pathways based on student responses to each question and was designed to support the Unilearn Mathematics course (QLD TAFE) a self-paced bridging course.

**Aims:** Evaluates Maths Fitness Test

**Methodology:** Detailed description of the test and how it works + evaluation. Evaluated by students, mathematicians and educational psychologists.

**Findings:** The test was found to be effective in reducing levels of anxiety often encountered in students in
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<td><strong>Context</strong>: ‘Tertiary preparation’ in satellite campuses — widening participation and student experience at USC. Enabling program (TPP) has approximately 50% success rate. Classes began at satellite campus in 2013. Authors note limited research on experiences related to satellite campuses (but see Ballantyne, 2012 for literature on the feeling of small campuses). Authors note the disadvantaged profile of the region (and make connections to the high proportion (60%) of enabling students who are on welfare (see p.245)</td>
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<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Stated RQ: “In what ways do students experience a tertiary preparation program on a satellite campus?” (p.247).</td>
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<td><strong>Methodology</strong>: Phenomenographic study; semi-structured interviews with enabling students (n=9). Demographic details of participants on p.249</td>
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<td><strong>Findings</strong>: Students = enrolled as gateway to undergraduate study + other motivators = encourage family members, demonstrate to self and others that they are capable, avoiding unemployment. Social element = important for many (sense of collective responsibility to each other, socialising) Students experienced some poor teaching (tutor expectations) and good teaching (high levels of commitment). Authors offer three metaphors for how students experienced the TPP: Stairway (challenges to be overcome), Doorway (access to undergraduate via enabling), Hallway (personal accomplishments = more important than other aspects) – see explanatory table on p.245–5</td>
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<td><strong>Core Argument</strong>: “Universities can widen access to study by offering tertiary bridging programs and by building satellite campuses in areas of need, but as educators we need to keep in mind that the success of our students is greatly dependent on their individual motivations and experiences” (p.261).</td>
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<td><strong>Context</strong>: Experiences of mature age students in a foundation degree (FD) in health and social care. FDs are generally taught in Further Education (FE) colleges in the UK (part of larger intention to unify the system and widening participation) – see p.376-8 for further description of the blurring of the divide between FE and HE.</td>
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<td><strong>Aim</strong>: To explore students’ learner identity/ sense of themselves as ‘second chance learners’; to broadly evaluate a particular foundation degree</td>
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<td><strong>Theoretical frame</strong>: Weick’s (1995) model of sensemaking, which is “retrospective, social and ongoing, and focused on and by extracted cues in our social environment” (p.385). Also Bourdieu: ‘General Theoretical Framework’ (from ‘Distinction’, 1984); specifically field, habitus; foundation degrees= sub-field of field of HE</td>
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<td><strong>Methodology</strong>: ‘Exploratory study’; interpretive; interviews with students on FD program (n=6; convenience sample): 5f, 1m; 3 aged 31-40, 2 over 40, 1 under 30. Thematic coding.</td>
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<td><strong>Findings</strong>: Number of themes</td>
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<td>1) ‘Second chance learners’: all participants had previous unsatisfactory experiences with education: perceptions of under-achievement, limited opportunity and not realising their potential, and they viewed their participation in the FD as “getting a second bite at the apple” (p.380). Students’ desire to return to education = ‘creative adaptation’ (see Reay, Crozier &amp; Clayton, 2010).</td>
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2) Motivation: flexibility to study part-time and balance work and study = ‘the practical option’, suggesting FD = “have a role to play in providing progression routes for those already within the workforce who wish to combine learning with their working lives” (p.382). Students also mentioned wanting to ‘prove to themselves that they could do it’

3) ‘Not quite higher education’: most students saw FE as a route to ‘getting a taste of’ HE; FD not seen as ‘threatening’ as a full degree program (possibly significant in terms of being ‘non-traditional’ students; see Bowl, 2001). Also, common perception that FE=better for their needs as mature students. Fear of failure seemed to fuel students’ belief that they needed more help. However, the location of study (in FE) could contribute to confusion about what an FD is (a ‘taste of HE’ rather than an academic qualification; significance = NVQs are privileged in the fields of health and social care)

**Core argument:** Exploring HE in FE offers insights into mature age students and their reasons for returning to study. “Educational disadvantage can be seen to be perpetuated in two ways: individuals exclude themselves from future possibilities by seeing themselves as not worthy of HE and institutions erect barriers to guard against students that are depicted as outside their realm of experience, or ‘other’” (p.387).

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**Context:** Indigenous/ non-Indigenous staff and Indigenous student perceptions: how participation can be increased in enabling/ business degree program. Works from idea that Indigeneity = own knowledge system of “values and ways of knowing regarding the land, law, ceremonies, language and familial relationships” (p.20, attributed to Keenan, 2010), which differ to normative epistemology of universities. Offers international picture of Indigenous participation/ lack of parity. Scopes literature that examines embedding on Indigenous culture and knowledges into curriculum. Business courses/ faculty = strong case for this focus in terms of facilitating Indigenous participation in commercial world (see Willmett, 2009). Describes context as Indigenous enabling program specifically for business/ located in business faculty through 1) bursaries and scholarships and market to Indigenous students; 2) extra tutorial support/ academic support. At time of writing = 1 week winter program (July, for Year 10-12 high school students) and 4-week summer program.

**Theoretical frame:** Organisational climate and culture, dimensions of reward orientation, task support, SES support to gauge ‘comfort level’ and ‘sense of community’

**Methodology:** Qualitative paradigm. Mixed methods: online survey, interviews, focus groups. Participants = 9 enrolled students (completed the survey), face-to-face interviews with 5 of these students + interviews with 15 staff (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) involved in enabling programs in other faculties. Focus group = 3 Indigenous students. Survey = ‘students’ perceptions of how well the School taught students how to study and do research and how well it supported them in their learning… what the School valued and to what extent students’ Indigenous backgrounds and the school’s relationship with Indigenous communities were valued” (p.26). Interviews/ FG = experience of studying, accessing help, reasons for low participation, sense of belonging

**Findings:** Attitudes to Indigeneity: mostly attributed to self-identification as Indigenous and knowing Indigenous Australia. Entry to university = difficult for some (quote from participant ‘Carl’ = how much/ what percentage Indigenous are you?). Author points to “the sense of shared discomfort and embarrassment
stemming from ignorance about Indigenous Australia” (p.28).

Reward orientation: the high ranking/high achievement of business school in UNSW = perceived as excluding many Indigenous students (with numeracy considered a constraint).

Support: participants perceived insufficient levels of support

Lack of sense of community for Indigenous students (but faculty scored highly in terms of multiculturalism because of high proportion of international students)

**Core argument:** Recommendations for increasing Indigenous participation: need to engage more with Indigenous issues and communities, consider mentoring; make the enabling program more substantial (longer with focus on maths; more task support)

|---|
| **Context:** NCSEHE-funded project that explores ‘Indigenous access [aka enabling] courses’. Rationale = increasing participation rates and raising mobility between HE and VET. Focuses particularly on dual-sector universities and regional/remote students. **Aim:** Project aim: to understand the practices and experiences of Indigenous access programs, with a view to designing a best practice framework and implementation statement” and “to explore how Indigenous learning journeys can respect and grow cultural identity while simultaneously developing study skills, particularly in the context of studying at a regional university” (p.3). Also set out to probe meanings of success from perspective of students. To develop a ‘best-practice conceptual framework’ for Indigenous access programs, considering pedagogy, curriculum and modes of study. **Theoretical frame:** Draws on work of Cajete (1994) Indigenous and concepts of path+way = path is ‘well-thought-out structure’ and way = navigate learning journeys. Also draws on critical pedagogy. Also considers ‘both-ways’ learning: “‘Both-ways’ approaches to education are gaining ground as a way of developing learning environments that are inclusive, welcoming and flexible” (p.27) **Methodology:** Project took interdisciplinary, qualitative approach and a case-study methodology to explore both the socio-cultural and educational aspects of access programs, involving a literature review, desktop audit, national roundtable and comparative case study based on individual interviews at CQU/FED/CDU. Interviews were with staff who teach into access programs (n=12), students (n=13), and community/stakeholder representatives. Desktop review looked at mission-based compacts for each university (but access students = rarely reported on) and reconciliation action plans **Findings:** Literature Review (scoping access programs, Indigenous-specific access = see Kinnane et al. 2014 OLT report; also Nakata, 2011 – and what constitutes success in non-assimilationist ways, support for Indigenous students) found:

1. Education has a key role in addressing Indigenous disadvantage, yet it remains poorly understood
2. If educational targets for Indigenous peoples are to be met, there is a need for ‘fresh thinking’
3. Access education has a special role to play in the widening participation agenda |
4. The evidence on best-practice teaching in access education is scant
5. Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning must be recognised
6. There needs to be more discussion about what constitutes ‘success’ in Indigenous access education
7. Pursuing best practice will require a comprehensive, holistic perspective
8. Policy and positioning are both important in the widening participation agenda. (p.6)

Interviews:
Staff = all agreed that access programs effectively prepare Indigenous students for further study
Not all courses include Indigenous content
Challenges = cultural differences (yarners), digital barriers (access to internet, familiarity with online environments), need to support for students with family responsibilities, need to indigenize the curriculum.
Face-to-face provision is considered best practice
Students = of 13 student participants, 3 had successfully completed, 1 had dropped out and 9 were ongoing. All 3 who had completed went on to further study. 2 said there had been Indigenous content in the course [not sure where they were from]. Generally, these students thought the course had met their expectations,
Advice to staff = increase cultural awareness, should include aboriginal history, access courses should be essential. Student who dropped out did so to ‘scrub up on maths and English’ but dropped out because of perceived lack of support. Students still studying = similar to completers; all claim that the program was helping to strengthen identity as Indigenous person. Challenges noted include: missing family/being away from home, navigating online systems, time management

Discussion: Success = ‘multilayered construct’ = “For Indigenous students, success in access programs is variously seen as increased ‘cultural identity’ and the development of ‘voice’, self-realisation, self-acceptance and ‘pride’” (p.61).
Importance of Indigenous-specific curriculum raised by all cohorts of participants
Indigenous students’ cultural capital should be recognised as strengths
Access programs aligned with ‘both-ways’ approaches = “can support inner transformations of Self related to strength, knowledge acquisition, growth, identity and voice” (p.64), and are thus particularly salient for Indigenous access/ best practice. Authors argue this could be example of ‘radical pedagogy’ which moves away from dominant and hegemonic curricula and pedagogies – “‘Both-ways understanding’ involves a system-wide process of cultural awareness by the developing bodies, achieved through crosscultural competency and a whole of university approach” (p.65)

Core argument: Offer a conceptual model of best practice for Indigenous access education:

AUS Annotation written by Sally Baker

Keywords: Indigenous, access, enabling, education, regional, success, outcomes

**Context:** Explores limited success of Indigenous enabling program at CQU facilitating access to higher education. Authors offer description of Indigenous enabling program; suggest new online version = “helping to address geographical and social isolation and improve successful outcomes for Indigenous Australians” (abstract). Accepting an offer into a course = “only the first of many challenges” (p.1), including access to computer, non-Indigenous environment, FinF. Need to also consider challenges of transitioning out of university study (especially issues of rurality and SES disadvantage). Notes importance of Indigenous centres in supporting students.

**Aim:** To describe Indigenous-specific TEP at CQU in order to argue “that a well-designed entrance program can help to address access barriers, particularly the barrier of geography, and help to support Indigenous students, both through the university entrance process and throughout their studies” (p.2), particularly the flexible, online nature of the provision.
### Methodology: Description

**Discussion:** Approx 50% of Indigenous students entered UG via enabling programs (see Behrendt review). There are two enabling programs: TEP and STEPS. TEP run by Nuloo Yumbah Centre. TEP reviewed in 2011 (separately from STEPS). Data pre-2011 = patchy and shows that only 100 students completed TEP in 10 years and only a few transferred into UG studies. The reviews in 2011 and 2012-13 suggested that CQU needed to rethink its approaches and support for Indigenous students (to improve success rates). Nuloo Yumbah = became The Office of Indigenous Engagement. TEP is now fully online for urban, regional and remote communities, and for students in correctional centres. TEP encourages students to reflect on own lives and communities, with a “capacity for an in-depth learning about themselves and combining Indigenous learning and non-Indigenous learning in way that make sense for them” (p.7). TEP also has 1-2 week residential block program = intensive learning.

**Core argument:** That access to HE/ enabling education = “critical tool” for supporting Indigenous students to overcome disadvantage

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**Aim:** To describe the Community Aspirations Program in Education (CAP-ED) Indigenous enabling program at CQU, which was designed to ‘build the educational aspirations of Indigenous people’ by moving university into community spaces and offering opportunities for people to visit university campuses: “CAP-ED is designed to inspire and enable Indigenous people” (p.55)  
**Methodology:** Essay/ description  
**Discussion:** Imperative for CAP-ED came from Office for Indigenous Engagement – who wanted short, informal program to engage with Indigenous community, which was built to fill a gap in the CQ area for Indigenous specific literacy/ numeracy/ language provision and to increase Indigenous participation at CQU. Discussion of evolution/design of the program (for example, issues with working from a program located in Victoria), local consultation: “The team aimed to build on community practices, rather than impose an external way of working – approaching the project as ‘working with’ not ‘working for’ the local communities. This close engagement helped to embed Indigenous cultures into the program as it was developed” (p.58).  
CAP-ED offers:  
- 5-week ‘CAP-ED and Me’ workshop program in Rockhampton  
- Networking lunches at CQU campuses or community venues  
- Information sessions  
**Core argument:** Success of CAP-ED and Me workshops = down to relationships between university and local community/ community elders, which was facilitated by the Indigenous staff working for CQU (because locals were initially hesitant). The flexible delivery is another important factor behind the success of CAP-ED.

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| Galligan, L. & Taylor, J.A. (2008). Adults Returning to Study Mathematics. In Forgasz et al. (Eds.) Research in Mathematics Education in Australia 2004–2007. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. | **Context:** Focuses on adults returning to study mathematics ‘out of necessity’. Looks at workplace and bridging/enabling course contexts. Offers definitions of ‘numeracy’ and ‘mathematics’ and reviews the literature and reviews on numeracy and mathematics in adult further education (including enabling programs and mathematics support) and community and workplace in Australasia. |
### AUS

**Annotation written by Evonne Irwin**

**Aims:** To review the Australasian literature on adults returning to mathematics either in workplace/community environments; in bridging/enabling programs; or in mathematics support (in tertiary education environments).

**Methodology:** The parameters of the review excluded “research available on the traditional learning and teaching of mathematics in undergraduate courses and is thus focussed on mature students in university study rather than recent school leavers.” (p. 108).

**Findings:** “Adults studying in formal or informal numeracy programs learn more than mathematics skills. They encounter rich embedded numeracy tasks . . .” (p. 112). There is little to no mention of ‘teaching practices’ in the literature on adults returning to study in the tertiary sector. Refers to Taylor & Galligan’s (2006) Four questions within enabling mathematics.

**Core Argument:** Direct reference to enabling programs and Taylor & Galligan’s (2006/5) “four questions” for enabling mathematics research/education.

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### UK

**Annotation written by Sally Baker**

**Context:** Explores quality, access and success from variety of perspectives. Starts from notion that quality, access and success are “complex and multi-perspectival” and depend on underlying ideologies (p.124). The authors take the position that equitable access and success are closely connected to social inclusion.

“…access, participation and success are ordered according to a spectrum of ideologies — neoliberalism, social justice and human potential, respectively — by way of a nested structure with human potential ideology offering the most embracing perspective” (p.124, emphasis added).

Spectrum of ideologies = reflected in degrees of social inclusion. Contextualises the paper in terms of globalization of HE; tensions between elite unis and massification (competition, commodification of knowledge, economic rationales); shifting notions of quality – tension between neoliberalism and social justice: “‘the trade-off between excellence and equity’ (Lunt, 2008; on page 128). Authors contest neoliberal notion of quality as a measure of an individual university’s “competitive edge” (p.128).

Social inclusion = could be poised to take over dominance of equity and access. Social inclusion policy pays insufficient attention to certain groups: CALD (inc. refugees), rural/remote, ageing populations and incarcerated people. Also, level of policy/ discourse direction is significant: If policies and interventions remain at the level of top down imposition of assumed common values, then it is likely that many of the groups discussed above, even if given access to higher education, may choose not to participate wholeheartedly’ (p.130).

Degrees of social inclusion:
- **Access through lens of neoliberalism** = investments in human capital/contribution to knowledge economy, so that access is about creating higher numbers (to fuel economic production) from outside of ‘saturated’ populations; works from deficit position and scarcity of resources; reduction of social explanation to economic framework is a “conceptual reductive integration” and lifeworld reduction = “cultural assimilation and stakeholder dominator hierarchies” (p.133).
- **Participation and engagement through lens of social justice** = “is about human rights, egalitarianism of
opportunity, human dignity and fairness for all” (p.134). Notes link with critical educational theories (e.g. Giroux and Freire). University-community partnerships = example that shifts away from notion of ‘ivory towers’ of academy

**Aim:** Responds to this question: ‘Are equitable access, success and quality three essential ingredients or three mutually exclusive concepts for higher education development? Key question: ‘To what extent does the new term, social inclusion, reflect a shift in policy; or is it merely old policies repackaged?’ (p.129)

**Theoretical frame:** Integrative analysis. Uses integrative — or joined-up — thinking to offer some future policy directions.

**Methodology:** Literature review

**Findings:**

Human potential ideology – goes beyond economic/social justice notions to idea that equal rights = “to maximise the potential of each human being [through] cultural transformation” (p.135) = opposite to deficit model/ ideology. Refers to Hope Theory (see Snyder in Egan et al 2008). Based on notion that there is no one ideal model of human development – people do not ’fit in’, rather they “bring with them the richness of their individual difference” (p.137)

Suggestions of interventions to increase access (p.139) include more equity scholarships, better income support, better regional infrastructure, improved physical modification of facilities for people with disabilities, more teaching (language-culture) support for CALD students, better counselling services

Suggestions of interventions to increase participation (p.140): partnerships, social enterprise, mentoring, learning networks, arts/sports interventions, outreach

Suggestions of interventions to increase success and empowerment (p.141) = pathways, hearing voices, dialogue, futures interventions, hope interventions, cultural festivals.

**Core argument:** Presents 2 notions of quality: justice globalism (prioritising collaboration rather than competition) and human potential (related to human potential and transformation)

Towards an integrative approach to quality: involves spectrum of ideologies and degrees of social inclusion; “quality in higher education is synonymous with a broad interpretation of social inclusion in higher education in that both are concerned with equitable access, participatory engagement and empowered success” (p.142).

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**Context:** Examines transition from school to university in context of enabling program (Murdoch: TLC) in Australian higher education. TLC = for low SES school students (Year 12) who did not get ATAR needed – identifies students “— achieved through ‘dynamic assessment’ based on progressive cognitive development (Vygotsky’s ZPD) = unique compared to other alternative entry pathways/ enabling programs due to use of ZPD and early recognition of Year 12 students: “the program is focused on catching students before they fall out of the educational system” (p.699). Scopes literature on study and career aspirations/ expectations for low SES communities. TLC = provides a ‘seamless transition’ (see p.701) in that students study TLC alongside HSC subjects on local campus. TLC = tracks cognitive development: “In keeping with the concept of ZPD, the unit focuses on the identification of the transitional readiness of students and the facilitation of their capacity to move from borderline patterns of critical and academic thought towards established cognitive formations”

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**AUS**

Annotation written by Sally Baker

**Keywords:** Access; enabling programs; first-year experience; Vygotsky; zone of proximal development
Aim: To describe TLC

Theoretical frame: Vygotsky’s theorization of the zone of proximal development (ZPD)

Methodology: Description of program and links to theory of ZPD

Findings:
Describes TLC/ ZPD in detail (p.702-6). Success of students’ transitions measured by: (i) enrolment at MU following successful completion of TLC, (ii) first-year retention at university and (iii) GPA for all units studied during their first year at MU.

89% of students who finished TLC demonstrated ‘critical and academic skills’

75% of students enrol at Murdoch [no note about whether students enrol in HE elsewhere]

TLC students record similar GPA to other students

“The successful transition measured by high retention and GPA is likely to be associated with positive attrition within TLC” (p.707).

Core argument: TLC helps to ‘catch low SES students before they fall out of the system’


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Context: Set in Australian HE context: explores the provision for students from refugee backgrounds (SFRB) in UON’s enabling programs. Notes that numbers of sfrb entering enabling programs has remained steady (approx. 20 a year) and from African countries (predominantly South Sudan). Discusses Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) support role in ELFSC. Discusses challenges with language proficiency.

Theory: Draw’s on ‘education as fourth pillar’ cultural theory (Sinclair, 2001); Morrice’s (2009) use of Bourdieu (habitus, field, capital)

Conclusions: LBOTE role = broker and advocate; importance of bonds of belonging and trust

Main themes: cultural meanings of education are differently understood, impact of disrupted schooling, psychosocial well-being, reasons for studying – family pressure; familial responsibilities. To engage in more inclusive t&l (including recruiting LBOTE/sfrb students to mentor at orientation), early engagement and trust building is vital. Benefit for community and students/university: “more than just language support” (p.9)


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Context: Examines enabling education through notions of self-confidence (‘I can do it’) and the underpinning “skills and strategies” (‘and how’) – p.811. Enabling programs often embody an anti-deficit approach. Discusses how a shift in structure of university/ Foundation Studies program led to redesign of curriculum according to Bigg’s constructive alignment to encourage deep learning approaches. Writing (introduction of major written task/essay) was big change – exemplar, essay planning, submit for formative feedback and final submission (see p.813) = “explicitly aligned curriculum” (p.813). Habel argues there is a lack of explicit discussion/ definitions of what ‘confidence’ means and methods for measuring

Aim: To explore approaches to learning and self-efficacy in Foundation Studies at University of Adelaide

Theoretical frame: Approaches to learning/ Bigg’s constructive alignment, “which emphasizes strong connections between intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment” (p.812)/ Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory

Methodology: Foundation Studies students (demographic data deliberately not collected) who attended
First lectures (TOPIC 1) asked to complete ‘Revised Two-Factor Study Process Questionnaire’ – assess attitudes on 5-point scale, which was administered 3 times: 2nd time = week 3 and 3rd time = 3 months later (end of TOPIC 2)

**Findings**: No significant difference measured in terms of students’ approaches to learning. No evidence that constructive alignment of first assignment “had any appreciable benefits in students’ approaches to learning” (p.820). Data suggests that students experienced substantial positive increase in self-efficacy in first month and by end of topic 2

**Core Argument**: “The problem with discussions of confidence and self-esteem in Foundation programmes is that the potential benefits to students and the profound social needs alluded to above (in addition to emotive language) can distract us from the need for rigorous analysis and research on the issue” (p.813)

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**AUS Annotation written by Sally Baker**

**Keywords**: Access and equity; Bourdieu; cultural capital; enabling programmes; Foundation Studies; habitus; low-SES; Preparatory Programs

**Context**: Looks at academic culture (experiences of enculturation and positive transformations/ alienation and negative transformation) in UPP enabling program at UniAd. University considered as both conceptual and physical space “a figurative, metaphorical space to be sure, but a space with particular cultural values and expectations, ways of being, ways of thinking, and ways of communicating” (p.74). Argues that “role, positioning and viability [of enabling education programs] have been altered by the rapidly developing context of Australian higher education” (p.71) – strongly links this to WP agenda and transition.

**Aims**: Study aimed to explore the lived experience of students undertaking enabling education. The research explored whether even the most successful students experience both positive and negative aspects to their academic transformation and need to draw on personal strategies and resilience strategies to ‘successfully inhabit’ the world of the university.

**Theoretical background**: Draws on Bourdieu’s sociological toolkit: field, habitus and cultural capital

**Methodology**: Phenomenological exploration of students’ lived experiences based on Giorgi (2012). 13 participants (all UPP students; 9 = f, 4 = m; 4 in 20s, 6 in 30s, 1 in 40s, 2 in 50s; all Australian – but one Russian-Australian citizen). Students interviewed once ¾ of way through UPP. Looks like researchers engaged in phenomenological bracketing (“to effectively generate themes from within the data rather than imposing constructs externally” (p.76) with iterative analysis

**Findings**: 3 main themes: 1) adapting to academic culture – based on past educational experiences/ expectations/ positive adaptation to university academic culture (but see limitation)/ sense of belonging/ positive transformational experience. 2) Positive experiences – auditing lectures, finding out what uni is like, sense of belonging to university – successful (if partial) adaptation to academic habitus. 3) Negative experiences – disconnects with family and friends, alienation and isolation, lack of support, assessment. “These particular experiences of negative transformation serve to further complicate the narrative of social mobility that surrounds enabling programmes” (p.81).

**Findings**: A dominant theme was that of adapting to academic culture. In this regard, past educational experiences were discussed in depth, most indicated positive experiences after beginning the UPP. Uncertainty about what to expect was also felt. Most felt a sense of belonging and that they had adapted to the culture of the academy.
Doors to heaven (positive experiences) were also discussed. Students felt more confident within the program and part of the wider uni culture. Regular attendance was mentioned as providing positive outcomes. University was also seen as providing health benefits, belonging, opportunities. Doors to hell reflect the negative experiences. Some participants talked about feeling alienated whether this be in the family or previous relationships or in relation to academic culture.

**Conclusions:** Transitions are often disruptive and can be fraught and painful. Systematic and well-resourced support activities are required. Universities also need to adopt ‘more sophisticated approaches to evaluating access and enabling programmes rather than simply focusing on quantitative outcomes of throughput and grade point averages’.

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**Context:** Exploration of enabling students' lived experiences at UniAd and UniSA post-degree commencement.

**Aim:** To answer the questions: How do enabling students see themselves through the process of their induction into academic culture? How do these transformations affect their personal relationships and their general outlook on life?

**Methodology:** Qualitative methodology; Bourdieusian notions of habitus and cultural capital combined with class theory and intersectionality in gender studies (in this case intersections of advantage and disadvantage); phenomenological perspective. Synthesised analysis + presentation of three case studies.

**Method:** 20 in-depth interviews (12 UniAd, 8 UniSA); 14 = Female, 6 = Male; variety of disciplines, however, largely situated in the Sciences

**Findings:** Experiences of enabling education and transition are complex and impacted by class/SES as well as gendered roles and physical and mental wellbeing. Difficulties included social adjustments around age differences, size of cohort and accessibility of staff in undergraduate degree programs compared to enabling programs. Space, place and belonging; self-efficacy and confidence; and the importance of academic literacies development in the transition to undergraduate degrees also emerged as themes. Of particular interest were intimate relationship breakdowns experienced by participants “as the social disjunction of entering a new academic pathway interfered with their domestic duties and identities” (p. 6) leading to understandings of how students’ identities can be complicated in multiple ways.

**Limitations:** ‘Selection bias’ because very difficult to gain participation in the study from those who did not have positive experiences of enabling education.

**Core Argument:** “[D]espite the narratives of positive transformation and social mobility that emerge[d] from this … research, it must also be acknowledged that student journeys also involve significant change, trauma, disruption and social stigmatisation. Because of this, institutional support structures are essential and should be given a more prominent place as essential instruments in building towards student success.” (p. 49)
**Journal of Adult Learning,** 55(2), 244–266.

**AUS**
Annotation written by Sally Baker

**Keywords:** enabling, Indigenous, education, bridging, foundation, Aboriginal

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**Indigenous context:** The ASSE suggests that Indigenous students are not proportionally represented in Aus HE (less than 1%, compared to 2.5% of population) and up to 35% do not complete Year 12. There are particularly disciplinary directions for Indigenous students (broadly speaking): health, education, society/culture. Refs Lane (2009) who heralds relative success of Indigenous students from 'mainstream' rather than welfare oriented background'. Lane points to 'Standard Australian English Literacy' as main barrier to success for Indigenous students. Lane (2009) and Oliver et al. (2013) suggest that there is evidence of disciplinary diversification at UG level. Oliver et al. note various barriers (including literacy) and the decreasing resources/ increasing demands of 'Aboriginal Centres'.

**Methodology:** PTS = evolved over last 16 years. Hall makes the case that a review in 2009 (undertaken due to high attrition/low levels of course completion) resulted in new pedagogy/curriculum, which have significantly enhanced the completion rates of students. Focus of PTS = ‘learning to learn’ – holistic, learner-centred program, based on Deakin Crick (2007) – ‘Learning Power Theory’. Overview of PTS on p.250. Offers numbers analysis and ‘stories of transformation’

**Conclusions:** New design of course has resulted in higher numbers of completion, and higher levels of autonomy and confidence on graduation.

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**AUS**

**Keywords:** Indigenous, enabling education, cultural safety, higher education, both ways, cultural interface

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**Context:** Describes the significance of cultural safety for Indigenous students in the context of the Preparation for Tertiary Success (PTS) program at Bachelor Institute/ CDU. Cultural safety = defined by Bin Sallik (2003) as “the provision of an emotionally and physically safe environment in which there was shared respect and no denial of identity” (p.21) = related to, but different from, cultural competence. Colonial past makes cultural safety an ongoing concern because of institutionalised racism and hegemonic practices that serve to exclude Indigenous people.

**Aim:** “The purpose of this research was to discover what made a difference to the academic success of students in this preparation stage of their study” (p.115).

**Theoretical frame:** Cultural safety/ post-colonial theory

**Methodology:** Reflective narratives from PST students, which are routinely conducted with students on a one-to-one basis and are published with permission on a blog

**Findings:** Students identified the importance of having culturally safe spaces of learning and a both-ways pedagogy that acknowledges and valorises their Indigenous experiences and knowledges. This helped to develop confidence and take risks. PST also helped them to navigate the cultural interface.

**Core argument:** “cultural safety is also about enabling a learning space that values the knowledge that students brings with them, maintains a ‘Both Ways’ approach to learning, utilizes and draws on multiple knowledge systems, highlights the work and voices of Indigenous academics and provides students with a cultural interface experience to help them re-imagine and strengthen their own knowledge positions” (p.120-121).

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**Context:** Enabling education in Australia; focus on retentions of students/facilitating 'effective student engagement’. Authors use enabling and bridging as interchangeable labels. Draws on 'student engagement' –
Aim: To present a holistic approach – Guidance, Encouragement, Modelling, Structure (GEMS) – developed from a qualitative study with students studying on the ‘Preparing for Success’ enabling course at SCU.

Methodology: Multi-stage study: 1) online survey post-orientation (n=215; 97% responses rate); 2) online study for students enrolled in ‘Managing Your Study’ course (n=152; 40% response rate); 3) focus groups (online and offline) with students (n=30/15 in each). Grounded theory approach taken. Limitation acknowledged: face-to-face focus groups undertaken by Academic Coordinator, which is likely to explain the predominantly positive responses.

Findings:
Guidance: students reported that tutors respected their ability, gave guidance, challenged their thinking. Overwhelmingly positive response reported, which is likely to be the result of the way the data was collected.
Encouragement: authors derived this theme from language in the data that connected with confidence, supported, tutors’ language, approach, attitude, feedback (see p. 30)
Modelling: words that connected with this theme = ‘show’, ‘demonstrate’, ‘professional’, ‘examples’:
“...in both the survey and focus groups students noted that one of the things they most appreciated about the PSP was the way lecturers showed them what to do” (p. 30).
Structure: students appeared to perceive the PFS course as well-structured.

Core argument: Authors claim that the GEMS approach “activated student potential” (abstract).
would attrit

- Students who are 'engaged' in their program by Week 2 are likely to persist
- Due to diversity of programs and students, 'normal' measurements of retention and attrition are not useful or effective for describing patterns of participation and drop out in enabling programs/ by enabling students.
- Some attrition is 'desirable', "as the enabling program is playing the role of a 'filter' prior to an undergraduate program" (p.5).
- Characteristic 'open door' strategy makes enabling programs a "very successful pathway for non-traditional students into higher education" (p.5).
- Factors ('in-program') that contribute to attrition are noted as:
  - Time pressures
  - External pressures/ 'life events', especially for mature age students
  - Low rate of awareness/ use of support services
  - Low student engagement with course and/or other students

**Recommendations:**

"R1.1 That procedures be developed for identifying non-participating students, contacting them and assisting in re-engagement or a positive exit process or (as a last resort) administratively cancelling their enrolment.

R2.1 That enabling programs investigate pre-enrolment processes to find the optimal mix of information and experiences to best prepare students for what it means to study at university, especially with reference to the kind of time commitment involved.

R2.2 That enabling programs, where appropriate, increase provision of counselling services, with special reference to meeting the challenge of provision in an external program and for students attending lectures in the evening.

R2.3 That enabling programs investigate and develop processes to facilitate student access to existing counselling services.

R3.2 That funding should be sought to investigate the particular challenges of teaching and learning for enabling students and to develop a range of appropriate enabling pedagogies.

R4.3 That enabling programs investigate the manifestations of "time pressure" on their students and develop flexible curriculum and course design responses to mitigate this source of attrition.

R4.4 That the five participating institutions facilitate the development of appropriate benchmarking of student retention in their programs with the aim of extending it to other enabling programs as appropriate.

R4.5 That Australian enabling programs undertake to develop a Community of Practice in addressing student attrition, including a collaborative process of sharing and mutual discussion of retention enhancement strategies.

R4.6 That Australian enabling programs devote resources, including seeking dedicated funding, to develop a more rigorous understanding of best practice in student retention in enabling programs" (p.6).

**Core argument:** Attrition in enabling programs is high, and appropriate strategies and funding should be
developed to assist students to remain engaged in the program and ensure that appropriate benchmarking occurs so that comparisons between programs are accurate. However, attrition is not in and of itself negative, nor does it detract from the effectiveness of enabling programs.


**Context:** Highlights the work of Earl Shorris (2000) and the establishment of the Clemente Course in 1995 in America (which has since expanded internationally), with opening a dialogue regarding the importance of a humanities education for “disenfranchised adults to access a more civil and just society” (p. 63). This led to the establishment of the Radical Humanities programs in Canada, examined in this study. This work encourages practitioners to consider the “range of barriers to learning that, while connected to economic forces, are not limited to economics” for mature aged non-traditional students (p. 64), and which are described here as the “forces of surround” (p. 65). Such forces can be escribed as systemic, structural, situational, institutional and dispositional, with impacts on the agency of individuals. The impacts of these forces are cumulative, in that students experience multiple barriers.

**Aim:** To explore the factors that impinge upon the participation of adults in higher education.

**Methodology:** Case study methodology utilising the experiences of “marginalized non-traditional adult learners” from “three Canadian Radical Humanities programs offering free, university-level humanities courses to people living in poverty” (p. 66). Program directors participated, and other techniques for information gathering included observation of classes, content analysis of programs, demographic survey of 71 students, 31 semi-structured interviews with students and those involved in the teaching and planning of programs.

**Findings:** Participants conceptualised the barriers to higher education as intertwined but fundamentally related back to the conditions of poverty. Students were reluctant to answer demographic questions regarding income, which “revealed a high level of anxiety about income and sustainability of living that was endemic to program learners” (p. 69). Students experienced precarious living conditions and multiple compounding challenging life events such as drug addiction, illness and so on. Students also tended to under-report such challenging circumstances in the survey component. Students expressed an internalised negative self-concept of themselves as learners including tendency to isolate, difficulty seeking assistance and mistrust of higher education institutions. Students saw a connection between their economic instability and their lack of belonging within higher education. Students used the term “marginalized” to refer to themselves. These students were more likely to be triggered by course content, and were unaware of typical behaviours and boundaries of higher education. Race was another compounding factor impacting upon experiences. Students discussed needing safe spaces, which relates to histories of trauma and violence, and this was an important role of these programs. The humanities themselves present an important way through which students can reframe themselves, and their experiences of others and society.

**Core argument:** Marginalized mature aged students exercise agency against the multiple compounding barriers that limit their access to and participation within higher education, however these barriers must be fully understood in order to be appropriately redressed. This includes challenging policies and attitudes that stigmatise such learners as incapable. Humanities education has a significant role to play in helping this cohort of students to reframe their experiences.

Annotation written by Emma Hamilton

Keywords: academic numeracy, mathematics, enabling education, academic literacies, academic preparedness, numeracy as social practice

**Context:** This paper complements a corresponding audit of academic literacies and language in enabling programs, and it also exists in response to research that posits that “decisions to seek alternative entry into higher education appear to be strongly connected to their experiences of high school mathematics” and therefore examining numeracy through a social practice perspective is important (p. 142). The theoretical context of this paper highlights the significance of distinguishing between ‘numeracy’ and ‘mathematics’; this paper refers to academic numeracy and acknowledges that this has often been sidelined in academic literacies discourse. Where academic literacies should be conceptualised as “a set of sociocultural practices that are deeply embedded within contexts, and which are constituted by/ are constitutive of particular disciplinary epistemologies” (p. 143), and are historical, systemically embedded and reflective of power relationships, the same can be said of academic numeracies. Connected to this, critical numeracies discourse indicates that mathematic pedagogies are increasingly understood as connected with equity and social justice and rejects traditional and dominant forms of mathematical education. A key role of enabling education is academic preparedness, and numeracies have a key place in the curricula of enabling education as a component of academic literacies. This is particularly so because in Australia mathematics is generally not compulsory after Year 10, uptake of mathematics is declining in high schools particularly at more advanced levels, and Universities have increasingly removed mathematics prerequisites. As there is variation in enabling programs across the sector there has been limited research into how academic literacies practices have been enacted in the sector.

**Aim:** To understand how enabling programs and educators within them conceptualise academic numeracies and mathematics in terms of curriculum content, concepts and practices, and how this facilitates academic preparedness.

**Methodology:** “Qualitative, interpretive methodology and adopted an evaluative stocking approach to scoping the enabling sector provision” (p. 149). Desktop review of available teaching and learning material, telephone survey with staff at all enabling providers, and thematic, critical analysis of these calls/interviews. Responses rates were 26 interviewees from 27 enabling programs at 23 institutions. Core questions revolved around what numeracy and mathematics is offered, what is core or optional, what is required for academic preparedness.

**Findings:** Overall, this study reinforces the context-specific and distinct nature of enabling programs, however there is a general consensus that academic numeracy is core to academic preparedness. Despite this being core to preparedness there is no clear-cut understanding of what undergraduate degrees actually require and relationships with faculties are generally not formalised. Participants generally agree that academic numeracies and literacies are connected (“symbiotic, and are part of a holistic and critical model of core forms of meaning making” (p. 151)). The understandings participants had of academic numeracy and its relationship to mathematics suggest a spectrum of understandings that require further analysis. Academic numeracies are seen as core in enabling programs – 72% of participant programs included numeracy as a core or compulsory component of study (meaning that they were a separate unit of study, a compulsory
part of a discipline, or embedded within a program of study). Numeracy was also embedded within other units of study, such as science units. There needs to be an unpicking of the assumption that mathematics “naturally” pairs within certain disciplines such as science, where is can be invisible, and not with other disciplines where numeracy may also be present (p. 147-148). The core content of these programs reflects “a view forward to undergraduate studies an attentiveness to the context of university preparation” (p. 148). Despite this attentiveness to undergraduate pathways, staff in enabling programs had a range of relationships with undergraduate faculties (none, informal, and formalised relationships). Many articulated that these connections were desirable to improve the transitions of students but “formal relationships were scarce in the data, perhaps indicating the marginality of enabling programs in universities and misrecognitions regarding their role” (149). In terms of participants’ perceptions, many acknowledged a shift “toward an acknowledgement of the connections academic numeracies have to social worlds” (149), but in qualified ways. They continued to talk about achieving levels of numeracy that indicates the ideological inflection of their understanding of mathematical numeracy. Participants generally understood academic numeracy as part of academic literacies.

**Core argument:** The place and practices of academic numeracies within enabling programs, and their relationship to undergraduate and disciplines, needs to be more fully understood and the significance of academic numeracies as a social practice realised in order for enabling programs to meet their social justice imperative.

| Context: Australia’s WP agenda has placed a greater emphasis on “Pre-skilling” programs such as enabling, preparatory, transition or access programs because of fears broader socio-economic cohorts may not ‘cope with the rigors of university’. In addition, links have been shown between under-preparedness and attrition in the first year of university study. Further, studies have shown that enabling students enter undergraduate studies with “disparate expectations about their level of ability [and] have lower self-esteem” (p. 253). Literature on the lived experiences of enabling students who have entered first year is limited. Therefore this paper reports on findings from a study exploring the lived experiences of 8 students who, after completing the STEPS enabling program at CQUniversity (a regional university with high proportion of LSES students), went on to complete the first year of their university degree. Uses the theoretical framework of social efficacy (Bandura 1997).
| Aim: To explore the lived experiences of 8 enabling students as they transition into and complete first year of university studies.
| Methodology: Analytical framework: Existential phenomenology; focused interviews
| Conclusions: Four key themes or common characteristics were identified from the interviews:

1. Sense of preparedness;
2. Fear of the unknown;
3. University as an anchor; and
4. Sense of certainty and rightness.

It was also found that students had a “heightened sense of self-efficacy, which proved integral to their success in their first year of undergraduate study”.

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AUS
Annotation written by Evonne Irwin

Keywords: Enabling programs; adult education; transitioning; university; self-efficacy; regional campus.
<table>
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<th>James, N.; Busher, H. &amp; Suttill, B. (2016). ‘We all know why we’re here’: Learning as a community of practice on Access to HE courses, <em>Journal of Further and Higher Education</em>, 40(6), 765–779.</th>
<th><strong>Context:</strong> Access to HE (AHE) courses in the UK: 1-year diploma program designed to give adults (19+) preparation for studying at university. AHE = key part of British government WP policy/ to improve social inclusion. AHE is described by Franklin (2006) as the ‘Cinderella of the education system’ (cited on p.766), partly because they are taught in Further Education colleges. AHE = sites of transition, and many AHE students face challenges and need support with those transitions. Literature attests to students’ effectiveness when they feel supported by their tutors. However, external influences (QAA, increasing performativity in education/FE) reduce the opportunities for support. <strong>Aim:</strong> To explore whether/ how AHE courses can be considered as Communities of Practice (CoP); to explore “mature students’ perspectives of their changing learning identities through their developing relationships with their tutors and with each other during their AHE courses” (abstract); to describe “the dynamic processes involved in the formation and reproduction of a community of practice in particular socio-economic and policy contexts” (p.768). <strong>Theoretical framework:</strong> Community of Practice (Lave &amp; Wenger, 1991) <strong>Methodology:</strong> Linked qualitative case study of AHE courses in three further education colleges; focus groups with 5–6 self-selecting students (Humanities/ Social Sciences) in each college over 3 occasions + individual interviews with their tutors. Questions included: “why AHE students, after leaving school, change their views on learning and themselves as learners; about the nature and importance of the learning relationships constructed on AHE courses; and how AHE students’ perceptions of their courses and higher education are affected by changing policy contexts” (p.769). <strong>Findings:</strong> How did the group develop: Establishing a common identity / identifying with particular features (e.g. as a mature student), underpinned by discourse of maturity and motivation shared by tutors. Tutors who had also been AHE students understood/ empathised with the struggles Working together: helping each other, offering advice and moral support. Social support developed over time; tutors noted that there were peaks of coming together. Developing repertoire of shared resources: tutors and students both saw mutual respect and support/ professional empathy and care (p.774), but acknowledged boundary between them. Increased surveillance/ performativity concerns created distance between the students and the tutors, which the authors argue highlights the tutors’ peripheral status in the CoP.</th>
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<tr>
<td>UK Annotation written by Sally Baker</td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Access to HE courses; learning community; power; adult learners; further education</td>
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<td>James, T.; Conradie, H.; Saint, R. &amp; Browne, M. (2015). An exploratory study of the factors associated with an initial testing process: Testing the test, <em>International Studies in Widening Participation</em>, 2(1), 2–14.</td>
<td><strong>Context:</strong> Diagnostic testing in enabling education; the ‘closed model’ and diagnostic testing used by STEPS at CQU. Authors argue that enabling courses are designed to help students become ‘academically literate’ and better equipped to complete undergraduate education. Authors note that many STEPS students are mature age. Open entry – authors cite Hodges et al. (2013): “Open entry models allow all students, over a set age, to enrol in the program no matter their prior educational or skill level. The underlying assumption explained by Hodge et al. (2013) is that the “student should try the program if they think they might be able to do it and if</td>
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they might be interested in tertiary study.” (no page number for Hodges quote; cited on p.5). Authors go on to say “On the other hand, closed entry models only allow those who have demonstrated a sufficient academic standard to enrol in their program. The assumption is that students want to enter must demonstrate their capacity to meet the academic requirements of the program” (p.6).

Authors note that closed entry system has implications for staff workload “due to the considerable time and effort required from a number of the staff to mark, review and interview prospective students” (p.6). Diagnostic testing of maths and literacy “to determine if a student is in an appropriate state of readiness” (p.6) – emotional and cognitive commitment to studies

**Aim:** To determine “the relative utility of the current STEPS entrance testing methods in terms of (a) differentiating students who successfully completed the STEPS program from those who did not, and (b) the efficacy of the combined set of testing methods in predicting success or failure respond” (p.8); to respond to 2 Research Questions:

1. Can we predict students’ success/non-success from their initial testing results and the responses they provide during the interview process?
2. As well, within the existing testing process, what elements can be identified as contributing to students’ success/non-success? (p.6)

**Methodology:** Mixed methods study: quantitative data = from diagnostic testing results; qualitative data from students’ writing (taken from T1 and T2, 2012 at Bundaberg campus; n=140: 87f, 53m; aged 18-74 yo).

20/140 students did not start the course; 40 /140 students completed 3 or fewer courses. Only 46% completed the full four subjects. Students who did not meet the criteria were not included in the sample.

**Findings:** Authors argue that their analysis supports the validity of the diagnostic testing. Three of six test measures show significance between scores and likeliness to continue/succeed: “This result may be an indication that if students are more competent in literacy and mathematics prior to entry, they will be more likely to engage successfully with the new knowledge presented through the program” (p.10)

Tests on math, comprehension and confidence = not statistically significant.

Evaluation of qualitative/ students’ written piece was not significant, but when taken into account in interview process it is useful.

**Core Argument:** Students who score higher in diagnostic = more likely to succeed in course; literacy test is most useful for predicting future success

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**Context:** Cross-national study involving New Zealand and the Netherlands measuring students’ perceived preparedness for university before entering higher education. Framed in terms of demands for a ‘highly educated workforce’ and widening participation policy contexts which aim to improve access to higher education but do not necessarily lead to increased completions of degree programs. Focuses on attrition, transitions, academic preparedness and the first-year experience.

**Aim:** Research questions addressed: “Do students from the two countries differ in their overall self-perceived preparedness and in their self-estimated chances of success?” “Can we establish differences on aspects of readiness between the two groups of students?” “To what extent can we explain the perceived
preparedness by readiness and self-estimated chances of success? Which factors differ and which factors can be considered to have a similar effect on perceived preparedness in the two countries?" (p. 4)

**Methodology:** Uses a survey instrument developed by the authors: The Readiness and Expectations Questionnaire (REQ) (2007; 2008) administered online and/or by hardcopy prior to the start of the academic year in each country. The survey was initially trialled in both countries, analysed and modified. The results reported in this paper are from the first iteration of the survey. Survey responses were statistically analysed. Responses: NZ, n = 458; Netherlands, n = 1490; Total, n = 1948.

**Findings:**

RQ1: The study found significant differences in perceptions of preparedness between students in the two countries (the NS students had been in a non-differentiated school system, whereas the Dutch students were from a differentiated system and had completed schooling in a school with a curriculum designed specifically for students who seek entry to university). However, the NZ students expressed greater confidence in their future university success than the Dutch students.

RQ2: Differences were also found between the two groups in perceptions of their time management, information processing, written communication (where the Dutch students scored higher), and group work (where the NZ students scored higher).

RQ3: All aspects of readiness tested in the study except ICT skills were found to be significant contributors to students’ perceptions of their preparedness for university.

**Core Argument:** While there were significant differences between the two cohorts studied and the high school systems they came from, many of those differences were not either not remarkable or not very significant. The university preparedness high schools in the Netherlands have not produced the desired effects. Therefore, the authors suggest greater attention be paid by universities to Transition Pedagogy (Kift 2008) and contextualised, embedded academic skills to better prepare students for university study.

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**Context:** Explores enabling programs in context of rural Australia/ mature age people wanting new career/better lifestyle (but are strongly tied to community/family). Reports on longitudinal = impact of enabling education on rural mature-age people (further study/employment). Benefits extend beyond individual [see ripple effect] = impact on family/increase local skills base/increased awareness of higher education in community. “University enabling programs are a key, but largely under-researched, strategy to facilitate the transition to further study for under-represented or non-traditional learners, including those from rural and remote areas” (p.71)

**Aim:** The study explores the medium to longer term outcomes of participation in UPP for Cradle Coast students. The research focused on the areas of study, employment and geographic mobility. Looks at role of enabling programs in assisting rural mature aged people who seeking to reskill or upskill. Many rural people seek to gain access to HE but for various reasons are unable or unwilling to leave their communities to under further study. Many don’t have the educational background or navigational capacity to access and meaningfully participate in HE. The paper focuses on a study undertaken in North Western and Western Tasmania (the Cradle Coast) and looks at the impact of the UTAS University Preparation Program in the region. The Cradle Coast region has higher than average unemployment rates, low levels of formal education aspirations, enabling program, outcomes of education, rural education, social inclusion
educational achievement. The UPP aims to provide access to HE for mature-aged people in order to address the low levels of educational achievement in the area. Stated aim: “to explore the medium to longer-term outcomes of participation in UPP for Cradle Coast students, in terms of study, employment and geographic mobility” (p.74)

**Methodology:** ‘Longitudinal perspective’ ‘an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach’ (Cresswell, 2014) study of UPP, meaning that surveys were conducted and follow-up interviews undertaken to illuminate quantitative data with ex-UPP students who had completed at least one UPP unit. 56 surveys completed (11.5% response rate) + 25 interviews + interviews with former coordinator of UPP/ campus manager. Participants = 71% female, mostly 30-49 years old, half = low SES, 59% = FiF, 82% still living in Cradle Coast area. Participants were past UPP completers from 1996-2007. 56 surveys were completed and 25 interviews took place. The former UPP coordinator and program manager were also interviewed. The study was limited in that it was based on self-selecting participants who were successful completers. The study did not include the views of those who did not complete. The difficulty in showing causality for employment shifts was also noted. Other factors may have influenced changes in career, not just completion of the UPP.

**Findings:** Enabling programs are a key strategy in assisting the transition to HE for people from rural and remote areas. Enabling programs such as the UPP facilitate social inclusion, increased independence for students in rural areas. They also contribute to the economies in rural areas. Most participants indicated that undertaking the UPP was positive because of the accessibility of the course and the supportive environment. Participants indicated that the UPP enabled increases in individual capacity in 3 main areas: foundations for change, increased confidence and availability of new opportunities. The UPP was described as a catalyst for change. 88% of participants went on to further study after the UPP and completion rates were high (77%). 57% = enrolled in UPP to prepare for undergraduate study 23% = personal development

Themes = resilience, strong sense of purpose, commitment to further study. UPP = personal challenge/challenge to gender/family roles. Participation built individual capacity= foundations for change, confidence, new opportunities 88% = continued with further study post-UPP, mostly UG at UTAS. 77% completed their courses (most = Education, second Society & Culture, third Management & Commerce). Students who took 5+ UPP units significantly more likely to continue with further study (72% = UG, 28% = Honours, Masters, PhD). UPP = perceived to have helped 54% to get job/better job

**Core Argument:** Looks at impact of enabling in rural communities and the effect of widening participation initiatives in these communities. “Enabling programs are a powerful but under-valued tool in helping to unlock and harness the potential within rural communities, both in the medium and longer term” (abstract)

Jones, A., Olds, A. & Lisciandro, J. (2016). Understanding the Learner: Effective course design in the changing higher education space. International Studies in Widening Context: The Bradley Review (2008) has contributed to substantial changes for universities and shifts in the types of students entering universities. This led to a greater emphasis on enabling and transition pedagogies to address the needs of this cohort, and the proliferation of enabling programs such as the creation of Murdoch
University's OnTrack Sprint program in 2015. This is a four-week program tailored to recent school leavers who have narrowly missed out on direct entry to university, with an ATAR between 60-70, with high rates of retention and progression of students into undergraduate studies.

**Aim:** To demonstrate the enabling principles important in the development of enabling programs to ensure student success. This paper emphasises knowing the learner and targeting learning that is appropriate to that learner, a “‘model, coach, fly’” approach, and “the presence of the academics’ authentic self, recognised through the use of relatable humour, storytelling and popular cultural texts to teach skills” (p. 20).

**Methodology:** Case study approach exploring how Tinto’s principles for creating learning communities and a modified version of Nelson et al.’s transition pedagogy were applied to the development of OnTrack Sprint.

**Findings:** Success of the program demonstrates the importance of targeting a population and developing a program in relation to this targeted demographic. While curriculum was inclusive this targeted population also had a degree of homogeneity rather than diversity. In terms of intentional design, the curriculum was developed around a unify principle, constructive alignment was considered, the program had a great deal of structure with a focus on skills development through scaffolded assessments. Transitional self-concept was emphasised – from outsider to insider. Importance of learning communities to improve the transition and humour, authenticity and storytelling as techniques in the classroom to facilitate this. These techniques are also important in creating an “engagement zone” where students’ passions are used to help enculturate them to university and create learning partnerships that motivate and transition students into study (p. 27).

“Assessment needed to be rich, with formative and summative tasks that invited the student to ‘rise’” (p. 27). They needed to be appropriately timed, build in complexity and provide opportunities for feedback. Rubrics were used to provide instruction and feed-forward. Importance of monitoring student engagement, regular check ins modelling communication, and articulating and reinforcing the goals of the program. The program invited evaluation from students, curriculum designers and tutors. In terms of program outcomes: student retention was 92%, all students met academic requirements of the course and received an offer to undergraduate study at Murdoch University, 96% accepted their offer. Students achieved an average mark in the program of 66.5% with no correlation between ATAR and program performance; there was a correlation between participation/engagement and achievement. In their first semester of undergraduate study 90% of former students passed at least half their units; 42% passed all units attempted, achieving pass grades on average. Raw ATAR did not correlate to GPA in their first semester of undergraduate study. In evaluating the program there was a 100% student response rate with 100% student satisfaction regarding the program.

**Core argument:** The Sprint program effectively enacted an enabling pedagogy adapted from Nelson et al’s transition pedagogy principles.
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<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> widening participation; student experience; falling standards; social class</td>
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and HE. Argues there is a dearth of empirical work on post-entry experiences of students

**Methodology:** Constructivist/grounded theory. Two groups of students: 1) ‘non-traditional’: accessed higher education via Access course (called SLAs; n=23 mix of Year 1-3/mix of disciplines) and all from lower social class groups; 2) matched group of ‘traditional’ students = articulated directly from school (TEs) and all from higher social class groups (n=22). Majority of participants = female (32/45) and doing Arts-based courses (34/45). Data collection = demographic questionnaire, 2 x interviews + email follow-up

**Findings:** 3 themes.

- **Transitioning from dependence to independence:** more SLAs experienced issues with school (many ‘hated’ it – they perceived their teachers as having low expectations of them); broadly the TEs had positive experiences and were generally expected to go on to further education. Both SLAs and TEs described learning at school as dependent (one student = “‘read, remember, regurgitate’”, p.710) and spoon-feeding = dominant metaphor used by participants. University learning = stark contrast

- **Figuring out/enacting academic practice:** both groups = patterns in academic experiences: poor attendance in Year 1, both groups considered dropping out (largely due to social/work-related issues). Attendance improved for both groups in Years 2 and 3. Participants in both groups = failed modules and had to repeat; issues largely related to maths/statistical requirements of course, stress, workload, writing. TEs struggled more with transition to independence more than SLAs initially and needed process deconstructed. 3 phases identified: regurgitating, experimental enacting, and stable enacting. SLAs experienced some of phase 1 (regurgitation) and moved directly to phase 2. TEs’ talk suggests the restricted code of schooling = difficult to replace with independent code/practices. Second phase generally happened at end of Year 1/Year 2 for TEs. Partly students (TEs in particular) struggled with this shift because it involved risk (incorporating own reading/opinions in). Overall both groups received similar results (most achieving 2:1 degrees). Most of both groups = postgrad study or planning to go on to do so.

- **Impacting factors:** similarity in results = explained by ‘balancing out’ of dis/advantages. SLAs’ previous poor school experiences = balanced out by explicit preparation and scaffolding offered in Access course; in contrast, TEs = initially lost because gap between school and university = larger and they needed to do more deconstruction of prior learning than the SLA group (who had largely disengaged from ways of schooling). However, SLAs = lower academic self-confidence

**Core argument:** Findings challenge deficit views of WP students (actually SLAs were further along the 3-part transferral process due to attending Access course). Author suggests there is a “need for significant system-wide change, including assessment (particularly in terms of the current points system, due to its backwash effect on pedagogy), and teacher and academic staff development” (p.715).

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**Context:** Discusses UniSA’s enabling programs: Foundation Studies (est. 2006) and UniSA-PAL (partnership with SA DECS) and the performance in undergrad of students of these programs. Compares this performance with traditional-pathway students, i.e., those who have entered via TER (Tertiary Entrance Rank) or STAT (Special Tertiary Admissions Test). Also looks forward to plans for enabling programs in the ‘post-Bradley era
**Aim**: To demonstrate the benefits of Foundation Studies for students by comparing enabling student performance with non-enabling student performance in undergraduate study.

**Methodology**: Comparison of 'success' rates (GPAs) of Foundation Studies and other pathway students in undergraduate programs.

**Conclusions**: Those admitted via enabling programs have a higher mean GPA (4.90) than those admitted by other methods (4.74). Those admitted via STAT have considerably lower GPAs (3.8) 'suggesting that the enabling programs have an important role to play in preparing adult entrants for university.' (p. 9). Retention rates for enabling pathways students in undergrad is also higher (90%).

**Core Argument**: Describes core courses as 'a deliberate focus on the development of generic academic and study skills that also anticipate the graduate qualities that the University seeks as outcomes for its undergraduates.' (p. 4). Discussion of possible reasons for attrition (p. 8). Offers a loose definition for 'enabling education' (p. 11). Mentions the importance of getting student support right in enabling programs (p. 11).

**Context**: Authors highlight UniSA’s long history of widening participation, related to Denise Bradley’s tenure as VC from 1997–2007. Discussion of evolution of Foundation Studies, which they argue is the most prominent example of UniSA’s WP commitment. Authors describe the diversity of the enabling education field, saying “it comes in numerous flavours and, given that no standard model exists, it can be difficult to generalise from one setting to another” (p.139). Authors cite figures that show 55% of Foundation Studies students were from equity backgrounds, compared with 42.5% of institutional average in 2006–2008 (mostly low SES, NESB and r&r). Authors argue that FS “enables students not just by providing a means of access to university but, in particular, by actively preparing them for success in their future undergraduate studies – an approach emphasised in Tinto’s (2008) admonition that ‘access without support is not opportunity’” (p.141). Authors describe FS in detail

**Aim**: To describe Foundation Studies program at UniSA

**Methodology**: Essay

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**Context**: Explores the widening participation agenda from perspective of increased diversity in student population requiring attention to language and literacy skills, from the position that non-traditional students are often “incorrectly labelled as ‘lacking academic quality’” (abstract). Paper is situated in post-massification context and explores both UK and Australia political/policy evolutions and explores 'non-traditional' entrance into higher education (aka enabling in Australian context).

**Aim**: Explores assessment mechanisms for identifying students ‘at risk’ and considers professional development needed to help academic staff understand and intervene.

**Methodology**: Discussion

**Findings**: Draws on the 'lowering standards' debate: “while diversity and quality are somehow mutually incompatible and one may either sustain quality by limiting diversity, or accommodate diversity at the expense of quality, there are compelling imperatives to do both” (p.31). Unpacks notions of diversity and quality in context of this debate.
Unpacks academic literacy – part of ‘institutional habitus’ (ref to Thomas, 2002): “it can surely serve to exclude certain groups while maintaining the dominance of others who acquire ‘legitimacy’ by virtue of the degree of fit between what is the product of their family, educational and life experiences and the expectations of higher education institutions” (p.33) and institutions have ‘moral obligation to support non-traditional students. Discusses notion of ‘language proficiency’ as restricted to NESB students – doesn't include NES students, which is problematic for the diversified student body. Presents Murray’s 3-part deconstruction of ‘proficiency’ (communicative competence, academic literacy, professional communication. ‘Proficiency’ = made up of 4 superordinate categories: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (p.34)

Non-traditional students most likely to require support with ‘academic literacy set’ for disciplines, requiring “supportive interventions designed to better align language usage with the customs and expectations of the academy” (p.36). Authors draw on argument to embed academic language and literacy support within disciplinary areas.

Discusses PELA – to whom and how should it be operationalized? Equity argument for not picking on particular student groups: “it is no longer possible to make sensible assumptions about the proficiency of any commencing students, and having regard to principles of equity and the need to avoid discrimination by selecting students on the basis of educational, geographical and socio-economic origins” (p.37).

Universal/mandatory assessment = logistical nightmare – could be made voluntary with incentives (see Murray’s work at UniSA). How = diagnostic test or assessment via an early piece of assessed coursework. Also consider post-PELA support. Draws on Clerehen and Northedge re: moving away from remedial views of language/ literacies and embedding support within disciplines with professional development for staff.

Core argument: Widening participation is “about changing attitudes and pedagogical practices and approaches that are often deeply entrenched in higher education institutions, where a deficit view of these cohorts predominates and the students who comprise them are stigmatized as a result” (p.39). Issues with language = 'symptomatic' of broader issues relating to views of acculturation, particularly for students who arrive with “a significantly greater shortfall in the kind of cultural capital successful study in this environment demands” (p.40).

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**Context**: CDU is a dual-sector institution where the majority of students (73%) are female and mature age. This paper examines the efficacy of online (e-learning) innovations in CDU’s enabling program, TEP, where the reported attrition rate was 65%; there is a low pass rate; and 75% of students study online. Contextualised in widening participation agenda and use of technology in learning as a means to facilitate ‘social presence’.

**Aim**: To evaluate three online tech/pedagogical innovations: a) Screen-capture videos; synchronous tutorials; and online discussion boards for their capacity to effectively facilitate students’ engagement and learning (p. 259).

**Methodology**: 3 x surveys over 2 x semesters in 2011 administered to students to gather feedback on synchronous tutorials and videos. Also further investigation via 15-minute telephone interviews which also
sought feedback on online discussion boards. Response rates for surveys: Survey 1, 91/300 responses; Survey 2, 41/300 responses; Survey 3, 143/640 responses. Eleven student interviews conducted.

**Findings:** All three innovations have the capacity to facilitate student engagement with synchronous tutorials and videos being regarded as most useful. It is recommended that discussion boards be more directed and active with prompt feedback addressing students’ needs. Recommends staff training in effective use of online pedagogies.

**Core Argument:** Brief discussion of high attrition rates and subsequent intervention may be useful. (p. 258).

| Lane, J & Sharp, S. (2014). *Pathways to Success: Evaluating the use of “enabling pedagogies” in a University Transition Course*, GSTF International Journal on Education, 2(1), 66–73. | **Aims:** Evaluating the University Preparation Course at Edith Cowan University with the aim to survey what students found to be enabling pedagogies and to build a model that would serve to guide other educators in widening participation.

**Background:** Researchers conducted a literature review focused on the background, nature and role of enabling courses. They reported that it is in the interests of Universities to develop courses that enhance or enable students to increase confidence and engagement at university. Krause (2005) detailed factors which can lead students to drop out of university; these are both intrinsic, such as lack of confidence and previous academic failure, and extrinsic, such as financial and family pressures.

Important features of enabling pedagogies described in the literature are support systems (Christie et al., 2013), explicit explanations of academic terms (Cullity, 2006), quality of the experience, peer mentoring, counselling services, and academic support workshops (Hodges et al., 2013).

**Procedure:** mixed methods study conducted utilising online student survey (n=450) and semi structured interviews with staff. Course analytics relating to retention and teaching evaluations were also used. Research questions were:

1. What are the challenges to teaching and learning in UPC?
2. What are the enrolment and retention rates for UPC?
3. What factors in the UPC have impacted student retention?
4. What enabling pedagogies are implemented in UPC?
5. How does participation in UPC impact on the students’ perceptions of themselves as a learner?
6. How does participation in UPC impact on students’ confidence to continue in higher education studies?

**Findings:** The UPC enabling pedagogy was developed from the research which had connections between leadership, teaching-learning, community and individual engagement. Teaching the diverse students in the course required immense commitment by leaders, teachers and students. The establishment of a positive and supportive culture was one of the most important factors as was the change in view from a deficit view of students to one where each student came with a rich ‘background of life experiences, which can contribute to their future success but who for a number of reasons have not experienced success in academic studies’.

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<th>Table 1</th>
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<td><strong>student performance in an equity and access program</strong>, <em>Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management</em>, 27(1), 129–141.</td>
<td>translated into ENTER (Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank). All DFS students have low ENTER = ‘at risk’ for UG study. “The objective of this program is to equip students with the necessary academic skills and tertiary literacy to progress to study full degrees. These skills include effective use of lectures and tutorials; conducting research and developing research strategies; effective engagement with the university’s online student interface; essay writing; referencing ideas; exam preparation; thinking critically; problem-solving; project development; and effective communication” (p.130). Program growth (23 in 1999 to 110 in 2003). All applicants = short interview prior to starting DFS. No guarantee of entry on basis of completing DFS/ Students receive advance standing credit for between 4-8 units, depending on destination program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUS Annotation written by Sally Baker</td>
<td><strong>Methodology:</strong> Description of program/ reporting of student data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keywords: diploma, foundation studies, tertiary preparation, entrance requirements, ENTER</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Core unit = Understanding University Learning — students explicitly unpack assumptions and expectations about transition into tertiary study. This module has longer tutorials and smaller class sizes (‘less-threatening’). Only selected staff teach into 3/4 core subjects.</td>
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<td>Lisciandro, J. G. &amp; Gibbs, G. (2016). <em>OnTrack to university: understanding mechanisms of student retention in an Australian pre-university enabling program</em>. <em>Australian Journal of Adult Learning</em>, 56(2), 198–223.</td>
<td>Student outcomes: 283 students between 2000-2003 = 45% completed/passed all units; of these students, over 70% offered place and 45% got into UG program. Aggregate retention into Year 2 = 77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUS Annotation written by Emma Hamilton</td>
<td>Extended discussion of entrance scores (p.134-139)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keywords: enabling programs, retention, attrition, success, non-traditional students</td>
<td><strong>Core argument:</strong> ENTER = not reliable guide/ predictor of academic success or student performance</td>
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**Context:** Enabling programs are an increasingly popular method for entry into university for students from ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds and in light of the Australian government’s widening participation agenda. The outcomes for students from an enabling program who progress on to undergraduate study are positive, and there are a range of benefits to participation in these programs beyond entry into HE. It is important to understand the relatively high rates of attrition and mechanisms to increase student retention within these programs. This is difficult however because of the variations between programs, attrition is complex, and the reasons for attrition in undergraduate may be less applicable to enabling contexts. **Aim:** “The aim of the current study was to report on student retention for a large cohort of students engaged in a pre-university enabling program over an extended period of time (2008 – 2014), and to investigate factors (demographic and other) which have influenced retention in the program” (p. 199). **Methodology:** The On Track enabling program at Murdoch University started in 2008. It has two intakes of full time 14-week study periods, it targets students from backgrounds under-represented in higher education, and does not have academic pre-requisites for enrolment. On-campus attendance at an orientation-like session is compulsory for students wishing to apply. Data analysis of demographic characteristics of students, and analysis of retention, success and progression rates, and student exit forms. **Findings:** Retention rates in this program were high; “This suggests that *OnTrack* is a cost-effective, successful and appropriate pathway to university for non-traditional students” (p. 214). Withdrawal was typically explained by students as related to health or family issues. There was no correlation between demographic characteristics and prior educational attainment and retention. High retention rates may be explained by the mode of delivery, the opportunity to form a learn community, the integrated and multi-disciplinary courses, which allow students to form learning partnerships with teaching staff in a supportive
environment, and pre-enrolment procedures. Acknowledges that student success is not measured wholly by completions.

**Core argument:** Enabling programs can implement mechanisms to improve the rate at which they retain students, including pre-enrolment information and facilitating post-enrolment learning communities and support.

**Context:** Widening participation agenda has increased participation in enabling pathway programs with high representation of students from 'non-traditional backgrounds'. In the OnTrack enabling program at Murdoch University a high proportion of students are engaging with STEM subjects, despite concerns about a decline in STEM students across the educational sector, and despite research that has indicated that enabling students tend to have higher levels of anxiety related to mathematics than undergraduate cohorts.

**Aim:** "The aim of the current study was to characterise the range of past learning experiences, attitudes, emotions and aspirations towards science and maths learning amongst a cohort of students entering an Australian pre-university enabling program” (p. 17).

**Methodology:** Survey of OnTrack students across two intakes of the program in 2014. Survey collected quantitative and qualitative information and as analysed using SPSS for statistical analysis.

**Findings:** Students enrolled in STEM subjects in OnTrack had diverse prior experiences of STEM teaching and learning. A positive prior educational experience, and perceived high-quality teaching with a positive classroom teacher, are important factors in fostering positive attitudes toward, and higher levels of confidence about, STEM amongst student cohorts. In light of this, the paper advocates for social and emotional learning (SEL) embedded within the curriculum and a supportive classroom environment, as an important teaching focus in enabling education in order to help students reconceptualise their prior negative experiences of learning in STEM. This study also revealed that students misrecognized the realities of future degrees or careers, for example, misrecognizing the need for prior mathematical training in their degree. This may be related to prior negative experiences with STEM, highlighting the importance of providing opportunities to challenge those prior negative experiences.

**Core argument:** Greater attention needs to be paid to the affective nature of students’ responses to learning in STEM. Prior negative experiences of STEM are important in shaping the attitudes and aspirations of students in STEM; providing opportunities for students to challenge those previous negative experiences should be a priority of enabling STEM curricula.

**Context:** The establishment of Southern Cross University (SCU) College to increase access to and widen participation in higher education in the space between the two structures in Australia’s differentiated tertiary education system: Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education (HE). SCU is a regional Australian HE institution with 23% of its student population classified as low SES and 30% of the student cohort studying by distance. SCU College was established to provide pathways to university for potential students who: did not qualify for entry to SCU; did not wish to enrol in TAFE-based VET programs; or did not wish to travel to one of the three SCU campuses in the region.

**Aim:** To demonstrate the processes, rationale and strategies in establishing SCU College which may have
potential value for other institutions who want to explore the integrated College model to “fill the educational gap that responds to removing barriers and enhancing access, as well as successful outcomes” (abstract)

**Methodology:** Descriptive report-style paper outlining rationale for establishment of this particular and unique integrated College structure.

**Findings:** Includes detail on policy, structural, geographic and demographic context; rationale and mission of College including widening access and participation, community engagement and VET institutional partnerships; internal structure and programs within the College, including associate degrees, enabling and English Language programs; governance and staffing arrangements; and infrastructure funding arrangements.

**Core Argument:** SCU College is a unique ‘integrated’ college in the Australian tertiary education landscape because of its integration within SCU, but with MOUs with institutions delivering VET qualifications. This, it is argued, makes it a potentially valuable model (including lessons learned) for other higher education institutions in Australia and internationally who wish to “address educational gaps, inadequacies and inequalities (geographic, education history and socio-economic obstacles) faced by many otherwise willing students, which often lead to lifelong barriers to entering a higher education institute” (p. 40).

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>May, J.</td>
<td>A child of change: The establishment of the Open Foundation Programme in 1974</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Explores 'layers of context' underpinning decision to start Open Foundation from historical perspective. May argues that OF &quot;was set up in response to a variety of international, national and local influences, and as a reflection of educational ideas that were flowing from overseas at the time&quot;, particularly the Open University (p.51). OF = intention to implement educational ideals and manage change (p.52)</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>May, J. &amp; Bunn, R.</td>
<td>1974–1976: the seeds of longevity in a pathway to tertiary preparation at</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Examines evolution of Open Foundation from perspective of curriculum and pedagogy, access and success, and support and retention = understand 'seeds of longevity'. Offers historical context of higher</td>
<td>Methodology: Discussion</td>
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<td><strong>University of Newcastle, NSW, Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 55(1), 135–152.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>AUS Annotation written by Sally Baker</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> enabling education; history; widening participation; access programs; non traditional students</td>
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<td><strong>Methodology:</strong> Archival research (cultural collections/ university archives)</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Curriculum and pedagogy:</strong> notes how original program included inter-disciplinary courses (Society and Humanity/ Political Man) which were unusual for the time – thus authors contend that OF sought to contest established epistemologies and thinking, arguing that “Smith wanted to offer adult students an adult academic course that privileged their interest as a guiding factor in learning and teaching” (p.141). Pedagogy = lecture and tutorial (‘sage on the stage’). Authors report that academics were perceived as odd and that there was little preparation = teaching was fairly adhoc. Authors report one student expressing perception that lectures appeared to be in code (working out what to note and when), but also a sense of intrigue (p.144). Exams initially not included in program, but by 1975 all students sat final exams (50% continuous assessment; 50% final exam). Exam included to assuage fears about ‘the rabble’ (see John Collins’ comment, p.147)</td>
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<td><strong>Access and success:</strong> Who first accessed OF? Average age = 36; mainly had ‘third year high school qualifications’ (5/80 total had completed high school). Academics rated students on ‘ability to succeed’ in Arts/Economics and Commerce (only options) according to 4 rankings: Predictably very successful at University; • Predictably ‘safe’ to pass degree requirements; • Would strongly recommend admission; • Would not recommend admission (p.146)</td>
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<td>Support, retention and performance in UG: Retention in early years = 37.5%, 56%, 57.5% (1974-76), with 90% of completers getting a place in UG programs. Number of OF students doubled to 160 in 1976</td>
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<td><strong>Core Argument:</strong> “The Open Foundation was as ‘open’ as Brian Smith could make it and the University at the time could tolerate. Adults could try their hand at university with no requirements and no repercussions. They were to be treated with respect as exemplified by the serious quality of the curriculum which facilitated their choice of topics while testing them rigorously. (p.149).”</td>
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<td><strong>AUS Annotation written by Emma Hamilton</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Context:</strong> Changes in the university sector in the past fifty years (that is, from the Second World War), particularly its “massification” and “corporatisation”, has led to contestation regarding the idea and meaning of the university (p. 384). Conceptualisations of the university sit on a spectrum, from the socially and cultural disengaged ‘ivory tower’ on the one hand, to entrepreneurially focused ‘factories’ preparing students as workers. This paper is produced from a broader OLT funded project related to first-in-family (FiF) learners and their families, produced in partnership between University of Wollongong, University of Newcastle and Open Universities Australia. This student cohort is apt for exploring the ways in which universities are conceptualised because they have little actual experience of universities and therefore their knowledge of them derives of familial, social and cultural imaginations and experiences, rather than hands-on knowledge.</td>
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<td><strong>Aim:</strong> To analyse the ways in which this student cohort conceptualise the purpose and meaning of ‘the university’, and the corresponding impact this has on student’s experiences and expectations of their learning. To “show how a range of powerful metaphors are at work in relation to what a university is and can do for individuals and the wider society.” (p. 386)</td>
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**Methodology**: Interview and survey of 44 FiF enabling students across two Australian universities in 2014. Participants were self-selecting. Surveys and interviews asked similar questions around the themes of university experience, family reactions, perceptions of university, motivations to participate in university. Responses were loaded to NVivo and subject to thematic analysis and coding; this was an iterative process. This paper draws conceptually on the work Lakoff and Johnson (1980) regarding the role of metaphor in ordering understandings of society and as “a form of ‘imaginative rationality’” (p. 388).

**Findings**: The idea of the university as an ‘ivory tower’ is enduring for FiF students, even though it is a conceptualisation that is increasingly deconstructed by government and university workers. FiF students have professional goals motivating their entrance into HE, but their motivations are deeper and broader than that too: “the idea of the university in these students’ accounts encompassed the ‘community of scholars’ carrying out high-minded work in the service of humanity” and is therefore about finding the “passionate career” or meaningful vocation (p. 190). The metaphors used by these students stressed a separation between university and non-university life (for example, ‘hard’ and ‘high’, ‘foreign country’). The foreign country metaphor posits the university experience as both about mobility and about the student as outsider. A divide between upper- and working-class expectations of university enrolment was evident, which intersected with geographical location (i.e. reflections that working classes from regional areas were not expected to go to university). This can “provoke suspicion and derision” about university, especially from the family and friends of FiF students (p. 391). “Hard” was used to discuss expectations that university would be difficult, require effort, could cause anxiety but could also be good because achieving ‘hard’ things would be rewarding and cause pride; “the adjective ‘hard’ shows that the imaginary of the ivory tower can be forbidding: its practices and languages alien and demanding, and its surfaces stone-like” and some students will fail (p. 394). It is also ‘hard’ to communicate ideas of university back to family and friends.

**Core argument**: Enabling first-in-family students arrive at University with a cultural imagining of the purpose of University that resolves the seemingly oppositional views of the university as either an “ivory tower” or a “degree factory” (p. 397). This is articulated through the concept of the “passionate career” (students are both career minded but also desirous of a career that is meaningful and has the capacity to be helpful to their family, friends and communities). This presents a challenge to consider ways to facilitate more idealistic, hopeful and encouraging purposes for universities.

**Context**: Examines expectations, experiences and skills of students entering first year UG study at USQ – based on idea these are ‘less than optimal for achieving academic success’. Scopes Australian FYE literature.

**Aim**: To evaluate academic outcomes of 3 cohorts of students who undertook a 5-day ‘enabling program’ pre-orientation at USQ called ‘Building Pathways to Academic Success’.

**Theoretical frame**: Descriptive reporting of evaluation data.

**Methodology**: Participants = 965 students (50% = low SES/ 50% = FinF/ 50% = mature age/ 50% = low entry scores). Data gathered 2007-2009. Outcome measure = students’ GPA at end of semester 1. Quant analysis of GPA scores.

**Findings**: 

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Annotation written by Sally Baker
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<th>Author(s)</th>
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<th>Aim</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Core Argument</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McMurchy-Pilkington, C. (2013).</td>
<td>‘We are family’: Māori success in foundation programmes, Higher Education Research &amp; Development, 32(3), 436–449.</td>
<td>Māori student learning environments in Aotearoa/New Zealand foundation studies programs in a variety of institutions.</td>
<td>To consider the question: “What constitutes an optimal learning environment for Māori learners in foundation programmes?” (abstract)</td>
<td>Kaupapa Māori: similar to critical theory; however, ensures that Māori values and ways of being and doing are central to the research. It particularly privileges Whānau (broadly conceptualized as a group with similar values) which keeps both researchers and researched ‘culturally safe’. Methodology also included a Māori advisory group. Fourteen focus groups comprising approx. 100 students from 12 providers of enabling programs (selected randomly from institutions including traditional university and polytechnic providers, tribally based providers, private training providers and Indigenous university (some tribally based). In addition, 8 tutors and 5 CEOs were interviewed.</td>
<td>In all research sites, Māori students were given a ‘home’ room with freedom to ‘design’ the room in whatever way they pleased. This allowed students to feel ownership over their learning spaces further enhanced by providing capacity to link to their cultural identity through artefacts. Whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building) is significant to emotional and spiritual wellbeing and all tutors embedded this in their practices. Caring relationships with tutors facilitated caring, collaboration and responsibility amongst the groups of students as well. Students were enabled to “live as Māori” (p. 444) in their learning spaces where cultural practices were embedded in pedagogy. Risk-taking, mistake-making and collaboration were encouraged in ‘success’-oriented classrooms.</td>
<td>The optimal learning environment for Māori learners in foundation studies programs is holistic and has embedded a strong sense of belonging and interconnectedness between cultural, spiritual, academic and emotional elements.</td>
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Students receive timely feedback
Discusses shifting from pedagogy to andragogy
Compares students’ grades from 2011 and 2012 (no scaffolded assessment) to 2013 (scaffolded assessment) – one-way Anova conducted and student comments/ lecturer comments analysed.

**Core argument:** Scaffolded assessment can help develop students’ writing practices: it appeared to have a “dramatic and positive impact on student engagement, retention, attendance and relationships with teaching staff” (p.85). Staff need training on how to scaffold assessment.


**Context:** Situated in expanding HE sector – explores the experiences of FiF, rural and international students as they transitioned into Year 1. Explains expansion as result of neoliberalism – increasing workforce/ ‘educated workforce’. Argues that neoliberal higher education system “contributes to processes of individualisation when young people detach from their family to become useful participants in society” (p.504) and encouraged to become self-entrepreneurs. Authors also draw on literature that explores affective dimension of transitioning/ starting higher education. Connects family/friends to habitus, capital and field. Draws on literature relating to loneliness. International students constructed as ‘non-traditional’

**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu – field, habitus and capital/ Weiss’ dimensions of loneliness

**Methodology:** Interpretive, critical qualitative approach. RQs: (1) What are the experiences of non-traditional students as they transition into the first year of university? (2) How do they experience the academic as well as social transition to university?

Online survey (n=285: 112 FiF/ 42 = rural/ 16 = international) + purposeful sampling for follow-up focus group interviews (3-5 students of same category in each focus group). A priori and post-hoc coding according to commonalities and differences (post-hoc = experiences of transition/ social experiences; a priori = habitus, field, capital; Weiss’ dimensions of loneliness)

**Findings:**

Transition: Non-traditional students do not have capital to understand ‘field expectations’ of higher education study. Grades/ performance are important signals of difference from prior educational experiences (and key triggers for loss of confidence)

Forced independence: For rural/ international students, forced independence = challenging – financial hardship/ responsibility for self/loss of emotional and social support

Social experience: 1) disconnection, 2) lack of opportunity to meet other students: ‘after the lectures it’s like they’ve all gone’ (p.512) = emotional isolation

**Core argument:** Facilitating transition for non-traditional students may necessitate/require cultural change in institution and move away from the notion that students need to adapt. “[N]on-traditional students are not well positioned in relation to cultural and social capital to negotiate transition to university” (p.513) and as a result they are constructed as ‘other’. Problems occur when there is a ‘mismatch’ between family and university habitus. Students “who experienced a sense of community adjusted more easily and enjoyed the process of transition” (p.514). “The research calls for a broadened perspective in the moral purpose of universities and a shared belief in wanting to make the transition to university smoother and
accessible for all student groups. In order to facilitate the transition to university for non-traditional students, focus needs to be directed to the interconnectedness of academic and social experience of university and the importance of strong social support” (p.514-5).

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<tr>
<td><strong>Context:</strong> Comparison of students' transitions into undergraduate study in NSW via TAFE and enabling program at 'Westview University'</td>
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<td><strong>Theoretical frame:</strong> Mezirow – transformational learning theory; Bourdieu – social capital.</td>
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<td><strong>Methodology:</strong> Two qualitative studies using narrative inquiry. Study 1 with students from tertiary prep course or Diploma of Nursing at TAFE (n=7) – interviewed twice; Study 2 with enabling students at 'Westview' (n=10) – interviewed four times.</td>
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<td><strong>Findings:</strong> Main themes: disengagement, insecurity, transition, adversity, identity and future selves. Resilience and persistence: financial barriers (and associated time pressures: 14/17 participants were also working) and long commutes. Students' commitment = example of resilience. Students spoke in terms of pressure. Several students had learning difficulties. Some students lived more than 50km from campus; one student had a 140km round trip. Authors argue that, “such findings suggest that successful transition involves a large measure of student ability to draw on inner resources to persevere” (p.43).</td>
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<td><strong>Transition and agency:</strong> All participants ‘adopted self-responsibility’ quickly. Transition and identity: “findings from the two studies point to changes to the perspectives or habitus of the participants” (p.44) – described in terms of difference, increased confidence, ‘getting there’. Authors also make connections to Mezirow’s notion of transformation</td>
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<td><strong>Core Argument:</strong> Study “highlights the fact that while TAFE and enabling courses like the UAP can nurture the potential of students, they can simultaneously and inadvertently widen the perceptual divide of students’ identity when they first enter higher education from such programs” (p.46)</td>
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<td><strong>Context:</strong> As new technologies are increasingly utilised for educational purposes and provide important mechanisms for widening participation and flexible delivery, it is important that universities consider the ways in which the digital literacies of students can be strengthened and attuned to educational purposes. Educational providers cannot assume a level of proficiency in digital literacies in students, or that digital literacies in other contexts translates to the university context. This is supported by international research in the US and UK contexts, which highlights that students have complex relationships with technology and that digital literacies do not always translate across contexts (Jisc [2015]) highlights the six digital capabilities that students engage with in higher education, emphasising that “a holistic understanding of digital literacy must attend to the collaborative, evaluative, and socio-emotional dimensions of technology use”, p.37). The higher proportion of students from a recognisable equity group in enabling programs, the emphasis on skills development and the growth in flexible delivery means that enabling programs have an even greater imperative to critically examine their provision of digital literacies in the curriculum. This study focuses on Aim: To explore the uses, perceptions, engagement and dispositions of students engaged in the James Cook University's (JCU) Diploma of Higher Education (DHE) enabling pathway program toward technology. This exploration will help scholars to understand the ways in which digital literacies are engaged with and can best</td>
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**Methodology:** This study provides a case study that focuses JCU’s DHE enabling pathway program, which provides a one-semester core course designed to build capabilities in digital literacies. Its findings are informed by a survey, based on an EDUCAUSE Centre for Analysis and Research (ECAR) Students and Technology survey, conducted at the beginning and toward the end of semester, combining Likert scale and open ended questions focusing on students’ use and ownership of devices, university experiences, preferred learning environments and disposition towards technology. Data was analysed sing a Grounded Theory approach. The first survey had a response rate of 415/435 students invited to participation; the second 150/317. Gender breakdown was fairly even and most respondents were in the age categories of 20-29 (45-46%).

**Findings:** Overall rates of device ownership amongst the DHE cohort were comparable to ECAR results, with rates of ownership increasing across all categories as the semester progressed. Mobile devices were seen by the DHE more important for learning and for the social elements of learning engagement at higher rates than the ECAR cohort. Research has pointed to the importance of mobile devices for learning amongst low SES students and first in family students, and therefore this finding may be related to the particular demographics of an enabling cohort. Overall students had a positive attitude toward technology, and most preferred blended learning. Many students wanted access to more course materials, like lecture recordings and slides, online. However, a “significant percentage” perceived themselves to be underprepared to engage with university learning systems and required software, which is a distinction from ECAR results and highlights the importance of understanding the specific context of students and programs. The demographic factors of students should be taken into account when designing programs with digital literacies. When undertaking this curriculum design enabling educators should be mindful of the need for authenticity in how technology is used, the practicalities of accessing and using technology for this particular student cohort and should be supported.

**Core argument:** Technologies used in higher education are educationally important and meaningful for students, however curriculum designers need to engage with technologies in a way that avoids making assumptions about students’ digital literacies and their transferability. Digital literacies need to be developed, taught, supported and the demographic factors that may impact on students’ access to and use of technology understood by educators.

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**Context:** Attraction levels in enabling programs (EP). Authors note EP students tend to be from low SES/ first in family backgrounds

**Aim:** To “investigate the factors that impacted the attrition of students from EPs and compared their experience with those students who successfully completed an EP” (abstract)

**Methodology:** Qualitative; phenomenological interviews with students (n=16; 8f, 8m/ 9 mature) around a critical incident. 11/16 students had completed the EP at UON; 2 of the 5 who did not complete returned and later completed (13/16 = completed).

**Findings:** Common themes in interview data:

- **Time pressures:** balancing study with life and work, time management challenges, more demanding than expected

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AUS

Annotation written by Sally Baker
| **Personal circumstances:** stage of life appeared significant – lack of maturity/commitment and ambition = mentioned by younger participants; family commitments/lack of family support mentioned by older participants. Also, work commitments impacted on priorities, related to seasonal work patterns. **Support services:** limited used of support services amongst students who withdrew. Participants noted differences in support offered in enabling compared with undergraduate studies. Mention of inadequate supports in evenings. **Student engagement:** completing students mentioned peer support. |

| **Context:** Enabling education in Australia in context of widening participation and equity/neoliberal university structures and systems, where a “neoliberalised conceptualisation overlooks the important ethico-political social justice commitments, forms of subjectivity and pedagogical practices, developed over many decades by the programmes’ educators” (p.632). Authors review literature on the ‘affective turn’ in higher education research, and argue that “By (re)inserting attention to the importance of the affective in HE, we are able to see that denial and repression of emotional and embodied humanity serves to reproduce the very problems with pedagogical performance that neo-liberal pedagogical policy-making reasserts (through attempts at denial)” (p.634). **Aim:** To “highlight the importance of pedagogies of care, care-full epistemological practice and ‘other’ caring subjectivities that continue to characterise the spaces of access and widening participation (A and WP) in higher education (HE)” (p.631). **Theoretical frame:** Feminised pedagogical praxis. **Methodology:** Participatory project. **Findings:** Discussion organised around three themes: care as recognition, care as dialogic relationality, care as affective and embodied praxis. |

| **Context:** National context of widening participation initiatives since 2008, including targets for under-represented groups including low-SES students, has prompted universities to consider strategies to recruit and support ‘equity’ students; enabling education is one of these strategies. This paper provides reflection on the establishment and operation of the University of New England’s (UNE) Pathways Enabling Program (PEP), which was established in 2008 owing to this broader national context. It represents UNE’s first engagement with enabling education, although UNE’s profile is such that it already attracts a higher than average proportion of low SES students. The PEP is an online one-year, part-time, fee-free pathway program that embeds tertiary literacies within academic university style learning, and also offers non-academic support to students. Successful completion facilitates student transition into UNE undergraduate study in “most” programs. **Aim:** To report on the key features of the PEP and to examine and compare the success, retention and progress of students entering university via the PEP pathway compared to those entering via high school qualifications. **Methodology:** The paper posits itself to be a “reflection”, informed by a variety of institutional measures of student experience (“student reflection activities, informal feedback and standard unit evaluations |
1,096 new students enrolled in PEP from 2008-10, which forms the foundation of this data set. **Findings:** The PEP structure is a combination of academic electives drawn from first year undergraduate with core foundational skills units that are designed to orient students to the practices and knowledge of higher education. This includes pragmatic understandings of IT and computer and system literacy, alongside skills of critical thinking and academic writing, for example. Assessment structures are also based on this divide, with foundational core units offering supportive, formative and “non-threatening” assessment alongside academic units that assess in alignment with undergraduate university policy. The profile of students comprises mature aged students returning to study and recent school leavers who have not attained a sufficient entry mark to commence their preferred undergraduate pathway. Typically, these students have had prior negative educational experiences and have family and work commitments outside of their study. 30% (96) of PEP students successfully completed the program and enrolled in UG studies. The success and performance of these students in their undergraduate studies was comparable to those students entering from high school. Student feedback from this cohort identifies that PEP is perceived as beneficial to them. The attrition rate for PEP students is around 57% - higher than undergraduate student attrition rates, but comparable to that in other enabling programs. Part of this attrition may be positive attrition, that is, a conscious decision on the part of student to not explore higher education further, but this is not explored in relation to the data. **Core argument:** In this case study, students entering into undergraduate study from an enabling pathway have similar levels of progress and success when compared to those entering via a ‘traditional’ high school leaver pathway. Enabling pathways such as that offered by the UNE PEP are effective mechanisms of entry into undergraduate pathways for their cohorts. However, attrition rates are high, and work needs to be done to understand whether the causes are distinctive and what interventions are appropriate for this cohort.

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**Context:** Explores how the ‘skills, experiences and personal attributes’ that enabling students bring with them to their studies present challenges for enabling educators to transform prior ‘procedural’ knowledge into ‘corresponding propositional form’ (p.117) needed for academic study. Draws on FYE literature to situate paper. Comments on human investment (as opposed to financial investment) required for higher education (and associated affective, cultural challenges): “It is incumbent upon receiving institutions to regard widening participation not merely as a recruitment strategy but as a commitment to ‘follow through’ and ensure that students who might otherwise not have the opportunity are given the means necessary to reach their full potential and succeed in their academic studies and beyond” (p.118). Examines Foundation Studies at UniSA (est. 2006): purpose = “is to provide alternative pathways to higher education, affording first-chance opportunities to those who have experienced educational disadvantage and second-chance opportunities to those who made earlier life decisions not to pursue tertiary-level study” (p.119). Authors note the complexity of teaching such diverse students without teaching qualifications: “Given that many academics have no formal teaching qualification, this raises the question of how and where they acquire and hone the skills needed to
mitigate the negative and potentially destructive effects of such conflict” (p.121)

**Aim:** To explore notions of ‘value added’ in enabling education; sought to explore whether themes that had emerged in earlier focus groups re-emerged, looked for conflict/consistency and sought to track transformations in experiences over 4 months. Specifically = mature age students

**Methodology:** Case study (‘Judy’) – 4 in total, selected randomly from earlier participation in enabling research project. 4 x monthly interviews conducted with each c/s participant (approx. 4 hours per person)

**Judy:** Completed FS with GPA 6.38/possible 7 and started Early Childhood Education degree. Judy = married and has 7 children (5-20 yoa) = had variety of roles/ jobs from age 16 when she left school. Other work has highlighted cognitive challenges; authors highlight affective challenges of studying for mature age learners = anxiety about balancing family/work/ inadequate support for induction and transition. Themes:

- **Confidence** (p.122-4) – largely due to familiarity developed through FS (e.g. writing essays, physical layout of university, information literacies, systems). Discusses strict planning (multiple calendars, one for study, one for children’s movements, one for birthdays)

- **Motivation** (p.124-5) – to get bigger house (from aspired-for job), prior work experience (recognition of past), interactions with staff (who recognised her interests and strengths).

However, there were contradictions (conflicts): for example the lack of formal recognition of mothering experience/ past work experience (no RPL) = ‘irritation’: “I don’t need to practise how to look after children, and my running playgroup for two and a half, nearly three, years doesn’t count for anything either’ (Judy’s words, p.126). She also had more experience than her tutor = resentment of lack of recognition: “Mature students, who bring to their learning situations considerable relevant life experience, would seem to be more likely to recognise a lack of authenticity, which in turn can seed discontent—that may be experienced by both parties: the student resenting the failure (perceived or actual) to acknowledge their experience; the academic resenting the challenge to the authority of their opinions and thus seeing mature students as a threat rather than a resource’ (p.127)… also prior experience of FS (e.g. writing essays) led her to question some of UG assessment activities (example on p.128 of finding essay plan a waste of time)

**Core argument:** Research Question: how can universities support mature age students in widening participation agenda? Case study of Judy suggests that the self-efficacy and confidence/practices learnt through FS led to both positive and negative consequences when she entered UG study, as she “struggled to transform effectively her experiential procedural knowledge into its propositional form, with its theoretical underpinnings” (p.130). Mature age students = high levels of motivation but also unrealistic expectations = exposure to emotional and intellectual distress

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**Context:** Enabling education in Australia – comments made on unmapped/diverse nature of field. Authors note that standardising the field is difficult because of 1) the diversity of programs offered and 2) the lack of knowledge about enabling curricula. Literature review includes brief discussion of 4 aspects of curriculum: enacted curriculum, intended curriculum, experienced curriculum, hidden curriculum (Arafeh, 2016)

**Aim:** To 1) explore “the unique challenges associated with teaching and learning in enabling programs”, 2) respond to lack of research into curriculum design in enabling, 3) to add more to knowledge about enabling
education (all p.9). Specifically, to focus on the ‘intended curriculum’ of 3 enabling programs (ECU, TAS, UON)

**Methodology:** Curriculum mapping, adapted from Cueva & Feit (2011) and Arafeh (2016): mapped alignment of program outcomes with learning outcomes for each unit + information about assessment task + mapping learning items to assessment. Mapping also recorded according to explicit and implicit outcomes

**Findings:** Units mapped generally aligned with learning outcomes and program attributes.

Rare measurement of abstract concepts such as ‘academic integrity’, ‘understand the learning environment’, ‘ethical conduct’

**Core Argument:** Authors offer 6 principles for intended curriculum in enabling programs:

- Principle one: Enabling curricula foster the development of a foundational level competence in key academic writing, research and communication.
- Principle two: Enabling curricula foster the development of a foundational awareness of salient knowledge across relevant academic content areas.
- Principle three: Enabling curricula foster the development of a foundational understanding of academic integrity and ethical conduct requirements in the university context and more widely.
- Principle four: Enabling curricula foster the development of a foundational ability to successfully engage with the university teaching and learning environment.
- Principle five: Enabling curricula foster the development of a foundational ability to work in teams, specifically to effectively collaborate and contribute within small groups in order to develop academic skills.
- Principle six: Enabling curricula foster the development of a cross-cultural and international outlook, specifically the ability to engage productively and harmoniously with diverse cultures considering alternative cultural perspectives.” (p.19)

**Context:** First-in-family (FiF) students and their families and attendance at Australian universities. Reports on data from a broader project exploring experiences and student identities of FiF students in Australian higher education.

**Aim:** An in-depth exploration of the ways first-in-family students reflect upon and narrate their reasons for attending university.

**Methodology:** Narrative approach to analysis where the desire is to “examine respondents’ stories to understand how university participation was described and defined. The focus of this analysis is on the content of narratives in order to highlight the sense that the speaker makes of these events” (p. 1025).

**Methods:** In-depth interviews (n = 101) and open-ended survey (n = 173) of 3 cohorts of FiF students studying in the following types of program across a range of public universities across Australia: enabling; primarily face-to-face undergraduate; wholly online undergraduate. Participants were diverse across demographic markers such as age, gender, social background and geographical context. However, the data analysed for this article is specifically from participants under 26 years (n = 35 interviews). Participants were invited to ask a family member to participate in interviews resulting in n = 4 family member interviews, while n
= 40 surveys were completed by family members.

**Findings:** Three key themes emerged from the analysis: (1) Discourses of betterment and opportunity—university participation is a chance for a ‘better’ life and financial security; (2) Realising generational dreams and ambitions—however, with potential additional stress to meet family members’ expectations; (3) Disparities between expectations and realities—university is more stressful and expensive than expected since information about university life is largely ad hoc for FiF students. Betterment and opportunity discourses shared by FiF students and their families largely focus on financial benefits yet ignore powerful types of social and cultural capital which can result from university participation.

**Limitations:** Small number of participants and lack of cultural diversity of participants.

**Core Argument:** Understandings and representations of university education should focus less on neoliberal configurations of individualism and more on a holistic, embodied understanding of university participation and recognition of the social and cultural lives of learners. The individual and collective benefits of university participation should feature in government policies and marketing campaigns so that a realistic appreciation of the benefits of higher education can be enjoyed by FiF students and their families.

**Context:** Focus on low SES students in context of increasing participation targets (post-Bradley) and in regional setting (Murdoch University). Findings foreground importance of student-staff relationships: positive relationships = sustain engagement; negative relationships = work against WP agenda. Set against context of under-representation of equity groups. Argue that to create a participatory and empowering educational context, need to understand students’ social histories, particularly in context of metanarratives/‘schooled knowledges’ (Alexander et al., 2005) that dictate who should have access to university – based on well-rehearsed scripts (“competition’, ‘failure’ and ‘sorting’”, p.485).

**Aim:** To explore the “cultural and pedagogical conditions that promote, support and enable their continuing participation and engagement in higher education” of low SES students in a regional university

**Methodology:** Qualitative: ‘purposeful conversations’ with 16 low SES UG students. All participants in study = came from enabling pathways and were mature aged (21-45), most = FinF. All participants = in 2nd/3rd year

**Findings:** Relational pedagogy = important for enhancing student learning; it foregrounds the importance of relationship building. Findings arranged around support & resources/ constraints & interferences

**Support & Resources**
Interaction (in lectures, tutorials, informal interactions) = key for developing rapport and permitting a sense that academics are available to students (help students to feel supported, to stay on track. Navigating who is approachable = important part of transitioning. Participants found that not all academics are open to interaction and “academics’ wishes are difficult to interpret and often contradictory” (p.486), which is likely to be result of poor communication. Participants’ descriptions = highlight importance of clear communication = ‘participatory model of communication’ = best (dialogue, horizontal relationship - Freire) + funds of knowledge. Interaction with lecturers = prevents sense of alienation. Notes power of academics (‘relational trust’ = Bryk & Schneider, 2002; or ‘relational trust’ =Warren, 2005)

**Constraints & interferences**
Relational pedagogy is shaped by institutional norms and impact on academic work and possibilities for relationships to develop. Mention casualization of workforce: “working conditions minimise opportunities for engagement with students” (p.488). Curriculum design is important for creating moments of connection: “When the emphasis is on delivering a large amount of content in a lecture setting, there is less opportunity for student interaction” (p.488) = “absence of dialogic encounters with students” (p.488). Participants described feeling dismissed and unimportant. Importance of feedback foregrounded (as in lecturers don’t want to give it) – onus = on students to seek feedback. Some academics = ‘stand-offish’ = critique of banking model. Authors briefly note context of neoliberal logics = “Relational dimensions of pedagogy are being seriously eroded and diminished by the anti-democratic and authoritarian tendencies of neoliberalism” (p.491)

Core argument: Relational pedagogy (relations and connections between staff and students) is particularly important for students who may experience cultural and economic issues (e.g. child care, balancing work and family, not knowing the ropes) and for students who have previously felt marginalised or isolated in their educational experiences. Feedback is particularly important. “When academics do not recognise the potentially exclusionary impact of their pedagogies and thus fail to engage in a relationship that can provide support when it is needed, they may unconsciously perpetuate existing social inequalities” (p.492).


AUS Annotation written by Sally Baker

Context: HEPP-funded project by NCSEHE, La Trobe, Deakin & Federation. Responds to brief to review current enabling programs and report on extent they are effective in opening access and increasing participation and success in UG studies. Note: no enabling people on advisory group (p.8).

Literature review: scopes the significant number of equity students who take enabling courses; discusses how enabling programs address academic, social and personal domains (p.12). Analysis of funding from 2009-2020 on p.15. Discussion of VET as pathway (use and efficacy): p.16-17 = based on literature that suggests VET-HE students have issues with transition, particularly with literacy, expectations and differences in epistemology/assessment theories and practices. Main conclusions from literature:

1) enabling programs have high proportion (“enrol disproportionately”) of equity students
2) enabling students who transition = generally have lower rates of retention and success (= ‘attainment’) than other students (all enabling students, not just equity students)
3) TAFE = not necessarily an effective preparatory pathway into higher education and there are issues with this premise on basis of treating all VET qualification as same
4) VET articulants = experience barriers “resulting in below-average performance, in terms of retention and academic performance (but same argument about not identifying difference between certificates) – all p.20

Aim: To report on 1) the effectiveness of enabling programs for increasing access, participation and success in UG programs of equity (“disadvantaged”) students; 2) appropriateness of enabling programs compared to other pathways; 3) the impact of varying quality of enabling programs; 4) what practices/modes of delivery should be added into enabling programs (if missing) to enhance effectiveness

Methodology: Creation of typology of enabling provision [no mention of Baker & Irwin’s typology from
Statistical/quant: used DET data (2009-2013) to count student numbers on basis of pathway/admission. Compared commencing domestic bachelor level retention and success rates of enabling students with students who had taken other pathways (VET, Associate Degrees, Adv Diplomas, Diplomas, OUA pathways).

Undertook national survey from undergraduate students to explore differences between enabling and VET pathways students. Survey examined: demographics (relating to disadvantage), motivations for choosing pathway, programme/satisfaction. All students who commenced in 2013, 2014, 2015 invited to participate (if had enabling/VET pathway. Pilot survey run at Curtin. National survey run over 11 universities = 1 June – 31 July 2015 (n=2593: 981 enabling, 1230 VET). Data = content analysis. 11 unis = Curtin, ECU, Federation, Flinders, La Trobe, UNSW, UON, UTAS, USC, WSU, UOW.

**Main Findings:**

- Diverse range of provision of enabling programs
- Lack of “transparency, transferability and information about enabling programs” (p.4)
- Most programs (except Indigenous programs) = unrestricted on who can access (in terms of student groups and prior academic achievement)
- There are more equity students in enabling programs as compared to sub-bachelor programs, but there are more equity students articulating via TAFE pathways
- Equity students who enter via enabling generally have better retention rates than students entering via sub-bachelor courses
- Possible suggestion of academic barriers for students from sub-bachelor programs
- Equity students coming from Associate Degree, Diploma and Advanced Diploma programs = generally better success rates than enabling course students
- Students from enabling programs = more satisfied than TAFE articulants (particularly in context of preparation for further studies/confidence/belonging)
- 66.2% of TAFE articulants took VET qualification for own benefit, not specifically as pathway to higher education
- More equity students use enabling as a pathway rather than VET
- Articulation via enabling = limited because of institutional limitations about recognition [e.g. universities only recognise own enabling program]. Large concentrations of enabling places in 8/39 public universities and limitations about future studies (what courses can be accessed via enabling articulation)

**DET data: findings**

Table 2 (p.27) = Enabling load by institution (top 5 = CDU, USQ, UNDA, CQU, UON)
- 48 enabling courses included (domestic + Indigenous)
- 32/48 = open to all students
- Only 1 (UNSW Prep) = specific to equity students
24/48 = allow entry for 18+
14/48 = no mention of age
6/48 = over 19+
4/48 = aimed at school leavers
29/48 = no minimum literacy/numeracy requirements
9/48 = some form of minimum literacy/numeracy ‘skill level’
6/48 = require Year 10 literacy/numeracy
1/48 = requires Year 11 literacy/numeracy

Enrolments by equity groups:
- Low SES increased from 28.4% in 2011 to 31.5% in 2014
- R&R increased from 37% to 35.8%
- SwD increased from 5.75% to 7.2%
- ATSI increased from 5.6% to 6.04%
- NESB increased from 3.05% to 4.37%

Equity group representation in enabling = much higher than UG (see p.33)
Retention rates = decreased for low SES/ R&R/ SwD students in all pathways between 2009-2014
Retention rates = increased for Indigenous and NESB students
Success rates = remained stable for all groups over same period
One suggested finding: “enabling programs engender equity group students with greater resilience or stickability” - from retention data (p.55) but they need more support at UG and academic preparation needs improvement – from success data

National survey: findings
Enabling = preferred for Natural/Physical Sciences and Health
VET = preferred for Management and Commerce
Enabling students = more likely to be studying FT (85.4% compared to 76.3% VET students)
Enabling = used more by SwD
Enabling = preferred by Indigenous students
NESB and R&R/Single parents/Refugees = more commonly transition from TAFE (13.7% compared to 10.2% enabling students)
FinF/Children of single parents = use enabling more than VET
Reasons for taking enabling pathway = cheaper, better reputation, better preparation (compared to VET respondents)
97% enabling and 79% VET thought their pathway was best option
More enabling = quite a bit/very much = feelings of belonging (31.5% and 38.3%) compared with VET (20.3% and 14.5%) = similar pattern with confidence and ‘developed written communication skills’
VET students = perceived to have developed better group working ability and spoken communication skills
Enabling students = approx. double considered enabling effective more than VET students
Some qualitative data (collected from 332 students who responded to open-ended question about reasons for enrolling) on p.69 for enabling; p.70 for VET
‘Academic skills’ in 6.4.3.4 (p.72)
19% enabling students believed they should have done a TAFE course instead/ 32% VET students indicated an enabling program would have been the better option (p.75)

**Recommendations:**
Calls for greater consistency in course design to increase cross-institutional recognition of programs from other universities (“most universities only recognise their own enabling programs in terms of preparation” (p.31))
More research is needed to identify which types of programs are best (in context of diverse enabling field), “and to promote greater consistency among programs to improve transparency, quality, student mobility, and equity” (p.5)
Enabling programs could be improved:
- “by better aligning course content, structures and processes with those at the institutions’ undergraduate level, so as to help acculturate students with their post-enabling experience;
- by ensuring that the enabling program provides the students with both generic and specific knowledge;
- by enhancing the academic skills development aspects of the enabling courses; and
- by providing clearer and more transparent information to prospective students who do not always understand what an enabling program is or does” (p.5).

Need to improve data collected on students – prior VET studies

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**Context:** Discussion of enabling program for mature age students in UniSA (UniSA-PAL – Pathways for Adult Learners), taught in adult-entry secondary schools in SA. Looks at links between low-SES and patterns of early school-leaving (connecting to ‘reproduction in education’ argument – Bourdieu & Passeron)

**Aim:** To explore the “unusually positive educational outcomes” (p.291) of UniSA-PAL

**Methodology:** Student questionnaire in 2002/2003 to explore motivation for study, plus expectations and experience.

**Conclusions:** Detail offered on success rates/ transfer rates/ students’ motivation/ support. Ramsay offers suggestion that enabling programs might work better in the secondary sector/ call for better connections between secondary and higher education. “…educational disadvantage has nothing to do with lack of educational ability or potential [it has] been socially constructed by unfair and disadvantaging life circumstances, but that it can relatively easily and rapidly be reversed if the required conditions are present” (p.301)

**Core Argument:** UniSA-PAL – as a preparation for university study, not just a gateway into university – encouraged students’ confidence and high levels of motivation. Offers brief critique of postcode method for identifying SES

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**Context:** UK – Higher Education (Foundation degree; Fd) in Further Education (He in FE), examining the disjuncture between students’ and government’s perceptions of its value, and the relation to Widening
Participation policy/ strategy (and relationship to social mobility/ upskilling the UK economy). Foundation degrees are described as “intermediate, vocational-based sub-degree qualification that would meet the needs of employers as well as widening opportunities across England for those students who prefer to study in their locality” (p.454). Fd = cited as helping to widen participation. Author points to problematics with defining WP students, and to the problematic assertion that HE in FE has helped to increase WP, when the statistics show that while general numbers have grown, the proportion of students has not (it remained reasonably stable at 8% over the last 30 years)

Aim: To explore students’ ambitions, objectives for undertaking an Fd; to examine whether students had an instrumental or transformational approach, or both, to taking the Fd

Theoretical framework: Critical hermeneutics (cultural criticism to expose power dynamics; perception-text-within perceived context) to offer “an insight into how they are responding to their situation within HE in FE and creating meaning of their specific context and, in so doing, revealing structural and social dynamics” (p.457)

Methodology: Focus groups/ interviews with Fd students (n=53), majority of whom were PT and over 25 years old (see p.458 for details)

Findings:
Students’ ambitions: younger/ full-time students = preoccupied with potential job/career benefits of taking the course/ insurance for the future in/on job market – reveal a concern with becoming self-entrepreneurs. Mature age students = more cynical about credentialism in the system; for others the Fd was the pathway to a long-held ambition (but author points to work that disputes whether investment in HE leads to desired results for students or employers. Mature age students were somewhat aware of this and acknowledged that Fd would skill them to be ‘associate professionals’.

Perceptions of HE students/ landscape: Younger students were aware of the stratified HE system, expressing a perception that an Fd was ‘second best’ in both the HE landscape, and for employment. Author draws on arguments that working class students are more likely to find HE more risky than FE, and that by taking an Fd, they are further perpetuating their disadvantage to some degree (in relation to the ‘real degree’ of HE):
“Drawing on the evidence from the data, it does appear that, given the already perceived disadvantaged position of vocational students, the undertaking of an Fd becomes a further confirmation of their position in the HE hierarchy and, potentially, their position in society, as opposed to the projected image of a transition into HE and the wider opportunities that can be offered which can support social mobility as well as career prospects” (p.461–2). Students also discussed perceived stigma of doing an Fd in a college (connecting with Billet’s 2010 notion of ‘self-subjugation’), but they also discussed choosing an institution that is “in their comfort zone” (p.464), offering more support than HE is perceived to offer.

Core Argument: There was a difference between younger and mature age students, supporting the contention of Nelson (2006) that speaks to a duality in Fd students. Foundation degrees are open to critique, as perpetuating existing social divisions/ inequitable participation in higher forms of education and careers: “Whilst agency may offer some individuals opportunities to access possibilities of social mobility, the indication
from this study is that structural social inequalities are a factor in limiting and defining individuals’ identity and mobility” (p.465).


**Context:** Australia has significant numbers of Year 12 non-completers (including school leavers who exit at earlier points in their secondary schooling), which lends significance to educational policies, practices and research surrounding educational re-entry pathways/second chance’ education. Factors influencing student non-completion are typically compounding and include parental occupation and education (low SES students are less likely to complete), family structure (students from single-parent and step-parent families are less likely to complete), gender (boys are less likely to complete because they experience fewer barriers to gaining an apprenticeship), language background (those from a language background other than English are less likely to complete), Indigenous status (Indigenous students are less likely to complete), academic achievement (students who struggle academically are less likely to complete), desire to get a job and earn an income, negative experiences of school or to undertake other training or study. However, the experiences of young people need to be considered in the context of the risk society, and wherein social structures may continue to have significant impacts on the experiences and choices of young people which they navigate through utilising their agency. Engaging in second chance education is part of this exercise of personal agency.

**Aim:** To “open up current educational policy discourse in Australia that hitherto and to a large extent still is preoccupied with improving retention and linear school to work transitions” (p. 104). The focus of this paper is TAFE; in this context “the term enabling courses’ is used to describe a range of pre-vocational courses, bridging courses, literacy and numeracy programs, job seeker preparation and employment skills development programs and life skills programs aimed at various target equity groups” (p. 119).

**Methodology:** Literature review; review of “findings from the case studies of second chance education in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia” (p. 128).

**Findings:** Many dominant metaphors about youth engagement with education reinforce concepts of linear education to work “pathways” (p. 112). The support available to young people “prior to early departure, at the point of early departure, after departure, at the re-entry stage and during the period of second chance education are limited, ad hoc and fragmented” (p. 113). The complex nature of student transitions into and out of education are not accounted for in research. Re-engaging with second-chance education signifies students’ “struggle to reconstruct their educational identities and experience a sense of self-worth… [studies suggest that] the real value of these programs is to be found in the intangible benefits that students derived from them” (p. 114-5). Between 1998-2001 studies suggest the number of 15 to 19-year-old people engaging in enabling courses at TAFE increased to be the most represented demographic group in enabling courses; these students were disproportionately from equity categories (e.g. high representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from rural and regional areas). Factors found to influence enrolment in TAFE include low SES and eligibility for government study assistance, the positive relationships established between staff and students, accessibility and ease of articulation through educational pathways, and student-centred pedagogies and practices. It is difficult to compare outcomes for Year 12 completers and this student cohort as the aim of second chance education can vary, however TAFE can facilitate successful transitions to other
forms of education and into the workplace. Policy makers continue to focus on linear transitions and retaining students through secondary education when it behooves them to embrace open discussion of the uncertainties faced by young people and their agency in making educational and employment decisions. Refusing to do so posits that young people are passive, second chance education is framed as deficit, those who engage in non-linear pathways are further alienated, and policies are less effective and more reactive. Highlights ways in which this is done well in international education contexts: Danish Production Schools for students experiencing difficulties transitioning through school; Netherlands has an emphasis in educational progression sideways rather than hierarchically, and on cross-agency support; New Zealand and the Alternative Education Policy; Israel and the establishment of external schools.

**Core argument:** “educational policy and practice should allow for the de-standardised, fractured and protracted nature of youth transitions” (109).

|---|
| **Context:** Enabling program at USQ for Year 12 leavers (TPP Intensive School = TPPIS), particular focus on low SES students. Course is designed to address academic communication, numeracy, study management strategies, career development and raise aspirations. Program incorporates social media (closed group on Facebook) as purposeful strategy to increase participation – to aid transition and expand social networks. TPPIS = summer school: “pre-tertiary bridging program”. Sounds like FB was used in similar way to VLE (posting videos/lecture PowerPoints/assessment templates etc. as well as sharing photos of accommodation etc.) **Theoretical frame:** Draws loosely on notion of capital (but no ref to Bourdieu) **Methodology:** Participants = 20 17-18 low SES school leavers from Toowoomba, Brisbane or Ipswich and some rural towns **Findings:**
- 67% of student-participants = rated Facebook TPPIS site as excellent; 33% = good;
- Students tended to check FB more than VLE: “young people from LSES backgrounds are less likely to have access to social networks which value educational achievement and facilitate successful transitions to career opportunities” (p.109);
**Core argument:** Strong social networks = important factor in career development and study success (80% of sample group moved onto UG study) |
| **Context:** Widening Participation in the UK; Foundation Year programs for students who are underqualified for undergraduate study: FY for WP and for retention. Authors seek to examine two psychometric tools (ABC and PEL) to identify students at risk of attrition. Authors note that WP without attrition is a challenge for universities across the sector. Authors argue that “WP initiatives are only successful if the students complete their programme of study as early withdrawal is a waste of resources for both the individual student…and the institution” (p.51). Authors note that transition is complicated for many reasons, and so identifying people likely to withdraw early in the course is prudent. **Aim:** To “ascertain whether it is possible to use psychometric measures with students on a Foundation Year (FY) programme at the start of the academic year, to identify those at risk of non-completion” (p.50) |

**AUS Annotation written by Evonne Irwin

**Keywords:** STEPS, enabling, preparatory, bridging

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| **Methodology:** Quantitative: survey instrument based on combination of Academic Behaviour Confidence (ABC) and Performance Expectation Ladder (PEL) scales. Students from 4 FY programs across 2 post-92 universities participated at the start and end of the program (n=90). Details of study on p.58–60. Analytic approach detailed on p.61.

**Findings:** PEL not seemingly useful but ABC subscales of Grades and Attendance appear to flag issues:
- Grades negatively predicted success: aka, students with high grades = more likely to withdraw if expectations are not met
- Non-attendance from week 1 correlates with subsequent progression issues
- For later in the year, ABC data shows that confidence appears to diminish for withdrawers at Easter and significant differences between two groups (persisters, withdrawers) increasing from that point. Withdrawers appeared to experience lowered self-efficacy as they got closer to the end of the FY. The withdrawers also experienced a drop in marks. Authors question whether intervention at this late stage might help.
- Authors note that only 15% were receiving marks under the national average, suggesting “that participants were demonstrating a level of unrealistic optimism” – the authors question whether this might be in part related to shifts in the relationship between marks and descriptors between school and university

**Core Argument:** Doubt around future attendance and unrealistic expectations about marks can be identified early and are likely associated with later progression issues. |

| Context: This paper examines the 2011 re-shaping of STEPS (Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies), an enabling program offered by CQUniversity, following an external review. CQUniversity is a large regional university (the largest in Australia at the time of publication) with 20 delivery sites across Australia and a high proportion of mature-age, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, First-in Family and low socioeconomic background students. The STEPS program was established in 1985 out of Commonwealth Government Higher Education Equity Program funding; it has the prime objective of “student articulation into and successful completion of undergraduate study” and aligns with CQUniversity’s strategic mission of accessibility and inclusion.

**Aim:** To demonstrate how student feedback can be used for continuous improvement strategies in an enabling program.

**Methodology:** Case study, incorporating two face-to-face semi-structured focus groups (n=10) and an online open-ended questions survey. One focus group was conducted on the Bundaberg campus and the other with students studying in the Distance mode, at the Bundaberg campus, with online video links to Brisbane, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay and Noosa campuses. Participants were either current STEPS students or former STEPS students who had entered undergraduate study. 111 students completed the online survey which collected demographic data as well as asked a series of open-ended questions. 51 out of the 111 survey respondents were current undergraduate students, while the remaining 60 were current STEPS students (with the exception of a small number who had withdrawn from STEPS or who had completed and decided not to continue on to undergraduate study).

**Findings:** Five themes were identified: flexibility; online testing and interview; required study plan; role of the
Access Coordinator; benefits of a curriculum refresh. Participants valued the flexibility offered by the remodeled program, stating that they would have found it difficult to manage the previous requirement of studying four courses at once due to various reasons such as family and work commitments and specific learning needs. Students also valued the flexibility offered by the distance mode of the program and the ability to take a course more than once if the first attempt was unsuccessful. Flexibility and confidence were linked in the data.

The online diagnostic testing was also valued by participants who saw the need for such entry testing, despite some participants indicating frustration with technical issues.

The Required Study Plan was also viewed positively by participants especially because it was flexible and could be re-negotiated depending on circumstances such as work, family and course results.

Access Coordinators were considered by participants to be essential to their success. Staff in these roles were perceived by participants as “advisor counsellor and administrator”.

Participants also valued the curriculum refresh with the core course, Preparation Skills for University at the centre, however, some survey participants in particular found the core course “not particularly helpful”.

Limitations: This is a small-scale, internal study.

Core Argument: The changes made to the STEPS program have been positive moves, ensuring greater flexibility and a strategic and more rigorous academic orientation. Student feedback from the data gathered will be taken to relevant program committees, while immediately actionable recommendations will be undertaken.

Context: Examines enabling education from perspective of technological change (modes/media), including MOOCs. Presents preliminary research from examination of online enabling program (Open Foundation online). Argues that widening participation = driven by two drivers: federal policy and university missions. Enabling students = 15-17% of commencing UG students. Literature review = discussion of online learning (broadly from OU UK) – flexibility, more used by ethnic groups in UK, less attractive to teachers. Research suggests that online learners perform as well as face-to-face learners

Aim: To compare participation rates of online and part-time OF learners. Paper “contrasts the participation rates of mature-aged, female, low SES, regional/remote and Indigenous students in the online program with those from the on-campus offering of Open Foundation, and with national average participation rates” (p.38).

Methodology: Quantitative statistics: student data from UON’s NUSTAR from 2008-2013 from 5 equity groups: students over 25 (mature age = experiences tend to differ post-25), Indigenous, women, low SES (postcode method) and R&R (postcode method). Qualitative data also collected from discussion boards and blogs

Findings: Online OF= consistently enrolls higher numbers of equity group students than on-campus offering; in particular women, r&r and low SES are well represented
58.1% online = mature age (compared with 45.8% on campus)
70+% = female (compared with 55-60% on campus): “Student feedback has consistently demonstrated that many female students in Open Foundation Online value the opportunity to balance study with caring for family
and children” (p.47) and offers opportunities to take up chances postponed due to mothering
Average 31% = low SES
Students from across Australia = enrolled on OF online
33.1% online students = R&R (national university average = 20.4%)
Indigenous students= average 2.5+% of online/offline enabling
Student confidence = recurring theme
**Core argument:** Online enabling offerings “can make a valuable contribution to widening participation in higher education” (p.38). Notes challenges to ongoing sustainability of enabling with push to expand sub-degree programs (Kemp & Norton; see p.51)

| Shah, M. & Whannell, R. (2016). Open access enabling courses: risking academic standards or meeting equity aspirations, Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, 21(2–3), 51–62. | **Context:** Expansion in enabling courses in Australia at public and private institutions. Enabling courses are not regulated by the AQF and in the absence of external accreditation there is a risk of failing to monitor the academic standards and quality of the programs and how well students are prepared for undergraduate success.

**Central argument:** “...the lack of standards across the sector has the potential to put the quality of education at risk [and] ...the academic standards in open access enabling courses should be regulated and monitored appropriately to maintain standards, and to ensure that such courses are preparing for student success in undergraduate study.” (p. 2)

**Methodology:** Literature review + experience of authors as teachers and researchers in enabling programs.

**Limitations:** Makes some unsubstantiated claims, e.g., “some young students enrolling in the course with the aim of obtaining social security payments . . .” (p. 6)

**Discussion:** 10 issues around academic standards are highlighted: attrition; open access; course design and learning outcomes; student assessment; teaching quality; lack of regulation; inclusive academic support services; robust data and information systems; risk of lower level of preparation for undergrad study; complacency.

**Conclusion:** Calls for accreditation and professional standards for open access enabling sector.

| Sharp, S., O’Rourke, J., Lane, J., & Hays, A-M. (2014). Cohesion, coherence and connectedness: The 3C model of enabling-course design to support student transition to university. Proceedings of International Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education (pp. 14-28). Brisbane, Australia. | **Aims:** Paper reports the redevelopment of the University Preparation Course at ECU. The evaluation focused on the ‘development and implementation of strategies to inspire, retain and assist UPC students to complete the course and pursue appropriate pathways for further study’. The redevelopment utilised transition pedagogy and aimed to ‘develop and deliver a cohesive, coherent and connected program to support student transition to tertiary study’ (3C model). A mixed methods study was conducted to measure the impact of the implementation of a 3C model of enabling course design.

**Background:** Details importance of enabling in transitioning non traditional students to HE. Refers to Bradley review and to the 2014 Federal government budget report which changed the unemployment benefits scheme to being an “earn or learn” policy. The paper foreshadows that this change may impact the demand for access to HE.

University Preparation Course (UPC) provides alternative entry for students from diverse educational, social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Program focuses on school leavers and mature age students. Over 1000 students per year graduate from the UPC annually and a large proportion transition to UG 80-82 %).
UPC is a one semester full time course that consists of 5 units. 3 units are compulsory. UPC curriculum focusses on a ‘learning journey’ (central to UG ECU curriculum design) which incorporates university wide developmental and cohesive approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. The approach also integrates elements of first year transition pedagogy featuring ‘institutional integration, coordination and coherence and an intentionally designed’ curricula which aims to accommodate the needs of diverse cohorts and facilitate increased retention.

**Procedure:** Mixed methods utilising online student survey (n=450) and semi structured interviews with staff. Course analytics relating to retention and teaching evaluations were also used.

**Findings:** The UPC had a relatively high rate of transitions to UG (80-82%) generally during the period. Student evaluations showed higher than average student satisfaction during the period. Student surveys indicated that the UPC increased student confidence, reduced anxiety, improved study techniques, implemented deeper learning strategies. Cohesion, coherence and connectedness were also found to be important aspects underpinning successful transitions. These aspects guided the leadership and course design of the UPC and the study indicated that ‘building a collaborative course culture based on a 3C model of cohesion, coherence and connectedness, which used interdependently, improves students’ confidence, skills and knowledge in their transition to undergraduate tertiary study’.


**Context:** Murdoch University, WA, equity/enabling program, UniAccess, in the context of Australian and Western Australian widening participation policies as well as economic productivity models and human brain development evidence.

**Aim:** To demonstrate that widening access, or increasing participation, in higher education “does not always translate into increased benefit for students” (abstract) from the defined equity groups.

**Methodology:** Statistical data regarding outcomes of UniAccess students reviewed against the economic and human development theories of Carneiro and Heckman (2003) and Mustard (2006). Further, initiatives to increase substantive equality for ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘under-served’ higher education students in South Africa and the US are highlighted.

**Findings:** From the review of policy, theory and practice, as well as program statistical data, the authors propose an expansion of the enabling program at Murdoch University from a four-week program to a semester-long program. This has resulted in the 12-week OnTrack program with three modules covering university culture; engaging with knowledge communities; engaging in specialist knowledges and research. A fourth module is designed for students for whom English is an additional language. It is hoped that the curriculum, pedagogy and pastoral care embedded in the new program will resource students to “pursue their undergraduate studies with sufficient confidence and application” (p. 25).

**Core Argument:** Increasing access to higher education is not all that is needed to improve outcomes for students from ‘equity’ groups. An increase in transitional support needs to be embedded in current enabling programs to improve ‘substantive equality’.

### Smyth, J. & Harrison, T. (2015). *What it means to be studying against the grain of neoliberalism in a community-*

**Context:** Community-based university study. In context of Australia, which is “deeply confused and conflicted around a policy discourse of inclusion that is sutured within an existential context heavily committed
Aims to the tenets of neoliberalism” (p.155). For low SES students in particular (authors problematize this term and ‘disadvantaged’) it is difficult to access university (as seen in steady figures of under-representation of people from lowest SES quartile). Authors describe misappropriation of ‘social justice’ orientations into neoliberal discourses/policies as “The middle class has become somewhat adept at pursuing its own interests, while at the same time, seeking to claim otherwise” (p.156) = concealment of power. Class = relational and lived (not a set of attributes or characteristics). Offers critique of higher education as high level exercise in power – particularly seeking to conceal admissions procedures, in particular the lack of nuance in the use of ATAR: “The short story about what is problematic about the ATAR is that it pays no heed to socio-cultural circumstances” (p.158). Describes neoliberalism as “reframing identity by inscribing it with a particular ensemble of notions: the supremacy of invisible market forces as the ultimate means of regulating all social activities; the inevitability of competition as a result of the operation of global forces; the retreat of the state to a focus on performative policy indicators; success based on meritocracy with rewards following by dint of personal efforts; and the cultivation of an entrepreneurial self through self-responsibilisation” (p.159). Neoliberalism forces the blame for ‘failure’ on students for having made ‘bad choices’ and positions them as ‘flawed consumers’ (Bauman, 2007).

Aim: To explore experiences of one student (case study) who took part in community-based program and challenges and obstacles he faced because of HE system and neoliberal policy discourses.

Theoretical frame: Takes a ‘capacities’ approach (as opposed to focus on barriers) – see Sellar and Gale (2011)

Methodology: To describe BA Griffin (community engagement program: not its real name) – aimed at young people without conventional entry requirements (e.g. not good VCE preparation) in low SES regional city in Victoria. Students accepted into program on basis of EOI and/or recommendation of someone who knew them well. Program based on pedagogical model = democratic and engaging and uses familiar school/community settings: 3-hour workshop based on ‘critical dialogue’ model (critical pedagogical underpinnings). Not presented as second chance education; “The key aim of the programme is to prepare students to succeed in a mainstream university setting in second year and have flexibility in programme choice” (p.163). Paper draws from larger critical ethnographic longitudinal tracking study over 3 years (same students into UG study).

Presents case study of ‘Jake’

Findings:

Challenges faced by Jake = the volume and diversity of reading to be undertaken and the new experience of writing and referencing essays

Jake drew on peers, support staff in program (teachers in secondary college + UG students from university) … interesting silence on academic staff

Suggestion that direct school-university transition = ‘too daunting’.

Analysis = Jake = missed out on ‘the structure of feeling’ (Williams, 1989) that makes university feel ‘normal’ or ritualized and he has lack of access to grapevine knowledge. Jake had to move away from friends/old peers, “and he had to sacrifice old values for the new ones he was taking on” (p.167).
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<th>Context:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Enabling pedagogies in the Foundation Studies program at UniSA. Author argues that increased diversity resulting from widening participation require responsive teaching and learning approaches.</td>
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<td>To “outline a successful College model for teaching diverse students and provide strategies for embedding relevant pedagogies” and “consider the role of enabling programs in widening university participation and supporting diverse student needs” (p.115-116).</td>
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<th>Methodology:</th>
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<td>Reflection on author’s teaching practice (including student evaluations)</td>
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<th>Findings:</th>
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<td>Reflection on practice identifies three types of pedagogy: transition pedagogy, inclusive pedagogy, critical pedagogy. Author offers examples of each type.</td>
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<td>Considered teaching approaches help “enabling programs [to] actively play a role in ensuring that more people realise their aspirations and potential through university study, while simultaneously supporting societal transformation through greater social inclusion” (p.122).</td>
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<td>Demand for digital literacies/ space for developing digital literacies offered by enabling programs. Author discusses the digital literacy course in the context of inclusive, strengths-based education approaches</td>
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<td>To discuss evaluation of a digital literacy course (Digital Literacy: Screen, Web and New Media) built on principles of Universal Design for Learning and critical pedagogy</td>
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<th>Conclusions:</th>
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<td>Digital literacy course designed with UDL, critical and inclusive approaches to engage students from the start: “Embedding these principles from the start ensures that course content caters for diverse student needs and interests, allowing high levels of student choice, which enables students to work to their preferences and strengths in learning and assessments” (p.69). It adopted a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) approach to encourage students to “engage in interactive processes” with familiar tools (p.69). Students engaged with range of cutting-edge digital packages/ multimedia tools in a dialogic manner with teaching staff. Course positions students as future industry professionals. Author argues the approach is inclusive because it “provides opportunities to connect through a shared language and assists students to develop meaningful content for this environment, while also demonstrating their attainment of threshold concepts” (p.72) and students can make active choices about the material. Students are encouraged to take risks and trial new ideas. Evaluation data/ student feedback suggest that students like the course and perceived as “a challenging and positive learning experience” (p.75)</td>
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<td>Offers argument about importance of careful design in enabling education courses.</td>
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Critical Pedagogy, Enabling Programs, Widening Participation, Australia

Theoretical frame: Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1994) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992)
Methodology: Case study in practice in 3 programs: English Language Studies, Critical Literacy, University Studies (all = compulsory, but students choose either ELS or CL)
Discussion: Authors note limitations of teaching in mainstream language, thus restricting possibilities for meaning making: “thus, the role and voices of minority language speakers have effectively been silenced and devalued” (p.60). Learning tasks in English Language Studies = “enable the students to think about the function and power language plays in their lives” (p.61) – to set learning goals, reflect on them (personalizing = enhances critical awareness) – critique the role of English in globalized world as homogenizer. In Critical Literacy, students work with multiple texts and critique purpose and messages conveyed, particularly through text analysis: “critical text analysis helps students understand issues of power and identify which groups are subjugated or oppressed for the benefit of others” (p.62). University Studies = students consider own learning experiences within limitations of system.
Core Argument: Critical pedagogy “can support students to become more empowered to create change” (p.63). 'Acquiring' academic literacy = insufficient if not tied to personal meaning making and relevance.

Context: Qualitative study as part of doctoral thesis carried out at the University of Newcastle with mature-age undergraduate students in second and final year of study. All participants entered via an alternative pathway, with most having completed the University of Newcastle’s Open Foundation program (considered a key equity program at the University of Newcastle). Study is informed by author’s personal experience as a student counsellor at the University of Newcastle, a regional university with a high proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and high proportion of mature age students (especially at its Central Coast campus).

Aim: To give voice to the experiences of mature-age, ‘alternative entry’ undergraduate students in order to more clearly understand and support their particular issues for better and more appropriate support upon entry, while participating and for success in completion.
Methodology: 20 participants (15 female, 5 male) all in at least their second year of undergraduate study. 11 participants studying full-time and 9 studying part-time. Age range: 32–52, median age: 40. First in family: 17.
Findings: Five broad initial themes are identified from the data: Beginnings; Challenges; Resilience; Identity; and Future.
Reasons for Beginning for students in the study included: significant events such as children starting school, or a broken partnership acting as a catalyst to begin study; a life-long dream or expectation for higher education; or something unpredictable and unexpected. Personal and societal barriers along with vision, mission and identity barriers prevented participants from beginning their studies earlier. For example, many of the women expressed a lack of encouragement from family and a sense of not being ‘smart enough’. Negative experiences in compulsory schooling were also a factor for not ‘beginning’ sooner for some participants, along with significant life events impeding progression through schooling and on to higher education at crucial moments.
Participants spoke of significant people who influenced their decision to begin higher education, including parents, friends, partners and teachers. For others, more positive experiences of post-school education were the catalyst to continue on to study in higher education. Alternative entry schemes and programs made it possible for the participants to begin their higher education. In this study, the Open Foundation program at the University of Newcastle provided a pathway for 18 of the participants. Many of the female participants expressed anxiety when recalling their early higher education studies, while male participants generally recalled being confident, however, concerned about the financial implications of giving up work to study. Challenges for students in this study are categorised as financial; lack of time; organisation and prioritising; managing changing dynamics with partners and children; and balancing home life with study. For some of the female participants, growing confidence and knowledge resulting from study created pressure within relationships with two participants ending their relationships because of resistance from their partners to their study. Other participants found that their engagement with study affected their relationships in positive ways. However, all participants expressed a struggle with managing all of the demands of family life, study and paid work. For women in the study, the demands of managing a household were an additional burden and many expressed guilt, self-blame and failure over not fulfilling their roles as caregivers to children. The men in the study found that family life and time adjusted around their study schedules, whereas women participants expressed adjustments they made to their study so as not to impinge on established family routines. Resilience for students was achieved through help and support from friends, family and institutional mechanisms such as counselling, lecturers and learning support. Chief among support and help, though, was that gained via friendships and assistance from fellow students. Determination and a love of learning were other factors of resilience for participants. For women, in particular, a growth in independence informed their resilience and increased determination to complete their studies. A number of these female participants seemed to value the ‘legitimate’ time alone from the family and independence that study gave them. All participants expressed changes in their own identity and the ways others perceived them as a result of study in higher education. Women reported internal transformations, whereas men reported changes as additions to their previous selves and personal and professional skills. All participants viewed study in higher education as a positive experience, with only time and money being lost or missed. Male participants expressed certainty about their post-study future. Many of the women, on the other hand, were less certain about their futures, however, some women had specific post-study ambitions, often centring on financial and personal independence. Both women and men participants felt their dreams would be realised in the future for themselves and for their children, therefore, affording the possibility for generational change.

Limitations: The author concedes that her analysis reported in this paper is preliminary, however, it is connected throughout with reference to recent supporting literature.

Core Argument: Equity-based Enabling programs create opportunities for socially and educationally disadvantaged mature-age students — who are underrepresented in higher education — to enter university. These opportunities can result in transformative experiences, increasing confidence and paving the way for the realisation of future ambitions and dreams. Public higher education institutions are crucial in providing such
opportunities for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Mature-age learners should be considered as individuals with a unique set of social, educational, personal and vocational experiences. Public institutions should provide programs which not only allow entry to higher education, but which provide appropriate, ongoing support to help mature-age students remain in education and successfully complete their programs of study.


AUS Annotation written by Evonne Irwin

| Keywords: | first, family, students, opportunity, open, online, entry, higher, education, learning, experiences |

### Context

First in Family students studying online, open entry, undergraduate units with the Open University Australia (OUA). The OUA is a commercial enterprise that works with 13 (at the time of publication) Australian universities to offer open entry online higher education; it has an annual enrolment of over 40,000 students (OUA, 2015). 67.7% of OUA students come from families where neither parent has university qualifications. While online study provides access to higher education for students who, for a variety of reasons including financial and educational disadvantage, cannot take 'traditional', face-to-face pathways, it also comes with low completion rates.

### Aim

To report on the experiences of mature-age students studying open entry undergraduate units online via the OUA.

### Methodology

Narrative methods were used to interview, design the survey/interview questions and analyse the data. In-depth semi-structured phone interviews (n=43) were conducted and a detailed survey administered (n=44), making the total number of participants, 87. Interviews and surveys covered the same themes including: motivations to study; experiences so far; reactions from family, friends, colleagues; managing their studies; any support received; the impact their journey had so far; and specifically why they chose an online mode of study, how they experienced that online mode and any specific study strategies they employed. Demographic data was also gathered from participants.

### Findings

85 of the 87 participants were mature-age students and most were partnered females with children. Most participants were in paid work.

Participants expressed a desire to study based on the motivation to improve their lives and their children’s lives via more secure employment and increased income as well as to fulfil personal dreams and ambitions. Participants specifically chose online study for the promised flexibility. This allowed work, care-giving and other responsibilities to continue. The OUA open entry units offered also gave participants an avenue to begin in higher education without the usual necessary entry qualifications. This opportunity to study in higher education is also tied to family expectations (where university study is not the norm) and is situated in a “social milieu that sometimes positively and sometimes negatively influences the student’s experience” (157).

Support from outside the institution in the form of friends, colleagues and family is just as, or more, important to online students as the support provided institutionally. Families also played an important part in inspiring and encouraging participants to enter their studies. Family members also acted as motivators during participants’ study, although some participants experienced negative or mixed reactions from family, including parents who did not understand the higher education system, nor their children’s choice to enter it. In summary, external support networks comprising family, colleagues and friends were important for participants to maintain their motivation for online study.

Despite attending university in ‘virtual’ spaces, participants expressed the personal transformative nature of
their study in higher education. This was particularly the case for women participants, however, men expressed transformation with respect to employment.

**Core Argument:** While widening access to higher education is one benefit for online learning, it is not enough to only provide access. Institutional supports for online cohorts (specifically mature-age) should:

- understand that online cohorts have high proportions of first-in-family students who may need to build confidence and gain experience in university environments; recognize that online cohorts are highly motivated to improve their lives and want to work hard to fulfill their objectives; try to accommodate the diverse and complex needs of online mature-age students who experience multiple responsibilities outside of their studies;
- provide timely and appropriate outreach and proactive support; acknowledge the role families and other external networks play in supporting online students; develop strategies to better include families and communities in the learning journeys of online students.

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**Taylor, J.A. & Galligan, L. (2005).** *Research into research on adults in bridging mathematics: the past, the present and the future.* In M. Horne & B. Marr (eds), Proceedings of Connecting voices in adult mathematics and numeracy: practitioners, researchers and learners: Adults Learning Mathematics (ALM) 12th Annual International Conference jointly with the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) and in cooperation with the Australasian Bridging Mathematics Network Mathematics Network (BMN), Melbourne, Vic., 3–7 July, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Vic.

**Context:** Traces the history of the Bridging Mathematics Network (BMN): an informal group of practitioners working in bridging mathematics. Focuses on the question: ‘What is bridging mathematics?’ and look at the development of bridging mathematics in the context of its history. Locates the work in a context of a “wide diversity of programs and approaches” because “Each university sets up and manages its programs at its own discretion.” (p. 2). Importance of Bridging Mathematics as a field of enquiry due to continuing lower high school achievement in maths and lack of entry prerequisites at university level means bridging programs gain greater importance. (p. 9–10).

**Aims:** To evaluate the success of the BMN in addressing its research goals; and to answer five questions:

- What do we teach? How do we teach it? Who will teach it? What do we do about the changing technologies?
- Is Bridging Mathematics still necessary in 2005 and beyond?

**Methodology:** Conference participation and Conference proceedings analysed (number and nature of papers) between 1992 and 2002. Proceedings analysed using grounded theory.

**Findings:** Number of papers remained constant at between 11 and 32 per year with most papers about teaching and practice (44%) and all papers (even those described as ‘research’) usually descriptive with only one or two using an underpinning theoretical framework. The BMI hasn’t fulfilled their research mission, but reasons may be lack of connectedness of practitioners and the under-theorisation of adults learning mathematics (p. 6).

**Relevance:** Five questions are posed at the end of article which are the launch pad for this project: How is success defined in bridging mathematics activities? What are the numeracy demands on entry to ‘non-mathematical’ university study? What are effective ways to support that study? Are successful bridging students successful university students? Is there more than mathematics? (p. 10)

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**Context:** Australian enabling programs: performance and experience of students/ regional Australian university (SCU). Authors work from the understanding that enabling students perform better in their undergraduate studies than their peers who entered their studies via a ‘traditional’/ ATAR pathway. Focus on strengths.
### Aim:
To explore “the performance and experience of students studying a range of undergraduate degrees after completing an enabling programme in a regional Australian university” (abstract).

### Methodology:
Mixed methods: authors draw on institutional data (enrolments/ performance); qualitative data collection: 1) individual interviews with post-enabling students (n=7) now studying in second year of UG program; questions asked covered:
- “Choosing to study at the university, their pathway to the university and motivations to study here.
- Studying at the university, what helps them to learn and how university fits in with their lives.
- Transition to undergraduate study, the impact of the enabling experience on their undergraduate study.
- Future thoughts with regards to their plans after studies have finished” (p.4)
2) Interviews with educators working in UG programs (n=5 from 5 different departments: Arts and Social Sciences; Business and Tourism; Education; Environment, Engineering and Science; and Health and Human Sciences).

### Findings:
**Institutional data:** SCU has approximately 50% attrition rate (as per Hodges et al., 2013 and Whannell & Whannell, 2014). Once completed, 80% of enabling students enrol in undergraduate studies [at SCU], 83% of whom go into nursing, education, social sciences, arts, midwifery, psychology or environmental science (see p.5). Post-enabling students have consistently higher success rate than ‘traditional’ students (mean performance rate = 80.3% compared with 75.4%, over 2011–2017), higher GPA (4.25 compared to 3.91) and higher retention rates (mean retention rate 68% compared to 63%).

**Student interview data:** major themes = confidence, approaches to studying, managing ‘lifeload’ (competing challenges), ‘skills’ [SB: they are better described as practices], appreciation of staff and teaching.

**Staff interview data:** enabling program = held in “high esteem”, particularly with regard to students’ digital literacy. Educators also perceived that post-enabling students are more successful [no definition of success offered] – some of this relates to perceived motivation and confidence, and time management. Other themes include confidence and attitudes to study.

### Core Argument:
Standard argument about enabling programs are important.

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Aims: Paper describes the student centred activities undertaken within the Pathways to University course at Auckland University of Technology. Activities such as personalised care for students enrolled in the program increased combined with the personal achievement of being accepted into the program appeared to help retain students.

**Background:** Introduction reflects on government policy in NZ to build a skilled and adaptable workforce, improve recruitment, retention and success of Maori and Pasifika people with low educational achievement in HE. Describes the Auckland University of Technology priority of fostering equity and the role of PTE’s (Private Training Establishments) in delivering education to under-represented groups. Paper describes the ‘Pathways to University’ scholarship style program designed to assist second chance learners to transition to university. Pathways was offered to students who had completed a foundation program run by a PTE and then had undertaken interviews to successfully enrol in a mainstream AUT course of their choice. The Pathways...
program was staffed with personnel who understand the PTE environment (more personalised, vocationally focused, smaller classes) and who provide individual support and pastoral care to students. **Pathways to University Program**: Program entry is via recommendation from PTE tutors. Pathways program students receive free career advice, pastoral care is provided by staff and structured support is provided. Students are also recommended to use university structures such as Maori and Pasifika specific meeting places, and student mentoring schemes. Specialised orientation was also provided. **Findings**: Retention analytics show increased retention of students enrolled in pathways program.

| Vernon, L.; Watson, S.; Moore, W. & Seddon, S. (2019). | **Context**: Enabling programs offered in low SES high schools. Low SES participation/underrepresentation in Australian higher education, particularly in terms of school articulation and obtaining an ATAR for university entry. Authors note literature that supports idea that well-resourced (higher SES) schools facilitate direct transition to university and make connections with teacher quality/management of behavioural issues and disruption. Authors also note demotivating effects of NAPLAN, and the limiting effects of a reduced suite of academic subjects for HSC. Authors argue that underpinning these factors is the assumption that low SES students should go into VET. Local cultural patterns also make “it difficult for individuals living in these regions to gain the skills they need to reduce their likelihood of repeating the cycle of entrenched disadvantage” (p.491). Authors also review literature on aspirations. **Aim**: To “test whether academic encouragement supported students’ school satisfaction and increased their desire for, expectation of and belief in the possibility of university study and whether differences were evident depending on pathway of study: the ATAR pathway versus a Year 12 access enabling pathway program called TLC110” (abstract). Hypothesis: “students that experience high-quality teacher and school encouragement and have an academic pathway will have high levels of school satisfaction which will associate with high support for desires, expectations and belief in the possibility of university study” (p.494) **Theoretical frame**: Bourdieu: capital **Methodology**: Survey of high school students. Two studies: 1) survey data (pre-, post-intervention - (n=257; 58%); 2) exploration of past TLC110 students’ experiences/perceptions of differences between ‘normal’ classes and TLC100 (n=8). Survey included items on desires, expectations, beliefs, engagement between students and teachers, school satisfaction. **Findings:** **Survey results:** University desires, expectations, beliefs = relatively high for both groups **ATAR students** = “high school and teacher encouragement increased school satisfaction, which led to higher university desire, belief and expectation” + early belief correlated positively with later belief and early expectations increased later expectations (p.500). School encouragement negatively associated with perception of possibility of obtaining a university degree (likely because of focus on hard work and good grades) **TLC110 students** = teacher but not school encouragement had positive relationship with school
satisfaction, but school satisfaction not associated with university beliefs, desires or expectations. Focus groups: students spoke about sense of welcome, encouragement to contribute and critically engage in ways that were markedly different from school, which they characterized as offering “[a] lack of support and encouragement for their goals which negatively impacted on their ability to engage with their work and put in the sustained effort needed to succeed” (p.501). This increased own expectations of success at university. **Core Argument:** Enabling courses in school “goes some way towards ameliorating the within-school and between-school differences” (p.502).

Hypothesis confirmed: “[students who] experience high-quality teacher and school encouragement and have an academic pathway will have high school satisfaction which, in turn, will support high desires, expectations and belief of university study” (p.504)

**Aim:** Attrition and achievement of 295 students (on-campus). Research Question: What influence do social relationships have on academic attrition and achievement for students in a tertiary bridging program at a regional university?  
**Methodology:** Questionnaire  
**Conclusions:** Three main factors that influence completion: Age - attrition mostly happens with younger students (18-24); Attendance – higher attrition for lower attendance patterns; Academic performance on first assessment task; Peer support – higher levels of support; lower attrition  
**Core Argument:** Interesting comments on academic performance/1st assessment |
| --- | --- |
| Whannell, R. (2013b). First-in-family students in a tertiary bridging program: Does it really make a difference?, *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning,* 15(3), 6–21. | **Context:** Examines importance of cultural capital in FinF enabling students’ experiences (regional university, Australia). 50% of students in enabling course had previously been found to have not completed secondary school (Whannell, Whannell & Lynch, 2010)  
**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital (aka lack of for FinF students)  
**Methodology:** Quantitative: custom survey completed by 294 (47% of total cohort) students at two different points in the semester (week 3 and week 12), and from two different cohorts (S2, 2010; S1, 2011). Students = 32%m, 68% f with mean age of 28.4. Used Principle Components Analysis. Just under 50% = FinF; 53.2% had completed Year 12; 26.4% had completed Year 10  
**Findings:**  
Week 3: No significant difference in previous educational achievement by FinF or non-FinF; hours in class, classes missed = no significant difference  
Week 12: No significant difference in results of final assignment  
Overall: FinF students received less support from families consistently throughout program  
Lower level of self-efficacy in FinF/ non-school completing students (week 3) resolved by week 12  
No significant differences in achievement or attrition found (FinF/ secondary school completers)  
**Core argument:** “the bridging program facilitated substantial improvements in academic efficacy through the social and academic support provided which bridged the gap between students of different cultural capital” (abstract) |
**Aim:** To ascertain factors in students’ lives that contributed to low levels of school exam success; to trace demographic info and past educational experience of a group of 18-22-year-old students taking the enabling program.  
**Methodology:** Psychologically-oriented questionnaires  
**Conclusions:** Data suggest that low-SES/ FinF/ type of school attended did not influence academic achievement. Only aspect of students’ social context that impacted on ac. Achievement was student-teacher relationship/ biggest influence on students’ emotional engagement = quality of student-teacher relationships/ family relationships also appear to be influential on emotional and scholarly engagement (p. 9)  
**Core Argument:** “The major implications that this study has on educational practice in secondary school and the tertiary bridging program is that educators must be aware of the hegemony that the student-teacher relationship has in respect of the academic experience of students, particularly those who are poorly engaged.” (p.15) |
| --- | --- |
**Aim:** To explore links between self-efficacy and study behaviours of enabling students/ examine the effectiveness of an intervention designed to improve self-efficacy and study behaviours  
**Methodology:** Questionnaire disseminated to students in compulsory academic skills course in week 1 and week 10. 246 (71%) completed QN in week 1; 102 in week 2; 79 completed both QNs. Intervention: students were taught theory of self-efficacy and self-directed study behaviours in weeks 1-6; students then undertook activities related to theory in accompanying tutorials.  
**Conclusions:** (26% of commencing students do not complete/submit 1st assessment). QN results suggest that while students’ self-efficacy improved, their confidence levels with exams and oral presentations still caused fear. Academic writing and referencing appeared to demonstrate ‘positive outcomes’. Self-belief appeared to increase significantly but study behaviours did not mirror this: “While there is clear evidence for a significant improvement in the participants’ perceived academic self-efficacy, the translation of this into academic behaviours is not as clear.” (p.50). Older students were more likely to achieve and better than younger peers but demonstrated less confidence.  
**Core Argument:** Strongly suggests that weeks 1–6 are highly significant for engaging students/developing confidence/ preventing negative attrition |
**Aim:** Explored ‘early departure’ of 20 students aged 18-25 who dropped out before week 4 of their course.  
**Methodology:** Semi-structured interviews  
**Findings:** Younger students had a higher rate of attrition. General themes that emerged: lack of commitment to undertaking study and lack of understanding of long-term goals. Six interviews described not taking up the identity of a university student (p.8); five interviewees’ circumstances had changed. Evidence to support notion of ‘positive attrition’ (p.9-10). Authors call for stronger orientation program and more careers counselling. |
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<td>Whannell, R.; Whannell, P. (2014).</td>
<td>Identifying tertiary bridging students at risk of failure in the first semester of undergraduate study</td>
<td>Australian Journal of Adult Learning</td>
<td>54(2), 101–120.</td>
<td>tertiary bridging program, attrition, educational transition</td>
<td>Presents 2nd phase of research (see Whannell, 2013) into attrition and progression of enabling students. Phase 1 (weeks 1-5): “identified age, academic achievement on the initial assessment tasks, the level of peer support and the number of absences from scheduled classes as being the factors which predicted attrition from the bridging program” (abstract)</td>
<td>Research question = “What factors, measureable at the end of a tertiary bridging program, identify tertiary bridging students at risk of failure in the first semester of undergraduate study” (p.102) – aka, to identify attrition factors for enabling education that are also relevant for UG study, in terms of academic performance/achievement</td>
<td>A-theoretical: section offers literature review</td>
<td>Quantitative. Surveyed 92 students who completed 12-week course and continued into Year 1 UG study. Enabling program = on campus, one semester, four units: “No academic restrictions are applied to enrolment with enrolment statistics indicating that about 45% of students have not completed secondary school” (p.103). Used same questionnaire as in Whannell (2013). Also compared students against TPP achievement and completion of first semester courses</td>
<td>‘At risk’ students = younger, more absences, low levels of academic achievement in enabling program, ‘lower quality’ relationships with academic staff Correlation between TPP achievement/ course completion = supports idea that achievement in enabling program is good indicator of capacity to cope with UG requirements (p.110) No significant difference between genders or hours in paid work (55% did not work) First in family = appear to have lower level of achievement, but not statistically significant Support from peers = significant in enabling; support from academic staff = more important for UG study</td>
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<td>Whitson, I. (1995).</td>
<td>The Maturing of the Newstep Course, The University of Newcastle, 1990-1993</td>
<td>Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education</td>
<td>35(2), 116–124.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summary of beginnings of Newstep (Newcastle University Second-chance Tertiary Entrance Programme) program at University of Newcastle. Newstep began in 1990 with 60 students – it went mainstream in 1993. Newstep followed the Open Foundation program which began in 1974. Newstep began with a government subsidy, for students aged 17–20. According to author, Open Foundation commanded a fee at the time of writing. Newstep students were subject to meeting criteria relating to academic potential and “proven disadvantage or disability” (p.116) and was fully subsidised by the university so free to students.</td>
<td>To describe positive and negative effects from changes to Newstep program over its first 5 years in operation</td>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Newstep = designed to support students with numeracy, literacy and study skills (see p.117). The course roll out was delayed to wait for a government subsidy, meaning that the Newstep team only had 5 weeks to advertise and prepare the course for its first run. It began as a 30-week course, with students timetabled to study for 16 hours/week. Originally, the course had two streams: assessed core (English and...</td>
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**Context:** Explores perceptions of adult learners about their learning in the STEPS enabling program at CQU. Works from basis that adult learners returning to formal learning have long-held assumptions about themselves as learners, particularly for those who “bear emotional scars from long-remembered negative schooling experiences” (p.434).

**History of STEPS:** Predecessor = Preliminary Studies Program for Disadvantaged Groups = offered as pilot program in 1986 at Capricornia CAE (Rockhampton, QLD). STEPS started in 1987. As AUSTUDY approved = free course. “It is expected that applicants should have completed the equivalent of Year 10 or show that they have the necessary aptitude to succeed at the tertiary level” (p.437). STEPS = transformative; acknowledges...
that students will experience unsettling periods, leading to ontological change. STEPS curriculum is holistic (writing, maths, "but also to discover the value of an optimistic outlook on life and learning") (p.437). Academic writing = STEPS aims to develop skills (reading, thinking, writing for academic purposes). Embraces 'adult learning principles' = celebration of strengths and prior experiences

**Aim:** To illustrate how adult learners’ perceptions of themselves as learners as they progressed through the program: "Why is it that participants who embark on STEPS as very tentative, unsure and insecure people can, in as little as thirteen weeks, convey such a changed and more positive perception of self?" (p.436)

**Theoretical framework:** Cranton’s (2002) phases of perspective transformation through critical reflection to unpack unexplored assumptions about selves and learning

**Methodology:** Interviews with 9 students who were in Academic Writing module at 3-weekly interviews

**Findings:**

“Once freed from the chains of these assumptions, the learners became liberated in a sense, and experienced personal change” (p.435)

Adult learners = typically have a lack of self-belief and insecurity

Too scared: feelings of exclusion and isolation/ comparisons with family members = perception of limited/ not good enough intelligence

Too stupid: fear of ridicule and criticism/ sense of vulnerability

Too old: lack of optimism or confidence in abilities – limited concerns about failing; “‘I didn’t have anywhere to fall ‘cause I was way down there anyway’ (p.449) – aka self-fulfilled prophecy

**Core Argument:** Authors argue that STEPS = transformative/ project in self-discovery in terms of people’s perceptions (albeit based on small cohort): “The STEPS program has proven to be and will continue to be the vehicle through which a many and varied clientele move from a narrow and often distorted view of themselves as learners and people to a more mature and healthy perspective” (p.450)

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**Context:** Mature age learners as a significant subset of university students; re-engagement/ ‘hits’ when returning to education. Specifically looks at STEPS program at CQU. Describes STEPS at length

**Theoretical frame:** Transformative learning theory (Mezirow) for adult learning; learning communities (Tinto); resilience

**Methodology:** Draws on data from Willans’ PhD study; qualitative data from mature age students (n=9)

**Findings:** ‘Enduring the bombardment’, characterised as:

- **Physical** (particularly for women, resulting from juggling multiple roles and commitments)
- **Cognitive** (returning to studies, struggling to master new practices and discourses – academic writing mentioned)
- **Emotional** (anxiety, self-confidence, anticipation, excitement, guilt, regret – much relating to past educational experiences, mismatches in expectations, lack of support)

**Core Argument:** “re-engagement with formal study can be physically, cognitively and emotionally challenging as old identities clash with new and previous perceptions of self as learner are contested” (p.136). Enabling educators need to consider the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of returning to education

**Context**: Attrition in Australian enabling programs; insights into attrition in the CQU/STEPS context.

**Aim**: To explore attrition in enabling education so as to develop a set of retention-focused recommendations. Two RQs: 1) What factor(s) led students to withdraw from STEPS? (2). What are the commonalities and differences among non-persisting students’ stories of their experience in STEPS? (p.50).

**Methodology**: Semi-structured interviews with ex-STEPS students who had withdrawn (n=23; 13f, 10m). Students asked about reasons for withdrawing and what could have been done to prevent them from leaving. Interviews with Access Coordinators (n=10)

**Findings**: Themes = personal challenges, institutional challenges, perceived improvements

Personal challenges: health issues (physical and mental) – also noted by Access Coordinators, juggling life (lack of time) – also noted by Access Coordinators, emotional issues (such as anxiety/low self-confidence).

Institutional challenges: perceived poor support from tutors, technology issues, feelings of isolation/disconnection (including not being aware of student supports).

Access coordinators also noted: ‘misguided motivations’ – pushed by parents/motivated by government benefits/motivated because the course is free.

Suggested improvements: 1) clarify expectations, 2) distance learning options – “students wanted to ‘sit in’ on on-campus classes and have access to sustained online support” (p.56), 3) help with planning/organisation, 4) more teaching contact/more timely responses to questions.

One recommendation = "during the mandatory pre-entry interview, Access Coordinators and students co-create a personalised teaching-learning contract, one that clearly outlines unit expectations and schedules, acknowledges competing life responsibilities, and elucidates student and staff responsibilities" (p.58)


**Context**: The first-year experience provides the “litmus test” (p. 1) through which current contestations about the modern university are understood. The composition of the student cohort is changing and McInnis (2001) suggests three strategies through which the university might re-engage students whose attentions might be spread across multiple competing demands: curriculum design, learning communities, infrastructure and support of student experience (p. 3). Engagement with the first of these factors using the work of McInnis forms the contextual and conceptual foundation of the paper and is applied to an examination of the STEPS program, and in particular the Language and Learning course at Central Queensland University.

**Aim**: To show how the challenge of engaging curriculum is addressed in the Language and Learning course, STEPS program, CQU.

**Methodology**: Reflection and theoretical exploration of surrounding literature.

**Findings**: Explores the literature and challenges of transformational learning, arguing that transformational learning is present in this course via the intentional uses of students’ experiences, stimulation critical reflection and encouragement of individual development. The curriculum encourages students to see education as constructed and to critically examine their experiences of education. While it is focused on skills it also encourages students to consider knowledge production and its relationship to worldviews, and correspondingly how larger social issues impact on the individual. In this way all knowledge and understanding...
is interconnected. The curriculum begins with an examination and identification of different learning styles and transitions into whole brain learning. Students deconstruct text-context and develop skills that are transferable. The course emphasises lifelong learning and therefore how to learn and the stimulation of creative and critical thinking that is useful in a range of contexts. The development of writing/reading skills, opportunities to write and receive feedback, develop critical relationships with staff and a community of learners is all emphasised in the curriculum, with the aim of not only developing skills but confidence and personal growth or transformation.

**Core argument:** The Language and Learning courses engages the student experience and helps students to successfully transition into first year.