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Engaging with Images and Stories : Using a Learning Approach to Develop Agency of Beginning "At-Risk" Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract: At a regional Australian university, a Learning Circle approach was implemented with a small group of first year education students who identified themselves as "at risk" of failure in the tertiary context. As part of their participation in weekly meetings, the students engaged in discussion, reflection and problem-solving related to their transition to university study. They also participated in a visual research inquiry which included the construction of photographic images and research conversations about being university students and dealing with study demands. Through the privileging of interactions and relationships, the students were able to make connections to other Discourses from their lives outside university and began to develop a sense of agency and a growing capacity to move within and between their multiple identities. This article argues that, in order to address transition and retention issues within teacher education, effective social integration and support should accompany academic preparedness.

Introduction

It has been argued that the development and maintenance of authentic partnerships and relationships are keys to the transformation of teacher preparation (Winer & Ray, 2000). A supportive community of practice can enable tertiary education students and academics to consider the multiple realities that characterise success on the learning journey (Moss, 2003; Wenger, 1998). It is thus important to consider and reflect on the particular contexts and social networks that assist students to develop positive dispositions so that they see themselves as successful lifelong learners.

This paper focuses on an initiative in an Australian regional university using a Learning Circle approach – a useful teaching tool that creates a positive environment for reflection, discussion and problem-solving (Noble, Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2005) – to

develop social networks and relationships. The intervention was framed as an "informal meeting" to support students in the transition to university and to allow them to engage in critical reflection. First year education students were invited to join the Learning Circle as a way of learning "what to do when you don't know what to do". In effect, students who decided to join had self-identified, to some degree, as being "at-risk" learners within the university context.

The idea for providing a support mechanism for first year education students was underpinned by the belief that skills for critical reflection are not innate but can be taught to students using effective processes and strategies (Noble, Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2005). Drawing on Gee's (1996) notion of Discourses as "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing" (p. viii), we argue that "new" university students are expected to take on a new Discourse – the Discourse of "university student" – but often without explicit knowledge of what that means or of what it might entail. Issues of identity and students' relationships with the institution or authority are generally not considered in an explicit way (Henderson & Hirst, 2007; Lea & Street, 1998). As Gee (1996) explains, Discourses involve a "usually taken for granted and tacit 'theory' of what counts as a 'normal' person and the 'right' ways to think, feel, and behave" (p. ix). In using the Learning Circle approach, we provided opportunities for students to critically reflect on their experiences and on their ways of "doing", "being" and "knowing" within the university context.

The preparation of university students for work across educational contexts requires an awareness of the demands on beginning teachers in relation to personal and professional skill development. From the outset, beginning pre-service teachers need to develop the knowledges, skills and social networks that prepare them to encounter the complexities of their "work" in a well-informed and positive manner. Thus we would argue that academics working within teacher preparation programs should consider how students might develop these at the beginning of their professional identity development, that is, upon entry to their pre-service teacher preparation program and the beginning of their transition to university.

This paper describes an initiative developed to support a group of first year tertiary students in their transition to university and to enhance their opportunities for success on their journeys to "becoming" teachers. It explains what happened in the supported community and highlights the impact of capacity building processes for participants. Because of the serendipitous nature of this initiative, this paper uses a narrative format. It begins with "our story" – a description of our plan to set up a support process for "at-risk" first year education students, then it tells the students' stories, drawing on data collected from three students who participated in the initiative. The data are in two forms: visual images that the students produced and stories that they told to explain their learning journeys as they made the transition into university study.

Developing a Learning Community

The Learning Circle approach uses the notion of a community of practice, whereby academics and students join together to enhance critically reflective skills, incorporate tacit knowledge and engage in dialogue to enhance their learning

experiences. In recent times, the term "community" has been used widely, particularly in social policy. Indeed, community now appears as a prefix to many government programs and policy reforms. In this sense, the term is used to evoke a sense of togetherness, referring to the notion of holding something in common. Community interests or a sense of common identity, for example, are examples of what "togetherness" might entail (Lave & Wenger, 1992; Wenger, 1998).

Community is not a static phenomenon. People make continuous choices about their communal identifications and the degree of their affiliations. Individuals belong to many Discourses and each Discourse represents only one of multiple identities (Gee, 1996, p. ix). University students, for example, do not arrive at university *tabula rasa*, but they arrive with social histories from their previous lived experiences and affiliations with various social groups (Gee, 1996). As Gee points out, Discourses "do not always represent consistent and compatible values" and the taking on of a new Discourse can be a difficult and stressful process (p. ix). Therefore, it would seem essential to make opportunities, knowledges and skills available for students who wish to engage in a cycle of learning and reflection. Such an approach can facilitate their ability to establish, evaluate and maintain membership of the learning community.

Collaboration and partnership are some of the recognised conceptions within the literature in relation to the establishment of learning communities (Lave & Wenger, 1992; Wenger, 1998). Indeed, interpersonal and group skills, as well as "groupness", are claimed as essential features of such communities (Goodfellow, 1997). In Gee's (1996) terms, it is the "'doing-saying' combination" that makes a difference – knowing how to behave, interact, think, speak, read and write so that group membership is evident (p. viii). In this way, the building of strong networks and social links are key components of effective community development (Falk & Balatti, 1999; Woodrow & Brennan, 1999). Unless new university students can feel that they belong to the learning community of the university, then their chances of being successful students are likely to be diminished.

A Learning Circle Framework

The model in Figure 1, adapted from the work of Noble, Macfarlane and Cartmel (2005), is a useful way of representing how each participant in a Learning Circle is privileged and therefore creates a space for agency to occur across the university learning journey.
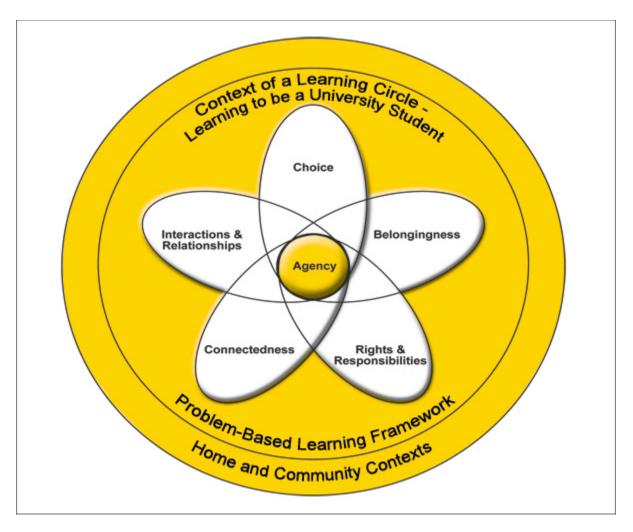
Figure 1: A context-agency model for conceptualising a Learning Circle for pre-service education students (adapted from Noble, Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2005)

As such, the contextual elements that are of significance are:

Interactions and relationships
All participants (academics and students) have the responsibility to find out what they know and what they are capable of. Therefore, within the Learning Circle context, effective communication processes must be established, whereby it is acknowledged that all stakeholders have equal rights.

Rights and responsibilities
What the student chooses to do in order to explore a particular issue is perfectly appropriate. There is no assumption that the learning journey be investigated in a prescriptive way. Neither should the student be stressed by the processes of critical reflection. Therefore, the student should have the right to explore experiences and knowledge as he/she so chooses. There exists an expectation that each student is entitled to express his/her reactions

to the university experience but has a concomitant obligation to do so in an appropriate way. Therefore, rights are understood to be reciprocal.

Choice
Within the Learning Circle, each individual has the right to disagree with his/her peers in terms of how to engage with particular experiences, but there is an expectation that other students have the right to disagree and make choices in the same way. However, these choices are framed in terms of a joint responsibility to develop a greater awareness and understanding of how each person might work together to achieve the fullest potential of any given situation.

Belongingness
This tenet highlights the need for the individual to feel safe and secure in choosing to engage with the Learning Circle in whatever way he/she chooses. It is imperative that the participants develop a sense of belonging to the social context and that they understand their own subjectivity in terms of their learning dispositions.

Connectedness
Implicit in this approach is the fundamental need for students to have interactions and relationships with others so as to form a network that supports their ongoing learning and development of professional identity. In this way, a sense of connectedness needs to exist for supportive networks to develop and for experiences to be meaningful.

Together, the application of these contextual elements impacts upon the quality of interactions, relationships and friendships that occur for the participants in the Learning Circle. Agency cannot exist within relationships and practice unless there is a balancing of power relations and the presence of all characteristics, as shown in Figure 1 (Noble, Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2005). We argue that these elements, in combination, should be regarded as essential for developing effective high quality learning and practice – self-directed, autonomous learning, critical and reflective thinking skills, as well as the integration of discipline specific knowledge and skills for beginning pre-service teachers.

The Learning Circle: Our Story

When the Learning Circle initiative began, we – as the two academics who decided to offer support to self-selected "at-risk" students – planned to respond to students' learning needs. Within our university context, student retention and progression issues are regarded as high priorities and our initiative was part of our faculty's attempts to respond to those priorities. Whilst we aimed to be responsive to students' needs, we expected that we would be sharing our expertise in academic issues, including academic literacies and other "formal" aspects of learning management relevant to first year university students. Little did we realise at the time that we would be using our

experiences as part of a research project that has provided visual images to tell the stories of students' learning journeys and that we would rarely focus directly on academic issues.

We began the initiative by extending invitations to all first year education students to meet with us to discuss what might be useful as support for them, having advertised that our project was to help students find out "what to do when you don't know what to do". Ten students (out of approximately 300 students enrolled in the first year of our faculty's education degrees) self-identified and responded to our invitation. To begin the process, we asked students to fill in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and to identify what they saw as their strengths and weaknesses along with the opportunities and threats that they had identified within the university context. We provided the students with a proforma and involved them in discussion about their analysis.

Within minutes, however, we realised that academic issues were not the first and foremost concerns of the students. It was evident that they regarded the development of social support networks as a priority and that they wanted to meet in a place and space that was "safe" from the pressures of the university context. From those ideas, the Learning Circle began. The small group of students began to meet with us on a weekly basis for a two-hour time slot. We abandoned all ideas of a formal agenda. The Learning Circle became a time for the group to meet; to discuss and compare notes about study and other aspects of university life, and to reflect on how tertiary study was progressing.

Over the first four weeks of the semester, the Learning Circle group talked about and considered a whole range of issues relating to "being" a university student. Even though there was no formal agenda, we tended to begin Learning Circle meetings with fairly broad questions, such as: How have you managed this week? What strategies have you tried out? What worked? What didn't work? The students shared their experiences about how they organised their time and about how they were trying to deal with the pressures of work and other aspects of their out-of-university lives whilst being fulltime students. We spent most of the time being "good" listeners, helping to facilitate the students' sharing of time management strategies and offering insights into our own strategies when that seemed appropriate. In our opinion, the students were developing as problem-solvers and the sharing of their different ways of "being a university student" was providing them with a repertoire of strategies and options for making decisions about "what to do when you don't know what to do".

The Beginnings of a Research Project

About four weeks into the project, a question asked by one of the students suggested that the project had changed direction in a way that we had not predicted. The week's Learning Circle had started with the students talking about their previous week and their attempts to be organised and focused university students, then one of the students looked at the two of us and asked, "What can we do for you?"

In hindsight, we regard that question as critical in the development of the social network of the Learning Circle. Until then, we had not realised to what extent the students regarded the weekly meetings as crucial to their survival and future success within the university context. The question opened up the students' desire to provide

reciprocal support for us. Since we had already been talking about the need to begin documenting the achievements of the Learning Circle, we answered the question by asking whether they would be willing to become part of a research project and to share their experiences with others.

Our plan at that stage was to ask the students to produce visual representations of their learning journey, including the impact of their participation in the Learning Circle intervention, using any art form that they thought was appropriate. Even though we knew that the students would be able to narrate their learning journeys in "words", we were cognisant of the constraints of using linguistic design in isolation from other design elements (The New London Group, 1996). We were also aware that we had been using the metaphor of the "learning journey" when talking with the students and that visual representations produced by the students might tap into other metaphors that we had not considered (Harrison, 2004).

The students decided that the production of photographic images would be the most appropriate way of telling the stories of their journeys. Within a week of ethical approval being granted, three of the students had each produced a set of photographs. From these images, a montage was constructed for each individual. In the community of practice, the students and academics together co-constructed a marriage of text and image about each of the three learning journeys. Although the metaphor of the learning journey remained dominant, another metaphor – the "closed door" metaphor described later in this paper – was evident in the students' narratives.

The data collected for this research was in two forms: the visual images that the students produced, and the students' narratives about their learning journeys and about their photographs. The narratives were told during the Learning Circle meetings as well as during semi-structured interviews that were conducted with each student. Although up to ten students were involved in the Learning Circle discussions, we focus here on the images and stories of the three students who were so quick to provide photographs of the strategies they were employing in their transitions to university study. Gee's (1996) notion of big D Discourses and Noble, Macfarlane and Cartmel's (2005) context-agency model (see Figure 1) provided the theoretical foundations for our analysis of the data. Where possible, however, we maintain the narrative format used by the students.

Images of the Learning Journey: Three Students' Stories

Within the personal context, the notion of community is often seen as a state of mind, rather than something tangible. It is more than a place. It is an acknowledgement of involvement: of engagement as well as interdependence. There is an acceptance that despite community being a social concept, it is utterly dependent on the individual person. It is not sameness, but it is the interlocking diversity and respect for individual difference. Therefore, a "learning" community of practice is never static, always negotiated, shifting and adjusting its "principles of order, but always mine and ours, mine to belong to, ours to be ourselves" (O'Farrell, 1999, p.18).

Over time, the students identified a change in the balance of their social support structures, moving away from sole reliance on external supports (for example, family and friends and home support) towards making friendships and developing supportive

relationships within the university context. It became apparent that, over time, support needs were met increasingly by university support structures and less by home supports. We are not suggesting that connectedness to students' other Discourses and social networks are not important, but that the participants recognised that new friendships with peers and relationships with academic staff were key to enhancing their general sense of well-being and belongingness within the university context, as well as providing a necessary buffer when facing challenging times.

In the beginning, physical barriers were important ways in which the students negotiated their new Discourse (Gee, 1996), "plugging in" when necessary, but equally recognising the importance of "time out" or "unplugging" from the context when necessary. Over time, this became less important as the students began to feel more comfortable with their identities as university students.

Student A travelled some distance interstate to attend university each week and she used road signs on the highway as visual markers for identity formation. When talking about her montage (see Figure 2), she explained:

> Just pictures of the highway, because I found uni so stressful when I first came, leaving from [name of regional city] and going home to [name of town]. As soon as I got to that sign it was "Phew, I'm out of there." … You know, turn my back on [name of regional city] and head home and get back to the normal life where I could just be me. And not be the student that had all the pressures that I thought were getting put upon me …
>
> Get on that highway! That was the make it and break it. Even coming from home and once I hit that sign on the way to [name of regional city], I knew I had to change my, not my aura, but to I just had to get it together, because I knew that the casual lifestyle of the last two days being at home was gone. Even though I was sort of doing stuff at home on the computer and doing stuff at the TAFE [Technical and Further Education College] and the library and everything … once I hit that sign … it was like a, yeah, I just had to change completely…That picture there with that highway … it was me as me and me as the student, when I hit that sign. You wouldn't think that a sign could change you that much, but just that freedom, especially when it was a heavy week, that freedom of just turning my back on [name of regional city] and going home. It's different now; I don't stress so much; I still enjoy going home, but it isn't so important to escape now.

Figure 2: Student A's montage story

Another important issue that had a significant impact on students' adjustment to identifying as university students was their ability to organise this particular aspect of their lives within the constraints of their pre-existing Discourses. Each one of the students had different life circumstances that they needed to accommodate. As previously mentioned, Student A lived some distance from university and so it was necessary for her "life to become portable" in a sense, and the "boot" of her car was thus quite symbolic.

> The organisation in the boot …one side is for uni and the other is for my life, my personal things. For uni, that was the only way I could do it was the coloured bags. I had the pink and the blue and the yellow and the black. Black was [for] [name of course] which I absolutely despised … Once you see your students with black bags, then panic! … The pink and the blue were for [names of courses] and the yellow ones were for prac … Yeah because that was a nice beautiful colour for the kids, canary yellow.

Participation at university as a full-time on campus student has required some major adjustments for these students and it has been necessary for them to often reconcile this choice within the Learning Circle. Indeed on many occasions, the students (and the academics) supported one another to find solutions to life problems that further complicated their journeys as students. For some there were issues of homelessness, financial difficulties, ill health, needs of young children and other family commitments.

Through the process of critical reflection, the students found ways together to solve many such issues. Often their solutions were arrived at collectively and, as a group, they celebrated one another's achievement in this regard. Importantly, the students realised that their initial solution may not work or may need to change over time and, through the teaching and learning of a formal process of critical reflection, they reported that they were finding solutions to problems as they arose.

For Student A, tidiness in the boot of her car was crucial:

> It (the boot) just has to be tidy. This is basically like home when I come up for the uni week. I've actually got a quilted doona in the boot because I don't like the carpet getting dirty inside the boot … yeah, my mum made it. I take a bit of her with me everywhere I go this way. I sort of look after stuff, because basically the car's not mine. It's my son's spare car because I sold mine to come to uni.

Over time, the students found that the initially-successful organisational strategies that they employed were not necessarily effective all of the time, particularly when the study schedule changed dramatically for their second semester of study. They were, however, able to develop new strategies that were effective within the changed circumstances. For Student A, the organisation of course materials continued to be significant:

> But the organisation … I just had to have those different coloured bags, because I knew that if something was … Like on the weekends when I'm home, everything gets taken out and put on the dining room table. And it got drafted and sorted out ... Because we had the lectures and tuts last semester, I'd just grab that bag and take it to the lecture with me, or the tut. I just had everything with me. Yeah, but this semester I've got my little pull-along wagon … a totally different set-up this time cause things changed; we needed to find new ways to organise the things we needed.

While the students considered and reconsidered the ways in which they could function more effectively over time at university, there was also evidence of the need for this level of organisation to permeate their home contexts. They were very aware of the impact of university on home and on their family relationships, and therefore much consideration was given to the need to form connections between these contexts.

As Student B, who organised her study materials by using colour-coded filing (the green, amber and red of traffic lights, as shown in Figure 3), explained:

> But when it came to these two big ones [files in the colour coded plastic boxes]. Oh no, which one do I do first? Oh no, I've got to change the green to which one. Okay, look over here [at the colour-coded checklists] and see which one needs more work and which one is more urgent. And so we did it. And Emily [her daughter] decided to help me in time and she wrote down her name and scheduled herself into the bottom of it. And she added her pretend friends to it as well.

Figure 3. Student B's montage story

Here it is evident that the student's young child was impacted by the organisational strategies that were employed. The student had even encouraged her daughter to become a participant, as a way of encouraging a sense of inclusion and to make participation in tertiary education a "normal" part of daily life.

In a similar way, Student C had her entire family unit assisting her to organise herself in her home environment, in order to accommodate her university studies. Student C recognised that she "never put anything back in the right place" and that her family was supporting her by stowing her study materials in a place where she could find them.

> My mum and my brother know what I am like and try to help
> me out. They are patient – just. That I have everything around
> the house … They get trawled, put, I sort. And I never put
> anything back in the right place, so they were probably sitting
> on the table and I couldn't be bothered to walk the four steps to
> the bedroom, so they put everything in the drawer. So when I
> can't find something, I go straight to the drawer.

Figure 4: Student C's montage story

However, Student C realised that her study habits were changing and that she could no longer work in the same way. Referring to her photographic montage, she explained:

> And that was the computer back then and I used to have
> everything spread out, but now I can't work that way. So my
> new idea was, the curtains are beside it, so I got mum's
> household pegs and pegged everything to the curtains. And she
> was not impressed … I started to put holes in the curtains so I
> got the household pegs … So that's only allowed when I have
> assignments. If it's a normal week, then no.

The students highlighted the early introduction to the academic staff involved in this initiative as being very helpful. They commented on the impact of having a supportive environment within the university context, a place were they felt that they could escape from the perceived pressures of university life and where they could engage in a constructive, critically reflective process each week. Through the process of co-construction of text and images, the students as a collective constantly referred to the door of the room that was our regular weekly meeting place. Shutting the door to begin the session was symbolic to all. According to Student A,

> When we shut the door, it was like we got to shut out
> everything that was going on and we had time just to be and to
> think through solutions to each others' problems. It felt good to
> know that we came to care about one another and that we could

> actually help each other. Really, sometimes if it wasn't for our
> Wednesday meeting, I don't think I would have made it
> through the week. Sometimes it was knowing that Karen and
> Robyn were putting the time aside to help us out and we didn't
> want to let them down … Each time we finished on a
> Wednesday and we all had to go back to the outside world at
> uni I felt really calm, no matter how stressed I felt before I
> walked in. I still feel like that now.

The creation of the "constant" physical environment enabled the construction of close friendships. In fact, attending this group was the first contact for each of the students. From these early encounters, social networks have developed whereby the students rely on one another and also count on the academics involved for ongoing social and academic support. As Student C explained:

> I make sure that no matter what else is happening, I am always
> here on a Wednesday. Sometimes it is the only sane time that I
> have. Robyn and Karen are always so happy to see us and they
> seem to really care about how we are going. Our group has
> really become a bit like a big family, we all listen and we all
> share and help each other out. It's great. I don't know what I
> would do without them all now.

In this case, the students have set up their own study group to support one another throughout the week. They report that they use the strategies that they have learned in the Learning Circle to support one another in many ways. In fact Student A stated that:

> It feels really good to come to uni and know that some of the
> others will be waiting to meet with you and that they really do
> want your help and support. We all have different things that
> we are good at and so we now help each other. Before I came
> to uni I had never even sent an email and I didn't even know
> what PowerPoint was. I really didn't think I could do it, but
> once I got to know some of the other guys they were really
> great and really patient and have taught me heaps. I have a
> little book that I write in all of the tips the guys give me cause I
> am a slow learner and I am always aware of the time that they
> spend helping me out. In the beginning I always felt bad, but
> now I don't cause there have been times when I too have been
> able to help them out.

Learning from the Students' Images and Stories

By showing the students' montages and retelling some of their stories about their first experiences of university life, we have shown that the students valued social integration and support. Although they regarded academic adjustment and integration as important, academic issues took a secondary position to social aspects. By creating a specific time and place for students to meet informally, the academic staff involved have

been able to support the students to become independent and at the same time interdependent.

In hindsight, it became apparent to us – as the academics meeting with the students – that there were a couple of critical steps in the students' becoming university students. Initially, the "shut door" metaphor, which they used to describe the calm they felt inside the meeting room, was their way of dealing with the disjuncture and discomfort that they felt between their lives inside and outside university. In fact, the students' talk about the room and about having to go "back to the outside world at uni" indicated that they felt like "outsiders". As Gee (1996) argues, becoming an "insider" of a particular Discourse requires the "right" combination – "putting words, deeds, values, other people, and things together in integral combinations for specific times and places" (p. viii). Over time, the students were able to achieve the "'doing-saying' combination" (p. viii) without the angst that they had felt initially.

Highlighted is the fact that, for these students, taking on the Discourse of university student was aided by their membership of the Learning Circle. They came to understand that they had individual rights as well as collective responsibilities, that they had a choice to participate (or not), and that over time they developed a sense of belonging to the group. Through this initiative and the privileging of interactions and relationships they were able to make connections to the other Discourses that they identified with. As was illustrated in Figure 1, the aggregate of these elements brought about a sense of agency for each individual.

It appeared that the making of connections between Discourses was another critical step in the students' journeys as university students. This was evident in the way that they began to incorporate aspects of their university experience into other parts of their lives – and vice versa. No longer was the university Discourse kept separate, but the students were learning to move within and between their multiple identities. They were beginning to deal with multiple Discourses even though, as Gee (1996) points out, they "need not, and often do not, represent consistent and compatible values" (p. ix). For the students, moving amongst Discourses had developed into a more seamless process, with an increased potential for a sharing of problem-solving strategies across Discourses.

Considering Broader Issues in Tertiary Contexts

This article argues that in order to address retention issues, similar emphasis needs to be given to effective social integration and support as has been placed traditionally on academic preparedness. Our data from students' narratives and visual images support the notion that it is imperative that the perceived support, rather than only the actual support received, affects the functional relationships that enhance social integration into the university context. As such, each individual in the learning community will access and interact with the community as their needs and the needs of the community change. This may result in associated changes that may impact on aspects of the model and therefore the model needs to be conceptualised as continuously evolving.

The research did not set out to make comparisons with more traditional academic approaches to student support, such as providing training in study skills or academic

writing. However, our experiences with the Learning Circle approach highlighted the importance of its capacity to help students build on the life skills and knowledges that they brought to university. The students credited their participation in the Learning Circle – and their developing agency – with helping them to find ways of adapting their skills and knowledges to the university context. In other words, the Learning Circle facilitated their use of "what they already knew" to problem-solve "what to do when you don't know what to do".

Influences on retention at university are complex and multifaceted. While not wishing to downplay the importance of academic preparedness, here we have focused on social support by teasing out the main tenets of the students' understandings of their new Discourse, that of "university student". For these students, becoming a university student meant constructing a new identity and a sense of belongingness, as well as enhancing their academic skills in this vital transition period. It was evident that the process of negotiating between their previous Discourses and this new one created tensions which had to be resolved. Therefore we conclude that making and maintaining social support with other students as well as with academics is central to this process and should be a consideration for assisting students who appear to be "at risk" in the university context. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that here is still much work to be done – to identify the relationships between social and more traditional forms of academic support, and to understand how these might work in tandem to enhance student retention and to develop students' agency as pre-service teachers.

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