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High School Enabling Programs, Learning Journeys, and Transitions: Measuring Effectiveness from the Student Perspective

Anita Maclaurin, Rebekah Sturniolo-Baker, Sue Shaw and Deb Monteith
Murdoch University, Australia

Abstract

University enabling programs provide historically underrepresented students with aspirational gateways and the academic skills and knowledges essential for success at university. Measurement of the efficacy of such programs has been typically neoliberal and quantitative in nature. This article argues for a nuanced measurement of success, exploring the efficacy of enabling programs from the students' perspective to reduce marginalising the lived experience of enabling students. A phenomenologically inspired, qualitative online survey was made available to students enrolled in two high school enabling programs at Murdoch University, TLC Learning for Tomorrow, and FlexiTrack High, and an interpretative phenomenological analysis was performed on the data. The key findings indicate that enabling students feel well equipped for first year transition, but some barriers endure. The qualitative evidence could give rise to the creation of a more holistic measure of student success and encourage universities to develop stronger transition strategies for equity groups.

Keywords: High school; enabling education; efficacy; student perspective.

Introduction

The adoption by the Australian government of the Bradley Review recommendations to widen university participation and improve social mobility (Bradley et al., 2008) has resulted in larger numbers of equity groups entering tertiary study through enabling programs. Enabling programs, also known as bridging or preparatory programs, offer a course of instruction to upskill students in academic and critical literacies, but also offer valuable acculturation experiences to reduce alienation in tertiary settings. The push for larger participation from under-represented groups has meant greater diversity in student populations (Diamond & O'Brien-Malone, 2018). This was, in part, instigated by the Australian Government's goal that by 2020, 20% of domestic undergraduate enrolments would be low socio-economic status (SES), in the overall goal of 40% of 25–35 year-olds achieving a bachelor's degree (Bradley et al., 2008). This aligns with the recent release of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report (Australian Government Department of Education**,** 2024) recognising the important role of enabling programs for raising participation rates in tertiary education (Recommendations 10, 11 and 12). Enabling populations arrive with a diversity of learning needs, aspirations, motivations, and past educational and life experiences often influenced by geographical, community, and contextual factors (Lisciandro, 2022). According to Andrewartha and Harvey (2014), 80% of enabling students are first-in-family to attend university and these populations require additional acculturation when navigating higher education (Patfield et al., 2022). In the words of the Universities Accord, it is vital to expand opportunities to all (Australian Government Department of Education, 2024).The need for a range of equity pathways continues to grow with an escalation of previously underserved students requiring greater support to complete education at a higher level.

High school enabling programs, a more recent addition to the sector, came into existence to address dissatisfaction in senior high school curriculums, specifically the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)[1] curriculum not suiting all learner needs (Olds et al., 2022). In response Murdoch University (MU) in Australia created two programs: TLC, Learning for Tomorrow (TLC) in 2011, and FlexiTrack High (FTH) in 2017. TLC emerged as a university entrance pathway in the Perth metro-south region for Year 12 students with aspirational intent to attend MU. The TLC program was designed for students who, due to economic disadvantage, were unlikely to achieve an ATAR, as low SES schools in the region provided less access to ATAR subjects necessary for direct entry to university (Vernon et al., 2018). TLC is delivered on MU's southern campuses at Mandurah and Rockingham, with proximal access to the 27 partnership schools. Students attend a university campus after school, two hours per week for 30 weeks with additional online and home study, participating in tutorials, lectures and workshops. Simultaneous completion of school is essential for academic progression and importantly in completing with peers. TLC has built on the longevity of successful engagement, a result of this bespoke program structure and on-campus staff support. FTH, alternatively, is a 30-week enabling course embedded within the school timetable and was offered for the first time in 2017. Recognised nationally in 2024 at the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) for outstanding contributions to student learning, FTH has 20 schools (as of 2024) in Western Australia, partnered with Murdoch University, with a total student cohort of 251. The course is a blended program, with students having a minimum of four allocated periods a week embedded in the school timetable with an assigned teacher, and a designated Murdoch tutor who supports students in the online space.

Successful completion of TLC and FTH rely upon supporting the integrated framework of the student, tutor, school, university, and family. We build on the work of Vygotsky (1978) who noted that "culture" plays a significant role in a student's engagement with the learning process (Devlin, 2013, p. 940; Vernon et al., 2018, p. 491). TLC and FTH have consistent guiding principles (Kift, 2009) tapping into the unique characteristics of the learning community, upholding social justice and equity ideals, building aspirations and cognitive transition, and ensuring inclusive teaching and learning practices as supported by Devlin and O'Shea (2012, pp. 77-79). The University Preparation Pathways (UPP) programs at MU are holistic and interdisciplinary in nature, with deeply embedded social and emotional pedagogies to create a transformative educational experience (Olds et al., 2019). Learning occurs in dynamic relational spaces (Bennett & Lumb, 2019). Both programs are endorsed by the School Curriculum Standards Authority in Western Australia and aim to develop the academic skills and knowledges of students who have experienced marginalisation in their secondary schooling. Research indicates that on average 50-55% of students pass an enabling course (Chesters & Watson, 2016), however data in both MU high school programs indicates higher success rates. This is due in part to highly supportive design, student selection and high satisfaction rates in student surveys. University aspirational students choose these alternative entry programs due to the reputation for effective learning structures and resulting success. Combined, the programs have served over 3000 students and these students have achieved grades in their final year of their degrees consistent with national enabling trends (Chesters et al., 2018; Olds et al., 2022).

The recent rise in embedded high school enabling programs in Western Australia has led to the requirement by the secondary school sector and local government to justify the programs' existence through assessment measures, particularly utilising quantitative data such as retention and completion. As programs of this nature are relatively new, data is slow to emerge and due to university practices mainstreaming enabling students into first year and preferring in-house reporting, access to such data is limited (Habel et al., 2016). Increasingly educational institutions have become neoliberal (Connell, 2013, Sarpong & Adelekan, 2023). Within these economically driven and marketised contexts, schools, universities, and government require completion data. It is therefore ethical to ask first the resistant question: Is this the most accurate measure of effectiveness? Measuring the effectiveness of these programs and the outcomes of student achievements are made difficult within the largely complex and social fields of investigation, often requiring more than quantitative approaches. Harrison (2012) explains that longitudinal datasets are sparse and open to misuse, nor do they capture the delay in completion that many equity groups experience. While it is acknowledged that quantitative data can form *part* of the measurement of effectiveness as numbers do tell a compelling story, this article challenges the current limited paradigm and invites a wider definition of "student success". In effectively reporting on student success, we must first understand the factors that relate to student success for our students. These potentials are not so easily measured. As Bennett and Lumb (2019, p. 969) assert, "getting a grip on participation patterns" is complex, asserting that quantitative methods often objectify the participants and exacerbate the social justice inequities the widening participation agenda is attempting to reduce. This article is an attempt to avoid reductionist counting and capture more agential forces at play. It is hoped this approach reduces deficit framing around enabling cohorts and offers

[1] The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a number between 0.00 and 99.95 that indicates a student's position relative to all the students in their age group. Universities use the ATAR to help them select students for their courses, and admission to most tertiary courses is based on your selection rank – see https://www.uac.edu.au/future-applicants/atar

a wider lens to measuring effectiveness; providing measurements from the social world (Gale, 2017 in Childs & Menter, 2022) and utilising collaborative methodologies that ensure student perspectives are recognised.

In previous autoethnographic research on the impacts of the FTH program, it was found that not only did the program create opportunity for students not flourishing in the ATAR system, but it changed mindsets about success, learning, aspirations (not only of the students but the families too) and built connections between students, tutors and teachers in the schools (Olds et al., 2022). This paper builds on the previous research by turning to explore the qualitative impacts of high school enabling programs from the student perspective. Bennett and Lumb (2019) argue that more engaged evaluation processes are vital to avoid reproducing inequities and that methodologies that capture program participants' viewpoints are a necessary part of this process. The data here is captured at a vital temporal juncture, after students have been undertaking their degree for a period of time and better positioned to have insight into which specific skills they were taught in their enabling course that have been transferable in their undergraduate degree.

The aims of this study were to further understand the high school enabling student journey, post completion of a Murdoch high school enabling program. The major research questions were:

a) *What did the post program student journey entail?*
b) *Did our students feel that our high school enabling programs were effectively preparing them for the transition?*
c) *What could be done to improve the high school enabling student transition?*

This article does not participate in the "history of misrecognition" (Burke, 2013, p. 114), choosing to instead explore the student experience using qualitative, open-ended surveys to understand the value of the program through the student lens. Early phenomenological researcher, Husserl (1965), argues that exploring the foundations of a phenomenon should logically precede empirical studies. While anecdotal evidence exists of student appreciation of the programs, this preliminary, phenomenologically inspired approach seeks instead to capture student viewpoints to reduce presupposition or assumptions (Moustakas, 1994), to understand relative change (Falconer & Holcomb, 2008) and casts a wide net to capture "subjective, 'insider' meanings and what the lived experience feels like for individuals" (Finlay, 2009, p. 475). Revealed most was the transformation of an unsure student into a confident, first year ready student.

Literature Review

Diverse Cohorts and Diverse Journeys

Enabling cohorts are diverse and have diverse needs. Approximately 50% of enabling cohorts are identified as belonging to one or more equity groups, in contrast to 30% of domestic undergraduate enrolments (Lisciandro, 2022). Equity groups identified as requiring support in transitioning into higher education include Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islanders (First Nations/Indigenous), low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds, have a disability, are from non-English speaking backgrounds, are from regional and remote areas and women in non-traditional areas (Bennett & Lumb, 2019). In addition, 95% of enabling cohorts experience above normal levels of psychological distress (Nieuwoudt, 2021). Despite a host of disadvantages, equity students continue to show up, flourish and prosper from their university experience, at rates similar to or near their peers (Chesters, et al., 2018).

Just as enabling student populations are diverse, so too is the student journey. Habel et al. (2016) illustrated in their study that there is "enormous depth and complexity behind the student experience" (p. 48). In order to understand the longitudinal effectiveness of high school enabling programs, it is first important to normalise the diverse student journeys during first year transition and beyond. Research reveals that first year transitions, regardless of entry pathway, are not linear (Bennett & Lumb, 2019), rather the path is winding and complex. Students do not enter university, and transition year-to-year with passing grades, at the same university, in the same course. There is variance of the time it takes to complete a degree and variance in the average grades achieved. Harrison and Waller (2017) assert that a student's journey through the education system is influenced by power structures, economic competitiveness, and personal liberties. Attrition rates vary year to year, and across disciplines. Chesters et al. (2018) noted, in their study of 1060 Year 12 high school students transitioning into university, that 49% discontinued their studies without completing their degree and students who gained entry via tertiary preparation programs were more likely to continue their studies than a traditional student. Lisciandro (2022) found that there was no significant difference in retention of first year students across a range of entry pathways. In their study of comparative university entry pathways, Diamond and O'Brien-Malone (2018) add that one in three students with an ATAR of 70 are likely to get a weighted average first year mark below 50 and that a vast range of variables and external conditions such as gender, hours of work, psychological and physical health, sleep habits, type of school attended, number of hours of study, and socio-

economic status can impact success. Similarly, Habel et al. (2016) note that factors such as educational background of family impact academic achievement.

Diverse Outcomes

With the proliferation of high school enabling programs in Australia, secondary stakeholders and university stakeholders are keen to measure their effectiveness. A simple quantitative measure would be to analyse the degree completion data, however these objectifying methodologies (Bennett & Lumb, 2019) do little to capture the journey of any student travelling through tertiary study, more so for an enabling student. Using the demise of the *Aimhigher* example in the UK, Harrison (2012) warns against the "crude constructs" used to measure the effectiveness of widening participation initiatives (p. 5). Similarly, Pitman et al. (2016) note that the accuracy of data collection will never be entirely consistent due to the multitude of variables that impact student life. Falconer and Holcomb (2008) suggest when measuring student learning not to focus on "absolute outcomes but relative change" (p. 870). Measures of effectiveness then need to measure a broad range of outcomes and consider the larger purpose of higher education (Callender in Burke et al., 2018). So too does there need to be an acceptance that not all success stories finish in a completion (Habel & Whitman, 2016). The "success" of enabling programs needs to be valued as much for the transformational journey, as the end result. Harrison and Waller (2017) suggest tracking individual student journeys through longitudinal studies.

We are not alone in calling for a reconsideration of success; Bennett et al. (2013) called for a widening of the definition of success, arguing specifically that attrition rates can overshadow the "soft" successes – a student's increased confidence about the future and what they are capable of, even if they did not finish the course. For example Li and Jackson (2024) explored the notion of success by analysing retention and progression from various equity group statuses, entry pathways, and the student experience. Crawford (2014) encouraged the consideration of success from multiple perspectives, including a recognition of these programs for their social inclusion practices and the shifts in the long-standing attitudes towards university. For first-in-family students, this shift can send a cultural ripple through communities that proves harder to capture in hard data but is evidenced in increasing uptakes through low SES groups. Other researchers have found that students from enabling programs performed slightly better (Chesters, et al., 2018, Klinger & Tranter, 2009) and enjoyed a more positive first year experience (Smith, 2010.) Larsen and Emmett (2023) suggest the problem be considered from four distinctive perspectives: economic, transformative, meritocratic and social justice perspectives. Sadly, nearly a decade later, a narrow, economic, dominantly neoliberal paradigm still dogs the reputation of such programs. The limited ways of counting success contribute to the "wicked problem" of social equity in higher education (Larsen & Emmett, 2023).

Enduring Barriers for Enabling Cohorts

Researchers have revealed that enabling cohorts experience enduring barriers throughout their educational journey and this needs to be acknowledged as having legitimate impacts on their studies. Habel et al. (2016) noted in their study the continued disruptions for enabling students due to financial pressures, health, and mental health issues, struggles balancing family responsibilities and/or expectations, noting even relationship breakdowns due to a change in social mobility. Discussed in the research also is the evidence that students who have university level education parents are more likely to complete degrees, with average completion rates of 78%, while in contrast, low SES students were less resourced, including cultural capital and had experienced more negative educational experiences, and achieving pass rates of 68% (Chesters & Watson, 2013). Evaluating success for enabling students should not be compared to students entering university from more traditional pathways and multiple forms of evaluation are required.

Methods

A qualitative open-ended survey was deemed the most appropriate approach to capture "what is important to participants" (Braun et al., 2020, p. 641) and the "lived experiences" (Creswell 2014, p. 14). Previous research regarding enabling students undertaken by Habel et al. (2016) also used this approach in gathering data, and were successful in gaining a broad perspective into the "rich and diverse" experiences of their participants (p. 6). Braun et al. (2020) also state "a key advantage of online qualitative surveys is openness and flexibility to address a wide range of research questions" (p. 642). By allowing students to reflect freely and anonymously, it was hoped that the responses would be honest and insightful and allow the researchers an opportunity to examine any trends that emerged from the reflections. There was also a desire from the researchers to be able to hear the participants' voices without any preconceived ideas about what would be said. According to Creswell (2014), "In the entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or that writers express in the literature" (p. 189). The open-ended questions in the questionnaire allowed for this to occur.

The initial questions were designed to elicit a snapshot of students' general perceptions of their enabling course, and whether it was helpful for them in gaining entry into university. Participants were also asked which university they attended in their first year and whether they were still attending that particular university. Using a 5-point Likert scale, participants were asked how helpful FTH or TLC was in gaining entry to university. Finally, the survey posed open ended questions about general perceptions towards their first year experience as undergraduate students. Past FTH and TLC students who had successfully completed their course were emailed a link to an anonymous online questionnaire via Qualtrics. The link was sent to 540 FTH students and 964 TLC students . In total there were 64 FTH participants and 125 TLC participants (189 overall), with an overall response rate of 12.6%. Online surveys were chosen as the data collection tool as they were a swift method to reach out to the hundreds of former students across both of the enabling programs. The participants were guaranteed anonymity, and the survey was relatively short (encouraging a positive response rate).

The open-ended question responses were collated into a single document, and an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the data, using a three-stage process, was conducted. Data was examined first for what was unique and shared among the responses. The researchers noted key phrases, explanations, and emotional responses (Cooper et al., 2012) which were then colour coded and condensed in order to see emergent themes. Finally, the major conceptual themes of "value and enjoyment" and "future learning journeys" were drawn together. Two researchers analysed the data, careful to bracket their own conclusions, and reflected on their findings through generative discussions with the remaining researchers to ensure key findings were not overlooked.[2] The conceptual themes found in the respondents' reflections are further explored in the following section.

Findings

A number of pertinent findings emerged from the survey. Most compellingly it highlighted that 96.3% of students gained entry into university after completing their enabling course. After this initial finding, a diverse picture of the student journey emerged, again confirming our phenomenological attempts to capture complexity (Falconer & Holcomb, 2008). Despite all participants successfully completing their enabling course, several of them commented that they decided not to apply for university after year 12, or chose to enter the workforce immediately, citing financial motivations for this choice. When asked about which tertiary institution they had gained entry into, 83% stated that they gained entry into Murdoch University specifically. Of these, 51% are still studying at the university they entered after completing the enabling course.

The final two questions of the survey, which allowed for the participants to reflect on their experiences more openly, gave the researchers a deeper understanding of the experience. Participants were not obligated to write a response to these two questions, however out of 189 participants, 109 responded regarding their first year experience (57.7%) and 103 provided a comment reflecting on their respective enabling course (54.5%). There were several themes that dominated in the participants' comments. The following themes were prevalent when students were asked about their experiences with their enabling course.

Value and Enjoyment

As Falconer and Holcomb (2008) explained, effective phenomenological research captures the relative change in student learning. Both FTH and TLC participants reported that the programs were effective for creating relative change, in particular teaching referencing skills and academic writing:

> The flexitrack high program was a great program to get people prepared for university studies, even more prepared than ATAR students. Key University skills (especially referencing) that were taught during flexitrack have been more than helpful in my first year University studies (FTH participant X)

> it prepared me for essays the most and how to complete a university standard assessment as we are not taught this in school (TLC participant X)

The comments reveal insider experiences of preparedness and a newfound confidence through successful completion. Many commented that the specific skills taught in the program were transferable, a clear indicator of effectiveness. Additionally, 47 out of 103 comments focussed on enjoyment and the value of the program, including positive descriptions of the program such as enjoyable, fun, excellent, great or good. One participant noted: *"*I really enjoyed my first semester of university, I found that I was ahead of other students who came straight from school" (FTH participant X*)*. Similarly, another student commented, "It was quite smooth and a good introduction to university life and expectations" (FTH participant X). For some students the enjoyment was derived from the feeling of having a university-like experience by studying the course: "I really

[2] This study was approved by Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number 2023/080).

enjoyed TLC, I enjoyed how you have the lecture then tutorial like University"(TLC participant X).The survey dispelled assumptions (Moustakas, 1994) and confirmed our anecdotal opinions; participants, once in their programs, felt the enabling programs provided helpful preparation for tertiary study, with 58.7% overall rating their enabling course as extremely helpful, and 22.7% as moderately helpful. Many participants felt more prepared to be successful at university than students who had not completed an enabling course.

Consistent with the intentions of phenomenological studies (Cooper et al., 2012), feelings regarding the program were evident. Words such as "grateful", "eye-opening", "insightful" captured the "essence of the experience" (Moustaka, 1994, p. 85). A sense of gratitude and appreciation for not only the program but the educators in the program were evident in 10 responses: "I was so incredibly grateful for the opportunity to study FlexiTrack High, I wouldn't be here today without it and it's (sic) amazing tutors, I do not regret doing FlexiTrack High" (FTH participant X). This is similar to the findings from Habel et al., (2016) whose research revealed that enabling students felt "a strong sense of gratitude to the institution and program for giving them a 'second chance' at entering academic culture" (p. 6). Some comments revealed advantages for neurodiverse students: "I am dyslexic and was unable to do atar (sic) but flexi track gave me an opportunity to study at uni and I'm doing so well" (FTH participant X),and others confirmed that they actively recommended the course to other students: "I try to encourage young students I know that are still in high school having trouble with selecting their pathways to complete the course if it is being offered" (FTH participant X). One former student even highlighted the importance of making it known to the general population:

> Make it more open to the public that people don't have to go down the ATAR path in order to go to university. ATAR was pushed onto us students and it was almost shameful to do the bridging course then (sic) to have stressed our final years of high school away doing ATAR. (TLC participant X)

The emotive language used by the respondents underscores the "mood" (Finlay, 2009, p. 475), the high regard that is held for these enabling courses, as well as the value they hold for those seeking an alternate entry to university study. From this, we learn that the value of transformation (or change as Falconer and Holcomb, 2008 assert) and development of a learner identity is not just personal, but relational to the family, community and wider society in multitudinous ways.

Future Learning Journeys

The research responses gave valuable insight into how our enabling programs can provide fuller educational experiences for future students (Falconer & Holcomb, 2008). Several students revealed a desire for the enabling programs to be recognised at more institutions, and concerns around the English language-centric curriculum gave valuable feedback into future program evolution. More vitally the response showed how the first year experience could be tailored to further support their tertiary learning journey. The responses captured students in their "lived time" (Finlay, 2009, p. 475), post enabling program and from this first year perspective they could offer wisdom. Student comments highlighted the need for study skills support in first year to further the development of independent learning and time management skills. Students commented: "Have more classes to help you understand the workload and to help teach you some time management for assessments and classes" (TLC participant X). Additionally, "I mainly struggled with understanding the extent of how much I need to independently organise everything myself, which obviously I am great at doing now with more experience" (TLC participant X).

The value in this phenomenological study is in its usefulness (Finlay, 2009) for creating ongoing supports for enabling students on their tertiary learning journey, particularly social and emotional, financial, and practical support. Students noted that this support was required from the institution itself, but also from tutors and lecturers. Students responded: "more support from staff and a better community feel so I didn't feel so isolated and alone in my struggles" (TLC participant X). This impact was particularly seen in regional students wanting "more financial support for the first years just out of high schools in the regions for students who must stay at accommodation" (FTH participant X). This theme also connected to other subjective experiences (Finlay, 2009) reported, highlighting the need for more assistance with navigating the LMS, using the library resources, and transport:

> Nothing prepares you for the travel times. If you have 1 class on a Monday and you drive up to Murdoch have your class then go home you've spent more time and energy than if you were at school doing 5/6 classes a day then going home. Maybe it's a personal issue but some days can feel so draining compared to high school. (FTH participant X)

With all of the support that our enabling programs provide in getting students into university study, the next step is to ensure that they feel supported to continue and complete their university journey.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research here provides support for the effectiveness of high school enabling programs, with social and emotional gains, and positive attitudes towards the programs, resulting in strong conversion rates. The findings also support other researchers' assertions for the need for continued and additional support for equity groups as they journey through their tertiary studies (Thomas, 2014: Australian Government Department of Education**,** 2024). As evidenced in the responses from this cohort, equity students are still facing enduring barriers when transitioning into university. Similarly to what was found by Habel and Whitman (2016), the transition was painful for our students and the alienation felt was in contrast to the belonging experienced in the enabling program. In previous research we demonstrated that features of the FlexiTrack High enabling transition pedagogy (ETP) supported our students holistically to achieve their goals (Olds et al., 2022) yet students in this study highlighted further need for the same pedagogical approaches to continue into the into first year experience. As Kift (2009) highlights in her transition pedagogy, institution wide approaches are needed for increasingly diverse cohorts to facilitate engagement, support and belonging. While this research highlights a number of preliminary qualitative indicators of effectiveness, it is acknowledged that further quantitative and qualitative research is required to fully understand the impact of high school enabling programs. Further research too is required to investigate the reasons why enabling students discontinue their studies to inform more effective mechanisms for support (Habel et al., 2016).

Failure to assess success holistically creates yet another barrier for equity groups. Equity groups should not be measured in the same way as other groups entering university, given the same enduring barriers, particularly financial barriers they encounter in society, do not suddenly vanish once entering the hallowed halls (Bennett & Lumb, 2019). The benefits of enabling education are widely confirmed yet intangible (Crawford, 2014, Syme et al., 2022, Taylor et al., 2018). It is in measuring these "benefits" that it is complex. Student experiences in our high school enabling programs have elicited responses such as joy, happiness, gratitude, confidence, and competence, before academic gains. The research reinforces assertions made by others in this field that more holistic conceptualisations of evaluation are needed. Crawford (2014) encourages us to consider the flow-on effect of enabling programs, including the impact of enabling students in university communities and in their own community. Bennett and Lumb (2019) assert than any evaluation policy for enabling programs should be contextually attuned and contain subjective practices that value the knowledges and experiences gained, arguing that "neo-liberalised policy discourses as problematic and wasteful of public money because the neo-liberal measures of successful educational engagement that are applied miss much of what is valuable about those programs for the participants" (p. 967). The findings, while not surprising, confirmed the long-term gains of participants. In many instances, the responses were richer and deeper than those given immediately after a course, as participants mature, learn skills in reflection and develop social-emotional skills to separate themselves somewhat from their experiences and their reflection of that lived experience.

We conclude by inviting reflection on what a holistic definition of success could look like for high school enabling students. Could measures be a combination of degree completion in addition to measuring individual transformation? Could an enabling learner profile be developed to help us target and capture the growth we anecdotally experience when teaching our students? As businesses are assessed from a triple bottom line, so perhaps should enabling programs be assessed for their contribution towards social inclusion, positive first year experiences *and* completion rates. Until efficacy is holistically conceived, the accomplishments of the students in these programs will continue to be marginalised.

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