WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE HETEROGENEOUS NATURE OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENT ENROLMENTS?

S. Mlcek, J. Ogden
Charles Sturt University, Australia (AUSTRALIA)

smlcek@csu.edu.au, jogden@csu.edu.au

Abstract

There is a greater awareness amongst the higher education sector about the different enrolment patterns of students entering university for the first time. The revelation is sometimes acknowledged with bemusement, that is, ‘how can students undertake that subject when they should be doing this one instead, or first?’ One of the overarching strategies that can help practitioners to understand this phenomenon, and deal with it more effectively, is through the idea of ‘intentional engagement’ as part of transition pedagogy. Students enroll in whatever, and however they are accommodated in university courses, and in an era of national and global attention, increasing participation in further studies should ensure subject enrolments are carefully planned to improve the overall student experience.

In our social work programs at Charles Sturt University [CSU], Australia, student data from 2011 and 2012 identified 69 different current subject enrolment patterns in a chosen ‘first year’ of study; on one level, the outcome extends the exciting possibilities and trends of a transition teaching and learning narrative. Within such a narrative, pedagogical processes provide a “guiding philosophy for the intentional first year curriculum design and support that carefully scaffolds and mediates the first year learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts” (Kift, 2009). This ‘mediation’ is based on the adoption at CSU, of six First Year Principles: transition, diversity, design, engagement, assessment, and evaluation and monitoring. However, applying the first year principles to such a diverse cohort brings its own challenges.

In this paper we look at the notion of developing a culture of sustainability in lifelong learning through discussing the issues that arise from types of enrolment patterns that students choose, as well as the application of the first year principles of lecturer engagement with these students, and the ways that skills integration can be built into the curriculum in order to facilitate all students achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Keywords: transition pedagogy; student enrolment patterns; curriculum design and delivery; first-year principles; intentional teaching and learning; heterogeneity of student engagement.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This paper came about as a result of participating in two situations: work that began in January 2011 on a student transition and retention [STAR] initiative at Charles Sturt University [CSU], Australia, and attendance at the 4th CSUED Conference [15-17 November 2011 – Transforming University Education: Developing a Culture of Collaboration, Integration and Sustainability] where the phenomenon of enrolment patterns in the Bachelor of Social Work [BSW] degree program was presented. The work was not part of a formal research project, but rather resulted from observation of the interesting way that institutional data can reveal patterns of behaviour when a seemingly innocuous question is applied – how are students enrolling in their course of study; what subjects are they taking?
The intention here is to continue what was started in 2011; to showcase and expose the likelihood of other discipline programs experiencing the same situation as the BSW, in terms of complex and complicating student engagement in higher education. Both authors are currently involved in the CSU STAR initiative as academic lead and support staff for the Faculty of Arts’ BSW and Bachelor of Social Sciences [social welfare] (BSW [SW]) degree programs. These programs were included in the initiative because of the critical interest they generated as being characterised by certain phenomena: high intake of adult learners entering from low high-school completion; high intake of adult learners re-entering study after many years’ absence either for family or employment reasons; high intake of students transitioning from Technical and Further Education College [TAFE] to university, and high intake of students who are designated as being in the low socio-economic range. Another interesting characteristic of the profile of social work and social welfare students is the increasing number of refugees and migrants whose second and even third language is not English. This paper addresses one aspect of the heterogeneity of students’ participation at university, that is, the way that they enrol in their courses. What are the effects of such diverse patterns of enrolments, and what can we learn from trying to address these patterns?

At Charles Sturt University [CSU], involvement in Higher Education Participation and Partnership [HEPP] funding to 2013 has meant scrutiny of the ways that students participate in higher educational opportunities. The participation funding component of the HEPP initiative has been provided to higher education institutions to undertake activities and implement strategies to improve access and outcomes for students from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds. The funds are to assist Australian universities in reaching the government target of 20% of students from LSES categories, participating in domestic undergraduate courses. The objectives of the partnership component of the funding are to increase the number of LSES students who access and participate in higher education by raising aspirations and collaborating with other appropriate stakeholders and providers (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2010).

HEPP government funding enabled us to undertake review of how we enrol students into our courses, how we keep them there, and how we address the overall ‘student experience’ in a positive and meaningful way. By introducing ‘first-year principles’ around student transition, engagement and retention at university, in both curriculum design and delivery, the debate around accommodating the heterogeneous makeup of our students was given an appropriate additional reflection framework.

1.1.1 Contemporary learning and teaching framework principles

At the end of 2010, CSU adopted the six First Year Principles that encompass: curriculum design and delivery; diversity; engagement; transition, and evaluation. Some educators use terms such as ‘socio-cultural incongruity’ (Devlin, 2011) to highlight the incongruous mis-match between learners from different socio-economic status and the institutions to which they attend. Additionally, there has been a marked increase in the way that institutional practices are designed holistically more and more to foster student engagement through reflecting on and addressing the ‘whole of person’ (Nelson, Smith, & Clarke, 2012). Our use of ‘heterogeneity’ is taken from ideas within transition pedagogy that acknowledges ‘first year students’, as multiple cohorts, who are extremely diverse. The diverse nature of student progression also means that non-first year students may enrol in first year units of study. This articulation of a ‘transition pedagogy’ — a guiding philosophy for intentional first year curriculum design and support that carefully scaffolds and mediates the first year learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts — is concerned with undergraduate first year curriculum and co-curriculum design, rather than with the experience of commencing students. It also acknowledges that good first year curriculum design must be concomitant with good first year teaching and proactive, just-in-time support and service provision (Kift, Nelson, & Clark, 2010).

The relevance of integrating first-year principles in order to enhance the first-year experience is worth recounting here. At a fundamental level, the adoption of first-year principles to enhance the first-year
student experience has resonance with the concept and practice of social inclusion. There are arguably six education principles that invite teaching practice to address: transition; diversity; subject delivery; curriculum design; assessment, and evaluation. Work on the STAR project [including the application of these principles] is genuinely informed by three overarching pedagogies:

- transition pedagogy
- social inclusion pedagogy
- Andragogy – the science of helping adults to learn.

1.1.2 The effects on adult education and lifelong learning in general

Participation in lifelong learning acknowledges the different ways that adults engage in spaces of learning; some of the language has changed but the articulation of what is going on at both the student and lecturer (and/or institution) levels remains the focus of discussion. Articulating a transition pedagogy requires scrutiny of the way that lecturers need to: orientate students; transition them into their subjects and programs; take account of the diverse cultural needs of different cohorts; provide clear directions/instructions and guidelines about assessment, and ensure timely communication is given throughout a session about participation, contacting a lecturer, assessment advice, and assessment marking feedback. The task by lecturers is to understand the myriad ways that each of the principles can be addressed in order to address the foundations of Andragogy – the science of helping adults to learn (Eduard Lindeman 1927, in Brookfield 1987). For example, through ‘transition’ practices, lecturers take account of the history of learners and the experiential learning they already bring to the higher education arena. That is, no learner comes from a ‘tabular rasa’ state (Mlcek, 2009a) and lecturers must acknowledge that the curriculum and its delivery should be designed to be consistent and explicit in assisting students’ transition from their previous educational experience to the nature of learning in higher education and learning in their discipline as part of their lifelong learning (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010). The first year curriculum should be designed to mediate and support transition as a process that occurs over time. In this way, the first year curriculum should enable successful student transition into first year, through first year, into later years and ultimately out into the world of work, professional practice and career attainment.

Articulating a social inclusion pedagogy requires attention to the access and equity of programs to engage all students. One of the guiding principles for evaluating the readiness of students to engage in higher education studies is to set an early, low-stakes, intense feedback assessment item that goes towards measuring student capacity to write, to present a synthesis of ideas, to organise, to engage with trans-systems communication, and to exercise judgement about choice of priorities. For social work students, an initial call to successful participation in university study relates to the level and degree to which they embrace praxis – the intentional engagement with situations in order to improve. The sentiment is a guiding beacon for all human services work including that from lecturers. And while all first-year lecturers on the BSW course at CSU fully embrace the integration of principles that help to improve the first-year student experience, the reality of collapsed session timetabling, the rationalisation of budgets to counter the anomalies of a competitive tertiary environment, and the fickleness of the commodification of higher education studies, only serve to stretch an already-over-stretched work environment.

Articulating a ‘pedagogy’ that in fact privileges Andragogy (Brookfield, 1987) requires acknowledgement of the unique ways that adults learn. The first year of university study is arguably the most crucial time for engaging students not just in higher education but also in a journey of lifelong learning (Jarvis, 2004; Mlcek, 2011). When students pick a course like social work, their motivation originates from several sources and their expectations are just as diverse. Often that motivation has been galvinised by life ‘sea-change’ experiences of the ‘mature-aged student’ (Mlcek, 2009b), but there is just as every likelihood that choice has been predicated on the need to make strategic career decisions.
1.2 Concerns about first-year enrolments - *heterogeneity*

Increasing numbers of students from a wider variety of backgrounds are now attending universities which are also coping with new funding regimes and accountability (Devereux, Macken-Horarik, Trimmingham-Jack, & Wilson, 2004). In Australia, the impetus regarding readiness-for-work for the past five years has been around issues to do with not only up-skilling workers, but also *in creating* more qualified workers. For Billet (2010) these directions are both lifelong and life-wide pedagogies which can be conceived to be part of lifelong learning rather than lifelong education; an extension of preparedness for the future of work (Mlcek, 2011). For Australia to remain competitive in the globalised economy, the Bradley Report (2008) had set out targets and recommendations to help achieve a greater access to higher education qualifications. The higher education system has changed in the past 30 years, and government funding has not kept up, with Australia falling behind in the number of graduates with degree level education. Only 29% of 25-34 year olds have such qualifications. Other countries have already set targets of 50%. To keep up with the demand for people with undergraduate qualifications Australia needs to look to non-traditional groups and increase its participation in higher education. Potential student groups such as low-socio economic status [LSES], Indigenous, and remote and rural students, all need to have improved access and support to higher education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). Targets set by the Government in response to the Bradley Review in the area of ‘Attainment, Access and Participation’, include those that, by:

- 2025, 40 per cent of all 25 to 34 year olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above.
- 2020, 20 per cent of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level will be of people from a low SES background.

Funding to increase low SES student participation is a key initiative to achieve the broader attainment target of 40 percent of 25 to 34 year olds having attained a bachelor level or above qualification by 2025 (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009).

Alongside increased acceptance of students into university programs are the tensions within the debates around quality of programs, standards, students’ academic capacity and capabilities, and staff and community expectations that are all interlinked with the economic rationalist argument of treating ‘students as customers’. Both James (2001) and McGinnis (2005) highlight the risks of trying to be ‘all things to all people’ through too much flexibility that could negatively impact support for student learning. For example, McGinnis (2005) argues that too much flexibility could lead to greater student isolation, less involvement in learning, and an increasing loss of experience identified with being a student; all factors that impact successful transition and adjustment to university study.

For the Bachelor of Social Work at CSU, what seems like a straight-forward exercise of enrolling in four subjects per session/semester for a full-time student, following a set course architecture, is in fact not the reality – in 2011, data revealed a possible 69 different enrolment combinations. The following information provides a snapshot of the enrolment patterns exercised by students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Combinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>201130 DE</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201130 Internal</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201160 DE</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those combinations could be chosen after a process that involves credit transfers from one undergraduate course/program to another, or from a TAFE pathway, or from the recognition of sustained and transparent professional engagement. The processes signify just one characteristic of ‘diversity’ in our students, and ways of ensuring access and equity to all students must be manifested through a social justice framework (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2002; 2008). That is, the first year curriculum should take note of student diversity and must be accessible by, and inclusive of, all students (Mlcek, 2011). Additionally, first-year curriculum design should recognise that students have special learning needs by reason of their social, cultural and academic transition.
Diversity is often a factor that further exacerbates transition difficulties. The first year curriculum should take into account students’ backgrounds, needs, experiences and patterns of study and few if any assumptions should be made about existing skills and knowledge. ‘Diversity’ in this context includes, for example:

- membership of at-risk or equity groups
- widening participation (e.g. non-traditional cohorts)
- students’ existing skills and knowledge
- patterns and timing of engagement with the first year curriculum (e.g. mid-year entry) (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010).

At CSU the makeup of 2011 social work students revealed the interesting basis of enrolment characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B Social Work</th>
<th>201130 DE</th>
<th>201130 Internal</th>
<th>201160 DE</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrolment</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSES</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Gen</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table provides some indication of enrolment pattern challenges for lecturers – some of whom do not even realise they are dealing with ‘first-year’ students, in third or fourth-level subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year Enrolment combinations:</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCS321 [child welfare practice], HCS406 [Human rights].</td>
<td>Students miss out on skills taught in levels 1 &amp; 2 subjects, for example, referencing, plagiarism/academic integrity, online literacy, library skills, research skills, and different genre writing skills.</td>
<td>Course swapping [?] need not be concerned with underpinning skills development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCS103 [fields of practice], SOC102 [sociology].</td>
<td>Miss out on basic concepts taught in other subjects</td>
<td>New ‘educational technologies’ will not over-whelm students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HCS102 [communication in human services], HCS204 [research methods], PSY113 [adolescent & child psychology], WEL218 [developing cross-cultural competencies].

Additional considerations require the bridging of incongruities. In relation to socio-cultural considerations, Devlin (2011) argues that, *Australia should avoid adopting either a deficit conception of students from low socio-economic backgrounds or a deficit conception of the institutions into which they will move*, but she mentions nothing about the incongruity of courses in trying to meet the choices that students make. Successful higher education participation ought to be conceptualised as a ‘joint venture’. At the macro level this is generally conceived of as being between the student and the institution, but on a micro level, CSU is no different to any other higher education institute that is trying to address the myriad government policy guidelines. In the current climate, course advice is provided to enable equitable access to university study for as many students as possible.

2 FACTORS THAT AFFECT SUCCESS AT UNIVERSITY

In the following sub-sections, academic cultural capital is linked to academic literacy development, which, in turn, is aligned to the presence of foundational skills. That is, we can have certain aspirations of what it is we want our students to gain after a four-year course, and the first-year can provide a sound basis for those foundations to be laid.

2.1 The effect of enrolment heterogeneity on *academic cultural capital*

Learners are acknowledged as having ‘academic cultural capital’ when they are able to support their learning within an academic context with the knowledge and awareness of communication and behavioural competence to successfully engage in diverse situations. We want them to have communication competence (Kaye, 2010). Those situations could include knowing how to enroll in a course or program, knowing what subjects to select after analysing a course structure, knowing who to contact when subject materials do not eventuate, knowing how to navigate around a university online site, knowing how to organise study around sessions, knowing what language to use when addressing peers or lecturers, knowing how to order text-books, and even knowing why all of that information is important for completing a subject and being part of the university environment. Many in the academic world would see the above situations as requiring ‘basic’ and/or ‘common sense’ knowledge. However, these assumptions are both contentious and contestable, especially in the new academic environment. But they are assumptions that are not even sustainable on any level whereby good teaching practice ought to be aligned to a sound learning and teaching pedagogy.

Many students struggle at the outset, with for example, transition from TAFE studies to university, and they require a certain departure from the episodic, more concrete form of the TAFE environment’s *opus operatum* to the different kind of practical knowledge [*habitus*] and mode of thinking [*modus operandi*] that is more abstract in a university (Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; St Clair, Rodriguez, & Nelson, 2005). Both environments are deemed to be ‘adult education’ institutes but the question of ‘cultural capital’ prevails. That is, the academic cultural capital that is required to participate in university study is quite different from that required in a technical and further education college. There is the question for example, of hegemony that prevails in upholding a highly stratified system (Pfeffer 2008) regardless of efforts such as the Bradley Report to mitigate against socio-economic inequalities in the distribution of educational opportunities. Indeed, linkages can be made to institutional structures and the persistence of educational inequality (Pfeffer, 2008).
First generation students [first-in-family] could also find their experience problematic but for reasons mainly to do with academic cultural capital. Neither of the above examples representing basis for enrolment indicate categorically that students will not progress successfully through their programs [in fact data/evidence yet-to-be-published suggests to the contrary]. However, the perception amongst individual lecturers is also based on sound experience of trying to help students transition successfully through their program/s. One recurring factor appears to be the lack of ‘sophistication’ in thinking about the extent and level of participation and commitment expected from students, as well as the acquisition and application of levels of thinking skills required to complete tasks, and the overall organisational skills associated with ‘learning how to learn’.

2.2 The effect of enrolment heterogeneity on skills development

At the level of acquiring specific academic learning skills, to, for example, complete assessment items, there is recent evidence to suggest that students who try to fit university study around the competing demands of balancing increasingly busy lives are disadvantaged when it comes to the effective development of tertiary-level literacy skills (Devereux, Macken-Horarik,Trimingham-Jack, & Wilson, 2004, p. 10). Knowing how to write, read and speak successfully within a particular university discourse can be exacerbated by several factors that ultimately determine the level and extent to which students acquire cultural capital. The changing nature of student enrolments into higher education means that individual lives could, apart from study in a university degree, involve: bringing up children; working full-time even, and possibly caring for elderly parents or relatives. Depending on circumstances, students could well find themselves also dealing with the negative effects of poverty impacting their university experience. Devereux et al (2004, p. 10) highlight the lack of internet access and essential resources such as textbooks as being two of the main deterrents for students that could last for the whole time that they are undertaking their degree program. That is, situations do not necessarily get better; continual social barriers, such as income and lack of disposable cash, as well as tertiary literacy development and therefore success in individual subjects, only become entrenched.

When students enrol in ‘first-year patterns’ that seem to not only focus on higher level subjects than those from traditionally first-year levels, but also ‘mix’ those levels within their program, adequate literacy development becomes problematic. In the following examples, some of the following subjects’ focus has been indicated already, but there are others whose levels of skills and engagement require ‘higher order’ thinking and engagement that are implied in their subject matter:

- HCS102, HCS204, PSY113, WEL218; HCS321, HCS406; PSY113, PSY216 [psychology of ageing]; HCS102, HCS204; HCS310 [mental health practice], HCS405 [4th-year theory and practice]; SOC102 [social inequality], SOC217 [fame & social control]; SPE211 [foundations in social policy], SWK423 [ethics & social work practices]; HCS102, HCS310, SPE211; HCS406, HCS111 [introduction to social welfare], WEL218, SOC101 [introductory sociology].

So, the heterogeneity of student enrolment becomes an interesting assessment by lecturers themselves; transition is about movement from one place to another and also about moving through situations. Issues can become challenging when students studying in a primarily social work course, must also complete subjects from other ‘service’ disciplines and those experiences can be more unique, isolated, or ‘removed’ even, from their program. A student who enrols in a certain first-year suite of subjects may attract the following considerations, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year Enrolment combinations:</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8
An informal skills audit in 2011 indicated the kinds and levels of skills that discipline colleagues look for in students. When those skills are looked at alongside those that are put forward by the AASW, then a complex array of skills, understanding/knowledge and attitudes are nominated even at the basic first-year level. At the subject level, apart from writing and digital literacy skills, there are those that could encompass a complex array of main skills and a sub-set of skills, including: Praxis - Purposeful behaviour, critical analysis, theory into practice, multidimensional analysis/assessment; Ethos of Scholarship - Research, referencing, avoiding plagiarism, academic integrity, confidentiality, copyright, critical thinking, and Communication - Context and discourse analysis, language skills, use of appropriate texts, formal and informal communication: email; online Forum messages; telephone communication, extra-dimensional communication such as different genres of social media interaction.

In looking at the heterogeneous nature of student enrolments, university enrolment pre-supposes a level playing field, that is, students check out their options, they apply, they go through the relevant processes; they check the criteria and then they enrol. However, a ‘level playing field’ does not denote homogeneity; the only ‘sameness’ relates to the subjects chosen and the mode of study. The one-way of doing things does not immediately identify the myriad pathways along which students travel to arrive at the pre or post enrolment stages.

2.2.1 The effect on academic literacy development

At the heart of academic literacy development, and demonstration of cultural capital, is the acquisition of foundational skills that can be as elusive to evaluate as they are to define. However, foundational skills here will relate to those skills that help an individual to identify with a particular ‘discourse’. In his ground-breaking work about what is literacy, James Paul Gee (1989, [http://www.ed.psu.edu/englishpds/Articles/CriticalLiteracy/What%20is%20Literacy.htm](http://www.ed.psu.edu/englishpds/Articles/CriticalLiteracy/What%20is%20Literacy.htm)) starts off by needing to define other terms first and ‘discourse’ is one which means: “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or a social network”. Gee (2011) makes continual eminent sense when he suggests that the focus of literacy is about social practices, and that “it’s not just how you say it, but what you are and do when you say it” (2011, [http://www.studymode.com/essays/James-Paul-Gee-s-Introduction-To-Literacy-594288.html](http://www.studymode.com/essays/James-Paul-Gee-s-Introduction-To-Literacy-594288.html)). In this way, Gee views ‘discourse’ as a social construct not dissimilar from ‘culture’.

In a similar vein, academic cultural capital is related to the way that individuals are socialized or immersed into, and then heralded as members of particular learning spaces through the utilization and demonstration of appropriate skills and attitudes (Edwins, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2002). Mostly, this appropriation has a dichotomous characteristic; it is acquired through investment of time and
training but also through exposure to cultural practices which is manifested in behaviour that is played out unconsciously (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, & Passeron, 1979). Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural capital’, with its distinctive focus on the social value of cultural habits, attitudes, and skills, provides an ongoing important input into debates around access and equity, the sociology of culture, and also the sociology of education both now and in the future.

2.2.2 The effect on function and forms of writing
There is little argument that academic cultural capital is enhanced through the practice and production of canonized pieces of written work. Writing is recognized as critical to effective professional practice and as an essential social work skill. Writing is also presented as a strategy for teaching social work knowledge, values and skills (Falk, & Ross, 2001). For the social worker, formal written tasks range from description, through to analysis, then into reflection, and progressions into critical reflection. By the second year, students are expected to be cognisant of writing genres that involve: narration; description; explication, and argumentation. For many of our students, progressing from descriptive texts to the other forms provides a real challenge, magnified by several lecturers’ lack of accommodating movement from tacit forms of knowledge to more explicit explanations of their expectations. That is, there is often a mis-match between what the lecturer wants in a subject, and what a student is capable of delivering; after trying to just get through and complete first-year subjects, students’ writing choices; their capabilities in this area, may not include enough options in order to deliver appropriately (Falk, & Ross, 2001).

3 CONCLUSION
In Australia, the Government push to educate more students to the Bachelor degree level has led to an increase in students from non traditional and LSES backgrounds attending university. To help these students to achieve, CSU has adopted the First Year Curriculum principles from Sally Kift (2008). As a result, students entering university these days are a more diverse and culturally varied group than used to be the case and all need to be explicitly taught the discourse and academic culture of universities. The heterogeneity of student enrolment reinforces this point, but the challenges are multi-dimensional and compounded by different levels of staff-readiness to cope with the expectations of transition pedagogy and andragogical principles.

Students’ subject enrolment choices are not as straightforward as they first appear to be in the course structure due to the many different entry pathways available. This affects their patterns of subject enrolments leading to difficulties in understanding the content when taken out of the traditional order. Because students who start at any point in the course still need to be taught the basic academic literacies needed for success at university, the responsibility for assisting them to achieve in their studies resides with both the university and the student.

4 REFERENCES


