Chapter 8

**Enabling pedagogy and critical teaching approaches in diverse learning contexts**

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**Learning Objectives**

At the completion of the chapter, you will be able to:

* Understand the history and context of Widening Participation in Australia
* Identify critical pedagogies aligned with enabling education
* Recognise pedagogies that value and support diverse learners
* Apply self-reflective practices to current teaching approaches to identify potential deficit discourses
* Support the transition of learners from equity backgrounds from school to Higher Education

**Introduction: The history and context of Widening Participation in Australia**

*When I say, “I come from Christies”, they’re like, “No.  Are you okay?” and I’m like, “Yeah.  It was actually a nice school”. Because I’m from one of the lower suburbs near Hackham and Christie Downs.* ***We’re considered to be like derroes****.  That’s the slang for it.  But I live in the barrier between Hackham and Huntfield Heights which is the better end of Hackham, and I always got told, “****You’re never going to amount to nothing because you’re from this area”,*** *and I’m like, “Well, actually I’m from Huntfield Heights.  Hackham’s just over the hill.  You don’t know my family”, so I tried to prove everyone wrong, that* ***I’m not a derro, I’m actually trying to be intelligent****. (*[[1]](#footnote-1)*Alice, Student Interview)*

Australia has identified targets for widening educational participation with many universities delivering pre-degree enabling programs to address these. Specifically, the 2020 target states that “20 percent of undergraduate enrolments in higher education should be students from low socio-economic backgrounds” (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, Scales, 2008, p. xiv). Learners who enrol in enabling programs have often left secondary school early or attained limited success in their final year, and frequently re-engage with education via alternative pathways. Enabling programs are defined as programs of instruction that incorporate enabling subjects or modules designed to develop academic skills to facilitate the transition of students into higher level award programs (National Association of Enabling Educators in Australia, 2019).

**Key term** Widening Participation: a policy logic aimed at addressing educational disadvantage in accessing higher education for learners from low socio-economic backgrounds.

While the Bradley report (2008) recommends addressing socio-economic disadvantage, this intersects with other identity markers as students from refugee backgrounds or ethnic minority groups often experience additional levels of marginalisation in accessing education (Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek, 2017). 26 percent young people do not complete year 12 by age 19 with 40 percent of low SES young people not completing year 12 by age 19 (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab & Huo, 2015). Between 2008 and 2015, the numbers of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds entering higher education increased by 50.4% (NCSEHE, 2017), with a significant number entering via enabling pathways. However, completion numbers according to socio-economic band reveal a disparity similar to that found in secondary school completions (Lamb et al., 2015). Only 68.9 percent of students from lower-SES backgrounds complete their university degree compared with 77.7 percent of students in the higher-SES band (Edwards & McMillan, 2015, p. 6). While a deficit explanation would attribute the lower completion number of working-class learners to lack of resilience or low aspirations (Burke, 2002), there are strong and continuing arguments regarding problems with HE pedagogy.  Problems with HE pedagogy are symptomatic of both the power dynamic between teacher and students along with how universities define who belongs (Burke et al., 2017). As the student cohort in Bachelor level study becomes increasingly diverse, adopting ‘critical’ pedagogical approaches in undergraduate teaching not only supports a social justice agenda for widening participation, but also improves overall student engagement, retention and satisfaction with teaching.

There are also strong arguments (Hattam, 2022) for the adoption of critical teaching approaches in secondary schools to enhance recognition of learner capability to achieve at a tertiary level. Previous research into early-school leavers details the ‘gate-keeping’ mechanisms implemented in secondary schools in lower socio-economic suburbs of South Australia (Smyth, Hattam, Cannon, Edwards, Wilson & Wurst, 2004). Drawing on Bourdieu & Passerson’s (1977) ‘Social Reproduction Theory’, Smyth et al., (2004) study demonstrates how secondary schools play a sifting and sorting role, actively or passively leading to early school leaving. One young person interviewed reflected on the active strategies of the school to push out the learners not deemed capable to continue on with further study: ‘*Um…if you haven’t been putting in the top effort. They’ve been trying to get rid of all the trouble makers. Keep just a class of kids that want to go straight to uni, straight to TAFE. They’ve got it all organised*’ (Smyth et al., 2004). Instead of creating opportunities to move up the class ladder, often education reproduces the same class inequality. These sorting and sifting mechanisms as outlined in the cultural geography of schools is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Source:** Reproduced from Smyth et al, 2004.

Recent research highlights similar exclusion in secondary schools in the same socio-economic areas of South Australia (Hattam, 2022). A young LGBTQI enabling learner shared his experience of being encouraged to leave school because his sexuality did not align with the religious values of the school: ‘*Oh, it was soul destroying. I suppose we talk about the institution, and to be rejected from such – what was supposed to be a nurturing environment, it has affected me in my life*’ (Luke, Student Interview). Many students are discounted from a university pathway years before the opportunity presents itself because of their ‘difference’ at the age of 15 or 16 (Cuconato, du Bois-Reymond & Lunabba, 2015). Aspirations to continue into HE can also be fostered in primary school by informing and guiding young learners about further education as well as instilling a belief in the learner that they are capable to achieve (Greenway, Terton & Elsom, 2017).

The authors have come to recognise the role of enabling education in disrupting multiple pedagogical problematics in secondary schools and universities such that young people, who have previously been denied access, can now aspire and participate in HE (Hattam & Bilic, 2019). Over the last decade, the enabling sector has flourished across Australia where practitioners and educators have begun to define distinctive approaches to teaching students in preparatory programs (Bennett, Motta, Hamilton, Burgess, Relf, Gray, Leroy-Dyer & Albright 2016; Stokes 2014).



Figure 2 Education over the life-cycle

The aim of all enabling programs is for learners to develop academic literacies and competencies to succeed in a tertiary environment. Research suggests that providing engagement opportunities for learners who ‘battle’ with “procedures that are difficult to understand and a language which is ‘alien’ to them” (Krause, 2005, p.11), requires the development of a responsive teaching framework. Enabling education can provide opportunities to a ‘second chance’ for those who have struggled in other educational systems. In enabling:

* we focus on the ‘cultural geography’ (Smyth et al, 2004) through cultural messages about who belongs;
* adopt dialogic and democratic approaches (Shor & Freire, 1987);
* promote funds of knowledge approaches & connect with learners life-world (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992);
* set challenging tasks and scaffold learning (Luke, 2012); and
* focus on the ‘affective’ (Ahmed, 2004) elements of teaching and adopting care-full pedagogies (Motta & Bennett, 2018) to be ‘emotional champions’ (O’Shea, 2019).

This chapter will develop your understanding of the role of widening participation in Australia, and specifically the pedagogical approaches outlined above which can be enacted to support learners from all backgrounds. These critical teaching approaches have the power to disrupt the reproduction of existing structural inequalities to enhance the educational success of learners from all sectors of Australian society.

**Key term** Enabling pedagogies: teaching approaches designed to support the transition of diverse learners between educational settings that encompass critical pedagogies through challenging tasks; scaffolding; connecting to life-worlds and valuing diverse knowledges and sensitive to emotions of the learner.

 Mapping to Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Box)

This chapter aligns with the following Australian Professional Standards for Teachers:

4.1 Support student participation

Identify strategies to support inclusive student participation and engagement in classroom activities.

3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs

Demonstrate broad knowledge of strategies that can be used to evaluate teaching programs to improve student learning.

3.3 Use teaching strategies

Include a range of teaching strategies.

6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning

Demonstrate an understanding of the rationale for continued professional learning and the implications for improved student learning.

 **Critical Pedagogies in enabling education**

The theoretical underpinnings enabling education pedagogies are adopted from critical education scholars. Each of these elements of critical pedagogy are explained below as they relate to enabling education. Enabling educators attempt to shift attention away from “deficit discourses to directing attention to transforming institutional spaces, systems and practices, which are implicated in reproducing exclusions and inequalities at cultural, symbolic and structural levels” (Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek, 2017, p. 30). While enabling programs are traditionally delivered by, and connected to, a HE institution, there are instances where enabling courses are delivered to learners completing secondary years of schooling (Vernon, Watson, Moore & Seddon, 2018). Enabling teaching approaches can be adopted by educators across educational settings where learners are in the latter years of secondary study. Importantly, enacting enabling pedagogies in learning settings foster students sense of belonging and builds their aspirations for further study thereby countering the feelings of disconnection that often lead to early school leaving.

**Reflection/Discussion question**: As you read, consider your own context - could enabling approaches be utilised within your environment? Reflect on your own teaching, what similarities and differences do you recognise in your own teaching and the descriptions given here?

**Connecting with student life-worlds**

A central element of enabling pedagogy is to respect and value the diverse knowledges that learners bring to the education setting. Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González (1992) promote the concept of funds of knowledge to achieve this connection. Funds of knowledge are “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p.133). Instead of focusing on what skills or knowledge the students do not have - a deficit approach - educators focus on the resources that learners bring with them and connect with their “life-worlds”, effectively building their curriculum around what interests the learners. According to Dudley-Marling & Dudley-Marling (2015, p. 47), “funds of knowledge is a powerful tool for teachers to both gather and understand the knowledge that their students have and support school learning through critical home-classroom connections”. A common strategy implemented by enabling educators is to reference popular culture in the delivery of a topic or concept. Starting from the students ‘life-world’ - with reference to a popular movie, song, show on *Netflix*, video game, event on social media or social issue that attracts high coverage across mainstream media - produces early engagement in the learning process and provides a platform to connect to academic themes (see the case study of how student life-worlds are activated in a critical thinking course). In the development of the curriculum of a Critical Thinking course in our enabling program, the learners are encouraged to select their own topic for assessment to enhance the participatory element in the course. If participating in a group text analysis, we select a topic that connects with their life-worlds.

**Key term** Life-worlds: Existing knowledges, experiences, cultural and social capital individual to learners which provides a schema with which to access the world.

**An ethos of care**

Many learners are anxious about their capabilities to succeed as they transition through study. Adopting the role of the ‘emotional cheerleader’ (O’Shea, 2019) can build confidence and motivation of the learner, as reflected here:

‘Getting back into education, and when I found it, I thought this is a really good program, for myself , I was going through a quite significant change, I was ready and at the same time a little bit afraid of what will happen …and then when I got here I have nothing but teachers that have been really kind to me, not only in my education but in personal aspects when I needed help, you know I feel like the lecturers and tutors want the students who are willing to try, they want them to succeed as much as we do. (Rose, Student Interview)

Ahmed’s (2004) turn to ‘affect’ in education has focused attention on how the feelings of learners and educators are central to their experiences of education, by actively showing, that you ‘care’ about the learners wellbeing. Shor (1992, p. 25) argues that “how a student feels in the classroom is as important as what is being learnt/taught”. Motta & Bennett (2018) propose a key strategy in enabling education is to create an inclusive and ‘care-full’ learning environment.  An ethos of care can be demonstrated by reaching out to learners who appear to be struggling or lack confidence. In addition, creating a respectful, supportive and ‘safe’ environment for learners are hallmarks of this approach where students feel able to seek support for any questions, or issues they may be struggling with

An ethos of care is also demonstrated through the adoption of an ‘active’ culture (see Figure 1) across all student interactions, from orientation to enrolment and right through to the processes of managing students-at-risk (see Hattam, Stokes & Ulpen, 2017, Weiler, 2020).   We recognise that this approach is both emotionally demanding and time-consuming (Crawford, Olds, Lisciandro, Jaceglav, Westacott & Osenieks, 2018), yet not investing this time can further reproduce the deficit approaches students have previously faced in education. The educator-learner relationship can be powerful disruptor to previous inequities. Over and above the curriculum, and the learning context, is the willingness and drive of the educator to connect in a meaningful way to learners. As reflected by the following student:

‘…Looking back at it from a perspective now, I look at my teachers here and comparing it to back then (high school), if I had the kind of teachers that I have here there, I would’ve felt like I had someone to turn to (Rose, Student Interview).

Providing feedback to learners who lack confidence needs careful attention and provides another avenue to enact an ethos of care. Whether in person or written feedback, a supportive and constructive tone is essential.  Starting feedback by stating what learners have done well, and then addressing areas for improvement recognises the emotional labour in both giving and receiving feedback. It is important to explain why students receive a particular grade, but emphasis should remain on providing feedback in a supportive way to enable learners to engage and consider how they can improve their work next time. For an example of dynamic feedback underpinned by an ethos of care, see case study 1.1.

**Key term** Affect: the external display of emotional state. This can be verbal or non-verbal and expressed through words, tone, feeling, expression, body language and gesture.

**Key term** Deficit approaches: formulating your curriculum, pedagogy and assessment around a perceived ‘lack’ of the learner or assuming the learner to be incapable of the learning task or assessment

**Case Study 1.1**

**Edit, Proof, Polish and post: Using student writing in lectures to enhance engagement**

Maintaining lecture attendance and engagement has been traditionally problematic for educators in HE settings. With increasingly diverse cohorts of learners, this traditional ‘transmission’ style of teaching is arguably out-dated and problematic. As stated by Gibbs (1992), students engage and exhibit deeper levels of understanding when given the opportunity to discuss and participate in the learning process. Making a lecture unmissable through transforming it into a dynamic writing workshop using student generated content has increased consistency of attendance and engagement in a literacy course within an enabling program.

Each week, students are encouraged to ‘edit, proof, polish and post’ their weekly writing to online discussion boards for use as exemplars in the lecture. Utilising deidentified student content to provide ‘live’ constructive feedback underpinned by an ethos of care have transformed lectures into an opportunity for active learning (Exley & Dennick, 2004), allowing for a greater connection to the content and desire for mastery. Evaluative feedback from students has affirmed that providing multiple opportunities for feedback has enhanced student understanding of common writing errors and led to increased attendance and engagement. As educators use real examples to supportively highlight how to improve written expression, students have built confidence in their writing and enhanced their communication skills.

**Reflection/Discussion question/s**

1. This case study relies on students submitting work to be deidentified and then used for constructive feedback in the learning environment. Can you think of other examples where this could be an effective method of instruction? Can you think of which enabling pedagogical approaches would be most useful to ensure that this type of learning activity did not exclude or create discomfort for learners?

**Challenging tasks & Scaffolding**

Learners' educational levels or abilities are characteristically diverse in enabling programs. To leverage this diversity, enabling pedagogy relies on Luke’s (2012) emphasis on scaffolding of learning of difficult academic themes and concepts. Through strategic scaffolding of curriculum and assessment, high intellectual challenge is possible. Learners from low-socioeconomic backgrounds historically suffer from ‘streaming’ or ‘tracking’, as Mehan suggests: “The distribution of students to high-, middle-, and low-ability groups or academic and voc-ed tracks seems to be related to ethnicity and socio-economic status” (Mehan, 2012, p 17). Once streamed into a low-ability class, capabilities are misrecognized (Burke et al., 2017) and contribute to lower completion and success rates of less advantaged young people in secondary school.

Luke argues that scaffolding is central to the success of heightening expectations: “In sociocultural terms, this entails upping the ante of intellectual demand, teaching in advance of development, and generating substantive engagement with curriculum knowledge and technical discourses as ways of reading and remaking the social and scientific life-worlds around us” (Luke, 2012, p. viii). Tools such as a Learning Design Canvas provide educators with an opportunity to approach curriculum design from a macro (course) level, before embarking on micro level tasks (individual lessons) and visualise how scaffolding supports students through challenging content and towards understanding.

**Transformative,  Dialogic approaches** & **Sense of hope**

Enacting critical pedagogy gives learners a positive experience of education, building confidence and a sense of hope so they can imagine pursuing tertiary education*.* Ira Shor and Paulo Freire (1987) offer the transformative and empowering function of education that happens through ‘dialogic’ approaches. In contrast to the traditional ‘banking-style’ of HE, enabling educators adopt a dialogic approach to teaching that sets out to ‘not talk knowledge at students but talk *with* them’ (Shor, 1992, p. 85). Shor outlines explicit practices of the dialogic teacher that include;

doing analysis with the students participation; avoiding jargon or obscure allusions that intimidate students into silence; posting thought provoking, open-ended problems to students so that they feel challenged in thinking them through; avoiding short answer question which make students feel like robots; be patient in listening to students and in giving them time to think on their feet; invite students to speak from experience, integrating that material into social issues and academic themes and invite students to suggest themes for study and ask them to select reading matter. (Shor,1992, pp. 95-96)

While we concur with Shor (1992, p. 196) that most often, “students do not come to class with a transformative agenda. Few are looking for empowering education”, students are often transformed through their engagement with enabling education. The case study 1.2 provides an example of the transformational potential of enabling programs for Aboriginal students in remote and regional parts of Australia.

**Case Study 1.2**

**Enabling pedagogy in regional and remote Australia: The Aboriginal Pathway Program**

Aboriginal students living in remote and regional areas are more likely to experience multiple and interacting socio-economic barriers to accessing and participating in HE which require innovative approaches that recognise and leverage the strength of support networks within communities to enhance student success (Smith, Bullot, Kerr, Yibarbuk, Olcay, & Shalley 2018). The Aboriginal Pathway Program (APP) at the University of South Australia boosts university participation of regional and remote students through an innovative and tailored academic program which builds academic skills alongside confidence and capability.

The innovative delivery model of the APP enables students to be supported by their existing networks. After extensive research and community consultation, it was recognised that a traditional semester model of university study does not adequately accommodate competing demands faced by Aboriginal students. Instead, using a block delivery model removes this barrier and aligns with best practice approaches. Students can study whilst maintaining work, family and cultural commitments. Another barrier can be regular engagement with teaching staff. Delivered face-to-face in all sites by local tutors, the APP is grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy that values Aboriginal ways of learning and knowing.

The APP approaches reducing structural inequalities and barriers faced specifically, by focussing on the ‘cultural interface’ of Aboriginal and Western ways as a means of informing best practice in Aboriginal education (Fredericks et al. 2015).  The program design is grounded in culturally-responsive teaching underpinned by the ‘8 Ways of Learning’ pedagogical framework (Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011) which emphasises storytelling and non-linear processes.  Yunkaporta suggests ‘if we find the overlap between our best ways of learning and the mainstream’s best ways of learning then we will have an equal balance’ (2009, p. 207).

Students who have completed the program have continued undergraduate study not only at UniSA, but also other universities. Aside from these gains there are visible and invisible threads in terms of societal outcomes. The outcomes for students on a personal level cannot be underestimated. Independent research of the program outlined comments from students such as: *I think the course [program] itself has changed my life really…. So, I can’t pinpoint one thing. I think it’s helped me to say, “I can succeed overall”, or can be persistent and keep driving for my overall goals.  So, I can do it, yeah.… It also changed my family itself because my nephews are now saying ‘oh I want to go to University just like Aunty L., or something like that’. So I’ve encouraged them to go to Uni as well which is great…*  Student interview, 2017)

**Reflection/Discussion question/s**

1. Using your understanding of enabling pedagogy learned in the chapter, identify as many of these approaches as you can, giving a justification for your answer.
2. “*The APP is grounded in a recognition and embracing of the multiple knowledges that need to co-exist in the academy, and an understanding and respect ‘that the time for the primacy of a single Western, euro-centric knowledge subsuming others is over’*” - Consider this statement reflecting on your own practice. How is your design, development and teaching contributing to an understanding and respect that ‘*the time for the primacy of a single Western, euro-centric knowledge subsuming others is over’.* Can you identify ways which the recognition and embracing of multiple knowledges can be enhanced in your teaching?

**Summary**

This chapter has outlined the history and impact of the Widening Participation Agenda and how this flows on to pedagogical approaches in Australian classrooms including HE. Recognising the increasing diversity of learners is vital to countering a deficit approach and narratives of ‘who belongs’ at universities. Importantly, an awareness of the potential of ‘sorting and sifting’ which can occur in secondary schools, and an understanding of active school culture, can counter many barriers to future educational participation, particularly for learners from recognised equity groups. The success of enabling programs has been in reengaging those through the critical interventions of enabling pedagogies, building relationships, and providing knowledge and explicit information about the hidden curriculum which can both exclude and further marginalize students who do not feel ‘legitimate’ or that they ‘belong’.

Critical pedagogies have the possibility to counter educational disadvantage by challenging these assumptions and recognising strengths in diversity. By approaching teaching in an inclusive manner that supports all learners, educators can redefine the structural inequality that is inherent in educational institutions, particularly universities.

**Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to acknowledge the work of Jennifer Stokes, who was the first to publish on ‘enabling pedagogy’ at our university (Stokes, 2014). Jennifer’s important theoretical contribution to the field of enabling education has provided a foundation for a shared language for those of us working in enabling to describe and theorise our work, that is built on here in this chapter as others have also (Bennett et al. 2016).

**Recommended Further Reading**

Bennett, A., Motta, S. C., Hamilton, E., Burgess, C., Relf, B., Grak, L., Leroy-Dyer, S. & Albright, J. (2018). *Enabling pedagogies: a participatory conceptual mapping of practices at the University of Newcastle*, Australia. Newcastle.

Burke, P.J. (2013). The right to higher education: neoliberalism, gender and professional mis/recognitions.  *International studies in sociology of education* 23 (2):107-126. doi: 10.1080/09620214.2013.790660.

Hattam, S. K., & Weiler, T. (2020). ‘Every single student counts’: leadership of professional development underpinned by social justice for sessional staff in a South Australian university.  *Professional Development in Education*:1-13. doi: 10.1080/19415257.2020.1814388.

Smyth, J., & Hattam, R. (2002). Early School Leaving and the Cultural Geography of High Schools. *British Educational Research Journal* 28 (3):375-397. doi: 10.1080/01411920220137458.

Vernon, L., Watson, S.J., Moore, W. *(2019).* University enabling programs while still at school: supporting the transition of low-SES students from high school to university. *Australian Educational Researcher* 46, 489–509. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-018-0288-5.

**Links to Further Reading (For website)**

**Struggles and Strategies: Does social class matter in Higher Education?** Report prepared for the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, University of Newcastle, Australia. ISBN-978-0-9945381-9-2

[https://nova.newcastle.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/uon:32864](https://nova.newcastle.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/uon%3A32864)

This report explores the impact universities have on social and cultural capital, resources and networks of students as they transition through Higher Education. Importantly, it discusses how educational disadvantage, mis/recognition and discourses of deficit impact directly on students experiences of education and how this continues to shape narratives of future educational experiences unless directly addressed through support.

**Introduction to Communities of Practice**

<https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

This website provides an overview of Communities of Practice and provides practical advice as to how these can be implemented across various environments.

**Review Questions**

1.     **Working towards dialogic approaches in the learning environment**

Imagine that you arrive to class prepared with your curriculum and activities for the session, to discover that only a few learners have completed the readings and homework and when you ask the students to engage with the activities, they stare back at you blankly and silently.

The temptation to launch into a lecture, spoon feeding the information and responses to them is great, but this counters the dialogic approach. It also presents a power imbalance as you, as the teacher, dominate the learning environment. What do you do? How can you flip the class dynamic so that you are in dialogue with them rather than talking at them?

**The suggested response (for website)**

**A1: Consider how you can avoid being a ‘sage on the stage’ or resulting in a ‘chalk and talk’ session which relies on a transmission pedagogy. Students in this situation often respond well to being given a chance to brainstorm, working in small groups to access the resources and come up with both what they have learned and questions they may have. Working with individual groups to support as they develop these mindmaps can build relationships, rather than viewing students in deficit having not arrived prepared.**

**2.     Drawing on the resources in the educational settings**

Given the increasing super diversity of the learner cohorts in educational settings, as an educator you have access to varied experiences, viewpoints and knowledges.

How can you draw on the ‘resources’ in the room to engage and validate students' diverse knowledges?

Think of a time when engagement was low – what could you do to activate the funds of knowledge in the room to increase engagement?

**The suggested response (for website)**

**A2:Ask students to speak about the resources in terms of their own lives. Are there any parallels they could draw? Discuss contemporary culture as part of the curriculum, linking what the teaching is aiming to do with context for students - this can be done by asking them how they see the content as relevant to their own lives, and creating an opportunity to link this to a personalised context and understanding.**

3.     **Demonstrating an ethos of care**

A student approaches you at the end of a class and asks to talk in private. While you are on a limited time frame to get to your next class, you say ‘okay’ and wait for the other students to leave before sitting with the student and ask them if they are okay.

The student starts to cry and opens up about how they are really struggling with the course, with the up-coming assignment, and is feeling very overwhelmed by study and her competing family demands.

How do you approach this conversation with the student, showing an ethos of care?

**The suggested response (for website)**

**A3: While taking time to listen to the student is important here, it is also relevant to recognise and acknowledge the limited time you have. Starting the conversation is unavoidable, but it is likely that a follow-up is needed afterwards to ensure the student is ok. Reminding students of the broader range of supports is important, as they may be more willing to engage with these after suggestion. Acknowledgment of competing demands and giving students a reminder they have agency over their study load can mitigate many issues and worries. The authors have had many of these conversations outlined in this example above, and found repeatedly that a willingness to listen and the student genuinely feeling heard and given options usually provides significant support for the student to take agency over the situation**

**Learning Extension**

1.     Consider your own educational experience. What are the pedagogical approaches you can identify that you saw enacted. Are there examples of enabling approaches that you can recognise? Can you recognise deficit approaches or discourses that you experienced or witnessed? What impact did this have?

2.     Think of your own pedagogy. Choose one of the enabling approaches you have learned about in this chapter, and research this approach further (start with the recommended readings). How can you embed this approach into your teaching in a meaningful way?

3.     What is your current approach to reflexive practice? Do you have a strategic plan for reflexive practice (such as action research or teaching squares)?

4.      What would a Community of Practice look like in your current environment? How could you contribute to a community of practice?

**Weblinks (for website)**

**National Centre Student Equity in Higher Education Website**

<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/>

The NCSEHE is the national research centre on equity and access to Higher Education. The research centre funds and provides a platform to disseminate projects that investigate and address the multiple barriers to accessing university study due to intersectional disadvantage.

**National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia**

<https://enablingeducators.org/>

The NAEEA is the national peak body to represent the interests of enabling educators and students. NAEEA host webinar, symposiums and conferences and play an advocacy role through working with various stakeholders to ensure enabling programs continue to be a strong feature of Australia’s widening participation objective.

**The Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education**

<https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research/centre/ceehe>

World-leading researcher, Professor Penny Jane Burke leads the research centre at the University of Newcastle in reconceptualising widening participation in Higher Education. This site provides access to the research publications as well as a range of professional development resources to engage educators in reflection and discussion of the need for a focus on inclusive teaching practices across higher education.

**Multimedia Resources (for website)**

**Enabling education alumni share their account of accessing tertiary education via an enabling pathway**

<https://enablingeducators.org/student-stories/>

Access this resource to read, hear and watch stories from many students who enrolled in enabling education programs across Australia after experiencing educational disadvantage or barriers to higher education. The stories provide an account of how enabling education provided a pathway to success in higher education.

**Regional Student Success and Wellbeing**

<<https://www.healthyuniversities.org/programs/regional-student-success-wellbeing/> >

Designed to correspond with key academic milestones, these resources can assist to improve engagement, success and wellbeing for students, particularly those studying in a regional setting.

**The desk**

<http://www.thedesk.org.au/>

The desk provides a free online program aimed at providing Australian tertiary students with strategies and skills for success and wellbeing during their time at university or TAFE.

**Q:** Consider your own educational experience. How has this shaped your approach to teaching, and interactions with students who have not had the same experience as you?

**Answer guide (for website)**

**A: Consider the factors that you were unable to change. Were you educated in a public or private school? Were you in a single-gender or co-educational environment? What political influences shaped your educational experience? How was school culture shaped? Consider your post-secondary education experiences? How did these differ to school? Which influences have you taken into your own teaching? Can you recognise approaches from your own education which you have carried forward into your own learning environments?**

 **Q:** Enabling pedagogy relies on an educators ability to reflect on their practice and shift and change, potentially confronting their own inherent prejudices and bias. What biases do you think may effect your teaching or approach to diverse learners? How can you counter these?

**Answer guide (for website)**

**A: Consider where you get information from, what news sources you engage with, what are your political views? We all have biases, but how we tackle and recognise these can be fundamental to how powerful and pervasive they are. There are a number of reputable online tests that you can try to see if you can identify unconscious bias. These can be useful to identify what you can confront, and how best this can be done.**

  **Q:** The Widening Participation agenda seeks to increase university participation, but operates mostly when students have already reached tertiary education age. What contribution could you make to broadening access to higher education for the learners you engage with?

**Answer guide (for website)**

**A: Consider what the conversation about tertiary education is in your learning context? Is this raised as a possibility for learners? Is there a culture that universities are for everyone, and a broad range of learners participate in a range of tertiary learning options? Is University presented to learners with the same language of possibility as other options?**

**Q**: Consider the cultural geography of your school. Is it an active school culture? If not, how can you contribute to reducing the ‘sort and shift’ culture and instead move towards being a socially-just leader in education?

**Answer guide (for website)**

**A:** Refer to the diagram on active school culture and make a list of factors that you feel match with each of the areas. Think about areas which are not ‘active’. Are you able to raise these in conversation with colleagues? How can you build a community of practice that fosters an active culture? Consider the further reading resources available in this chapter to share with colleagues to start a conversation about a cultural shift that is more inclusive.

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1. Student insights included in this chapter are sourced from an un-funded research project conducted at the University of South Australia in 2018-2019 with 10 students enrolled in an enabling program who self-identified as coming from a low-socioeconomic background and left secondary school early. Students have been given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, as specified in the human research ethics protocol number 200476. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)