

Original citation:

Murray, Neil, 1960- and Nallaya, Shashi. (2016) Embedding academic literacies in university programme curricula : a case study. *Studies in Higher Education*. pp. 1-17.

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Publisher statement:

"This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis Group in *Studies in Higher Education* on 27/11/2014, available online:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.981150>

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Embedding academic literacies in university programme curricula: a case study

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As the number of students entering higher education continues to increase, many English-medium universities have been looking carefully at how to more effectively ensure that those for whom English is not a first language have the opportunity to develop the academic literacies they require to successfully engage with and complete their studies as communicatively competent individuals. Their efforts, in part, reflect concern at the language problems faced by a (sometimes significant) proportion of this cohort, despite their having met English language entry criteria typically stipulated in terms of scores on high-stakes 'gatekeeping' tests such as IELTS. This article describes an approach adopted at an Australian university characterised by a very diverse student body. It takes as its starting point the notion that *all* students require tuition that helps them develop conversancy in the academic literacies of their particular disciplines and that such tuition should thus be embedded in the curriculum.

Keywords: academic literacies, English language proficiency, cultural capital, curriculum design, teaching strategies, diversity

Introduction

With the globalisation of education and efforts to increase rates of participation in higher education, the demographic of students studying in universities today is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of cultural and first language background, age, socio-economic status, and the entry pathways (high school, foundation programmes, community college, etc.) via which they arrive at university. This has meant that, for students studying through the medium of English, a proportion have neither the language proficiency necessary to successfully negotiate the demands of their study programmes, nor sufficient conversancy in the literacies required to experience successful learning outcomes (Bretag 2007; Dunworth 2010; Murray 2010). In a report published in 2009, the UK Quality Assurance Agency stated that:

Specific challenges have been identified with regard to the admission of students with English-language skills that are either insufficient to deal with the demands of their programme of study or have the potential to have a detrimental effect on the learning experience of all students (2009, 2).

Furthermore, rising tuition fees and family commitments mean that many students lack the time required to commit sufficient effort to their studies because of the need, simultaneously, to work.

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Alongside this changing student demographic, is the growing requirement and expectation among employers – and thus also universities looking to increase their rates of graduate employment and institutional rankings – that students should be able to demonstrate certain graduate qualities or attributes and that these should be specified in the learning outcomes of their programmes (Gunn, Hearne and Sibthorpe 2011). Increasingly, these qualities are built into universities' mission statements and their assessment of students' coursework, and they typically include: the ability to function effectively with and upon a body of knowledge, preparedness for lifelong learning and development, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, logic and the capacity for creativity, and the ability to communicate effectively in academic and professional practice. Furthermore, students undertaking certain study programmes, such as medicine, nursing, education and law, are also expected to meet the professional standards specified by the registration bodies that govern those professions (Craven 2010). There is evidence that such bodies are increasingly demanding that students wishing to become professionally registered take occupational English tests regardless of whether they have successfully graduated from English-medium universities. This would appear to be significant both in terms of what it suggests about perceived – and perhaps actual – standards of English in universities (see, for example, Fox 2005; Murray 2010), and about the high stakes involved in health and other professions where good communication skills can be critical.

Collectively, these realities of higher education today can be intimidating to newly-enrolled students who may be unaware of or lack conversancy in the values and behaviours expected of them by their host institution and which are likely, ultimately, to have an impact on their learning outcomes and future employability – and, by extension, on the reputations of their alma matres. They will quickly need to become familiar with the institutional habitus and to acquire the cultural capital needed to succeed at university (Bourdieu 1986; Thomas 2002; Ryan and Hellmundt 2005; Sheridan 2011; Klinger and Murray 2012). More particularly, it is crucial that institutions equip their students with the academic literacies relevant to their disciplines if they are to ensure that they both thrive academically during their studies and exit their programmes suitably equipped as graduates ready for the world of work.

It is specifically with the development of academic literacies that this article is concerned. We seek, in particular, to describe a holistic, whole-of-institution approach to the development of academic literacies adopted at a university in Australia and which involved the embedding of academic literacies in programme curricula. In doing so, we detail the process employed in what was widely regarded as a quite ambitious project, along with some of the challenges its implementation presented.

Academic literacies

The fact that today's higher education student population is so diverse means fewer assumptions can be made about the language and literacy skills with which students come equipped to university. Consequently, having enrolled them in their degree programmes, responsibility lies with receiving institutions to provide the necessary opportunities for students to acquire a working understanding of the literacy practices pertinent to their particular disciplines. As a necessary prerequisite to doing so, we would argue that they need to recognise a distinction articulated by Lea and Street (1998) between academic literacies and study skills, and the fact that literacy is fundamentally a pluralistic concept with each discipline having associated with it a set of literacy practices in which students need to

become conversant. Lea and Street (1998) state that the literacy demands of the curriculum involve ...

... a variety of communicative practices, including genres, fields and disciplines. From the student point of view a dominant feature of academic literacy practices is the requirement to switch practices between one setting and another, to deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices appropriate to each setting, and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes (1998, 159).

Students need to be made aware of the fact that, unlike generic, context-neutral study skills, literacy practices in their disciplines are socially situated and that the academic and professional discourses with which they engage in their degree programmes both define those disciplines and serve as markers of membership of their communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). Students thus need to develop a working understanding of those discourses and to recognize that the genres to which they should strive to conform in their written work effectively serve to allow them to stake a claim to membership of those communities. Their written work will be read and assessed by other bona fide members of those communities who will have expectations in relation to the literacy practices that form the norm within their respective disciplines. Although failure to meet those expectations will result in poor grades, students can face considerable challenges in their attempts to participate in the academic discourses of their disciplines (Crook 2005) and, in particular, struggle to understand the manner in which meaning is constructed in writing and the nature of power and authority as they pertain to the writing process.

A significant number of students are likely to have experienced learning styles and educational cultures that differ from those of the host institution or, in the case of non-traditional/disadvantaged local students, to have reached university via pathways that may mean they have had less opportunity to familiarise themselves with the literacies in which they need to be conversant if they are to pursue their studies effectively. As Sheridan (2011) notes, students' perceptions of good practice are frequently out of kilter with the requirements of the institution and the discourse community of which they need to gain membership and it is this mismatch that often results in poor learning outcomes. Even traditional, home-grown students cannot be expected to come equipped with the particular literacies of their disciplines, especially where those disciplines are not represented in high school curricula offerings – as is the case for subjects such as astronomy, philosophy, law and nursing. Yet, as Gunn, Hearne and Sibthorpe (2011) report, university lecturers often assume, nonetheless, that students who successfully secure places on degree programmes come pre-loaded with the academic literacies they will need to navigate their degree studies. Increasingly, such assumptions are being called into question as increased diversity means that more students struggle to produce written work of the required standard without additional extra-curricula support. The growing realisation that students are entering universities unequipped with and unable, without support, to acquire the literacies they need to succeed and realise their academic potential is becoming a cause for concern, not least because it raises questions of academic standards. Furthermore, it reflects, perhaps, the fact that universities represent a much broader church today than was hitherto the case when, in the early 1960s, at the time of the Robbins Report (1962), a mere 4% (in the UK) of the population benefited from a higher education experience. That 4% represented an academic elite many of whom came better prepared and/or were deemed to have the wherewithal to identify and acquire on their own, and relatively quickly, the literacies associated with their university disciplines.

Given (a) that mastery of its literacies is fundamental to fully understanding and being conversant in a given discipline, and (b) that universities can no longer assume that students come equipped with the literacies they require and the means to acquire them independently, it is incumbent on departments to ensure that their students receive tuition in this key area of their academic and professional development.

What is evident from a review of the relevant literature is that while the volume of research critiquing existing literacy practices in academia is copious, there is a relative paucity that considers, in procedural terms, how to furnish all students with the disciplinary literacies they need and some of the challenges associated with doing so (although notable exceptions include Bohemia, Farrell, Power and Salter 2007; Curnow and Liddicoat 2008; Wingate, Andon and Cogo 2011).

Supporting academic literacy

The most common model adopted by universities to address student learning challenges around English language is the provision of generic study skills offered centrally through English language centres or units. Although not without its benefits, this model fails to reflect the pluralistic nature of academic literacy and the fact that different academic disciplines are characterised by specialised vocabularies, concepts, and knowledge, as well as by accepted and valued patterns of meaning-making activity (genres, rhetorical structures, argument formulations, narrative devices, etc.) and ways of contesting meaning (Rex and McEachen 1999). It assumes, incorrectly, that 'literacy is a set of itemised skills which students have to learn and which are then transferable to other contexts' (Lea and Street 1998). As Russell, Lea, Parker, Street and Donahue (2009) note, employing the study skills model when providing learning support only addresses challenges students face at the surface level, such as rules of grammar; it does not assimilate students into the practices of their disciplines as a prerequisite to developing them as better writers (400).

There is a growing body of literature in support of the idea that the optimal way to sensitise students to the genres of their disciplines, and thereby promote their mastery of them and ensure positive learning outcomes, is through embedding academic literacies within degree programmes (Gunn, Hearne and Sibthorpe 2011; Hocking and Fieldhouse 2011; Kennelly, Maldoni and Davis 2010; Murray 2010, 2013; Wingate 2006). This raises students' awareness of the 'complex interplay between linguistic practices and the social and cultural contexts and meaning systems of both the disciplines they are studying in and the institutions they are studying in' (Hocking and Fieldhouse 2011, 35). It socialises students into the discourses of their disciplines in a way that enables practitioners 'to take into account the nature of student writing in relation to institutional practices, power relations and identities and consider the complexities of meaning making'. Crookes (2005) speaks of the 'novice' needing 'to enjoy a special form of participation and immersion in the exchanges of some community relevant to their aspirations' (510). These notions invoke Vygotsky's (1978) concepts of scaffolding and learning as a social activity, for over time, an understanding of language (and specifically academic literacies) as fundamental to the student's integration onto their disciplinary community of practice can be promoted through these processes via a carefully structured curriculum and a pedagogy involving modelling, feedback, reinforcement, questioning, task structuring and direct instruction (Whipp and Lorentz 2009). In the project described here, it was felt important that it be informed by a theory of learning, and Vygotsky's theory of learning was thus adopted as particularly germane given the nature of the endeavour.

Embedding academic literacies: a hands-on approach

The context

The embedding of academic literacies was trialled at a university in South Australia from 2012-2013. The university concerned is a sizeable institution comprising four metropolitan campuses and a student population of approximately 33,000, of which just over a third are international students. It has a widely-recognised commitment to social justice and engagement with the community, and its aspiration to provide opportunity to those socially and educationally disadvantaged, and thereby widen participation, is built into its founding legislation. The University is made up of four 'divisions' (faculties): Education, Arts and Social Sciences (EASS); Health Sciences; Business and Law; and IT, Engineering and the Environment (ITEE).

Eight targeted programmes within these four divisions (faculties) were selected for inclusion in the trial and the Language and Learning Coordinators (LLC) – one each of whom are aligned to each of these divisions – were tasked with facilitating the embedding process. This article focuses on the embedding process as it was undertaken in the University's Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences (EASS). Following consultation with the Division's Dean of Teaching and Learning and the Programme Directors concerned, it was decided that the embedding process should be trialled in two first-year programmes in the Division, namely, the Bachelor of Teaching degree, located within the School of Education, and the Bachelor of Arts degree, located within the Division's College of Indigenous Education and Research. The Bachelor of Teaching programme comprised eight core courses and the Bachelor of Arts, five. The discussion in the sections that follow provides an account of the LLC's experience of the embedding process and looks in turn at three aspects: collaboration, resources and challenges.

Collaboration

For the embedding process to unfold systematically, collaboration between language tutors and academic staff is vital. At the outset, therefore, the Divisional LLC attended Teaching and Learning Committee (TALC) meetings in both schools and presented to stakeholders on the embedding initiative. The membership of TALC included the Heads of School, Programme Directors, Course Coordinators and other school staff. The LLC presentations provided an opportunity to:

- explain academic literacies and their importance;
- convey the rationale for and value of the embedding process;
- reiterate that the process was supported by the university's Senior Management Group and had been mandated by the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic;
- highlight the fact that two pilot studies that had been previously undertaken in the Schools of Communication and Engineering in order to trial the embedding process, with some success;
- assist Committee members to understand what the process entailed and how it related fundamentally to different aspects of teaching and learning;
- present research findings emphasising the employability of new graduates and the need to equip students with particular graduate qualities – specifically good communication skills;

- relate how an audit of the programmes taught in the two schools had identified that while certain genres were being taught extensively, others were being virtually ignored;
- emphasise the (undesirable) repetitiveness of assessment tasks across the programme;
- highlight the fact that although particular academic literacies were important and needed to be assessed via carefully tailored tasks, there existed a lack of clarity around whether students received any relevant training and whether any associated teaching was appropriately scaffolded, drew on suitable models of writing and reading texts, and was integrated and coherent across courses in the programmes concerned; and
- address any concerns or questions raised by Committee members.

It was important that language tutors collaborated with academic staff to identify the genres relevant to the discipline, how language was used to communicate meaning in those genres, the targeted learning outcomes, and the types of assessment that could measure the extent of any learning. Despite efforts to enhance their understanding early on in the project, it quickly became apparent that academic staff were often still unclear about what academic literacies were and that there was a need for English language tutors to help them articulate the literacies pertinent to their particular disciplines and to exemplify how these could be mapped to learning aims and outcomes (as measured via assessment tasks). In order to assist the language tutors in this task and obtain as much information as possible about the programmes with which they were working, in the early stages of implementation language tutors met regularly with the Associate Heads of Teaching and Learning from the schools within which the programmes were located.

It was found during this collaborative activity between the English language tutors and academic content tutors that, historically, programme learning outcomes frequently had not mapped well onto the assessment tasks and, consequently, efficiencies were lost as a result of students completing similar assessment tasks in three or four courses. In part, this was a product of the fact that academic literacies had not been articulated – or sufficiently articulated – and taught explicitly, meaning that it was unclear to all concerned who was teaching which academic literacy. The collaborative exercise of aligning learning outcomes and assessment tasks was to prove useful in identifying any repetition of assessment tasks and addressing any misalignment between the stated tasks and the actual tasks. For example, on courses that required students to produce essays as part of their assessed coursework, it was found in some instances that whereas the curriculum stated that the task to be assessed was an essay, in reality it was a report. Furthermore, while some genres featured extensively, others did not.

Resources

It was determined that academic staff who were teaching in these programmes should have available to them resources that would facilitate their understanding of academic literacies and the embedding process, and that the English language tutors concerned would design those resources and provide professional development, in the form of workshops, that would furnish academic staff with the pedagogical skills needed to teach those literacies.

At the outset, academic staff working in the two programmes concerned were provided with readings on academic literacies. In order for the embedding process to occur efficiently, it was felt important that those tasked with implementation had in-depth knowledge of what the procedure entailed. The readings that were distributed defined academic literacies and identified a comprehensive list of literacies that students studying in different disciplines in

higher education were required to master (see, for example, Gardner and Nesi 2012; Nesi and Gardner 2012), along with examples of how these could be embedded in study programmes. The academic literacies on the list were categorised into *reading*, *writing*, *speaking*, *IT* and *information literacy* were classified from ‘easy’ to ‘complex’ and according to how they rated in terms of higher/lower order thinking skills (see Appendix A). The language tutors conceded that, having understood what academic literacies are, content lecturers would be better placed than themselves to identify, from the list and their knowledge of their respective disciplines, the particular literacies that students studying in their disciplines needed to acquire in order to navigate their studies successfully.

The embedding process had been piloted a few years previously, on a more piecemeal basis, in two programmes in the university, namely the *Bachelor of Applied Linguistics*, located within the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages (see Curnow and Liddicoat 2008), and the *Bachelor of Aviation*, located in the School of Engineering. Experience gained from these tried and tested examples was to prove valuable not only as a way of exemplifying the process but also lending it credibility by effectively demonstrating that it could work. Moreover, a number of key findings emerged from these pilot studies that were to prove beneficial as pointers during the process of embedding academic literacies in the Bachelor of Teaching and Bachelor of Arts degrees. First, the importance of communicating the rationale for embedding and of clearly articulating and explaining the process could not be over-emphasised, for it helped secure the necessary buy-in of stakeholders by giving them confidence in those driving the change, reassuring those who felt cynical and cautious, and indicating that the initiative had the potential to address a problem many felt keenly. Indeed, the pilot studies were helpful in that the positive results that emerged from them helped promote the current initiative by providing evidence of efficacy. In particular, students resoundingly expressed greater confidence in dealing with the relevant literacies of their disciplines and a more developed understanding of the types of writing characterising those disciplines. Their performance on assessed tasks also improved markedly. Despite these positive experiences helping convince staff early on of the benefits of embedding, as we indicate later, it was still felt that pressure also needed to be exerted more vigorously by the University’s senior management if compliance was ultimately to be secured among staff.

Secondly, the pilot study experience underscored the importance of starting the embedding process by looking at what Programme Directors and their teams wanted and expected students to have learnt across the whole gamut of courses that made up their degree programmes, and then working backwards. It was felt that these requirements should inform assessment and determine the academic literacies that needed to feature in the curriculum. Importantly, those literacies needed to be taught as and when they naturally arose and were needed by students, and their distribution throughout the curriculum needed to be looked at holistically so as to ensure that there was a logical progression and interplay between them.

Having collated and distributed resource materials, the relevant Course Coordinators were then asked to meet as a group and to identify the academic literacies pertinent to their disciplines and which they felt their students needed to master. It was agreed that each of the Course Coordinators would initially focus only on two or three academic literacies as a way of helping them gain familiarity with the process and avoiding overwhelming them and their respective teams. It was felt that to be overly ambitious and move too quickly in the early stages of implementation would be counterproductive and lead to a backlash. In light of this, in the case of the Bachelor of Teaching programme, each content lecturer identified two academic literacies, conversancy in which they perceived to be particularly critical to their course, and agreed to teach them through modelling and scaffolding. Given that there were

eight first year courses in the programme, this meant that by the time they progressed to their second year students would have mastered a total of 16 academic literacies. Having taught the core academic literacies through embedding them in the first year curriculum, the second-year content lecturers would then incorporate any additional literacies required, and/or, through scaffolding, require students to demonstrate higher-order thinking in respect of the literacies that they had acquired in their eight first year courses. This arrangement, and in particular the recycling of academic literacies through more sophisticated realisations, reflected a common view, expressed openly by academic staff in their meetings with English language tutors, that students in their third and fourth years of study were frequently unable to demonstrate core academic literacies, despite having managed to progress through their degree programmes.

Following the identification of academic literacies by the course coordinators, the English language tutors developed a framework illustrating how those literacies could be embedded in the curriculum. The framework comprised 7 elements: the course name and code, its aims and learning outcomes, the academic literacies identified, scaffolding, and assessment (See Appendix B).

By way of an example, the aim of Course 1 (see Appendix B) was to introduce students to the major theories of learning and human development and to apply the theories to practice in educational settings. The language tutors worked with the academic content tutor of the course to ensure that the aims of the course were reflected in the learning outcomes and that at the end of the semester students would be able to demonstrate that they had achieved those outcomes, specifically: to discuss and critique theories of learning; identify the relationships between theory, research and practice; apply theories in ways that create and support effective learning environments; be able to decipher meaning from context; and demonstrate an appreciation of the importance of academic integrity and the ability to apply in their writing those principles of good practice that underlie it. In the case of the latter two of these literacies, the academic content tutor would seek to ensure that their students acquired these literacies by –

- introducing students to vocabulary relevant to the course;
- demonstrating strategies to decipher meaning from context;
- providing examples of how meaning can be derived from context;
- introducing students to the concept of referencing, academic integrity and plagiarism
- making students aware of the different referencing styles;
- showing students the UniSA Harvard referencing guide;
- drawing students' attention to referencing conventions; and
- providing examples of good and bad referencing practice.

Importantly, English language tutors were tasked with reinforcing the teaching, by academic content tutors, of these and other academic literacies identified, through face-to-face consultations, workshops and the provision of online resources. Furthermore, if requested by academic tutors, they were to run course-specific workshops focusing on assessed tasks, with a view to helping ensure that students were conversant in the skills required to perform at least to the minimum required standard.

As we have indicated, the framework's underlying premise required that academic literacies needed to be integrated into a coherent whole if positive learning outcomes were to be achieved. That is, the aims of the course had to be connected to the learning outcomes, against which student outputs would be assessed and which in turn should reflect the

academic literacies the students were required to master on the course. Given that assessment tasks had to reflect the specified teaching and learning outcomes for each course of students' degree programmes, it was necessary to ensure that where students demonstrated mastery of the academic literacies taught on the course – for example, the use of discipline-specific vocabulary and correct referencing conventions – marks were allocated in the assessment process so as to reflect this. The precise weighting such mastery was given in the assessment process was left to the discretion of the Course Coordinator.

The academic literacies identified were mapped out over two study periods, enabling Course Coordinators and the Programme Directors to visualise what the embedding process would look like in each of the courses and in the programmes as a whole. It also helped ensure that the tasks academic staff set did not overlap and that students had the opportunity to learn a range of different genres associated with the discourses of their disciplines. For example, while essay writing was a common form of assessed task across different disciplines, other genres such as report, note-making and oral presentation were of particular relevance to pre-service teachers on the Bachelor of Teaching degree programme.

Throughout this preparatory phase, it was regularly emphasised to all concerned that in teaching the literacies identified, content lecturers should avoid presenting them from a deficit perspective, as 'bolt-on' aspects of the course, and instead strive to present them as fundamental elements of the discourse of the field.

Challenges

Various challenges were experienced in the course of implementing the embedding process. Firstly, obtaining collaboration between parties to the extent required sometimes proved difficult and the degree of such collaboration varied markedly between both programmes involved, there being greater engagement with the English language tutors on the part of academic staff in the Bachelor of Teaching programme. There were numerous meetings held between the School's Associate Head of Teaching and Learning and the LLC and, as a consequence, also between Course Coordinators and the language tutors. In each such meeting there were open and in-depth discussions concerning the challenges that academic staff were experiencing in understanding the process, and how they might be addressed.

In contrast, however, in the Bachelor of Arts programme, although there were initial meetings with the School's Associate Head of Teaching and Learning, no subsequent meetings were held with the Course Coordinators and there was a distinct sense among English language tutors that, while not overtly stated, some academic staff teaching on the programme were nonetheless reluctant to cooperate with them to facilitate the embedding process, largely, so it transpired, for underlying political reasons. As a result, in consultation with the Associate Head of this School, it was decided that, with the help of documents such as course outlines and the program schedule, the LLC should take responsibility for identifying those academic literacies that Bachelor of Arts students enrolled in the programme's five courses would need to master, and for embedding them in the established framework. This approach was contrary to the more collaborative approach originally envisaged and proved somewhat difficult in light of the fact that language tutors did not have the relevant disciplinary expertise and did not know what academic staff involved in the programme expected their students to demonstrate by the time they graduated from the programme.

Although greater collaboration was evident in the Bachelor of Teaching programme, this varied between Course Coordinators working in the programme, a number of whom were

against the idea of embedding from the outset. The reasons for such resistance included their belief that they were already teaching the academic literacies of their discipline and that they were content specialists and *not* language specialists; that is, they regarded academic literacies as being a language issue rather than something fundamental to conversancy in the discipline and a prerequisite to obtaining membership of its community of practice. These same Course Coordinators also indicated that they were already overwhelmed by their other course commitments and felt they had neither the time nor the requisite expertise to focus on this additional endeavour. Furthermore, there were members of the team who felt that, based on their expectations regarding student learning outcomes, teaching two or three literacies was insufficient and that it was incumbent on them to teach as many as seven academic literacies. It was difficult to convince these instructors that selecting a more modest two or three academic literacies and teaching them in depth would ultimately yield better learning outcomes by helping consolidate and familiarise all concerned with the process. Although some academic staff claimed to have been teaching certain academic literacies, it was difficult to verify such claims or establish how effectively they were doing so and whether they were scaffolding the teaching and learning process in the way intended within the proposed model.

In some cases, training that academics had undergone in the past appeared to both dictate and constrain their understanding of academic literacies and how they should be taught. Thus, some Course Coordinators insisted that the framework adopted failed to address the learning needs of the students in the Bachelor of Teaching programme and expressed a desire to adopt an alternative approach that drew on Willison and O'Regan's (2007) *Research Development Framework* (RDF) – a framework with which they were familiar but which does not address discipline-specific academic literacies. Changing the views of these Coordinators, for whom the familiar was more reassuring and less daunting, proved difficult.

Past experience and allegiance to previous practices also made themselves felt in other ways, most obviously in the tendency for academic staff to see academic literacies and study skills as one and the same thing and as such something that could be taught outside of rather than within the curriculum, despite ongoing efforts to inform them otherwise. Similarly there was scepticism regarding the fundamental inseparability of academic literacies and content knowledge and the notion that academic literacies could be embedded in the curriculum and thereby contribute toward better learning outcomes through careful scaffolding. It seems likely that these attitudes were in part influenced by a reluctance to change and apprehension around having to expand their role and take on responsibility for imparting academic literacies to their students. Ultimately, their effect was to retard greatly the embedding process, for the mapping and scaffolding of literacies was sporadic as a result, as were the setting of clear assessment tasks and the provision of models for students to emulate.

Another highly significant challenge that impeded the embedding process, and which relates to the kind of attitudinal problems discussed above, was that of compliance among those tasked with implementing it on the ground. Although it was mandated by the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Teaching and Learning that the embedding of academic literacies should be implemented in targeted programmes, there were no clear directives from the university's Senior Management Group or the Heads of Schools about the process and no punitive measures in place should those responsible for implementation fail to bring about – or attempt to bring about the required change. Given the scale and ambition of this institution-wide innovation, clear directives from senior management regarding the significance of undertaking the embedding process, deadlines for compliance, and the consequences of failure to implement would have provided the project with greater credibility and momentum. In the event, it was left almost exclusively to the Language and Learning team within the

identified schools to oversee the embedding process and the impression created was that it was the sole responsibility of the English language tutors to facilitate that process. The consequence of this was that Course Coordinators perceived the initiative as unimportant and unnecessary. This in turn had a somewhat demoralising effect on language tutors who at times felt as though they were swimming against the tide and that attempts to bring about change were futile.

Conclusion

The case study described here illustrates vividly that, no matter how theoretically well-informed it may be and how great the need for it, bringing about curriculum change is invariably a challenging process, particularly where it implies change not merely to the *what* of teaching but also the *how*. Academic staff are continually being asked to re-think their practices in response to seemingly ever-changing directives from senior management – directives frequently driven by policy change and other drivers at the national level, and which sometimes contradict previous such directives, thereby leading to a lack of enthusiasm combined with a degree of scepticism – even cynicism – on the part of those expected to implement change.

It also illustrates the need for a clear understanding on the part of all concerned of the nature of the change, its rationale and the central concepts underlying it. Without such understanding buy-in will surrender to scepticism and lack of engagement, and progress will be sporadic and disparate. Embedding academic literacies promises to help address a problem which is increasingly seen by academic staff as compromising the quality of what they are able to do and of their graduates. Yet even here, where academic staff are widely supportive of initiatives designed to improve this situation, securing their engagement to the extent needed to ensure positive change is difficult. It requires more than a good idea that is theoretically well informed; it also requires leadership (even charisma), good networking skills, an understanding of the local political climate, astuteness, the *active* support of senior management, a clear roll-out strategy, good channels of communication, clearly articulated consequences for failure to comply, and a good deal of perseverance on the part of those driving change.

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Appendix A

Categorisation of Academic Literacies: Sample List

<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Following written instructions and interpreting assignment questions• Using the title of an article/essay/text as an indication of what will come• Sourcing and managing information• Demonstrating versatility in reading various forms of organisation• Reading complex texts without instruction and guidance• Deciphering the meaning of vocabulary from the context• Understanding terminology/idiom/style/register• Developing and applying strategies for reading complex sentences• Understanding how individual ideas related and form a whole• Making connections to related topics or information• Determine major and subordinate ideas in passages• Identifying key examples that attempt to prove a thesis• Anticipating the direction of the argument or narrative• Critical reading skills• Reading case studies• Editing and proofreading	<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing voice/identity in academic discourse• Generating an effective thesis• Developing a thesis convincingly with well-chosen examples, good reasons, and logical arguments• Structuring writing so that it moves beyond formulaic patterns that discourage critical examination of the topic and issues• Conducting an ‘undergraduate level’ research project• Correctly documenting research materials in order to avoid plagiarism• Using vocabulary appropriate of university-level work and the discipline• Providing short-answer responses• Writing essays• Writing to discover and learn new ideas• Designing, implementing and reporting research• Writing expository and argumentative essays (using relevant examples/the research of others)• Writing research papers• Maintaining academic integrity: citing/referencing sources and paraphrasing• Writing case studies• Writing a review• Writing a reflective journal	<p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporting facts and narrating events• Using vocabulary appropriate to university-level work and the discipline• Providing factual descriptions• Narrating events and reporting events• Delivering an oral presentation• Engaging in seminars• Engaging in teamwork	<p>Information Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predicting the intention of the author from extra-textual clues• Understanding the ‘rules’ governing those genres relevant to the discipline• Relating prior knowledge and experience to new information• Arguing with the text• Analysis, critical reflection and evaluation• Critically analysing, challenging, drawing inferences from others’ ideas/arguments• Retaining information while searching for answers to self-generated questions• Withholding judgement• Summarising ideas and/or information contained in a text or expressed verbally• Synthesizing information and ideas from multiple sources• Using the library catalogue and internet to locate sources• Critically assessing the authority and value of research materials• Analysing information or arguments• Evaluating others’ work• Analysing and using data/statistics• Comparing and contrasting perspectives and approaches
		<p>IT Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typing• Using word-processing software to cut, paste and format text; spell-check; and save and move files• Navigating e-mail; composing; sending; and receiving e-mail; and positing attachments• Employing email etiquette• Navigating the internet and the world wide web, and recognizing the significance of domains (e.g., com, net, edu, org, gov)• Using search engines effectively• Evaluating the authenticity of Websites, the credibility of the author, and the validity of material found on the Web• Knowing how to cite internet sources• Knowing what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it when using the internet• Contributing to online discussions	

Appendix B

Academic Literacies Framework Example

Course Code/Name	Aim	Learning Outcomes	Academic Literacy	Scaffolding Task	Assessment
<p>SP2</p> <p>Course 1</p>	<p>To introduce students to the principles of the major theories of learning and human development, and to apply the theories to practice in educational settings.</p>	<p>1) Discuss and critique theories of learning and development relevant to educative relationships and settings for learners from birth to adulthood</p> <p>2) Identify the relationship between theory, research and practices in educational settings from birth to adulthood</p> <p>3) Apply theoretical understandings to creating and supporting effective learning environments</p> <p>4) Evaluate the contribution of psychological research to educational issues</p> <p>5) Use data bases to locate research findings in educational psychology</p>	<p>1) Deciphering the meaning of the vocabulary from the context</p> <p>2) Referencing, plagiarism and academic integrity</p>	<p>- introducing students to vocabulary relevant to the course</p> <p>- demonstrating strategies to decipher meaning from context</p> <p>- showing examples as to how meaning can be deduced from context</p> <p>- introducing students to the concept of referencing, academic integrity and plagiarism</p> <p>- making students aware of the different referencing styles</p> <p>- showing students the UniSA Harvard referencing guide or one that is recommended for the course</p> <p>- drawing students attention to referencing conventions</p> <p>- showing students examples of good and bad referencing</p>	<p>1) Presentation 40% (1800 words equivalent)</p> <p>2) Essay 60% (2700 words)</p> <p>* assessment of academic literacies in the tasks by awarding marks for the identified literacies</p>