

Sue Webb

Monash University, Australia

Learning capabilities for the university of 'hard knocks': case studies of tensions in compensatory pedagogies in the UK and Australia. (0211)

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This paper explores the relevance of the 'affective and therapeutic turn' in relation to institutional widening participation policies and practices in the UK and Australia. This 'affective and therapeutic turn' is understood to refer to the increasing focus in higher education on how to create new subjects, the 'employable' student and the 'successful non-traditional' student through the provision of support services and supportive pedagogies (Hey and Leathwood, 2009). For the purpose of this paper the concept is being examined in the context of the progression of non-traditional students from school to university, where often new pathways and curricula in post-school vocational education and training settings have been developed, such as in further education colleges in the UK and TAFEs in Australia.

Arguably, whilst widening participation may have slipped down the policy priority of UK higher education under the present Government, HE systems in other countries such as Australia are building on the UK experience by expanding participation through focusing on increasing recruitment of those from disadvantaged backgrounds and progression from vocational to higher education (Bradley Review, 2008). Additionally, in times when concerns are expressed about the globalisation of higher education and dominance of human capital theory under neo-liberal conditions (Olssen and Peters, 2005), it is valuable to explore how global policies 'touch down' in locations such as the UK and Australia, the so-called 'Westminster' countries that have developed comparable systems (Marginson (2007). The paper will draw on analysis of empirical work in both the UK and Australia to argue that widening participation, particularly in the vocational education and training sector has led to the predominance of an affective and therapeutic curricula (as described by Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008).

The paper will discuss the findings of two case studies of widening participation that sought to understand the experiences of students as they studied and made the transition from further to higher education. The empirical work was in the main qualitative. In both countries the focus was on the progression of learners who had followed 'vocational' qualification pathways in the further education and training setting in institutions that had pathway arrangements with a selective research-intensive university. Research data was collected from three levels and involved interviews with staff managers, teaching staff, progressions advice and support staff, student services and admissions tutors in both the colleges and the universities and students both in the colleges and universities. There was also a match in

relation to some of curricula, with medicine, health and human sciences being studied in both locations.

The initial analysis drew on a learning cultures approach (James and Biesta, 2007) and revealed many matches in college learning cultures between the Australian and UK settings and mismatches between the college cultures and the learning cultures in the university settings. For the purposes of this paper, the discussion will focus specific understandings of 'failure'. The paper will explore the different ways that failure was discussed, prepared for and dealt with by staff and students in the college and university settings. The paper will draw on the affective and therapeutic turn to understand how failure is being conceived in the college setting. Within the university setting, two contrasting understandings of managing failure were observed, the first being a human capital model of academic literacy and the second being a deficit learner model aligned with the affective turn.

By synthesizing Bourdieu's notion of learning to 'play the game' and those, such as Bridges, (2006), Hart (2012), Robeyns (2006) and Walker (2008) who have begun an exploration of the application of Sen's (1997) and Nussbaum's (2000) notion of capabilities, the paper opens up discussions of a capabilities pedagogy for widening participation and social justice drawing on students' own cultural resources (see also Clegg, 2011). It will contribute to existing work questioning the meaning of support in the 'affective turn' (see Myers, 2013) and the alternative human capital competency approach (see Lozano et al. 2012). In these ways the paper will contribute to the development of learning capabilities to enable non-traditional students to 'play the game' in the university of hard knocks.

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