The changing nature of academic development: Exploring student perceptions and experiences of a learning skills programme in higher education

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A. Keywords

academic development,

embedded learning,

academic literacy,

third generation academic literacy,

employability skills,

generic skills,

school-leavers,

mature learners

B. Abstract

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In this paper, I focus on the issue of student perceptions and experiences of a 3rd generation academic development programme in higher education. I set out to explore the issue from two perspectives: firstly from the perspective of the higher education institution's approach to academic development, namely, a learning skills programme and a first year sociology course, and secondly from the perspective of students' intentions, expectations and experiences of such a programme. The research questions focused on the learning priorities embedded in the curriculum of a learning skills programme at Monash University, South Africa and the learning experiences of students in this programme.

The methodology used in this study includes a case study which focused on the responses of six participants from a number of African countries completing their BA degrees. Semi-structured interviews held and the content analysis method was used to analyse the data.
The study concludes: that the main priority of the learning skills programme is to prepare students for their university learning rather than to prepare students for the world of work i.e. it falls within Street's (2004) academic socialization model and that the Learning Skills programme can be seen as an example of Boughey's (2007) 3rd generation academic development programmes.

The study also suggests that there is a need to explore Volbrecht's (2003) argument on the limitations of discipline-based models of academic development, the need to examine how academic literacy is constructed and how identity and power relations intersect in this construction. It further highlights the importance of the idea of multi-literacies as put forward by Street (2004) and suggests that as practitioners we should include a consideration of these literacies in academic development programmes to improve the quality of students' learning and meaning making.

C. Acronyms

CPD	Continuous Professional development
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
LS	Learning Skills
LSA	Learning Skills Advisor
MSA	Monash South Africa
MU	Monash University
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NPO	Non Profit Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SA	South Africa
TQM	Total Quality Management
WB	World Bank

D. Declaration

I declare that

The changing nature of academic development: Exploring student perceptions and _experiences of a learning skills programme in higher education_ is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Full name: ...Karen Teresa Petrenko.................…………….............

Date: ..... October 2011...........… ………..

Signed: …..............…………...........
    Karen T. Petrenko

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

One of the fundamental reasons why higher education institutions are reassessing their approach to the students' holistic learning experience at university, is that they are responding to the changes in the global economy, to produce the best possible graduates to participate in that economy. Universities are under tremendous pressure to compete for funding and other resources and there is also the need to produce students who are well rounded and who can adapt relatively easily to the world of work. This paradigm shift is focused primarily on integrating the students' learning experience into interactive and collaborative learning experiences at university and to have a more utilitarian approach to learning (Duderstadt, 2005). It is no longer enough to have the content knowledge as taught in a traditional sense at university, but it becomes imperative to link this knowledge and learning experience to skills required for the workplace.

The learning skills programme was developed, because of the need by universities, to respond to these changes in the economy and to accommodate the learning needs of vast numbers of students from diverse cultural, economic and social backgrounds. Institutions are also regarded as inclusive of students who can no longer be regarded as traditional students, but come into the systems with diverse abilities and competencies. On the one hand the learning skills programme tries to address the inequities that students come into the university system with and on the other hand it tries to engage the entire student cohort with discipline specific academic writing skills including mature students who re-enter the system after a long absence from studying. This academic literacies programme reframes the teaching process "not as a deficit for students who are [English second language speakers], but something that all students encounter as they shift from secondary school into postsecondary education" (Lea and Street, 2006, p. 369).

This study looks at the course offerings of the learning skills programme set out by Monash South Africa (MSA) as a response to the needs of students and turning the spotlight on some of the perceptions and experiences of student attending these programmes. This could be used as the beginning of an enquiry into the experiences of academic development programmes from the perspectives of the students themselves. It also tries to illuminate the viewpoints of students and what they see as necessary considerations when these programmes are restructured and reviewed.

Background and Context

Academic development programmes, formerly known as academic support programmes were developed to cater for the academic literacy needs of students entering higher education. The historical development of the academic development programmes can be categorised into three phases: The first phase, academic support can be traced back to the 1980s. In the second phase the focus shifted from students to the HE institutions in response to the political changes in the country, the third phase, which include institutional development results from the need for universities to respond to global economic changes (Boughey, 2007, p. 2). In the earlier stages of these programmes there seemed to be a major focus on equity, but recent shifts in the literature seems to focus strongly on issues of quality. This phase of academic development is what Boughey (2007) referred to as third generation of academic development. She argues that this development in higher education (HE) globally, and South Africa (SA) specifically is a direct response to the demands of globalization and a more neo-liberal agenda at policy level. It is in this context that I will explore the experiences and perceptions of students participating in an academic development programme at an institution of higher learning.

My interest in this research area from a practitioner's perspective is based on how these programmes are received by students and what contribution they make to student learning in a SA academic context and as preparation for the world of work.

What is the Learning Skills (3ʳᵈ generation academic) programme and why was it developed?

The learning skills programme is perhaps a good example of how institutions of higher learning are responding to global changes and the need to prepare university students for their lives as global citizens and who may take up positions in the global job market (Allan, 2005). Global citizenship embodies the values, skills, knowledge and attitudes that students would develop to address global issues such as sustainable development, trans-national responsibility, respect for cultural and ethnic diversity and social justice both locally and globally. How will HE institutions ensure that graduates have the appropriate skills and knowledge to live and work within a global society? The notion of global citizenship will be explored further in the literature review.

The academic development programme at Monash University South Africa's aim is to respond to the needs of underprepared students coming into the university and to incorporate graduate attributes such as problem-solving, time management, teamwork, reading strategies and critical thinking in discipline-specific courses. The intended outcome is to improve students' academic performance and to prepare them for the world of work linked to global citizenship.

The question is which one of these two sets of needs is the programme responding to. Is it responding to the need to develop academic literacy skills, or is it responding to the need to develop graduates' employability skills or both, and if so how is it doing this? Is there a tension or balance between the two sets of needs?

Research Purpose

This study investigated the contribution made by a learning skills (3rd generation academic development) programme, implemented in the Sociology Department at MSA in

Johannesburg between 2009 and 2010, to the academic needs of underprepared students and development of their employability skills.

This research addressed four main questions: Firstly, what learning priorities are embedded in the curriculum of this learning skills programme? Secondly, what are the intentions of students entering this programme? Thirdly, what kinds of learning do students experience in this programme? Fourthly, to what extent is there a match or mismatch between the programme design and students' expectations and experiences?

To try and answer these questions I set out to explore a number of issues which I felt was relevant to the debate around student learning from a discipline-specific perspective, and the current discourses that prevail within the context of academic development in higher education. In chapter 2, the literature review aims to explore questions relating to academic development, and employability skills from both an international and a South African perspective and identifies Street's academic literacies framework as a useful framework for discussing these issues. Chapter 3 describes the research process, the methods used to collect the data and how the date was analysed. Chapter 4 presents the data gathered through document analysis and semi-structured interviews with students. In Chapter 5 I discuss the data in the context of the literature review, and chapter 6 presents the concluding arguments.

Chapter 2:

2. Literature Review

The shift in the field of academic development is profound in the sense that it has moved from focusing on academic support to that of academic development in response to changes in education policy and other developments within the broader SA context after 1994. Boughey (2007) contends that "Academic Development [should be about] a concern for equity [intertwined] with a concern for efficiency within an overall regard for quality. The debates, centred around academic literacy, takes place in the context of major shifts in how academic development is constructed and its potential instrumental role in the changing nature of HE institutions in response to socio-economic changes" (p.1).

There are two perspectives that will be focused on in this literature review, one being the debate around employability and employability skills and two, the significance of these two dimensions on the development of 3rd generation academic development programmes. There is the view that that this approach to academic development would inculcate within students values and skills that would prepare them for their roles in the workplace, and global citizenship which is epitomised by an acceptance of cultural diversity and difference, and being equipped to take up positions in global organizations, or in cultural and economic environments beyond their national borders. A major focus of this research study tries to establish whether the learning skills programme, at a HE institution like Monash University, emphasizes elements in the curriculum which promotes employability skills and the attributes university graduates need to participate in the world of work, or whether this programme is more focused on developing the students' academic learning skills.

Some of the issues raised in the literature review will be that of education and the knowledge economy which centres around the debate on education's response to the rapid
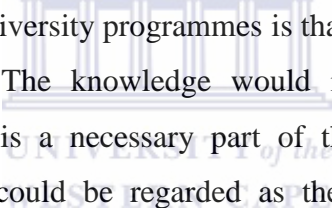
changes in the global economy; a discussion of the current discourses on employability and employability skills; then diversity in higher education and finally the development of academic literacies and academic literacy in practice

2.1   Education and the Knowledge Economy

There is tremendous pressure on higher education (HE) institutions to produce graduates with the necessary skills needed for the rapidly changing and demanding work environment.

 Institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) placed less emphasis on the traditional relationships between education, learning and work, and more of a focus on the need for a new coalition between industry and education. Universities are traditionally centred around activities such as teaching and scholarship, but more recently universities are seen within society as a major contributor to economic growth (Duderstadt 2005). According to Peter and Humes (2003), education will play a prominent role in "determin[ing] the future of work, the organisation of knowledge institutions and the shape of society in the years to come" (p.5). This view is consistent with Leadbeater (cited in Naidoo, 2003) who claims that there seems to be a drive by nation states, through their skills development strategies, to increase the production of knowledge workers, who are highly educated through post-secondary school education, who will take up positions which will contribute significantly to the knowledge economy. Knowledge workers include those workers involved in technical, scientific and managerial work. In this new dispensation there is a stronger link between higher education which will produce the 'knowledge workers' and developments in the economy which will then create a demand for the knowledge workers.

Graduates are viewed as knowledge workers who should be well-rounded in terms of their academic qualifications, their employability skills and their graduate attributes. Another interesting point raised by Hager (2006) is that "[education] policies which promote and reward employability skills, generic skills and learning to learn skills have become common concepts at all levels of education systems" (p.17). This means that individuals will have to be equipped with the employability skills that will make them the preferred candidate for positions in the job market. This prerequisite is what is referred to as employability and employability skills. From the perspective of HE, it is argued that universities should play a far greater role in forming partnerships with industry and preparing graduates for the labour market. The issue, about what measures universities should take to introduce teaching and learning strategies to prepare graduates for the demands of the labour market, is at the centre of the debates in HE (Winberg et al, 2006)

A more recent emphasis in university programmes is that of including knowledge and skills relevant to the workplace. The knowledge would include academic knowledge and technical knowledge which is a necessary part of the student's qualification and the practical knowledge which could be regarded as the graduate attributes that students developed along the way (Hager, 2006). This is a bid to make universities more utilitarian rather than academic, and responsive to societal and economic changes. Kraak (2003) argues that there is a radical transformation of the intellectual culture in higher education, and universities in particular, away from the traditional university system towards a more utilitarian university system (also referred to as a mode 2 university system). This means that a more open, responsive and inclusive system of teaching and learning is emerging that caters for a diverse student population (Kraak, 2003) and that universities are responding to economic pressures and quality imperatives by trying to maintain student throughput, postgraduate numbers and research outputs (Naidoo, 2003).

As a consequence, tensions have emerged in the field of academic development between the imperatives of quality verses redress and the notion of creating an inclusive university

environment. In the South African university context inclusivity refers to the social inclusion of those students who were previously disadvantaged by an unequal education system and an unequal society, which included students from diverse social and economic backgrounds and those mature students who have decided to return to university. This aspect will be discussed in more depth later in the literature review.

This tension played itself out in a recent SA parliamentary discussion report on transformation in HE (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, February 2010). Some members of suggested that the quality of the students coming into universities needed to be assessed, and it was proposed that underperforming institutions should to be closed and their funding rechanneled to better performing institutions. Brown et al, (2003, p.121) argue that "Where market competition is based on quality rather than price it is important to be seen to be the best" and suggest that because of the decrease in government funding to tertiary institutions, they should compete for this resource, a model which is consistent with neoliberal principles. Other members felt that a major challenge was not only about quality, but also about equity, which supports the process of social transformation. The view here was that rather than closing these 'underperforming universities, they should be afforded more support to meet the demands of the changes in the social and economic environment. It is in the context of these developments that the issue of the employability and employability skills of graduates take centre stage.

2.2   *Employability and employability skills*

Hillage and Pollard (as cited in Brown et al, 2003) suggest that 'employability is about having the capability to gain employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required' (p.110). This definition, according to Brown et al (2003) is geared towards satisfying the needs of the labour market and seems to ignore the needs of the individual.

Brown et al (2003) argue that most policy statements fail to recognize the 'duality of employability' which include an absolute dimension and a relative dimension (p.110). This *absolute* dimension of employability focuses on the individual's capabilities, as being knowledgeable, having the skills and the commitment to carry out the job in an efficient, creative and productive way. The other dimension is that of *relative* employability. Here the emphasis is on the notion of supply and demand within the job market. This alludes to the fact that there are much fewer jobs than the number of candidates applying for these jobs which suggests that candidates have to compete for positions.

Brown et al (2003) suggest that there is significant pressure on HE institutions to produce employable graduates due to high public investment in them and the need to prepare them for the demands of the knowledge-driven economy. According to Hager, Holland and Beckett (2002) there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that there is a demand from business and employer organizations for graduates to possess employability skills. This is part of a bigger debate about the purpose of HIM and how it should produce "[graduates that are both employable and capable of contributing to civil society" (p.4). There is also the concern that employment cannot be guaranteed in a highly competitive global economic environment because the labour market is affected by the principle of supply and demand. This implies that there will always be more candidates than jobs available in the job market (Naidoo, 2003; Brown et al, 2003), and herein lie a number of contradictions, which will be highlighted below.

This human capital perspective has played an important role in transforming education systems to produce the kind of knowledge and intellectual capital that individuals would need to adapt to the rapidly changing work conditions and to equip them with the intellectual capacity to develop new skills and new knowledge as these opportunities present themselves in the workplace. There is the concern that the labour market may not be able to accommodate a highly qualified labour force, because the number of prospective positions are far fewer than the candidates that apply for them. Winberg et al (2003) states

that neither skills nor experience are sufficient in securing a job, but that it is dependent on what the economy has to offer in terms of job opportunities and patterns of discrimination in the labour market. This challenge has presented itself in the South African labour market context in recent years and formed part of a major discussion in the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) report.

The JIPSA Report (2006) found that 200 000 graduates, with a mix of diplomas, certificates and degrees, were unemployed. Unemployment amongst Black graduates was particularly high and the reasons cited in this report were that there seemed to be an oversupply of graduates with qualifications that were not in demand in the labour market on the one hand, and on the other hand, those who had the relevant qualifications lacked industry experience and the generic skills that would have distinguished them from other applicants for positions. This trend is exacerbated by factors such as race, field of study, and employer perceptions of the graduates' quality and employability.
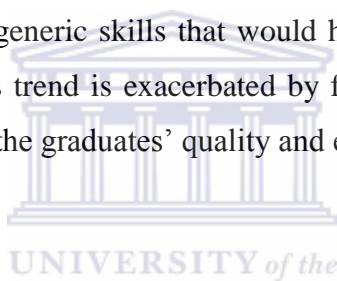
However, these policies pay little attention to broader debates about the purpose of higher education in producing graduates who are both employable and capable of contributing to civil society as suggested by Hager, Holland and Beckett (2002).

2.3   The Link between Employability Skills and Generic Skills in Higher Education

The terms generic skills, employability skills and graduate attributes seem to be used interchangeably when referring to preparing students for the workplace, although there may be subtle differences. According to Poole and Zahn (1993), employability skills refer to the personal characteristics and attributes preferred by employers. These skills would include personal responsibility, seeking and securing a job, reasoning and problem-solving, health and safety and personal attributes. They also note that "studies that have been conducted with the purpose of defining the employability skills needed for job success typically identify similar types of characteristics but often use different words and systems of

organization to define them" (p. 58). Poole and Zahn (1993) also recognize that it does not matter which route or system an educational institution takes, but that some organizational system be used to integrate employability skills into the curriculum. They believe that it is imperative that institutions of higher learning embed these employability skills into their curricula to prepare students for a volatile work environment.

Hager, Holland and Becket (2002) however, use the term generic skills to refer the qualities and capacities that are needed in higher education. They identify a range of skills that make up generic skills, for example, critical thinking skills concerned with "logical and analytical reasoning, problem solving and intellectual enquiry; effective communication skills; teamwork skills and capacities to identify, access and manage knowledge and information; personal attributes will include skills such as imagination, creativity and intellectual rigour; and values such as ethical practice, persistence, integrity and tolerance" (p.3). It can be argued that higher education have included generic skills such as those listed above embedded in discipline-specific knowledge. Business considers these generic skills to be inadequate for the education of graduates, if they cannot utilize them in a workplace context. The Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative (EHEI) in Britain identified transferrable skills which they suggest are becoming increasingly valued by employers. These include problem-solving, communication skills and working effectively with others which are required to allow knowledge and understanding to be used appropriately and effectively at work and in collaboration with others (Entwistle, no-date).

Jansen (2010) takes the debate about the importance of developing generic skills in HE a step further and talks about generic competencies specifically geared towards the Arts degree, which he dissects into "critical thinking skills, appreciation of literature, understanding of cultures, the uses of power, the mysteries of the mind the organization of societies the complexities of leadership and the problem of change" (p. 8). He implies that a BA degree forms a solid basis for workplace training because he contends that students should learn to learn in an academic environment and become educated first and foremost.

He also contends that what South African universities fail to do, is to educate young adults broadly on issues of ethics, values, reasoning, problem-solving, argumentation and logic. He emphasizes that complex social and human problems cannot be solved except through inter-disciplinary thinking that spans across disciplinary boundaries. Therefore one can conclude that a tension exists between the EHEI and Jansen's view about where the focus of developing generic skills should be. Hager et al (2002) suggest that the debate about generic skills is really centred around what the purpose of university education is and should be, and how to develop graduates who will be able to participate in the workforce, as well as having the capability to participate in other social engagement activities in broader society.

What is also revealed in the literature is that there is no real explanation for how generic skills and graduate attributes can be transferred to the workplace context. It can be deduced that employability skills can only be tested once the graduate engages in work activities with other workers. Another question which remains unanswered is, are these skills generic and transferrable, and can they be applied in any context, whether it be the workplace or otherwise, or are these skills generic and transferrable in the sense that they lay a foundation upon which students can build, and are able to engage in a range of other intellectual activities on the foundation that has been laid.

Apart from the pressure applied from business and industry, another factor that presents considerable challenges for HEIs is the changing nature of the students entering universities. What Walters and Koetsier (cited in Winberg et al, 2003) alludes to, from their experiences at the University of the Western Cape, is that "new students require new structures and new concepts to support their learning" (p. viii). This can be viewed through the lens of issues of diversity and inclusivity in the student population at universities in South Africa and further afield.

2.4 *Diversity in higher education – Promoting the move towards inclusivity*

Higher education institutions are moving towards the process of inclusivity in education which attracts diverse groups of students to higher education. This diversity in the student population encompasses the following characteristics: age, culture, background, sexuality, work experience, different learning styles, physical ability and disability (Tennant et al, 2009).

In recent years there has been a strong focus on the internationalisation of higher education. From the Australian HE perspective it meant that student mobility from Asian countries like China, Malaysia and Japan became more prominent in Australian universities in recent years and with this came the need to accommodate these students from diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds (Tennant, McMullen and Kaczynski, 2009). Inclusivity, in a SA context, tries to address two major challenges, firstly, the issue of equity and social justice: to create an inclusive environment for Black, Coloured and Indian students who were previously disadvantaged, and were restricted from getting a university degree from historically white universities, and for the SA government to redress past inequalities, and secondly, to prepare students for the global labour market by exposing them to, and to create an appreciation for diverse cultures.

From a MSA perspective it is really about the inclusivity of a diverse population of students mainly from other parts of Africa. Table 1 indicates the student population at MSA from a multi-cultural perspective and shows the diversity in the student population in the faculty of Arts in 2011.

Table 1: Students enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts at Monash South Africa in 2011

Country	Number of students
South Africa	288
Botswana	235
Zimbabwe	491

Other African Countries	143
Europe and UK	10
Asia	2
Australian Antarctic Territory	2

The proportion of SA students only constitutes approximately 25 percent whereas the majority of students in this faculty come from other parts of Africa where English is spoken as a second or third language. The assumption can also be made that they come from diverse cultural, ethnic and educational backgrounds.

The internationalization of education and the focus on global citizenship have created two opportunities for universities in terms of rethinking their curricula and adding an international dimension to their course offerings. Firstly for universities to restructure their policies and curricula in anticipation of the influx of international students to major universities around the world, and secondly, to expose all student to issues of cultural diversity and to better prepare them for the global labour market and for their future roles as global citizens (Tennant et al, 2009).
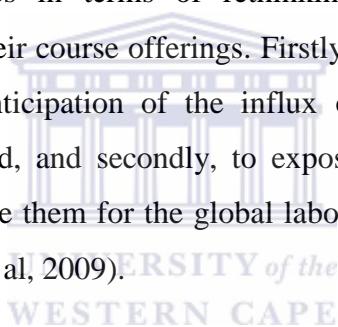
There is a significant effort by HE institutions to create inclusive environments, given that the intake of international students has increased over the last few years. There is also an increasing view that this new development in higher education, the issue of the diversity in students' learning preparation, should be viewed as a unique opportunity to embrace diversity rather than to see it in terms of a deficit which requires remediation. This has led institutions of higher learning to revisit their approach to academic development and academic literacies.

In a SA context the issues of inclusivity in HE meant that institutions of higher learning had to align their policies with that of the new political order which means that instead of focusing on academic support, as they did in the past, they now have to revise their

curricula and teaching methodologies to meet the needs of the anticipated social, economic and cultural diversity of students entering HE in the form of new academic development practices.

Academic development practices have been subject to different stages of transformation, as it adapted to the changing landscape of HE, especially in a South African context. Boughey (2007) contends that earlier endeavours of academic literacy within HEIs, provided underprepared students with direct academic support. Underprepared is a term used to refer to students, especially in a SA context, who are underprepared by their schooling for university studies. The schooling system, during apartheid, had an authoritarian and rigid approach to teaching and learning which required learners to regurgitate knowledge without questioning and critiquing it. Students who were underprepared for university tended to reproduce information verbatim, had an inability to present an argument, not being able to critically analyse a text and had a tendency to write from a highly subjective point of view (Slonimsky and Shalem, no-date).

Another view is that most universities in SA use English as a medium of instruction, although most of the students entering universities have English as a second or third language, which means that students come into the university environment with a significant 'deficit' (Pauw et al, 2006). Students must be able to grasp the academic language and conventions needed to advance in their university learning, and universities have had to put mechanisms in place to address these challenges. These mechanisms came in the form of academic development programmes with the objective of bringing underprepared students up to the level where they could cope and excel in their academic learning. These programmes were initially referred to as academic support programmes.

It should be noted that words like 'deficit' and 'at risk' has negative connotations and reinforces the language of exclusion and remediation (Rose, 1998). The academic literacy perspective does not approach academic learning in this context as a problem of deficit, but it explores a set of issues about how students learn the academic skills to become part of

the academic community. 'At risk' is a term still used by learning skills practitioners and lecturers at MU and MSA to identify students who are finding their academic studies challenging, and who are not coping with their academic learning. This term is however also used in the MU Learning Skills Policy guidelines (Learning Skill Policy document). I have reservations about using this term because it holds negative connotations especially for the students who are classified in this way and may categorise or label these students as needing constant academic support and intervention (remediation).

2.5   *Academic Development as Practice*

A plethora of literature have emerged on academic development and student learning (Zamel and Spack, 1998), but very little has been written in the area of 3rd generation academic development or differentiated learning (Boughey, 2007).

The aim of the academic development movement post-1994 in South Africa had the responsibility to make a contribution to the transformation of HEIs. Although these programmes were crucial in addressing the education disparities between White and Black students, they were by and large a gesture of goodwill since these programmes lacked substantial funding to remain sustainable. It is ironic that while the academic development movement had taken root, the issue of funding was still a major factor in determining the success or failure of the programmes.

The debates at HE institutions were about where to position these programmes and about what the function of academic development should be. The debates shifted from addressing education disparities towards the need to assure the quality of programmes presented by institutions. Universities are not only held accountable by their funding agencies, but also by HE quality agencies, which conduct annual audits to ensure that quality standards are maintained. Academic development programmes are monitored by the HEQC, to ensure that equity issues are addressed, that the quality of their course provisions is maintained and that these programmes are sustainable.

The repositioning of the academic development movement has occurred as a consequence of the changing relationship between HE and the needs of the economy and society in general. The nature of the debates centred around exactly what role these academic development programmes will play in SA universities. By and large this practice drew much of its theoretical underpinnings from literature abroad. The approach that featured most prominently in the discourses on academic development is that of the deep versus the surface approaches to learning. There was an urgent need for academic development practitioners to engage students in text-based activities and to provide an opportunity for them to become actively involved in their own learning. This was indeed a paradigm shift for HE in that the students that came into the university system came from a schooling system that taught them to rote learn texts and to memorize concepts without them understanding these in context and the relevance of the information they were learning. With this shift in focus, came what is known as 'differentiated kinds of learning' (Boughey, 2007, p.8).
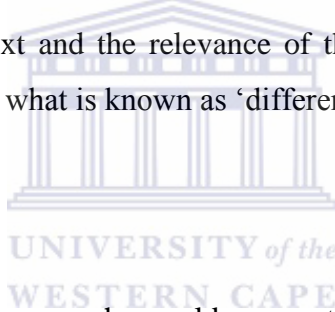
The differentiated learning approach would mean that academic literacies would be embedded in the courses and disciplines of the students and that practitioners would go beyond teaching generic skills but skills that would fulfill the specific requirements of a particular discipline or course. This means that academic development would have to be contextualized at programme level (Boughey, 2007). This is the main thrust of the 3rd generation academic development and a major dimension of the learning skills programme, carried out by the learning skills practitioner, in partnership with the academic staff at MSA. The implication of this approach is that the academic fraternity would have to play an active role facilitating the process to embed these skills into the course content and should adopt a student-centred approach to learning, which would include aspects of what students need to learn and to develop effective strategies to teach these capabilities.

Academic disciplines constitute the norms and conventions which are often treated by academics, seasoned in the discipline, as common sense and are often not explicitly addressed, so they remain elusive to many students. It should be noted that what constitutes a discipline and its ways of thinking and knowing are actually embedded in that discipline's writing, its norms and conventions. Volbrecht (2003) however contests this compartmentalization of using discipline specific language literacy programmes, emphasizing that its disciplinary content and conventions are a hindrance to creative and independent thinking because students, especially first year students, would be confined to using the language of that particular discipline.

Volbrecht (2003) presents another argument in his review of Rouse and Katz's book, *Unexpected Voices: Theory, Practice and Identity in the Writing Classroom,* by stating that the issue of power and identity is becoming a major concern in the field of literacy studies. Rouse and Katz contends that this presents a very pertinent question that all educators should try to address, 'What sort of individual should we help bring into being?' (cited in Volbrecht, 2003, p.106). The fundamental concern here is that the issues of knowledge acquisition and transmission is rooted in power relations. Volbrecht (2003) also emphasizes the fact that educators need to be critically aware of how they "reproduce, perpetuate or subvert [power relations]" (p.107). This line of thinking has direct bearing on the academic literacies model presented in Street's Academic Literacies Framework.

2.6 Academic literacy and the New Academic Studies perspective

As discussed above, the arrival of students from diverse backgrounds or what was also termed 'non-traditional' students in HE, has led to a paradigm shift for universities and the role of writing in it. There are two contexts which will be featured as integral to the debate about writing in HE. It locates writing within a broader framework that takes into account more than simply study skills and academic socialization which are featured as the dominant approaches in academic development, to include New Literacy Studies which

was the latest development in academic literacy according to Street (2004). This new approach sees reading and writing as social, contextual and ideological practices within the field of academic literacy. The broader context within which these new developments occur within academic literacy is what Street (2004) termed the 'new orders'. He focuses on the limitations of viewing academic literacy as a set of skills or as academic socialization. His research calls for a policy shift from focusing on remediation and skills support to a concern with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for academics as well as teachers, and practitioners in the academic development services.

Academic literacies in the broader context: The 'new orders'

The new literacy studies identify three broad areas within the new orders: the new work order, the new communicative order and the new epistemological order and it calls for a new approach to how literacy should be defined (or conceptualized) within the context of work.
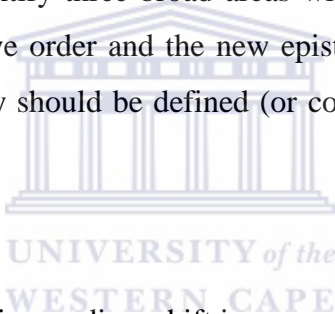
Street (2004) contends that this paradigm shift is as necessary for academics and researchers as it is for activists and practitioners. The former have to accommodate the needs of practical knowledge and the latter are being called upon to take account of theoretical knowledge. These academic literacies are linked to the broader changes taking place in the work environment. He identifies three different models in his study that would highlight changes in the way students' writing in higher education can be viewed: study skills, academic socialization and academic literacies, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Academic literacies and the 'new orders'.

	New Work order	*New epistemological order*	*New communicative order*
Study skills >writing as surface language correctness	**Hierarchy and discipline**	**Atomized units of knowledge transmitted and tested; Quality control, performativity**	**Include as units non-linguistic skills and modes – visual, gestural, etc. Regulation of body, policing**

Academic socialization >Writing as conduit	Multiple discourses in multi-disciplinary teams; privilege exchange value	Learn new knowledge in old ways – elitist institutions – or in new marketized ways – wider access, knowledge in use	Learn new modes e.g. 'rhetoric of science classroom'; new policing of modes
Academic literacies >writing as contested	Flattened hierarchy teamwork new Language skills; privilege use value	Critical reflexivity on language and knowledge as process/resources; academics as practical epistemologists'	Critical reflexivity on uses of language and non-linguistic modes in representing knowledge; knowing as processes/resources

Street (2004, p.14)

I will begin by paying closer attention to the framework devised by Street (2004) and will attempt to give a brief explanation of the headings that constitute the academic literacies models and the new orders

Academic literacies

The *study skills* approach, very briefly, characterizes academic literacy as a set of skills which students learn and can be transferred to different contexts. This can be defined as a remedial and instrumental approach and incorporates surface level learning, incorporating grammar, referencing, and spelling. This approach has been reviewed and began to include issues related to social context.

In *academic socialization* the students are socialized into the academic culture. The main thrust of this approach is to induct students into the academy and for them to be able to interpret their learning activities. Although this approach includes aspects of student-centred learning and the cultural aspects to learning, this approach has been criticized for focusing on the academy as one culture.

The third approach, namely *academic literacies* sees literacies as social practices. This approach engages students at the level of 'epistemology and identities' (Street, 2004, p.15) rather than study skills and socialization. The main thrust of this approach is for the student to use his/her body of knowledge including different genres, disciplines and courses which would be relevant to different settings. These models as illustrated by Street (2004) will form part of the guide to the analysis of the learning skills program in this research, to ascertain where, in these three models, the learning skills programme at Monash SA is located.

Institutions are viewed as sites of discourse and power and influences how the academic literacy practice is carried out within that context. Black (no-date) concurs that "rather than focusing on the extent to which individual possess a particular set of literacy skills, [he] focus on what literacy actually means to these people". Here he refers to how literacy is used and valued by people in different social contexts. Literacy cannot be seen as something that is prescribed to address learning or writing problems as is the case in the study skills model. Street makes the distinction between an autonomous model which focuses on standardized skills to literacy practices and the ideological model which focuses on literacy practices in a range of social contexts.

The academic literacies described above may operate in different contexts, described by Street (2004) as a new work order, a new epistemological order and a new communicative order – as outlined below.

The New Work Order

Gee et al and Holland et al (cited in Street, 2004), characterizes the new work order within the globalization of production and distribution. They contend that these changes has implications for the what language will be used in work and educational contexts.

Street (2004) agrees that the language and terminology have changed to express the changing nature of work contexts. There is also a distinct emphasis on change in the organizational behaviour, an organisation that can adapt to the rapidly changing global economic environment.

This means that an organization, operating within the global economic environment should be able to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability. Another important feature of an organization is that of total quality management (TQM) and that organisations should conform to certain standards. This includes educational organizations as they too have to conform to quality control measures to ensure the quality of their outputs and products. There is also a distinct emphasis on change in the organizational behavior, one that can adapt to the rapidly changing global economic environment.

The flatter organisational structure which encourages team work projects and interaction within these teams between managers and workers has implications for worker interaction and the skills needed to function in this new work environment. Teamwork and collaboration is emphasized, with members having differentiated skills and different levels of competence and analysing problems from different disciplinary discourses.

Another essential requirement for employees to have would be 'discursive skills', according to Street (2004), and the ability to collaborate and negotiate within these environments. He contends that these new work environments seem to be strongly linked to some of the principles of democracy: that it is participative; that there is devolution of power in the workplace; that there is a partnership between managers and workers and that workers are empowered (Street, 2004). However, Street (2004) together with other authors, like Gee (cited in Street, 2004) believes that these shifts in the terminology should be handled with great skepticism.
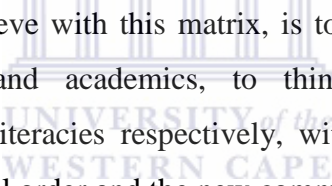
The New Communicative Order

This area of the new orders is of particular concern for the New Literacy Studies approach. It draws attention to how literacy is defined within the new communicative order and suggests that "reading and writing forms one part of what people will have to learn to in order to be 'literate' in future" (Street, 2004, p.11). The other forms of communicative practices would be that of teamwork literacies and the use of icons in many communicative practices. However Street advises that literacy should refer to language use and that it is always accompanied by other visual and oral semiotic practices which should be referred to as channels but in essence these also represent other literacies. He suggests that this distinction has advantages for both research and practice:

1) It enables us to see the relationship between reading and writing and other channels, whereas incorporating them into one term 'literacy' hides internal variations.
2) It recognizes the social importance of reading and writing
3) It provides a tried and tested language of description that provides detailed accounts of literacy practices
4) It offers a model from the new literacy studies that might then be applied to other channels (Street, 2004, p.12)

Language and writing is but one aspect of the broader range of literacies which include "semiotic systems' which cut across reading, writing and speech" (Street, 2004. P.11). Grammar is viewed in a holistic way one that brings meaning to how people, places and images are depicted in a particular context. The different dimensions of grammar go beyond just being a set of language rules and conventions, but are also a set of possibilities, and emphasizes that each participant engages and derives their own meaning from it. The communicative order relates to the next order under discussion the new epistemological order which questions the basis on which we define and learn knowledge.

The New epistemological Order

The *new epistemological order* centres around the debate on the relevance of traditional knowledge within a changing work environment. This alludes to the discussion about knowledge economies and the marketization of knowledge in the global economic context. This also challenges the view that universities are the leading sites where knowledge is produced and that this new knowledge can also be produced in non-academic settings such as business environments. Barnett (cited in Street, 2004) suggests that the new role of researchers should be that of 'practical epistemologist' those that would engage with practical knowledge in real world projects and not only with theoretical knowledge. Universities should become sites for debate about the basis of knowledge, an opportunity that is not readily provided by business. The practical epistemologist engages with knowledge in use and not simply with propositional knowledge.

What Street is trying to achieve with this matrix, is to set up a framework for academic development practitioners and academics, to think about study skills, academic socialization and academic literacies respectively, within the context of the new work order, the new epistemological order and the new communicative order. It can be identified as a heuristic device which may help academic development practitioners locate their programmes within the framework. It can help the practitioners, academics and HE curriculum developers to think about academic literacies and how it links to the workplace. This aspect of the matrix clearly links with the discussion on employability and employability skills and how academic literacies can be linked to skills required for the workplace. The epistemological order relates to how knowledge is viewed in higher education as distinct from the business environment.

What has become clear is that there is a need in academic development to reframe the learning process. Below is a comment on how Street's framework and Boughey's concept of 3rd generation academic development has been used in this research.

Conceptual Framework

2.7   *The Academic Literacies Framework and the 3rd Generation Academic development*

I have used Street's framework and the concept of 3rd generation academic development as a way to analyse the learning skills policy, the learning skills programmes and the Sociology 101 documents in this study. A set of criteria was drawn from Street's matrix. The documents were analysed using these criteria to establish whether the curriculum, the policy and the programme actually lean towards a study skills approach, an academic socialization approach and an academic literacies approach. This means that I explored the extent to which the curriculum, programme and policy leans towards surface language correctness and fits into the study skills model. Next, the aim was to ascertain which model the sociology curriculum, the LS programme and the LS policy fits into. In order to understand whether the academic literacies model is used, means that one would be trying to establish whether the policies, programme and curriculum aim to highlight the fact that there is a debate currently about what constitutes literacies and to familiarize students with these debates and at the same time enable them to understand which of these literacies are being practiced and recognized by Monash University and inside the Sociology curriculum. These would include institutional policies and requirements, for example the policy regarding plagiarism or the feedback system.

It should be noted that the 3rd generation academic development phase, discussed by Boughey (2007), is similar to the Academic Socialization model illustrated by Street (2004). It addresses the embedding of differentiate kinds of learning in discipline-specific courses. If it is established that the LS programme would fall in the category of 3rd generation academic development then the likelihood that it is located in Street's academic socialization model would be high.

However it should be noted that I will not be evaluating the efficacy of these approaches but will be exploring student responses to a LS programme which has been designed as embedded within a particular discipline, i.e. 3rd generation academic development.

Chapter 3:

3. Research Methodology

This study investigates the contribution made by a learning skills (3rd generation academic development) programme to the academic needs of underprepared students, and to the development of their employability skills.

The study was focused on the learning skills programme implemented in the Sociology Department at Monash University in Johannesburg between 2009 and 2010. It was driven by an interest in understanding how students made sense of their university learning experiences in relation to the learning skills programme and the Sociology 1365 course.

This research has utilised a qualitative research design which placed great emphasis on words rather than on quantifying data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2008). In terms of ontology the qualitative researcher discards the notion of an external, objective reality in favour of a reality that tries to discover meanings that people in a specific setting attach to it. From a constructivist perspective, social phenomena and their meaning are in a continuous state of reconstruction. In terms of epistemology, the qualitative researcher is subjective because he/she interacts with the participants and tries to capture reality from their perspectives. The role of the researcher requires the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases.

My perceptions of HE have been shaped by my personal experiences of the context within which I work. I have been involved with academic development for the past six years and served on a number of projects related to university learning, and student workplace preparation programmes. Because of these experiences I have an understanding and sensitivity to the learning context of the participants. As the researcher I tried by all means

to be mindful of the fact that I have a predisposition to the students and the learning skills programme. I may not always be impartial during the data collection and analysis processes. As a researcher I have had to reflect on the biases I bring to the study. I would have to give an account of how the findings are shaped by my experiences and background such as gender, culture and socio-economic origin and history.

Research Design

The case study as a format for design was characterised by the focus on a phenomenon which has identifiable boundaries. This is what Henning (2004) describes as a "bounded system" (p.32). The aim is not to simply describe the case but to establish the patterns, relationships and the dynamic that prompted the inquiry. Merrian (cited in Henning, 2004, p.41) points out that "the process is more important than the outcome". Here she means that the how, where, when and why things happen, are noted and form an essential part of the study. The context is more than part of the case. The interaction between context and action is usually the unit of analysis.
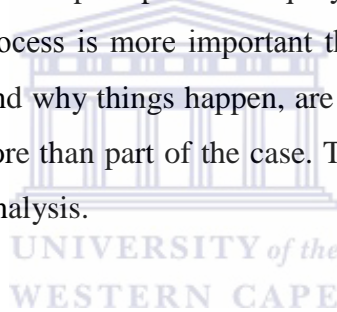
The case study was used because it tried to illuminate student experiences and perceptions in a particular context, namely Monash South Africa, and the findings of the research will contribute to broader discussions on student perceptions and experiences of the learning skills programmes with Monash Malaysia and Monash Australia.

Document analysis

Key documents that were analysed are:

- Monash Learning Skills Service Policy document,
- Sociology 1365 Curriculum and course outlines.

I chose to use these documents for the purpose of this study for the following reasons: 1) The Monash Learning Skills Service Policy document outlines the vision, mission and rationale for introducing the Learning Skills Programme at Monash University (MU), the practical implications of the programme and the different levels of services the programme has to offer to MU students and teaching staff. 2) The Sociology 1365 Curriculum and course outlines were used to show how the learning skills can be embedded into the content of the course material used in this study.

In analyzing these documents, I used the qualitative content analysis. This process searched out the underlying themes in the material being analysed, and I linked their relevance to the research questions and the themes arising from the literature as indicated in Appendix 4.

Interviews

Interviews are one of the most effective sources of case study information, but for the sake of this project semi-structured interviews were used to capture the meanings of those being researched and to understand their worldview. The enquiry took take place in the natural setting viz the university, to collect substantial situational information.

For the most part, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted, around eight themes arising from the literature. These included:

- Learning priorities embedded in the curriculum
- curriculum e.g. employability or academic literacies
- a set of skills or a means to academic socialization.
- shift from addressing education disparities towards quality assurance of programmes
- preparing workers for the global market, global citizenship.
- intentions of students entering this programme

- kinds of learning students experience in this programme

- Match or mismatch between the programme design, students' expectations and experiences?

Interviews were an ideal method for collecting data of student experiences and an interview guide was used to cover all the categories and themes that were covered in the literature review. Through these interviews I have explored the views of students, allowing for discussion to flow.

This involved having an informal conversation with the participants and maintained a friendly chat while staying close to the interview guide. It was interesting to note that the participants were fairly nervous at the onset of the interview but as the conversation progressed some became more relaxed. I also found that most of the respondents were English Second and Third language speakers and at times were unable to express themselves clearly. Another observation was that the more mature students were far more engaging than the younger students, who at times had to be coaxed along to elicit the kinds of responses that would be relevant to the research questions and themes. I have recorded the information by audio taping and writing notes. The audiotaped data were transcribed and will be kept in storage for about six months. These will be made available when requested. The data analysis process was ongoing which involved reflection on the data, asking analytical questions and writing memos throughout the study.

The sample

All 2nd and 3rd year sociology students were invited to participate in the research project. These were students that have attended the learning skills workshops arranged jointly by the sociology lecturer, and the learning skills practitioner. Based on the responses by students I selected six students using the following criteria:

- 2nd and 3rd year Sociology students because they have had experience of the Learning skills programme at different levels, namely in one-on-one consultations, generic workshops and as an integrated workshop with their discipline-specific courses. These students have participated in the learning skills programme for at least one year, to be able to give an informed account of what they have experienced with the programme. They have accessed a combination of services offered by the learning skills unit – personal consultations and generic and course-specific workshops

- A combination of young and mature students were recruited to ascertain whether their approach to making use of a programme such as the learning skills programme differed between young and mature students and, if so, why?

The next step was to invite them to a preliminary interview where I discussed how the interview will be conducted and the ethical issues involved in participating in such a study. Once the student agreed to participate, I presented him/her with the consent form and arranged the interview date.
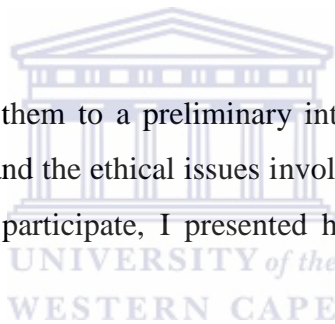
For the sake of this study and because of time constraints, interviews were the best method in accumulating the data. If more time were available it would have been beneficial to the study to observe the students and lecturer in their natural setting to strengthen the reliability of the study.

It was agreed that their names would not be disclosed in the research paper and complete anonymity would be maintained throughout the research process and in future use of the data. The information that they provided will be discussed below. Names and identifying information have been removed to maintain anonymity.

I have not used participant-observation as one of my research methods because I did not conduct this research as a systematic participant-observation activity, as indicated earlier. I will nevertheless add my own comments based on my observations as a participant in the research process, and in my capacity as a LSA.

Challenges during the interview process

Interviews are often cumbersome and complex, especially when time is a scarce resource (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). My experience was that the interviews did not always go according to schedule. The interviews were conducted during the students' busiest time of the semester and one participant was unable to present herself for the interview because of her workload, and we agreed that she could send her responses via email. Another participant decided to withdraw from the research project in the light of her being inundated with assignments. Alternative arrangements had to be made and another participant had to be recruited.
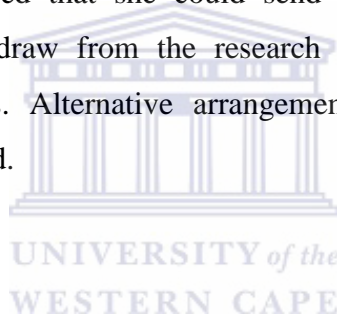
Data analysis

For the purpose of data analysis the open coding system was used (Henning, 2004; Creswell, 2009). "Because the open coding system is an inductive process, whereby the codes are selected according to what the data mean, you need to have an overview of as much contextual data as possible" (Henning, 2004, p.104) This method identified the major categories in research, by reading through the transcripts of the interviews carried out on the participants. By reading through the transcripts again, units of meaning related to major categories were be identified. The raw data was segmented into units of meaning, which was subsequently labeled as codes. These codes were then grouped into categories and began to reveal the themes constructed from the data. The relationship between the categories and subcategories can be reflected as theories. These categories were then related to the research question and the themes in the literature review. Consistent with the

interpretive paradigm these processes seek to produce descriptive analysis that emphasises a deep, interpretive understanding of the social phenomenon (Henning, 2004).

Reliability, validity and Generalisability

Qualitative reliability indicates that the research is consistent across different researchers and different projects/ or qualitative reliability means that there has to be a consistency with how other researchers conducted case studies. It is suggested that to determine reliability, the researcher needs to document the procedures of their case studies and to document as many of the steps of the procedure as possible (Yin, cited in Cresswell, 2009).

In an attempt to ensure validity the researcher employed procedures to establish the accuracy of the findings. In qualitative terms, the question that needs to be asked here is whether I am investigating what I say I am investigating (Kvale, cited in Henning, 2004).

Generalisability refers to the degree to which the findings can be generalised. The findings cannot be generalized to sites or contexts outside of those under study (Creswell, 2009). Generalisability is not only about representativeness but is also about contributing to a particular field. Theory, by definition, is general and applicable across contexts. This is dependent, of course, on how well the researcher draws connections between conceptual ideas developed out of the findings. This alludes to the notion that case studies can be placed in the inductive tradition of theory generation (Bryman, 2008). This is an approach where the relationship between theory and research is such that theory is generated from the research conducted.

The case of academic development, particularly learning skills, at Monash University South Africa cannot be generalized to other context because the findings are specific to this particular context. The conventional limitations of case study research apply. However, the

insights from this research will be useful despite these limitations because study also aims to locate the LS programme and academic development within a broader social, political, economic and educational context.
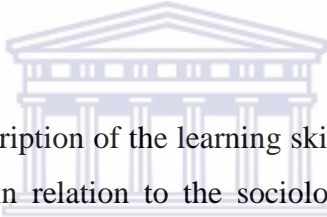
Chapter 4:

4. Presentation of Data

4.1   Document Analysis

1. Introduction

This chapter analysis two documents which are pertinent to this research study, namely the learning skills policy and programme and the Sociology 1365 course offered to first year students at MSA. In analyzing these documents, I used qualitative content analysis to search out underlying themes in the material being analysed, and link their relevance to the research question and the themes arising from the literature review.

Firstly I will give a brief description of the learning skills (LS) programme, secondly I will analyse the LS programme in relation to the sociology 1365 curriculum, thirdly I will determine if the LS programme contributes to students' academic learning or if the programme is preparing them for the world of work, or both, fourthly I will locate the discipline –specific LS programme in one of the models as illustrated in the Street Framework and lastly how these generic skills relate to employability and the world of work.

2. Learning Skills at MSA

Generic skills are understood at MSA as learning skills which are presented to students through generic learning skills programmes or embedded or integrated into the discipline-specific courses. These generic skills include communication skills, essay writing skills time management skills, reading strategies, study methods and exam preparation skills. Some of the skills are generic in the sense that they can be applied to a number of situations within the student's university learning. The objective for the university is to equip students with the skills to cope with their academic learning, and   lay a basis for developing

graduate attributes which will equip students for the world of work. It is in this context that a HE institution like Monash University is responding to the pressures of globalization and the need for universities to produce the best and well rounded graduates who will be able to compete for jobs in the global job market. For the purpose of this research I will use the terms generic skills and learning skills because it is better understood and relevant to the academic environment within which the learning skills programme is utilized. The development of students' generic skills is a focus of the university, its faculties and schools in aiming to,

> Produce graduates who are highly employable both locally and internationally and who are well equipped for a lifetime of learning…We must focus more on …higher order generic skills such as problem solving, teamwork and oral and written communication. These are the skills that employers are seeking in our graduates (Monash Direction, 2007)
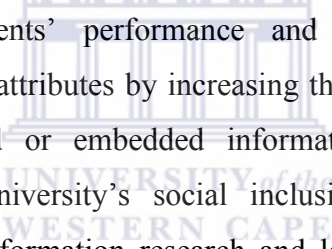
Learning Skills Policy linked to the Monash University Policy

This LS policy is aligned with the Monash policy which promotes employability. One of the core values at Monash University is excellence in education and it promotes "student-centred and flexible learning emphasizing the discovery, analysis and integration of information, problem-solving, communication and [a] lifetime of learning" (Excellence and Diversity: Strategic Framework, 2004-2008).

The learning skills discipline-specific programme and policy resonate with the Monash University values and objectives, which is a major focus of the university and faculties, in aiming to produce graduates who can compete confidently in the job market and who are well equipped for a lifetime of learning. The discipline-specific LS programme aligns itself to the Monash vision and mission which aims to develop and enhance students' academic learning and simultaneously contribute to the development of the students' graduate

attributes. The graduate attributes acquired through the discipline-specific LS programme may not have the immediate benefit of preparing students for the world of work, but it does develop generic skills which would form the basis for graduates to acquire new knowledge and learn new skills in the workplace, and prepares them for the fairly rapid changes they may encounter in the work environment. The design of the LS of the curriculum of the LS programme resonates with Boughey's (2007) 3rd generation academic development and Street's (2004) academic socialization model which shows more of a focus on preparing students for their university learning.

One of Monash University's core values is that of academic excellence, which is outlined in their policy document through the following statement which states that their teaching and learning strategy is to,

> "Contribute to students' performance and the development of the institution's graduate attributes by increasing the proportion of courses and units with integrated or embedded information and learning skills… Contribute to the university's social inclusion strategies through the provision of target information research and learning skills programmes" (Monash University, 2011).

The learning skills programme, emphasized in this research paper is part of a strategy by this institution, in response to the changes in the global economic environment and to equip university graduates with generic and employability skills to cope with these changes.

This is illustrated in MU Career Development Unit's view of employability skills (Appendix 5) which presents the link between the generic skills and employability skills or capabilities that students developed during the course of their studies. Together these skills will enable the graduate to adapt and manage the constantly changing work environment

3. The Learning Skills Programme

Learning skills programmes are presented to undergraduate and post-graduate students across faculties and schools, with the aim of providing students with the skills they need to learn within an academic environment. Generic and discipline –specific classes are provided throughout the semester and are open to all students studying at Monash University One of the main objectives of the LS programmes is to work with academic staff to embed the academic skills into the course curriculum. Learning Skills Advisers (LSA) liaise with the academic staff to provide suggestions for generic and discipline – specific workshops as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Academic Socialization Model

(adapted from RMIT University: Study and Learning Centre)

The programme also provides drop-in sessions to all students to consult briefly with the LSA. This service is aimed at accommodating students who have a specific question or issue which could be dealt with within a 10-15 minute consultation. The one-to-one consultations are for students who failed an assignment, those who appeared before an academic progress committee or a student who is identified as an 'at-risk' student through a joint learning skills-faculty diagnostic or assessment programme.

The generic skills workshops and the discipline-specific workshops form a major part of the activities of the learning skills programme, however the learning skills unit and the library also continue to source and implement a range of online learning tools and packages for all students, including academic English and oral and written communication.
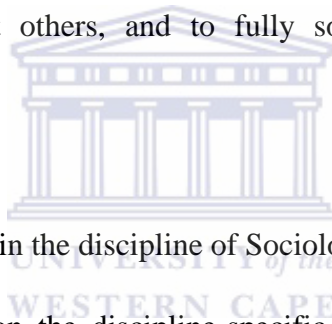
Generic skills workshops are generic in the sense that they offer general skills to all students irrespective of the courses they do. The generic skills include how to achieve academic success throughout the semester or year, note-taking skills, presentation skills, listening skills in lectures, issues of plagiarism and how to avoid it, time management skills, reading strategies and study skills.

An example of a generic skills workshop is one which deals with 'how to achieve academic success'. It will focus the student's attention to setting up a study plan which will include all the themes, tasks, tests and assignments in their course and how to break down the work into manageable chunks to work through and study, throughout the semester. This work plan will include how the students should prepare for the lectures and tutorials and how they should revise lecture notes and tutorial notes in preparation for tests and assignments, and ultimately for the exams. These skills are generic in the sense that they can be applied to any course or discipline that the student engages in, in fulfillment of their bachelor's degree.

The discipline-specific workshops use a repertoire of learning skills material which was developed by learning skills practitioners, adapted or tailored to suit a particular request or intervention by lecturers in their course units. These are then aligned with the learning or assessment requirements within that academic course and academic discipline. The learning skills programmes which are embedded within faculty units, are discipline-specific because it engages with course specific texts, its different writing genres and the academic writing style particular to that course. Examples of these genres are writing for

law reports, report writing for psychology or marketing. Ultimately the teaching collaborations and the integration of the LS programmes between the learning skills practitioners and the lecturers are and should be initiated by the lecturers, but because this is a service, staff and students may choose to use it or not.

A number of lecturers at Monash South Africa (MSA) have shown some concern about weaknesses in students' ability to write assignments in their discipline-specific courses. Partly in response to this concern, Monash University policy and strategy on teaching and learning, encourages academics to make use of the services of the learning skills unit, to embed generic skills relevant the needs of students in their respective courses. The aim of this initiative would be to improve students' academic performance, to contribute to their academic learning, amongst others, and to fully socialize them into their academic disciplines.

4. Learning skills workshops in the discipline of Sociology

The focus of this study is on the discipline-specific learning skills programmes in the Sociology 1365 course. The generic skills offered by the learning skills programme that are particularly relevant to the Sociology curriculum include question analysis, researching effectively and efficiently for the essay question, structuring the organizational framework for the essay, how to present an argument, how to reference and paraphrase, how to evaluate an article and so on. These are some of the skills that students should develop as an outcome of their engagement in the sociology curriculum. The academic staff in the sociology department felt that there was a need to develop these academic writing skills and reading strategies so that it would improve the quality of the students' work.

The learning priorities embedded in the Sociology 1365 curriculum can be categorized at three levels, namely learning objectives particular to the subject, graduate attributes and critical cross-field outcomes (A*ppendix 3)*, as outlined by the South African Qualifications

Authority (SAQA). The learning objectives are related to the discipline-specific learning outcomes that students are expected to acquire at the end of the course. In the case of Sociology 1365, these would include the gradual introduction of the concepts and theories which form the building blocks of the subsequent levels of the course. The graduate attributes, which are spelt out in Sociology 1365, are those academic skills/attributes which students develop as a consequence of their engagement in the learning process through classroom activities, assessments and feedback. One example of this, is to be critical and creative, meaning that students develop 'innovative solutions to problems, apply research skills to a range of challenges and to communicate perceptively and effectively' (Sociology curriculum, 2010, p.2).

The learning skills programme therefore is designed to enhance the process of socializing students into the sociology discourse. Through a combination of the sociology course tasks and discipline-specific LS programmes, students are expected to become aware of and develop the skills that are a necessary outcome of the course. It is also intended to contribute to their academic learning more generally, in the sense that these generics skills can be adapted and applied to their other courses. Another dimension of the LS programme is the LSA's consultations with students where they comment on their learning challenges. Through an analysis of these comments, the student and the LSA decide on what interventions and LS will be focused on in subsequent consultations.

5. Learning Skills Programmes as academic socialization

Based on the evidence in the discussion above, the LS programme can be located in the academic socialization model (Street, 2004). The gist of this model is to introduce students to the new academic culture and for students to develop skills in talking, writing and thinking in ways that the discipline requires. The learning skills discipline-specific course has characteristics of an academic socialization model in that it is integrated and embedded within a disciplinary discourse, namely sociology. Here a range of generic skills are learned in relation to a particular assignment or question for the first year sociology course.

The embedding of learning skills within a course in a particular discipline, is what Boughey (2007) refers to as a 3rd generation academic development programme, which entails developing differentiated literacies that respond to the needs of students at programme level. The discipline-specific learning skills programme together with the conventions and rules in a particular discipline, enables a student to understand the way that knowledge is organized in that discipline, and the communication conventions that are specific to that discipline. The differentiated learning approach, which introduces generic skills relevant to a particular discipline, would develop the student at two levels, at a programme level and at an institutional level, namely to socialize students into their respective disciplines and to socialize the students into this new ways of learning at university.

There is also a focus on presenting learning skills to all students especially those in first year as they adapt to the new academic environment. The aim is to expose all students to what is required of them as they make the shift from high school and other contexts to Monash University. Student also typically learn certain generic skills relevant in the faculty of arts which include presenting a structured argument based on an assessment of historical evidence, expressing ideas in writing with coherence and clarity and critically applying methodologies for quantifying, analyzing and interpreting data.

The learning skills programme also encourages students to interact with the virtual learning environment. A whole range of interactive tools were developed to help students to improve their academic listening and speaking skills. Students are able to watch videos and do interactive exercises online. This is a taken-for-granted aspect of the learning skills service and in the teaching and learning processes at Monash University: that students and teachers should be familiar with virtual teaching and learning aids, like Blackboard, Moodle, Wimba and other devices used in the virtual learning environment. These activities can be seen as elements of *new communicative order* which Street (2004) identifies as necessary skills for the new work environment.

The Learning Skills Programme, Employability and the World of Work

It is expected from the perspective of the university and in alignment with its vision and mission, that students will learn skills that could be adapted for the world of work. At first year level there is more of a focus on disciplinary knowledge than the application of knowledge, but it has become increasingly evident that as the students progress to the subsequent levels of the course, they develop practical knowledge and application of knowledge relevant to a particular profession. The Employment and Career Development Centre suggest that graduates can develop employability skills through their graduate programme.

The employability skills that can be drawn from the generic skills developed through the learning skills programme in Sociology 1365, are implicit rather than explicit at first year level in this particular course, Sociology 1365. Employability skills identified by the Employment and Career Development Centre *(Appendix 5)* are to be developed, as students engage with course tasks and the learning skills programme, For example, teamwork skills are developed by working on group assignments at university through working to achieve a common goal, by sharing information and appreciating and responding constructively to the opinions of the group members. Communication skills are developed by writing assignments and reports and by doing class presentations and participating in tutorial discussions. However, it should be noted here that graduate attributes are almost always used as a cluster of skills, which means that in the case of teamwork skills the individual also deploys communication skills, problem-solving skills and analytical skills, which are all higher order skills (Hager, 2006).

Such employability skills as stated in the Monash Policy are linked to both the notion of preparing students for the global labour market and preparing them for global citizenship. Employability for the individual student is improved by a good academic record and the skills and attributes that would equip the student to adapt to the changing work environment. The graduate attributes related to global citizenship, which student are

expected to acquire as a consequence of the course are, to engage in an international environment, to develop cross-cultural competencies, to demonstrate ethical values related to cultural diversity, and to develop critical and creative skills which can be used to problem-solve and apply highly developed research skills to a range of challenges.

What has become apparent, when graduate attributes are compared with the employability skills recognized by the career development centre at Monash University, is that employability skills are illustrated as an extension or an output of the learning achieved though academic learning at university and within the various disciplines. The development of the students' generic skills is a focus of the university and faculties in aiming to produce graduates 'who are highly employable both locally and internationally and who are well equipped for a lifetime of learning. The university endeavours to develop students' higher order skills in the form of problem analysis and problem-solving, teamwork and oral and written communication (Ancora Imparo, 7 February 2007). What is not clear, however, is whether these generic skills, acquired by the students, can be transferred to the work. I will discuss students' comments on this issue in the following chapter. However it should be considered that graduates' employability or lack thereof is no fault of their own ability or inability to acquire a job but should be rationalized from the perspective of the changes in the economic environment and the demands of the labour market.

In my view one of the aspects of the learning process would be that students should critically assess what works best for them as active participants in their own learning and how they could adapt this learning to the work environment and for their roles as active global citizens. Students should be able to develop the confidence to challenge the content of their courses and adapt it to their own conditions and realities. This alludes to Street's academic literacies model where knowledge is contested, and the dominant knowledge is challenged. This brings into question issues of identity, context and power relations.

4.2   Student experiences of the LS programme

This section identifies the students' intentions and experiences of the LS programme between 2009 and 2010. The interviewees include students who are in their first year of a BA degree and who have completed the Sociology 1365 course.

There were six interviewees who participated in the research. They are a diverse group of students from a number of African countries: two females from South Africa, one male from the Democratic Republic of Congo, two females from Botswana and one male from Nigeria. They range from being young students between 20 years and 29 years with little or no prior work experience, to mature students between 30 years and 45 years who have many years of work experience.

Some students faced multiple challenges of learning academic English, adapting to the academic environment from school and the workplace, and changing their learning behavior from previous educational systems to what an institution like Monash University South Africa requires. All the participants in this study have varying degrees of English proficiency sufficient for everyday interactions but this is not sufficient for their academic activities.

These students have volunteered to participate in the research. I have presented a profile (*Appendix 2)* and the responses of each of the interviewees. I have divided their responses into the following categories to present the descriptions below: background information, age, work experience, why they came into the programme, how they got to know about the LS programme, relevance of the programme, experience of the LS programme, whether the skills were generic or not, how the learning skills have changed the participants' approach to their learning, transformed learning, future benefits of acquiring learning skills and additional comments.

Ben

Ben is a 3rd year Bachelor of Arts student at Monash University. He is a mature student in his late twenties. He has had prior work experience as a marketing manager at his father's company. He comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo and his first language is French while his second language is a local Congolese language. According to him English is his third language. He acknowledged that he had difficulty in writing assignments in English, although he is able to conduct a conversation and participate in class and tutorials with relative ease. This is a problem common to most first year students, irrespective of whether they are English 1st language students or not, that they are not able to write academic English.

Ben entered the LS programme because he had difficulty writing an academic essay. He stated that he was referred to the Learning Skills Adviser (LSA) by his Sociology lecturer who felt that he needed help with his academic skills. The challenge was that he was not structuring the assignments correctly in spite of his verbal English proficiency. The lecturer felt that he needed coaching in how to write an academic assignment, in line with the conventions of the Sociology discipline. When he came to the LSA he did not recognize the need for academic development which is a problem common to many first year students. In my assessment of his assignment he needed assistance with various skills, for example topic analysis, how to structure an essay, referencing and research skills to equip him with the skills to complete his academic tasks. The major concern for the lecturer was that although he could write well enough in English but could not apply an academic writing style to his assignments.

He stated that once he had come for the consultation, he learnt that the programme offered other services and other topics besides learning how to structure an essay and presenting an argument. These generic skills included research skills, referencing and paraphrasing.

Ben said that his experience of the LS programme yielded positive results for him. He reiterated that he was a French speaker and that this had implications for how he approached his assignment tasks in English. He stated that he used to think about his essay topic in French first and plan his essay in French and then translated it into English. From

the LS programme he commented that he learned to paraphrase and how to write assignments in an academic way. He believes that it has fulfilled his expectations and that it has even helped some of his friends whom he had recommended it to.

He stated that the programme had lived up to his expectations and he believes that the LS programme had changed his approach to his university learning. He found the skills learned to be relevant and something that he could apply to his other courses as well.

Being equipped with the skills from the LS programme gave him the confidence to tackle other essay topics confidently and draft the assignment plans with ease. He now knows that he has to analyse the topic and stick to it when writing his assignment. He also feels that he is sometimes able to gauge the grade he could get, by saying, "for this one [assignment] I can get 60 or 70 percent which was not the case before".

He feels that the skills learnt in LS will stay with him for the rest of his life. He feels confident that he will be able to transfer these skills to other students who are struggling with their assignments. He feels that he could also transfer these skills to the workplace. He emphasised the ability to do research and to apply the research skills learned from the programme to any work context that would require him to do research. He also states that he has developed his higher order skills, and that these skills are enhanced by learning research skills and not 'to take anything for granted'.

He believes that the competition in the workplace is very tough and that he regards the learning skills as additional skills which he needs to polish, to perform better in the workplace, and that he will be able to apply, the research skills especially, to 'conduct proper research'.

He also pointed out that, at this stage, he does not need any additional skills, and that the skills learned in the programme is sufficient for his needs, at this point, to help him cope with his academic learning.

Brenda

Brenda is a mature student in her late twenties from Botswana and is an English second language speaker with Setswana as her first language. She is a 3rd year student completing a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Geography and Environmental Science, and Human Resources Management. She completed a Diploma in Office and Clerical Administration at a Botswana Polytechnikon before she embarked on completing a degree at Monash South Africa (MSA). She has never had a permanent job, but filled some temporary and part-time administrative positions in government departments in Botswana while completing her studies.

Brenda heard about the LS programme through her sociology lecturer at one of the tutorials, because the lecturer became aware, after marking their first assignments, that students did not know the referencing conventions, how to do research and how to write an academic essay. The lecturer arranged that a learning skills workshop be conducted in the sociology tutorials to address these challenges.

Her experience of the LS programme showed her a different approach to writing assignments than what she had learned in her previous institution. At the LS workshop, she had learned a step-by-step process on how to analyse an essay topic, how to write an essay and conduct research related to the topic, referencing techniques, finding journals and other electronic resources. After the training she found it much easier to approach essay questions and to write assignments. Brenda stated, "It has helped me to become an independent learner and has boosted my confidence in being able to do my research". She said that it has also helped her to evaluate research material. She felt that the skills learned had immediate benefits and were relevant to the assignments that she was busy with at that point in time, and could be used in other courses as well.

She believes that the generic skills acquired through the workshops have definitely changed the way that she approaches her assignments. These new skills include academic writing skills, communication skills, presentation skills, research skills and reiterated that the skills were different from what she had learned at her previous college in Botswana.

Brenda also stated that she would like to share her knowledge and skills with other workers in her prospective work environment. She believes that she would use the research skills learned through the LS workshops to do research work. She also believes that she would use the communication skills, report writing and proposal writing skills extensively in the workplace.

She is passionate about community based projects and stated that, in future, she would like to work on issues such as management of the environment, environmental impact assessments, problem-solving and decision making, in a non-governmental organization or in government where she can plough back her knowledge and skills in prospective projects.

She believes that learning is a lifelong process and that she likes to set herself learning orientated goals. She stated that she would like to pursue post-graduate studies in geography and that learning the correct academic conventions now will help her in her future studies. She also feels that she will be equipped to deal with some of the challenges and issues that her community faces, drawing on problem-solving and analytical skills learned in undergraduate studies.
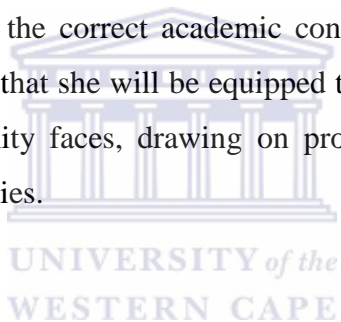
Carl

Carl is a mature student in his mid forties. He comes from Nigeria and is a second language English speaker with Ibo being his first language. He has lived in South Africa for the past sixteen years and is married with two children. Carl was quite sensitive about the fact that although he always wanted to study he was compelled, through personal circumstances, to find work after he matriculated. This is the first time he came to university to pursue an Arts degree because he did not have the opportunity to pursue further studies as a young man. He is self–employed running a car dealership for the past five years.

He gave a strong motivation for why he felt that he had to attend additional academic support sessions such as the LS programme. He believed that he had to try to adapt to the 'modern way of studying', using technology. He felt that it was very tough for him as a first year mature student, because he had not studied at university level before and found it

difficult to adapt to university learning. He felt that he had to find his own way around the university system and he appreciated any help that he could find, be it from the lecturers, tutors, and additional student services available on campus.

He got to know about the learning skills programme, when he received a MSA global email, sent to all staff and students at MSA, advertising exam skills, and he felt that it would benefit his university learning.

As a first year student who had not studied for many years he struggled with his studies and the large volume of readings for his courses. He felt that having to juggle between family commitments, running his business and studying, he had to find a workable solution. He found that it was necessary to develop time management skills to balance his work life, family commitments and his studies, but more urgent was his need to develop his academic learning skills.

Carl stated that he had learned a number of skills that would help him to engage more meaningfully with his academic tasks. At the LS workshops he learned exam preparation skills, study methods and time management skills. Furthermore, he learned a number of reading strategies, how to analyse an academic article, to identify keywords, to analyse assignment questions and how to present a draft essay in linear form and as a mind map.

He believed that an immediate benefit for him was that the reading skills that he learned saved him a lot of time and gave him the confidence to read challenging journal articles.

He also made use of the other services offered by the LS programme. These included the one-on-one consultations and the drop-in sessions. At these sessions he was able to refine his research skills and his ability to use the databases and referencing skills.

He stated that the programme was very helpful and that the skills learned were relevant to the skills that he needed at that point in time.

Carl believed that the programme had assisted and changed his approach and his behaviour towards his studies. He also believes that some of the skills that he had learned can be adapted to other courses and other situations outside of the academy. He states that he uses some of these skills in his work context and his church's community engagement

programmes to analyse people's ideas and engage in meaningful discussions and finding solutions. He also believes that he should share this knowledge with other students because he feels that some of the students that he interacts with in group assignments are struggling with their academic learning. From a business perspective he feels that he would be equipped with improved communication skills, presentation skills and teamwork skills, in how he would communicate with his clients and how he would interact with his team of sales people at work.

Carl makes particular reference to the institutional nature of 'doing things'. He feels that MU is strict about the way in which it teaches students to 'do things'. Here he refers specifically to how the students engage with their academic tasks taking heed of the plagiarism policy, the format students should use when writing essays and how students should make use of the virtual learning technology.

As a result of the skills learned in the LS programme, he believes that he is able to articulate himself better in an academic environment and has the ability to approach his academic writing and problem-solving tasks with confidence.
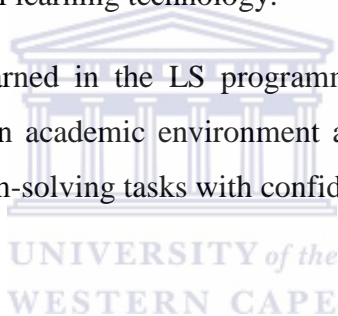
Jill

Jill is in her late forties and comes from Botswana. Setswana is her first language and English is her second language. Her experience at MSA started with her enrolling for a Bachelor of Commerce degree, but felt that she could not cope with the 'number-orientated' courses and switched to a Bachelor of Arts degree and is in her final year of her studies. She felt that her experience on campus initially, was that she did not feel welcome within the student community, because she was a mature student and could not really relate to her younger peers.

Jill has extensive work experience and is currently an HR officer in one of the departments in the Botswana government. She felt the need to upgrade her qualifications in line with her work and came to Monash SA to pursue a bachelor's degree to enhance her skills and knowledge.

She contends that students were told about the learning skills programme at the orientation week, but that they generally do not really follow-up on these services to get the help they need. She says "sometimes students think that they know what is expected of them because of what they have learned in high school and in other tertiary institutions, and one learns the hard way that Monash University has strict rules and policies for how you present your work".

She feels that lecturers give a general layout of the assignment but they are not clear as to what they expect of the students in terms of setting the parameters of the assignment task and the assessment criteria. Some aspects of the writing process are taken-for-granted.

Jill says that she felt that attending the LS workshop was a good experience for her and that it had definite benefits for her grades. There she learned how to write an essay and present an argument. She feels that the workshop presented an excellent guide to writing assignments and breaking down what goes into the introduction, body and the conclusion. The other skills learned were academic English and the presentation of assignments.

Jill believes that the programme was relevant to her work and the skills needed at that point in time. She also stated that the skills could be transferred to other courses and that she feels confident in using them.

She said that she felt more confident about her academic learning. After the LS workshops, writing assignments and using the correct referencing conventions for Sociology resulted in an improvement in her grades. She stated that her lecturers were no longer giving her low grades for her assignments and commenting negatively as they did before.

Jill felt that the skills that she learned through the LS programme and her discipline-specific knowledge could be transferred to other contexts. She reiterated the fact that the LS programme gave her the confidence to work on her assignments and tutorial tasks in a more structured way, and improved her marks for her courses. The academic English she learned from the course would assist her in future in preparing and presenting talks in the workplace confidently, something that she was not comfortable doing before.

She explained that through her overall learning at MSA she learned to accept other people as they are and to mingle with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds. She believes that one should be open to listen and learn from others from different places and to be accommodating of other students' cultures and diversity.

She felt that one should be sensitized to issues and challenges in the community that are of great concern to everyone, such as alcohol and drug abuse and HIV and AIDS. She also believes that these very issues and challenges filter into the workplace and has to be dealt with in an empathetic way (this is probably from her perspective as part of HR personnel). Jill firmly believes that lecturers should be involved in the LS programme because they have certain expectations of students and that they finally grade the students' work. She felt that their input would be invaluable and beneficial to students.

She also feels that there should be a synergy between the LS programme and the discipline -specific courses and that LSA and the lecturers should work more closely to present a more effective programme. She believes that this programme would be very beneficial for the foundation programme and first year students, and that a series of LS workshops might ensure the academic success for more students, especially those students beginning their first year at university.

Lisa

Lisa is a South African, English first language speaker. She is a mature student in her early thirties. She is a second year Bachelor of Arts student at MSA. She studied at another tertiary institution but did not complete her course. She had subsequently worked for a number of years in the emergency services and enrolled for a BA degree at MSA. She is currently working part-time for the emergency services in Gauteng while completing her degree.

During her first year student at Monash, her tutor felt that all the first year students needed go for LS training because they had to become familiar with what was expected of them to improve their performance on an academic level. Her reason for attending the workshop

was that it was arranged by the sociology tutor and that it was compulsory. (This was just her choice of words). This suggests that if she had a choice, she probably would not have attended the workshops

Lisa stated that her experience of the LS programme was that she learned a number of skills which helped her to become an independent learner, a quality which suited the demands of her studies and her work schedule. She stated that she learned how to navigate through the online resources and how to access and evaluate journal articles found in the database. In a nutshell, she learned information research skills. She also learned academic writing and essay writing skills. She stated that it gave her a step by step explanation of how an essay should be written and what is expected of her as a student, how to structure an argument and the technical skills involved in referencing.

She stated that the LS programme has enhanced her university learning in a number of ways. She found the programme to be useful, relevant and easy to follow. She contends that being a student again after such a long time can be overwhelming and that the study tips she learned from the LS workshop were invaluable and it diminished her anxiety towards her studies.

Lisa felt very strongly that the LS programme would be immensely beneficial to first year students, especially those students leaving high school and entering university for the first time. She believes that the programme will equip new students with the relevant skills that will be needed to perform well at university.

She stated that the first thing she realized when she started at MSA, was that as a student, "one is pretty much on one's own and that one has to keep up with the academic pace or you may lag behind". She also believed that learning at university for the most part is an individual experience and that one has to learn very quickly how to be an independent learner.

Lisa confined her response about the future benefits of learning the learning skills to university learning and how it benefits school-leavers going to the university. She contends that this programme will equip students with the skills to perform well at university.

Sally

Sally is a young South African student in her early twenties, from Nelspruit in Mpumalanga. She was straight from high school, with no prior work experience. Her first language is Tswati and English is her second language. She is a 3rd year Bachelor of Arts student with majors in Sociology and Media and Communication Studies.

She stated that her first year at university was very challenging because it felt as if every task or assignment was difficult to do. She talked briefly about her transition from high school to university and mentioned that at school level she generally depended on her relationship with her teachers, but at university she was forced to do things on her own. She confessed that she was quite confused about what was expected of her as a student and acknowledged that when she did not understand the lecture, she went to see the lecturer concerned. Sally believed that the lecturer   explained the work differently in the consultation than in the lecture. It was at this stage that the lecturer felt that she needed help with her university learning. She was referred by her lecturer; and this was the first time she got to know about the LS services.

When she came for the LS consultation, it was evident that Sally was confident in her verbal communication skills, but her assessed assignments revealed a lack of logic and coherence, she was prone to dwell off the topic, her referencing style was incorrect and her reference list was almost non-existent. I felt that based on the quality of her assignments, we would need a number of LS sessions to improve her academic writing and referencing skills. She had even decided to consult with me after her agreed upon consultations. She was really determined to succeed and her lecturer reported a marked improvement in her performance.

Sally stated that she found the LS programme very helpful. She said that she came for a one-on-one consultation with the LSA and felt that the step by step explanation of how to write assignments was very helpful and clarified the key issues that needed to be addressed in the essay question. She reported that the skills that she learned in the LS programme was essay writing, structuring a report, presenting an argument, note-taking, reading strategies and time management.

For her the benefits became more pronounced in how she approached her essays. She stated that by drawing on the skills learned in the LS sessions she improved the quality of her assignments. She felt confident about applying the different reading strategies that she had become familiar with, to her perceived reading load. When asked whether the LS has changed her approach to her university learning, Sally felt that she has developed the confidence to analyse essay questions and answer them through a step-by-step process. She also felt that she was using her time better, that she was able to do research confidently and that she is generally more productive. She found that she was generally more critical of any situation whether it be in the university learning environment or in her personal life. She is now able to view things from different perspectives.

On the issue of transferring the generic skills to other contexts like the workplace, Sally could not relate to questions that asked about the future benefits of the skills and how these could be adapted to the workplace context and a community context. This response could be as a result of the fact that the student had never worked before.
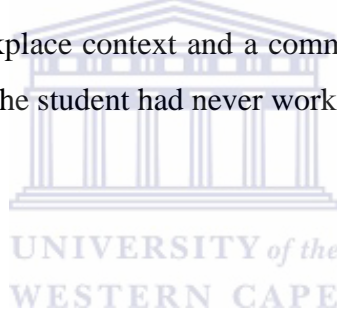
Chapter 5:

5. Findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the interview data and document analysis presented in chapter 4. As shown the document analysis chapter, the LS programme has a dual purpose in addressing the equity issues related to equipping underprepared students with the generic skills to perform capably in their academic learning and to improve the quality of the learning outcomes of students, and to prepare students for the world of work. From the MU perspective it is hoped that these skills will ultimately be transferred to the graduates' workplace contexts.

An important point that surfaced during the interviews with the more mature participants, is that many of them had worked prior or during their studies. Most of them were in the service professions in government organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO), as opposed to private enterprise. For example one participant was a paramedic, one was an HR officer in government, another was in the marketing profession although it is not clear whether he was marketing social campaigns or business/enterprise campaigns and the other participant did part-time work in government departments, as well as at the college where she studied.

The data gathered through document analysis and interviews are discussed in relation to themes explored in the literature review. The discussion is presented under the following headings: the objectives of the LS programme, the intentions of students entering the programme, the expectations of the LS programme and their learning experiences in the programme.

5.1 LS programme objectives and students' intentions, expectations and experiences

The LS programme was designed to address some of the learning priorities that MU felt that all students needed, to cope with their university learning. The LS unit offered a range of services which targeted individual students who needed help, as well as lecturers who requested a structured programme around some of the challenges that students faced in completing their academic tasks. A particular focus of the LS programme, in terms of its design was to embed generic skills into discipline specific course work. This seems to indicate that the LS workshops are designed around the needs of a particular course.

There were a few learning objectives which were outlined by the lecturer. These included that students have a good understanding of their essay topics, that they should learn how to write an academic essay in Sociology, learn how to paraphrase and reference. As discussed in the document analysis chapter, the learning skills were embedded in the Sociology coursework and sociological theory, empirical evidence and examples were used to illustrate how an essay should be written and how to structure an argument. This matches the intention of embedding generic skills into disciplinary course work like Sociology. My research suggests that the objectives of the LS workshop were met because the participants reported that they learned a range of skills related to essay writing in Sociology.

Some of the students like Brenda, Jill and Lisa came to the workshops because this was a tutorial requirement. Lisa explicitly acknowledges that she had very little, or no expectations of the programme, because it was a compulsory tutorial.

Brenda and Jill, both from Botswana, noted that they came from an environment where people believe in lifelong learning and that any context provides an opportunity to learn, but they admitted that they did not make use of the LS services at first, but got to know about it at a tutorial class arranged by the sociology lecturer. These two students seemed to suggest that they were open to any new approaches to learning. They even

went as far as to compare these new skills in academic learning to their previous learning experiences and came to the realization that every institutions has its own sets of rules and norms.

Ben and Sally were referred by the lecturer because they had been identified as 'at risk' students who had failed their first assignment and who needed a LS intervention to help them to acquire skills that will improve their academic performance in future. At first Sally was apprehensive because she did not know what to expect from the consultations. Both these participants used words like 'it inspired confidence' and 'improved marks and performance' to describe how the LS programme had helped them.

Sally, who is a third year student now, was referred to the learning skills advisor by her Sociology and International Studies lecturers. She was identified as an 'at risk' student when she was in first year, commented and felt that the programme was a form of remediation for her and she felt a bit skeptical about the value of the sessions, because she was not sure of what to expect. This is often the case when students are referred to the LSA because they are given a form where the lecturer has to tick the type of issues that the LSA has to focus on. In some cases these concepts are quite foreign to the student being referred and these issues need to be spelt out to the student to set them at ease and both the student and I decided how they sessions will proceed and what will be focused on in each session.

Carl seemed to be the only participant who was driven by an internal motivation to participate in the LS programme to address some of his learning challenges at university. Although students were made aware of the services offered by the LS programme at the orientation week, many students failed to make use of it in the early stages of their studies. Carl's need to attend a LS workshop was driven by an internal need to succeed in his studies and felt compelled to get all the help that he could get by stating that the LS advertisement seemed to appeal to his learning needs and he felt that it would equip him with the tools to succeed in his studies.

Some of the participants became aware of the LS programmes through email advertisements and through the sociology tutorials. Participants' overall perception of the programme was that it could benefit them and that they would learn how to approach their university learning in a more rigorous way.

Students felt they had benefited from the LS programme: The acquisition of skills such as generic skills and higher order thinking skills, according to most of the participants, have improved their approach to and their performance in assessment tasks and tests. Some of the participants, by their own admission, felt that they were unprepared for their academic learning and needed to improve their academic performance and to make a success of their university studies.
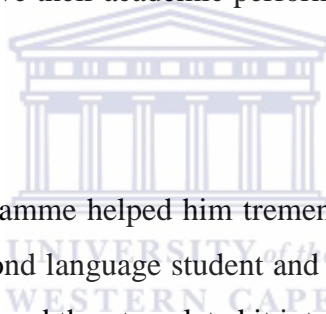
Ben stated that the LS programme helped him tremendously with his essay writing skills because he is an English second language student and said that he used to think about and write his essay in French first and then translated it into English.

Carl also reflected on his learning experiences at different stages of his participation in the programme. The skills learned by Carl were generic in the sense that it did not really focus on any particular academic discipline. He stated that he could adapt these skills to all his courses and even to his work context. This is in line with Hager's (2006) view that these generic skills are called upon in different disciplinary contexts and in different combinations to adapt to discipline-specific discourses. Consequently through this process students begin to utilise the skills associated with higher order thinking which are crucial to the quality of learning outcomes that a student at university should develop.

Sally who was referred as a student 'at risk', noted that she had a problem with developing an argument in an essay, note-taking in class and time management throughout the semester. The coursework only really started to make sense after the LS interventions, because she developed skills on how to evaluate different authors' perspectives, reading strategies and critical thinking, analytical and problem-solving skills.

The graduate attributes referred to by the participants are those personal attributes that graduates develop as a consequence of their learning, and add value to their academic competencies. As stated by Poole and Zahn (1993), graduates attributes include a brief discussion about personal attributes which an individual develops over a period of time. These may include personal integrity, ethical values, persistence and confidence. There is a strong emphasis on developing these skills, from the perspective of business, so that students have a competitive advantage over other students when applying for jobs. This position is strongly contended in MU policy objectives. These skills, it is argued, are crucial in giving graduates the edge during the process of seeking employment, securing employment and adapting to the rapidly changing work environment (Duderstadt, 2005).

The data revealed that the LS programme has developed participants' graduate attributes, like boosting their confidence in a number of ways. Ben stated that it has given him the confidence in his academic writing. Brenda revealed that she is able to apply the learning skills to her courses, while Jill stated that she developed the confidence to be able to utilize and apply her new found skills in her workplace context. For Carl the emphasis was more on his ability to manage his time more effectively.

Jill may also be experiencing a paradigm shift because she is questioning deeply held assumptions about people of other cultures and her initial impressions of others. An illustration of this is revealed in her comments about her acceptance of people of different cultural groups, consequently developing trans-cultural ethics. She has really begun to

challenge her own thinking and view of things. Jill is possibly the only participant who has revealed that she has questioned her own beliefs around issues of culture. Jill felt that there are a number of ways in which her thinking has changed in the way that she has become sensitized to people of different cultures and to issues in her community. She accepts that everyone has a different worldview and belief system and that one should be tolerant and appreciate the views of others and to enhance the quality of one's learning and that of others. She also felt that as a professional in her line of work, in human resources development, she is beginning to become critically aware of the issues in her community. These include the problem with HIV and AIDS, and drugs and alcohol abuse. She recognizes that these challenges filter into the workplace, and poses tremendous concerns for the health and wellbeing of the labour force. Jill's views could be attributed to her learning experiences more broadly, because she did not explicitly state that it has developed as a result of her participation in the LS programme.

On the question of how the learning skills may have changed students' approaches to their studies, Ben stated that it gave him the confidence to write academic English and that it had improved his mark. Brenda echoed similar experiences by stating that she could confidently search for her own information and that she has developed the tolerance of others as a consequence of working in groups and interacting with other students.

Carl, on the other hand, felt that because he is a student, as well as a business owner, learning skills have given him reading tips that would save him a lot of time, to manage his time better and to strike a balance between family life, his studies and his business. So, perhaps for him the personal quality that he developed here is that of self-management. Students like Jill, Brenda and Lisa felt obliged to attend the LS tutorial as part of their course requirement acknowledged that there was a marked change in her approach to her learning, with her grades improving.

Lisa, who is a mature student and has a tough work schedule tries to juggle her studies, work and family commitments, and agreed that the learning skills helped her to become an independent learner. It also diminished her anxiety towards her academic workload, and the learning expectations associated with learning at Monash University. She had a strong individual approach and she admitted that she had no expectations of the learning skills programme to university learning.

Ben stated that he developed critical thinking skills as a consequence of doing research or it could be as a consequence of engaging in the research methodology coursework or a combination of both.

Brenda shared an example of what she values when working in groups or teams: the fact that people share their ideas in their group work assignments, and being able to consolidate these ideas to create a coherent written task. She always tries to ensure that every member of the group agrees with the final product, namely the group assignment.
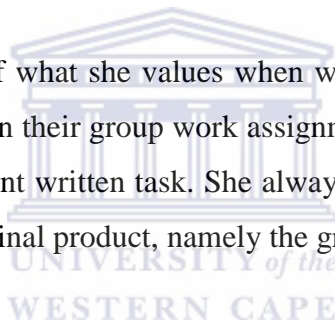
5.2 Lecturer Involvement

Although comments on lecturers' involvement in the programme were an unintended outcome of the interviews it is nonetheless an important issue. Jill felt very strongly that at the beginning of the semester, the lecturer would give the general layout of the assignments with unclear guidelines. She further noted that lecturers should be involved in the presentation of the LS workshop. She felt that students needed to see more visible lecturer involvement in the presentation of the learning skills workshops and to give some tangible and relevant examples when the generic skills are discussed in conjunction with their course material. She further noted that lecturers, generally, should be involved in the presentation of the LS workshop "because they are the ones who grade the students' work".

She contended that there should be synergy between the skills taught by the LS adviser and the expectations of the lecturers.

Jill's point is really about what the learning skills (3rd generation academic development) tries to achieve. In theory the conceptualization of lecturers and learning skills practitioners working together to achieve this synergy, by integrating learning skills into the coursework is discussed in the document analysis. However, from a practitioner's perspective, this is not always the case because the collaborative lectures would take a tremendous amount of time to plan and organize, and it would mean reorganizing assessment rubrics and learning tasks to include learning skills as part of the assessment criteria. This would give the generic skills more credibility within a course and would emphasise the importance of these skills as an integral part of the students' learning. It has become evident that this process takes a greater amount of strategic planning and logistical considerations.

From the perspective of the tutor and the lecturer, learning skills are seen as academic socialization that students, especially underprepared students need, to cope with their course specific learning. These programmes are called upon to remediate some of the deficiencies that student come into the academic environment with. From the perspective of the LS programme, the focus is on both the issues of redress and quality: redress, to expose underprepared students, through the learning skills programme, to the demands of learning in an academic environment. The focus is on text-based activities and reading strategies, and how to approach the different genres of writing which might differ tremendously from the learning that students have acquired elsewhere in their education. However there still seems to be qualitative differences in the students' learning outcomes as presented in their assignment assessments, despite the fact that most of the students were exposed to the programme.

Although some of the students identified certain sets of generic skills as part of their experiences of the learning skills, it should be noted that embedded within the workshop learning activities were the skills specific to sociology, especially from the perspective of the reading material used emphasizing a particular writing style, which appears to be objective and introducing students to the terminology used in sociology and how ideas are communicated in that particular discipline. In addition although the students are not explicitly referring to specific examples of how the LS are embedded in the Sociology 1365 course, it should be noted that the intention of the LS programme as spelt out in the document analysis is that the programme should focus on sociology course material, drawing on the sociology writing style, how essays are structured particularly in sociology and how the sociological theories and empirical studies are drawn upon when presenting an argument in their essays. Of course, some of the skills could be taught in any faculty courses and this should be born in mind when discussing the views of transferability later. However there is little evidence in participants' responses on how they use the different combination of generic skills, as suggested by Hager (2006).
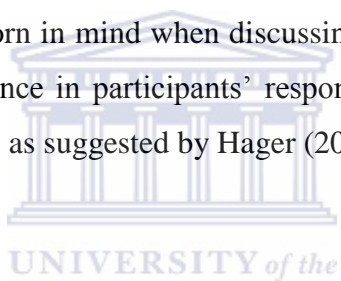
It can be argued that the LS programme fits with the 3rd generation/academic socialization model where academic skills is embedded in a disciplinary curriculum and the intention of the programme is to orientate the first year students to the norms and conventions of the Sociology discipline. The evidence revealed that the participants generally felt that the LS programme and the skills learned at the workshop and through the other LS services played a tremendous role in the improvement of their academic performance and their approach to their studies.

5.3 Learning Skills and the World of Work

The research data has revealed that there is more of a focus, from the participants' perspective, on acquiring academic learning skills and the immediate benefits of the improved quality of their assignments and tasks. This can be gauged by the improved grades that the students reported. However, some participants revealed that they are able to

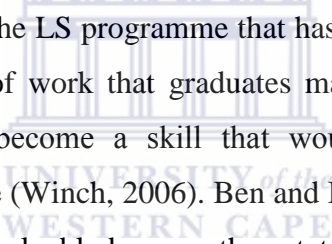transfer some of the learning skills to others courses and contexts, especially the workplace context.

Ben who has worked for about two years in the marketing division of a company stated that 'the competitive workplace needs additional skills 'over and above ones academic skills'. He mentioned that one could apply these additional generic skills to the workplace but found it difficult to give an example of this. Here it seems that Ben has already identified some of the challenges that university graduates face when they enter the job market. He explicitly identifies that in the current work environment seek candidates with outstanding skills over and above their professional/technical skills and talked about the competitive work environment. This point alludes to the employability skills implicit in learning skills, which is aimed at giving the MU graduate the edge, in competing for jobs in a work context and to transfer the values implicit in their courses to that context as well.

Brenda also noted how she would use skills like report writing and proposal writing skills in the workplace context in the near future.

Carl, a mature student and who is running his own business seemed to be very goal orientated in his approach to his learning and stated that he would apply his generic skills to other contexts like the community and to his business environment. The skills that he would draw on would include communication skills, teamwork (group work) skills and presentation skills.

The generic skills which are significant to Jill are group work skills (teamwork), cultural acceptance and appreciation of others, which are also acquired through group work, skills. These skills would hopefully, at a later stage enhance her practice of good citizenship both in her community and in the workplace. She feels particularly confident about her newly acquired presentation and proposal writing skills which she feels will help her tremendously in doing presentations at work.

Sally, Ben and Lisa found it difficult to explain how learning skills could be transferred to a workplace environment or to community based activities. Although Lisa had some work experience, she neglected to mention the benefits of these skills in the workplace. Perhaps her response to this question may have been different if she had engaged in a face-to-face interview, instead of an email response. During the interviews, participants found this particular question on 'How they would transfer their LS to the work environment?', difficult to answer. I had to rephrase this question a few times to clarify what I was asking. It is possible that these students may not have begun to make the link between these skills and their use in the workplace as in the case of Sally. This is perhaps because she has never been employed or been involved in community based activities before.

Another important aspect of the LS programme that has been revealed is the importance of research skills in the types of work that graduates may want to pursue. The ability to conduct research has also become a skill that would be integral to the graduates' employability skills repertoire (Winch, 2006). Ben and Brenda found that the acquisition of research skills particularly invaluable because they stated that they would like to use these skills in their future work activities. Although the research skills is a component of the LS and Information literacy, it was not a particular focus of the LS workshop at the time, The information literacy (research) skills are taught jointly with LS at times, but the deeper research skills are developed at a higher level in the research methodology component of different courses. Both the programme and the students recognize this as an important component of their repertoire of skills for employability.

The findings lend support to the view that the LS programme, in all its forms (drop-in sessions, one-to-one consultations, generic skills workshops and the embedded workshops), have been successful in enabling the participants to overcome many of their university learning challenges and that the skills learned hold certain benefits for the university

graduate when they interact with the real world in whatever work or activities they will engage in, in their future work environments

Another interesting feature which has surfaced in the interviews is the question of transferability. There are two ways in which students may employ the transferability of the skills learned in the LS programme: the one is that these skills can be applied to other courses within the participants' degree, and the other is that some students feel that they can transfer these skills to the workplace context.

It was especially interesting to note how differently some of the participants responded to the issue of how these skills can be transferred to their work environment. Most of the participants' work environments are in the service professions in non-profit organizations (NPO) such as government institutions and parastatals. The more mature students, who have work experience, generally show that they would be able to transfer their skills to their work environments. However some of the students, like Brenda and Jill, also show a stronger association, when talking about the acquisition and transfer of skills, with social engagement and community-based activities. It is evident that most of the university graduates in the study want to be employed once they have completed their university degrees, but not in the way that is required by the world of work, as is outlined in Street's Framework highlighting the '*new work order*'.

The majority of the students stated that they would be able to transfer the learning skills to other courses, because in many respects these skills are generic and can be called upon in a numbers of ways and combinations to suit the tasks at hand (Hager, Holland and Beckett, 2002; Hager, 2006). This is especially true if the courses are in similar disciplines, however these skills are contextualized to suit the needs of a particular course. Brand and Schwartz (cited in Hager 2006) contend that the issue of transfer should not be restricted to the replication of these skills, but states that there should be a 'reconceptualization' of transfer

and by the same token 'learning' (p.20). Here, they suggest that the notion of transfer should not be regarded as replication but should be seen as contributing to ongoing learning.

5.4   Overall perception of the LS programme

There seems to be overwhelming consensus, from the participants, as well as the lecturer and tutor, about the perceived impact that the programme had on the students learning. The students came into the programme for a variety of reasons. Some were referred by the lecturer, others attended a tutorial/learning skills workshop and others voluntarily sought the services of the learning skills adviser.

This study has also revealed that there are also qualitative differences in the students' learning experiences. All the students saw it as a set of skills to be applied to their different academic learning activities. They could explicitly list the LS/generic skills that they have acquired through the LS interventions and workshops. All the participants stated that they were concerned with applying the LS to their courses but participants like Carl and Jill, also saw the value of applying most of these skills to their work contexts.

All the participants, explicitly stated that they saw it as an opportunity to develop attributes like critical thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills and sought to accommodate these skills as they saw a distinct relationship between this newly acquired skills and the new knowledge that they are learning through their course work. Everyone linked these to their own personal beliefs about learning. This indicates that the participant engaged in a deeper learning process, engaging higher order learning skills.

The majority of students in the study wanted to improve their skills because they wanted to perform better in their academic environment and they want to apply the generic skills to their work contexts but Jill was the only participant who explicitly showed a concern for

issues of social transformation in her community. This is perhaps something that Jill experienced as she was grappling with her academic learning and how it has changed her perspective about community issues and the role that she can play through her work (position) to link community issues with those in her work environment, and to implement programmes that will promote social change. It is interesting to note that this student's profession is in human resources management and seems to have found a niche where she can address issues of social justice and portray good citizenship. This idea may have culminated from a range of processes and activities in the learning environment.

Brenda made similar comments, that she had developed skills that would allow her to be perceptive of and sensitive to community issues and that through her work she will be able to assist in building capacity in her community, by sharing her skills with her fellow employees and to pursue projects on environmental issues, an area of research which she perceives as a priority in Botswana.
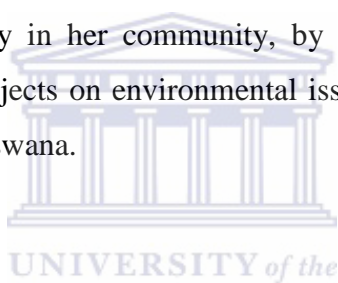
The ultimate aim of the LS programme is to enhance students' university learning and to prepare graduates for their future work environments. The document analysis highlights one of the distinct objectives of the learning skills programme, which is to embed learning skills into the course content within the various disciplines. This is precisely what Boughey (2007) referred to as incorporating differentiated skills into the course programmes. Although this is taking off slowly within the Monash University Australian and Malaysian contexts, this wheel seems to be turning even slower in the MSA context. The participants have revealed in their comments on the programme that they acknowledge the importance of such a programme in their university learning but feel that more direct lecturer involvement is essential to create a synergy between what is expected of them in the course work and what the learning skills programme has to offer. One participant, Jill, felt that sometimes there is a dissonance between the knowledge gained in the learning skills programme and what is expected of them by the lecturer. It has to be noted that, from an

insider perspective it is quite difficult to sustain this synergy in practice. This may illuminate a whole range of other challenges which could be explored in further research.

Chapter 6:

6. Conclusion

This research has focused primarily on the contribution of an embedded learning LS programme to the academic needs students in HE. This study aims to make a contribution to the emerging literature on the new academic literacies discourse. What has been revealed in the data and findings is that the LS programme at Monash South Africa is more about equipping students with the skills and knowledge to prepare them for their university learning rather than to prepare them for employment i.e. in terms of Street's (2004) typology it can be seen as an academic socialization model.

The LS programme curriculum fits with the 3rd generation academic development (Boughey, 2007) and the Academic socialization model (Street, 2004). It emphasizes differentiated learning and the embedding of learning skills in different courses, which in the case of this study, is the Sociology 1365 course. The generic skills identified in the literature and that the students developed through the LS programme, are those skills that students should, in my view, develop for the purpose of their learning in HE as opposed to preparing them for the workplace. These skills include the higher order thinking skills like analytical reasoning, effective communication skills, teamwork skills and the ability to access manage and evaluate knowledge and information (Hager, Holland and Beckett, 2002).

Although the LS programme focused on some of the technical issues related to language, especially academic English, the purpose of the LS workshops and its other services emphasizes a need to focus on discipline-specific academic writing styles. This would require the student to write better assignments, focusing on using evidence, structuring an argument and the academic style specific to their courses. This requires a range of interwoven skills, specific to the task at hand, which include discipline specific knowledge, learning skills and personal attributes.

Volbrecht (2003), however, questions the quality of the learning outcomes advocated by this 3rd generation academic development model and argues that it has its limitations displayed through its one dimensional nature and restrictive modes. He contends that academic development should move away from only embedding learning skills into one discipline, but that these skills should be employed across disciplines to enhance the quality of students' learning and academic capabilities. Volbrecht's view is that students should not be confined to one discourse at a time but that students should be able to draw on their other academic discourses to encourage critical inter-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary thinking.

The majority of students in the study wanted to improve their skills because they wanted to perform better in their academic environment and they want to apply the generic skills to their work contexts. Only two students commented on improving their skills because they wanted to contribute towards broader transformation. One student commented that she has changed her perspective about community issues and the role that she can play through her work (position) to link community issues with those in her work environment and to implement programmes that will promote social change. Another student commented that she would link the learning skills with her work in an NGO which works towards environmental justice.

This suggests that the majority of students worked within the academic socialization model and that the students' learning may not have induced the type of transformative learning that can enable them to critically evaluate and analyse issues and propose creative solutions, including on issues related to the learning programmes themselves, the cultures and the power relations into which they are to be socialised.

Does this imply that there is a need for rethinking the compartmentalization of discipline specific language literacy programmes, as Volbrecht (2003) argues, in favour of an examination of how academic literacy is constructed and in ways that acknowledge the interplay between skills, identity and power relations?

The dominant view in academic development is grounded in text-based literacies and should be challenged according to Street (2004). He contends that there is the need to recognize the different norms or literacies operating in different situations that students may be involved in, and that there is not just one set of norms that are applied across all contexts. Street recognizes that these different literacies are prevalent within the lives of the students and that they have to recognise that there is value in each one of these literacies depending on the context in which they are used. He also states that all literacies need to be considered and that no one literacy should be favoured above others, as in the case of this study, where print/text literacy and computer literacy are prioritized. It is evident that through the academic socialization model, the most prominent norms the students learn are academic norms. In certain academic development models one could also consider issues relating to, Street's new communicative order that gives value to the different literacies that are practiced in different contexts.
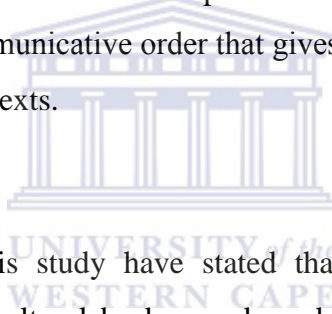
Most of the students in this study have stated that they come from different work environments and different cultural backgrounds and it can be argued that they may be employing literacies which they have gained through their prior work and other experiences, in their new learning context. This is particularly true for two participants – one who shows a strong concern for social challenges in her community and another who shows an interest in pursuing environmental justice and community based issues.

Furthermore it appears that any other literacies that students may come into the programme with seem to be negated in the current stage of academic development. As Street (2004) argues that there is a whole set of other literacies in people's repertoire of learning experiences and meaning making that should be strongly considered in the process of acquiring new knowledge. The question for academic development practitioners would be, should academic development programmes be focusing on developing literacy in one discourse at a time or should it also be incorporating other literacies that are operating in

the lives of students, and how students can draw on these other elements of their repertoire to strengthen what they are learning in the university context?

At the same time one of the LS curriculum objectives and the Policy at MU suggests that the programme must develop students' employability skills. The emphasis in the MU vision and mission statement is about preparing graduates for industry and the workplace, and what Street (2004) would refer to as the new work order. However there is not much evidence of an orientation of the LS programme to the new work order. The LS curriculum is more focused on preparing student for their academic studies and can be seen as an academic socialization model as stated above.

There are a number of students, however, who suggest that they would apply these skills to their respective workplaces. It is interesting to note that these workplaces are not like the workplace referred to in the new work order (Street, 2004) and in the Monash University policy. The work environments illustrated in Street's Framework which identifies the new work order as demanding skills that would be relevant for the business and enterprise professions does not resonate with what most of the participants would consider ideal work environments. The kinds of employment and workplace environments described by the participants are in sharp contrast with Street's new work order, focused predominantly on what is required of graduates by business and the labour market. It is evident that the Monash policy is compatible with what Street (2004) is saying in his 'new orders'. The ideals of Monash University policies are geared towards satisfying the needs of industry, but it seems that the students in this study have a different set of priorities when it comes to fulfilling their work expectations. They have indicated that they want to work in different kinds of work contexts, ones that would allow them to serve the community through mechanisms like NPOs, NGOs and the government sector.

This study is intended to contribute to the emerging literature in the field of academic development and it is hoped that the points raised in the study would provide a basis for further exploration. I therefore argue that two considerations be made in unearthing the possibilities in this field: 1) that we consider the notion put forward by Volbrecht (2003) that we should move away from confining thinking to one discipline, towards encouraging multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary thinking and learning, in ways that would harness intuitive, speculative and creative thinking, and 2) we should explore the notion of multiple literacies, especially those that students come into the university learning environment with.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Schedule of Interviews

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Interviews held during May 2011
Ben	face-to-face interview
Brenda	face –to-face interview
Carl	face –to-face interview
Jill	face –to-face interview
Lisa	Email
Sally	face –to-face interview

Appendix 2: Participant Profile

Participant	Gender	Age	Country	Work Experience
Ben	Male	20 – 30 years	Democratic Republic of Congo	Marketing Manager for 5 years
Brenda	Female	20 -30 years	Botswana	Temp work in government Temp work at polytechnikon
Carl	Male	40 – 45 years	Nigeria	Business owner in the motor industry
Jill	Female	40 – 45 years	Botswana	HR officer
Lisa	Female	30 – 40 years	South Africa	Paramedic
Sally	Female	20 – 30 years	South Africa	No work experience
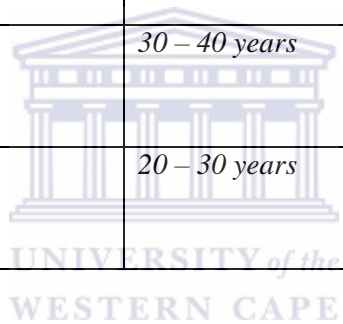
Appendix 3: Critical Crossfield Outcomes

Critical Crossfield Outcomes (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA], NSB Regulations, 1995) as applicable to Monash South Africa

- Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
- Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organization, community.
- Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and / or language skills in the modes of oral and / or written presentation.
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
- In order to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the society at large, it must be the intention underlying any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:
  - Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
  - Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
  - Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
  - Exploring education and career opportunities,

Appendix 4: Interview Questions and Themes for the Document Analysis

The four main research questions

Identify key categories (themes) within both the following sections and then develop a) interview questions and b)themes for document analysis

1. What learning priorities are embedded in the curriculum of this learning skills programme?

2. What are the intentions of students entering this programme?

3. What kinds of learning do students experience in this programme?

4. To what extent is there a match or mismatch between the programme design and students' expectations?

Categories	Interview Questions	Themes for Document Analysis
Learning priorities embedded in the curriculum		The main learning objectives of the learning skills programme Who is the target group? Curriculum offerings: what is the focus of the curriculum, employability or academic literacies?
Intentions of students entering this programme	1) How did you get to know about the learning skills programme? 2) What were your reasons for attending this programme and its related services, e.g. personal consultations?	
Learning experienced by students in this programme	3) How has the programme lived up to your expectations, if at all? 4) What were some of your learning experiences when attending this programme?	

	5) What skills did you acquire through the programme? 6) What are the benefits (if any) of the learning skills programme for you as a student?	
Match or mismatch between programme design and students' expectations.		an analysis of the data coming through the earlier questions.

Themes arising from the literature

- Learning priorities embedded in the curriculum
- curriculum e.g. employability or academic literacies
- a set of skills or a means to academic socialization.
- shift from addressing education disparities towards quality assurance of programmes
- preparing workers for the global market, global citizenship.
- intentions of students entering this programme

- kinds of learning students experience in this programme

- Match or mismatch between the programme design and students' expectations?

Categories	Interview Questions	Themes for Document Analysis
Curriculum: employability or academic literacies		Is the curriculum focusing on employability skills or academic literacies, or both?
A set of skills or a means to academic socialization		Learning skills as a set of skills or as academic socialization
A shift from equity towards quality		A focus on quality or equity
Workers prepared for the global market or global citizenship	7) What, to you, are the future benefits of learning these skills, if any?	Are students being prepared for the global market or global citizenship?

Appendix 5: Developing Employability Skills

Skills	Examples	Ways to develop these skills
Teamwork	• Working in a team to achieve a goal • Sharing information, supporting and empowering other team members • Responding constructively to the opinions of others	• Working on group assignments at university • Being involved in a team or community organization • Working in a team in employment
Communication	• Organising and expressing ideas concisely • Speaking clearly and directly to individuals or groups • Being proficient in other languages	• Writing assignments and reports • Presenting and participating in class discussions • Using customer service skills
Problem Solving	• Researching and selecting relevant information to solve a problem • Analysing issues underlying causes, assessing options, proposing solutions • Thinking sequentially, critiquing and synthesizing information	• Working on assessment exercises such as a research project • Participating in work-integrated learning such as a placement or internship
Learning	• Putting in time and effort to learn new skills • Understanding the need for learning to bring about change • Being adaptable in different learning environments e.g. in class, online or on the job	• Mentoring or coaching activities • Participating in an interest group or study society • Subscribing to newsletters and updates from professional associations
Technology	• Proficiency in using computers and telecommunication systems • Understanding current trends and developments • Managing information through technology	• Sourcing information with electronic databases • Using specialized software packages for course/occupation • Managing project timelines with software

Appendix 6: Learning Skills Embedded in the Sociology <u>1365</u> Course

The following discipline-specific workshop is an example of what the learning skills programme would incorporate when offering LS at programme level in the Sociology 1365 course.

The initial step would be that the LSA would meet with the academic staff to develop the appropriate content and the learning objectives of the discipline-specific learning skills workshops which in the case of the Sociology 1365 course was: academic writing, essay writing, topic analysis and the referencing style relevant to the sociology students.

For the first part of the workshop, the LSA may introduce the students to the importance of developing writing and research skills. For example, 1) to become an independent learner a student needs to be critical, analytical and open-minded, 2) a student is encouraged to develop and broaden their knowledge and 3) that students should gain written communication and research skills which may benefit the student when he or she enters the work environment.

In the second part of the workshop, the LSA will address the learning skills which the lecturer wants students to demonstrate and how they have incorporated these into their course work. In this instance the intended learning outcome was that students should be able to demonstrate that they will be able to support their own point of view with evidence and that the evidence comes from their readings, lectures and tutorials, personal experiences, observations and experiments.

The LSA and the lecturer decided what the students needed to learn that would improve their performance in the sociology course, based on anecdotal evidence from the students' performance in their first sociology assignment. Another implication of the students' participation in the discipline-specific LS workshops meant that the skills that they learnt there, would make a contribution to their broader university learning because they would be able to apply these skills to their other courses.

One such workshop, focused on the essay writing and topic analysis skills that student needed to learn in the Sociology 1365 course. The LSA and the lecturer developed a workshop that would embed the generic skills that the students needed for a particular assignment task. These generic skills included, how to analyse the essay question, research skills using the keywords from the assignment topic, and how to structure the essay. The generic skills were discipline-specific in the sense that the skills that were taught, and the learning outcomes that were achieved were centred around specific academic learning needs, that students had, within the Sociology 1365 course.