

**Strategies for embedding socio-emotional learning as part of a holistic
enabling transition pedagogy**

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Abstract

The connection and impact of emotions on education and learning (from kindergarten to adult) has been of interest to researchers for decades. In 2001, Dirkx unpacked the ‘growing body’ of literature that demonstrates the connection of emotion, emotional intelligence, feelings and imagination on adult learning, noting ‘emotion and feelings are deeply interrelated with perceiving and processing information from our external environments, storing and retrieving information in memory, reasoning, and the embodiment of learning’ (Dirkx, 2001, p. 68). The research and application of ideas, especially within the primary and secondary schooling sectors continues to grow. Of particular note is Carol Dweck’s work on mindsets, as well as a focus on psycho-education as an evolving area of interest; the link between enhancing one’s self-awareness, perception and interpretation of a problem or a difficult/stressful situation to improved self-efficacy and wellbeing. The Australian education system has recognised the importance of the development of personal and social capabilities, noting that it is the “foundation of learning and citizenship” (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2015). The Australian curriculum responds to this need by embedding socio-emotional learning outcomes across all subject areas. It has been highlighted that enabling students, particularly those from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, often come to this new learning environment with gaps in their previous education, including their social-emotional learning, and sometimes also with negative emotions resulting from previous learning experiences (Cullity, 2006; Lane & Sharp, 2014). In our previous research we have shared the process of embedding Carol Dweck’s work on mindsets and emotional intelligence activities within the OnTrack enabling curriculum. We recognise that there is a need for an enabling transition pedagogy (ETP) that focuses on understanding the learner and preparing them for their educational journey ahead; both academically and emotionally. Drawing on our enabling transition pedagogy model, this paper demonstrates the positive impact of embedded strategies addressing the socio-emotional needs of the learner when included in a

holistic ETP. The case study of Murdoch University's OnTrack program demonstrates how curriculum design and staff development choices that support socio-emotional learning have been informed by the ETP model.

Introduction

In recent years, enabling programs, also known as “bridging courses, university preparation courses, foundation courses and pathway courses” (Hodges et al., 2013, p. 14) have become an increasingly popular pathway to university for non-traditional students, particularly those from typically underrepresented equity groups. These courses are generally aimed at providing a chance for university access and participation for those that would otherwise lack opportunity due to personal, social, familial, medical or financial reasons.

Enabling courses primarily focus on building academic literacies that bridge gaps between previous, and often disrupted, educational trajectories to equipping students with “the skills required to undertake higher education studies, such as those relating to communication, specific literacies and numeracies, research and critical thinking” (Pitman & Trinidad, 2016, p. 12). Further, enabling programs also help to acculturate students to the university environment and develop community connections and a sense of belonging (Lisciandro & Gibbs, 2016; Pitman & Trinidad, 2016). However, enabling programs differ widely across the Australian sector in terms of their entry requirements, mode of delivery, course offerings and time to completion. In addition, as these courses are not part of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and not regulated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TESQA), the curriculum content and learning outcomes are determined independently within each program or course.

OnTrack at Murdoch University is one such pre-university enabling program which aims to prepare students from disrupted or disadvantaged educational backgrounds for university study. It is offered bi-annually as a full-time, internal course with a single and fully integrated curriculum, as opposed to units (Lisciandro & Gibbs, 2016). The course content and learning outcomes have evolved over a number of years since its inception in 2008. This evolution has been in response to gaining a more nuanced understanding of the student cohort and its needs over time. While the *OnTrack* curriculum continues to respond to the foundational academic needs of students, more recently, we have also directed increased attention to the social and emotional learning needs of our students.

In this paper, we describe social and emotional learning (SEL), and why more attention needs to be given to this in enabling education curricula in order to: (a) effectively and holistically lessen the gaps for enabling students (not just the academic gaps), and (b) strengthen their odds of persistence and academic success at university. Further, we delve into how enabling educators can go about embedding socio-emotional learning outcomes into their programs, as informed by the Enabling Transition Pedagogy (ETP), originally proposed by Kift, Nelson, and Clarke (2010) and more recently adapted for the enabling education context (Jones, Olds, & Lisciandro, 2016).

Social and emotional Learning (SEL)

SEL has been described as the process by which one gains an enhanced “ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving to achieve important life tasks” (Zins et al., 2004, p. 194). Those competent in SEL have an enhanced awareness and ability to manage their emotions, implement effective problem-solving strategies and build positive relationships within their networks (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 234). Elias (2006) a prominent advocator of SEL, suggested that SEL is about education of the ‘whole person’ and is “*the missing piece*’ because it links academic knowledge with a specific set of skills important to success in schools, families, communities, workplaces and life in general” (p. 6). Importantly, there is now a strong empirical base linking SEL with significantly enhanced academic outcomes, confidence, resilience, attitudes and motivations towards learning, and improved social behaviours within the learning community (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins et al., 2004, p. 206).

Over the last couple of decades, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) have led the way in research about childhood SEL in the United States, which has since informed SEL curriculum initiatives internationally. According to CASEL (2005), the focus of SEL programs and interventions is the development of five interrelated cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4) relationship skills and (5) responsible decision-making. In the Australian schooling system, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) refers to SEL as development of *personal and social capability* and related learning outcomes are addressed over the period of schooling through to Year 10. The curriculum targets the development of the following elements as summarized in Figure 1 (ACARA, 2015):

- (1) *Self-awareness*, which includes the ability to recognize one’s own emotions and personal qualities, to understand oneself as a learner and to develop reflective practice

- (2) *Self-management*, which involves developing metacognition, resilience, confidence, self-discipline and independent learning skills, and expressing emotions appropriately
- (3) *Social awareness*, which involves developing an understanding of relationships and respect for others' perspectives, emotions and needs
- (4) *Social management*, which involves the capacity to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, make decisions, deal with conflict and develop leadership qualities

Figure 1. Organising elements for Personal and Social Capability (ACARA 2015)



Notably, there is strong evidence to show that the development of resilience, academic-self-efficacy, metacognition, independent learning skills, emotional intelligence and social integration, for example, are highly significant predictors of student retention and academic success, including in tertiary settings (Dweck, 2010; Ee, 2009; Parker et al., 2004; Stallman, 2011; Tinto, 1997, 2003; Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006; Zimmerman, 2000). Yet, while SEL interventions have featured prominently in school curriculums across countries like Australia and the United States of America, tertiary institutions on the other hand have been slower to address and integrate SEL interventions. Most of the work in this area has been more recent and prompted by increasing awareness of significant mental health issues in university students (Said, Kypri, & Bowman, 2013;

Stallman, 2010) and concern for student wellbeing, particularly in competitive courses like law and medicine (Field, 2014; Larcombe, Baik, & Brooker, 2015). Approaches to addressing this have included the use of reflective practice (Field & Duffy, 2012), and intentional assessment and feedback design practices as part of an overall *transition pedagogy* (Field & Kift, 2010). Of note, the Office of Learning and Teaching recently funded a project aimed at developing more “comprehensive guidance to assist academic teachers to embed into practice pedagogical principles and approaches that support the psychological needs of university students” in recognition of the need for more widespread action (Larcombe et al., 2015, p. 1).

Enabling education: bridging socio-emotional learning gaps

Enabling cohorts tend to be characterized as richly diverse student populations of varying age groups, cultures, family and socioeconomic backgrounds (Hodges et al., 2013; Lisciandro & Gibbs, 2016). Despite the inherent diversity, a commonality amongst these students is that they have often endured a disrupted or disadvantaged educational trajectory, and for some, also negative past learning experiences (Cullity, 2006; Lane & Sharp 2014). These “casualties of schooling” (Whannell, Allen, & Lynch, 2010, p. 1) arrive to enabling programs with many ‘gaps’ in their learning. This includes all learning, and there are not only academic skill deficits, but also, social and emotional learning deficits (Whannell, Whannell, & Allen, 2012).

Indeed, other Australian enabling programs have found that a significant proportion of entering students had not been successful in traditional secondary education and were characterized as having low academic self-efficacy or confidence (Atherton, 2015; Whannell, Whannell, & Chambers, 2011). Moreover, mental health and emotional issues are prevalent amongst enabling student cohorts (Crawford, 2015; Lisciandro, Jones, & Strehlow, 2016), and this is commonly cited as contributing to student attrition in these programs (Hodges et al., 2013; Lisciandro & Gibbs, 2016). Research shows that the students who have been most successful in enabling programs have experienced growth in motivation, determination, confidence, academic self-efficacy, independent learning skills and ability to regulate emotion (Crawford, 2014; Crawford et al., 2015; Orth & Robinson). Notably, these characteristics are targeted through SEL interventions and are known to support student resilience, persistence and academic success at university (Archer, Cantwell, & Bourke, 1999; Krause & Coates, 2008). Of interest, one other Australian enabling program employed an intervention explicitly targeted at improving students’ academic self-efficacy and study behaviours and this intervention was found to be effective (Whannell et al., 2012).

Therefore, it is clear that in order to truly enable these students for their transition to university, we need to focus efforts on also developing students' academic self-efficacy, motivation, metacognitive awareness, emotional resilience, and ability to self-regulate their own learning. We propose that it is possible to achieve these aims more holistically in enabling programs by explicitly addressing SEL deficits, alongside academic gaps. In this paper, we will model our approach to designing learning outcomes and learning experiences for enabling students that explicitly address SEL deficits, and contribute to a holistic *enabling transition pedagogy* (Jones et al., 2016).

Constructive alignment of SEL in enabling curriculums

Effective enabling programs require the conscious design of teaching and learning (D'Andrea, 2003). Creating outcome led curriculums (Allan, 1997), a process by which the specific outcomes are decided upon first, and then aligned to appropriate learning activities, is a highly conscious approach to design and allows for improved learning for the student. It is a goal orientated approach, whereby the focus remains on the outcomes as opposed to being content driven. The advantages of student learning outcome based planning are documented and the approach is being widely taken up by tertiary institutions (Tam, 2013). Spady (1994) states that "outcome-based education means clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences". Such design is what Allan (1997) refers to as student-centered learning. While theorists such as Ewell (2008) argue that learning outcomes can become reductionist or an inadequate way to capture the nuances of a student's whole learning experience, outcomes, when crafted well, can powerfully orientate the learner and the educator to specific desired ends. This approach is more recently known by a number of names including "Outcome based planning" (D'Andrea, 2003), "Understanding by Design" (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004) and "Constructive Alignment" (Biggs & Tang, 2007). This method is also useful when planning SEL interventions.

The crafting of effective outcomes in an enabling pedagogy requires consideration. For deep learning to occur, outcomes need to be phrased in such a way to engage students at a higher cognitive level (Biggs & Tang, 2007) and precise verb choice in the outcome statement can drive the level of learning expected (Tam, 2013). Similarly, D'Andrea (2003) adds that outcomes need to be open enough to invite a range of responses and be achievable. Savic and Khashef (2013, p.993)

assert that the “learning outcomes structure should be absolutely clear and understandable.” Outcomes need to consider what they expect the student to be able to “do” by the end of the learning journey.

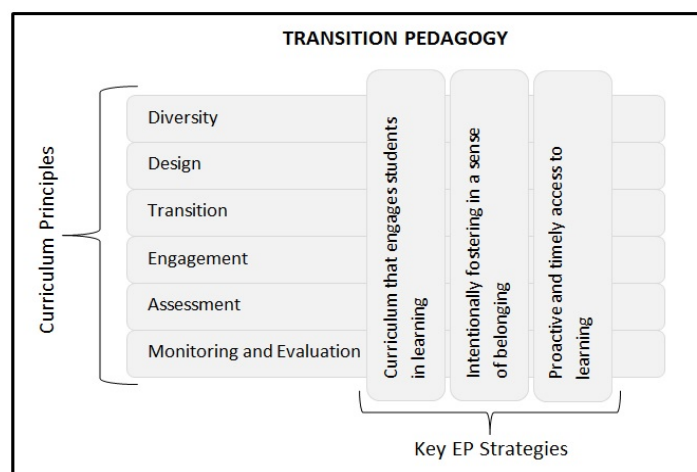
The specific social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes in OnTrack were created not only out of response to observed student need but were informed by the pedagogy described above and the suggested outcomes already present in the field. The “affective domain” in Blooms Taxonomy forms the foundation of much of the current understanding of SEL (Savic & Kashef, 2013). As discussed above, later developments in the field by CASEL defined the five core competencies of SEL and nationwide secondary curriculums such as the Australian curriculum have embedded SEL capabilities across the subject areas. The ACARA outcomes, while designed for K-12 students, can form a starting point for a broad set of adapted SEL outcomes for an adult enabling cohort. We are not suggesting that every enabling student commences with a deficit in all of SEL areas, or ignoring skills and attributes that have been gained through life experience. Our aim is to transform a working framework, of which the ACARA model represents. Considering complimentary psychology theories such as the emotional intelligence traits described, a “self science”, by Goleman (1995) can further inform the design of SEL outcomes for tertiary enabling cohorts. While there were a number of SEL outcomes already present in the OnTrack program, as the program expanded in size and diversity, it was recognised that further development was necessary in the area to address new challenges in contemporary cohorts. The designers were aware of the specific metacognitive skill and affective process development requirements of the cohort. Recommendations for the systematic integration of SEL outcomes include a whole school approach and deep embedding of the principles in the curriculum (Oberle et al., 2016) yet given OnTrack’s limited time frame, already dense curriculum, and the available resources at the university, it was decided that the program needed to synthesise aforementioned SEL outcomes. Strategically the SEL outcomes in OnTrack work towards the development of the university’s graduate attributes as they grow communication, social interaction and independent learning skills. These outcomes also sit under the umbrella of the broader transition pedagogy as prescribed in the Access Programs at Murdoch University. The final learning outcomes for students were crafted and are detailed below:

- 1- Develop self-awareness and academic self-efficacy
- 2- Apply a range of self-regulating and independent learning strategies
- 3- Demonstrate effective relationship management in a learning community

Social and Emotional Learning Outcomes as part of an Enabling Transition Pedagogy

The constructive alignment of the curriculum with socio-emotional learning outcomes requires a pedagogical strategy for delivery. Therefore including SEL as part of the enabling transition pedagogy (ETP) model is a necessary requirement of this process. SEL is informed by and is a part of the ETP. The model below (Figure 2), which was adapted from the Nelson, Creagh, Kift and Clarke (2014) first year transition model (Jones et al., 2016) would use social and emotional learning outcomes to inform each of the three key Enabling Pedagogy (EP) strategies. These are: (1) curriculum that engages students in learning; (2) intentionally fostering in a sense of belonging and (3) proactive and timely access to learning.

Figure 2. Enabling transition pedagogy (Jones et al., 2016), a modified version of (Kift et al. (2010)) “transition pedagogy”



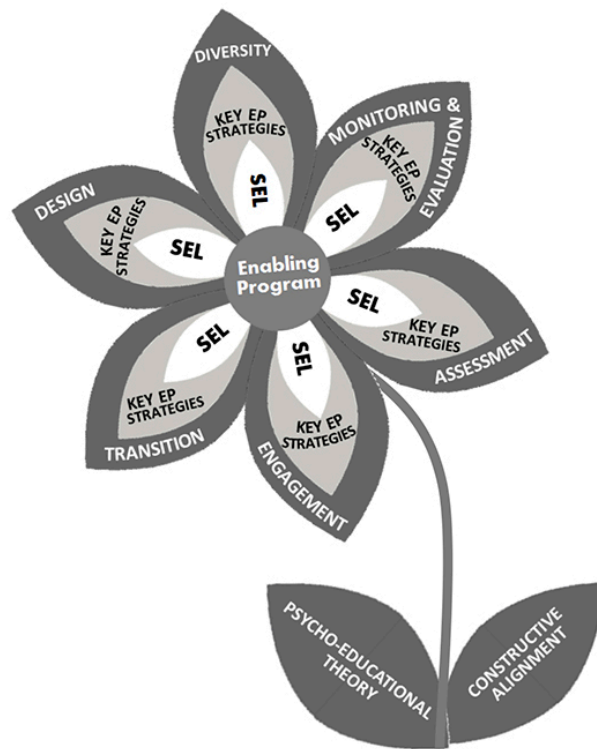
SEL strategies can be developed as a subset of strategies within the Key EP strategies. The SEL strategies are recognised as working at the micro level to develop the SEL outcomes, whereas the Key EP strategies are working at the more macro level and encompass academic skills, disciplinary content and SEL development and transition. The reason why the SEL strategies are a subset is to have overarching strategies that can deliver the core academic skills and disciplinary content, as well as achieve the SEL outcomes. The rationale is one of creating and delivering a holistic learning experience, where the SEL strategies are not dissonant to the other core objectives of the enabling program. Once all strategies are recognised, then assessments and learning activities can be developed to achieve these outcomes. This rationale and strategy development informs the OnTrack program.

OnTrack Program: SEL Outcomes, ETP and SEL strategies

Systematic identification of SEL learning outcomes and integration of the outcomes into the OnTrack curriculum was achieved by using a modified planning framework “Understanding by Design” as created by Wiggins and McTighe (2004). The first step was to assess the cohort needs whilst simultaneously defining the desired results. The second step was to develop and align the needs and the desired results with the EP strategies. Step three was to create the assessment evidence, and the final step was to align the strategies with the learning plan. This approach ensured that the outcomes and particular needs of the cohort were matched to the strategies, and aligned with assessment and learning activities. Tam (2013) supports the need for this synergy to occur. Explicit communication of the SEL outcomes to achieve clarity of expectations (Tinto, 2011) is being further developed by incorporating the outcomes into the unit information guide, embedding the outcomes in the participation assessment rubrics, unpacking the outcomes in lectures and referring to outcomes during the daily learning activities.

The Enabling Bloom depicted in Figure 3 below, illustrates how SEL acts like the pollen producing stamen, that lies upon and is a subset of *Key EP Strategy* petals.. Similar to the importance of the stamen in mediating the pollination of a flower, so too are the SEL outcomes and strategies in the Enabling Bloom.

Figure 3. The Enabling Bloom



Deep embedding of SEL occurs when the learning activities are aligned to the strategies and outcomes. The activities (see Table 1 below) in both the lectures and classes were selectively employed then sequenced as such to allow for an effective learning and teaching cycle that builds on background skills and knowledge, adequate reflection and integration of the outcomes. All lectures in OnTrack ensure that adequate theory underpins the content to realize higher-level cognitive engagement; lectures aimed at the development of an SEL outcome were no exception. Theories by (1993) on “Multiple Intelligences”, Dweck’s (2010, 2012) “Growth Mindset vs. Fixed mindset”, and the link between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy (Adeyemo, 2007) were explicitly explored with the students in timely lectures. In addition, the Counseling team at Murdoch covered topics such as mindfulness, persistence and stress management by delivering a suite of SEL lectures to our students throughout the semester. In tutorials, a deeper understanding of these theories was fostered through aligned activities. For example, the Mindset Quiz (NCCEP, 2016) helps students to reflect and gain self-awareness of their own learning mindset. The ‘Wheel of Wellbeing’ adapted from MindTools (2016), assists students to identify pressure points in their lives or areas that are unbalanced in order to develop strategies that allow them to achieve better balance and reduce stress. The ‘Critical Reflection Log’ (Murray & Kujundzic, 2005) was developed as a guided reflection tool that was deliberately designed to prompt metacognitive processes and assist students to understand more deeply: themselves as a learner, all of the factors that impact their learning, and

the effectiveness of their learning strategies and their own strategic flexibility/adaptability. The development of a shared SEL meta-language was also achieved through embedding growth mindset language in the instructional rubrics (Sundeen, 2014) and through professional development with the tutors. Lastly, the instructional rubrics were tailored to assess the SEL outcomes.

Table 1. Constructive alignment of learning outcomes, activities and assessment to address SEL

Targeted OnTrack SEL Outcome	ETP Strategy	SEL Strategy	Learning Activities Examples	Assessment
Develop self-awareness and academic self-efficacy	Curriculum that engages students in learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of assessment rubric • Model/Coach/Fly (adaptation of the Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989) apprenticeship framework) • Curriculum that provides metacognitive development opportunities • Choosing curriculum with a dual purpose to engage students in the skills/content, engage students in social emotional learning practices • Make explicit and clear learning outcomes • Staff Development on Growth mindset, mindfulness and critical reflection assessing and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Assessment rubrics (Sundeen, 2014) • Wheel of wellbeing (MindTools, 2016) • Lectures and associated tutorial activities that focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth versus fixed learning mindsets (Dweck, 2012) • Multiple intelligence theory (Gardner, 1993) • Mindfulness (Langer, 1997) • Emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Reflection • Participation
Apply a range of self-regulating and independent learning strategies	Proactive and timely access to learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of assessment rubric • Scaffolded and Sequenced Unit Outline • Model/Coach/Fly • Make explicit and clear learning outcomes • Staff Development on effective feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Assessment rubrics • Critical Reflection resources and log (Murray & Kujundzic, 2005) • Time Management and Backward Planning • ‘Grit’ (Duckworth et al., 2007) Lecture • Stress management Lecture - based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Oral Presentations • Submission of all assessments

			principles (Harris, 2013)	
Demonstrate effective relationship management in a learning community	Intentionally fostering in a sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of assessment rubric • Model/Coach/Fly • Staff Development on learning communities (Lisciandro & Gibbs, 2016; Tinto, 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Assessment rubrics • Class Behaviour Protocols (established and agreed by each group/learning community) • Team building activities • Fairness and conflict group activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Oral Presentations

Preliminary Outcomes

Utilising Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis, a 'preliminary' analysis was undertaken on student survey data to garner impressions from the students regarding the embedment of SEL outcomes in the program with a specific focus on the newest content addressing 'learning mindsets' and 'emotional intelligence'. The reason a qualitative approach was chosen was twofold: firstly, it served as a preliminary surface level analysis that could provide timely feedback as to whether SEL curriculum was impacting student learning in order for curriculum designers to make adjustments/changes for the following semester; secondly it could provide preliminary data for a larger integrated mixed-method research project that will track and analyse the impact of SEL content on OnTrack students over the duration of the program. The survey asked the students: *Did the topics on developing a growth mindset and emotional intelligence help you with your studies this semester. If so which particular aspects and how did they help you?* The aim of this question was to elicit whether the newest SEL material (lectures and activities) that had been incorporated into the program was having any impact on their studies, as well as the nature of the impact (positive, neutral or negative).

Methodology

A theoretical analysis or a top down approach was used, as we wished to code the data relating to a specific research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.83). In terms of identifying themes, decisions were also made around the level of themes to be identified. A semantic rather than a latent approach was selected, given the aim of this stage is to not look at comments beyond what the students had said (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84). This in turn shaped the epistemology of the analysis and it was determined that the analysis would sit within an essentialist/realist rather than a constructionist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.85). After the theoretical framework for our analysis was decided upon, we used Braun and Clarke's five phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006 pp. 87-93). As the researchers involved were also curriculum designers and teachers in the program, it was decided that a research assistant sitting outside of the program would conduct the first three phases to avoid research bias. The research assistant read and re-read the student survey answers (phase 1). The next phase (2) was to code the language features in the data set. Certain questions informed this coding such as:

- Do responses use language from the course material that related to growth mindset?
- Do responses use language from the course material that related to emotional intelligence?
- Are there any words/phrases relating to change?

- Were responses positive, negative or neutral?

From here the coded data was grouped into key themes (phase 3). In conjunction the research assistant and researchers, then then mapped and reviewed themes and coding (phase 4). A final set of four themes was then ‘defined and refined’ (2006, 92), which could then be analysed.

Results and Analysis

Of the 375 students enrolled in program, 263 students completed the unit survey and 222 answered the question on growth mindset and emotional intelligence (OnTrack Unit Survey, 2016). Of these 222 responses, 186 asserted that the material had a positive impact, 21 indicated no impact and there was 1 negative response. There were another 14 responses that were categorized as ambiguous, as they were not positive, negative nor neutral but were focused on content unrelated to the survey question. Of the 186 responses that suggest a positive impact, improved ‘motivation’, ‘confidence’ and ‘perseverance’ were popular language threads. However the coded positive responses fit into two main groups: themed and generic. There were 55 generic positive responses, which included responses that were non-expansive, for example ‘yes’ and ‘yes it had as positive impact’. The other 131 positive responses were grouped into four themes (Table 2).

Table 2. Emerging themes from the ‘positive response’ data

	Theme	N Value
1	Awareness of self and changing thought patterns	75
2	Adoption of positive mindsets – learning through failure and growing	41
3	Identifying learning style and strategies to improve learning	49
4	Self-identity and self-assessment	73

This preliminary analysis highlighted that 75 students demonstrated an awareness of self and changing thought patterns. One student noted *‘I feel that through understanding how your mindset can have a significant impact on many things in life, I was able to conscientiously make an effort to stay in a growth mindset. I feel that I have achieved greatly this semester because of this’* (Respondent 62, EQU060 Semester 1 2016) and another noted *‘learning the differences between both a growth and fixed mindset has allowed me to gain knowledge on how I can improve as a student. Throughout the course I have adapted a growth mindset into my learning style, which has allowed me to produce better results for my assignments. Learning about the benefits of adapting a growth mindset has allowed me to become more success as a student so therefore I am grateful for*

learning about this topic' (Respondent 183, EQU060 Semester 1 2016). There were 41 students who made comments about having a positive mindset, and how this helped them to grow as a learner, one student noted that the material *'helped develop a positive mindset to be able to completed assignments and take on feedback constructively'* (Respondent 32, EQU060 Semester 1 2016). The understanding of learning styles and strategies to improve their learning was also another key theme which 49 students highlighted. One particular student acknowledge that, *'the topic of growth mindsets and emotional intelligence greatly improved my understanding of how I learn effectively, allowing me to alter my strategies to best enhance my studies and provide the best chance for successful studying''* (Respondent 122, EQU060 Semester 1 2016). Finally self-identity and self-assessment was the final theme, with 73 student responses demonstrating signs of acknowledgement of the self as well as reflection. One student noted *'the ideas about a growth mindset helped especially for my final essay, as I never believed I was good at or would enjoy writing essays. Being conscious of the growth mindset helped me to let go of that idea'* (Respondent 36, EQU060 Semester 1 2016). It should be noted that theme 4 differs from an awareness of changing thought patterns because these were largely responses that were generally in the third person and did not necessarily indicate their own change in mindset. However it should be recognised that the most common shared themes was theme 1 and theme 4, and we believe this is likely because of the close link between identifying, reflecting and then actively changing thought patterns. In terms of the breakdown of themes 50 students identified with one theme, 54 with two themes, 14 with three themes and 13 with four themes.

What can be gleaned from this analysis, at a semantic level, is that there is a spectrum of change through the cohort which highlights the positive impact of the SEL material at various degrees. At one end of the spectrum, there were those who simply identified and acknowledged that this material was positive and useful, and at the other end, some students had taken this further to critically reflect on themselves, their previous learning experiences and their mindset, and actively work towards changing negative thought patterns and develop strategies for their own learning. Also of note is that 3 of the 21 responses which indicate that this material had no impact, acknowledged that they had learned this material previously. Questions surrounding where this knowledge was accessed (for example, schooling) would be of interest for future research projects.

This thematic analysis was undertaken for surface level analysis only and suggests that 84% of respondents were positively impacted by the growth mindset and emotional intelligence material in some way, yet the extent of the application does differ as the themes show. A deeper, more

integrated approach to evaluation is now required in order to gain a better understanding of key areas of impact and how it could be developed further for the benefit of students in the future.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Students often enter enabling programs with gaps in their past learning, including their social and emotional learning, as a result of a non-traditional and possibly disrupted or disadvantaged educational trajectory. As well as this, there are often concerns for the emotional wellbeing of these students as they undergo a significant life change in their transitioning to university study. Past research shows that these students may arrive with low resiliency and academic self-efficacy, and need assistance with learning 'how to learn'. Those who are successful in their enabling education experience and beyond are those who develop attributes such as these, and not *just* academic skills. Here, we advocate that the role of every enabling program should be to prepare the 'whole' learner for the educational journey ahead, by explicitly addressing the development of important attributes like resilience and self-efficacy, and assisting students to establish effective study behaviours. Considering SEL in the curriculum and in pedagogical practices, may be one important way to address educational gaps, enhance student motivation, resilience and academic self-efficacy, and potentially boost academic and retention outcomes.

Here we have outlined some ideas of how we have approached this in the OnTrack enabling program, starting with development of explicit learning outcomes, constructively aligning these to learning activities and assessment, and considering ETP in our approach. Notably, a key element of embedding SEL in the OnTrack curriculum is our understanding that SEL is both informed by, and also forms a part of, the ETP. Preliminary analysis indicates that our initiatives to address SEL have been effective for student learning and development. In future, we intend to formally evaluate and report on the outcomes of these initiatives.

In a broader sense, further research is needed in the sector to better understand the SEL gaps amongst adult enabling cohorts and the best ways to address these in both time and resource pressured environments. Moreover, the transition experience largely continues for these students into their first year of university, and therefore larger scale conversations across universities about transition and SEL will be necessary into the future.

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