The Theory: Do we teach ‘Study Skills”?

An Academic Literacies Approach:

Educational research into student writing in higher education has fallen into three main perspectives or models. The first, the *study skills model*, sees writing and literacy as primarily an individual and cognitive skill. This approach focuses on the surface features of language form and presumes that students can transfer their knowledge of writing and literacy unproblematically from one context to another. The second, termed *academic socialization*, is concerned with students’ acculturation into disciplinary and subject-based discourses and genres. Students acquire the ways of talking, writing, thinking, and using literacy that typified members of a disciplinary or subject area community. The academic socialization model presumes that the disciplinary discourses and genres are relatively stable and, once students have learned and understood the ground rules of a particular academic discourse, they are able to reproduce it unproblematically. The third model, *academic literacies*, is concerned with meaning making, identity, power, and authority, and foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context. It is similar in many ways to the academic socialization model, except that it views the processes involved in acquiring appropriate and effective uses of literacy as more complex, dynamic, nuanced, situated, and involving both epistemological issues and social processes, including power relations among people, institutions, and social identities.


**Study Skills:**

[Remediation of] student deficit.

- ‘Fix it’, atomised [transferable] skills; surface language, grammar, spelling.
- Sources: behavioural and experimental psychology; programmed learning
- Student writing as technical and instrumental skill

**Academic Socialisation:**

Acculturation of students into academic discourse

- Inducting students into new ‘culture’; focus on orientation to learning and interpretation of learning task, e.g. ‘deep’, ‘surface’, ‘strategic’ learning; [academic] homogeneous ‘culture’; lack of focus on institutional practices, change and power.
- Sources: social psychology, anthropology; constructivism.
- Student writing as transparent medium of representation

**Academic Literacies:**

Student’s negotiation of conflicting literary practices

- Literacies as social practices; at level of epistemology and identities; institutions as sites of/constituted in discourses and power; variety of communicative repertoire, e.g. genres, fields, disciplines.; switching with regard to linguistic practices, social meanings and identities
- Sources: new literacy studies’; critical discourse analysis; systemic functional linguistics, cultural anthropology
- Student writing as meaning-making and contested