



Chasing Pokemon – in pursuit of the LAS ideal

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Abstract: *A 'remembered' moment from a lecture given by James Gee (2000) at the University of the Witwatersrand in which he compared the infinite possibilities of creating Pokemons to the infinite options for Language and Academic Skills (LAS) units became the catalyst for an interrogation of my current LAS model. Does it, in fact, promote 'equity of access and ... enhance learning' (Leibowitz, 2004: 35), or had I merely become a LAS advisor who had embraced the shadow world of academic compromise? This paper describes the three stages of my reflexive and reflective Pokemon chase. In part one I reflect on my initial employment at Monash South Africa (MSA) in 2001 and the 'ideal' model I planned to implement. In part two, I explain the current 2005 model. A reflective, comparative table presents the complex circumstances that shaped my practice as I explored the question 'What insights have I gained from this reflection?' In the third part, I describe and explore 'selected' insights with reference to isolation, sole provider, complex and complicated South African LAS contexts and facilitator versus lecturer versus LAS advisor. I conclude by suggesting that LAS models tend to be the result of our continuous*

struggle to integrate and incorporate what we hope to create (the ideal) with the constraints of the real.

Key words: *Reflection, LAS contexts, academic literacies*

Introduction

In 2001 Professor James Gee delivered a lecture titled – ‘Academic Languages and Identities’, at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa. He compared academic literacy to the Pokemon (Pocket Monster) phenomenon. Pokemon began as a children’s video game, a game which has now ‘invaded our televisions, disrupted our lives as parents, obsessed our children and created paranoia and anger amongst teachers around the world’ (Tzelepis, 2001:4). Pokemons are creatures that evolve. The aim of the ‘master Pokemon trainer’ is to build a creature that is able to survive and destroy the ‘dangerous’ monsters in their world.

The possible options for developing alternate Pokemons are infinite. Although, unlike Pokemon, academic literacy initiatives have not developed into a \$5 billion international industry, they are initiatives in tertiary institutions that constantly attempt to evolve into powerful instruments of access and opportunity for all students entering tertiary institutions for the first time. In many cases such initiatives can develop into ‘tyrannical monsters’ as the Language and Academic Skills (LAS) staff desperately attempt to discover, unearth or create academic literacy curricula that will challenge the collective higher education categorisation of the LAS unit as a remedial unit (Zeegers, 2004). I realise that Pokemon and the recent Pokemon cards are the subject of intense debate, both positive and negative. However, it is not the intention of this paper to enter into this debate. This ‘remembered’ moment was merely the catalyst that began my looking backwards to understand how I had

inadvertently abandoned my ideal Pokemon programme and enthusiastically embraced the compromise.

This paper documents and critically reflects on my attempts to develop the 'ultimate Pokemon curriculum' for my LAS work at Monash South Africa (MSA). It describes the three stages of my reflexive and reflective 'chase'. In part one I look back to the 2001 beginnings, to my reflection before practice, to a description of my teaching and learning philosophies, my perceptions of the MSA 2001 context and the resultant initial 'ideal' programme. In part two, I explain the current model, the result of my reflexive practice over the past four years. This stage includes a comparative tabulation of the evolution from 2001 to 2005. This reflective exercise enabled me to identify issues that shaped and influenced my practice as I tried to negotiate and reconcile what I aimed to achieve with what I did achieve. In part three, reflection for action, I explore my future options – what should I retain and why, if I am to provide a LAS service that truly promotes equity of access and enhances learning.

I do not claim that I have found the 'recipe' for any particular LAS unit but rather hope to open up debate about the possibilities of developing LAS programmes from, and for, a particular context.

Part 1: Looking backwards – reflection before action

'There are 150 different kinds of Pokemon, and it's the trainer's job to catch as many as possible' (<http://www.wizards.com/pokemon>).

Teaching and learning philosophies

As I prepared for my interview (April 2001), for the position of lecturer in Language and Learning Services, South Africa (LLS.SA), I read the Monash University pamphlets (Monash University Student Resource Guide 2001; Monash Course Guide 2001) with interest. As I analysed the information on content and assessment for each faculty, I asked myself the following questions

- What should the structure of this course be? Should it be credit bearing, optional or compulsory?
- Who is the audience? What are the features of the current student population?
- What are the needs and perceptions of students and lecturers in relation to LAS?

I then studied the teaching and learning philosophy of the University (www.monash.edu.au) and found that it closely approximated my own beliefs about teaching and learning. The documents suggested that any teaching and learning environment should develop a spirit of innovation, progressiveness and intellectual and cultural curiosity – essential 21st century skills (Gibbons, 1998). This curiosity, supported by meticulous research, should be encouraged within the context of real life situations that engage with and benefit the community. Ultimately the acquisition of any process or knowledge should occur in an integrated, collaborative environment and should instil the principle of *ancora imparo* – I am still learning.

I had previously been teaching on the Foundation in English Language: Academic Literacy A and B for the Department of Applied English Language Studies at the Wits (1997–2001). These courses are one-year credit-bearing courses for first year students entering Wits on an extended or special curriculum. The aims of the Foundation in English Language are to ‘learn the language requirements of university level work in the Faculty of Humanities’ and ‘introduce students to academic research ... to learn how to conduct a small-scale research project on a language topic of their own choice, in teams with other students’. Working with these students in these credit-bearing courses had not only provided me with knowledge of possible LAS topics, skills and content but it had also highlighted the need for ongoing adaptation and reflection. It was not enough to deliver programmes: it was also essential to continually refer to, explore and revisit the theory that underpins and defines academic literacy. I therefore reviewed articles and notes in the area

of academic literacy from my own Honours and M Ed studies at Wits and found the work of Lea and Street particularly helpful.

According to Lea & Street (2000), 'Academic literacies' can be broadly classified into three approaches: Study Skills, Academic Socialization or Academic Literacies. The Study Skills approach views 'student writing as a technical and instrumental skill' (Lea & Street, 2000:34). One problem with this approach is that it embraces the idea that 'we can fix it': students are viewed in deficit terms. It also assumes that students are able to transfer what is 'fixed' to other contexts. Academic Socialization concentrates on introducing and inculcating students into the culture of the academic discourse. This approach views student writing as 'a transparent medium of representation' (Lea & Street, 2000:34). One problem with this model is that it assumes that all students 'fit into' and are part of a homogeneous culture. The Academic Literacies approach views student writing as a 'process of meaning making and contestation' (Lea & Street, 2000:34). This approach is based on the belief that students' writing and learning are 'issues of epistemology and identities rather than skill or socialization' (Lea & Street, 2000: 34). Issues of discourse and power are acknowledged as factors that have a direct influence on what is taught and how and on who is considered. After this refresher reading, I began to explore my options. What approach should I follow? What approach could I or should I develop? Could I integrate these approaches in innovative and appropriate ways to promote the achievement of equity and access? Which approach would most closely approximate my ideal approach? Could I capture and create the ultimate Pokemon programme?

The perceived context of MSA 2001

I knew that it was not enough to study the literature, it was also essential to learn more about the potential clients, the students. Franks (as cited in Warren, 2001: 310) argues that in any learning situation, we are dealing with 'real persons, with histories of their own, with identities constructed through family, social life and schooling'. This view of identity is similar to that of Gee (1996) and foregrounds one of my main beliefs: each student is

multisubjectival, a 'unique blend' (Armstrong: 1994: 2). All students are, therefore, products of their social histories which they express through their use of language, symbols, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, values and actions (Franks, 1995 & Gee, 1996).

But who were the MSA 2001 students? What were their cultural, historical, social, economic and political identities? What educational, social and intellectual experiences would they bring to the classes? As the first group of students had only been on campus for three months, would anyone really have a good idea of their 'identikits'? I could not access this information and so visualised the group based on the demographics of the area in which MSA is built and my knowledge of previous foundation groups at the Wits. I assumed that the MSA students would not be very different from the groups of students I had taught for the past five years; 17–25 years old, multilingual, multicultural, from diverse political, economic, social and educational sectors.

The initial 2001 LAS course

'... never underestimate a basic Pokemon'
<http://www.pokemonelite2000.com/sgbuilding102.html>

On my first day, I brought to campus a programme I had named 'A Vision for Monash South Africa Language and Learning Service'. This programme was loosely based on an Academic Literacies approach and a proposal I had just submitted (2001) in collaboration with CA Gildenhuys: School of Education, Wits to the Pan South African Language Board (PANSLAB). The programme drew on all my previous knowledge, experiences and beliefs as it integrated a variety of subject matter, encouraged co-operation between disciplines, promoted a multidisciplinary approach, focussed on the holistic development of the learners and encouraged collaboration between the professionals, the schools and the community.

This 'basic Pokemon' programme began with a single task set for all students irrespective of area of study or language competencies, a task which involved

creating a storybook for young children. All students would arrive at the first lecture to brainstorm the group project and identify the contribution they could make. My intention was to actually create this book and publish it – so there would be real sense of audience and satisfaction in completion of the task. It was easy to envisage how each of three schools (Business and Economics, Information Technology & Arts) could fit neatly into the real project:

- Business and Economics – Advertising, marketing, needs analysis, community involvement, surveying storybooks currently on sale, pricing of the process and the product etc.
- Information Technology – Internet information, current initiatives and thinking about children’s books, designing the book, layout (fonts, graphics), chat rooms with children etc.
- Arts – South African official languages, appropriateness and register, media surveys about similar projects, the psychology of the age group, interviews etc.

Once the project had been brainstormed, action plans would be drawn, working groups constituted and goals set. Relevance would be established during a discussion on how this would benefit and develop students’ academic literacy competencies through opportunities for

- Notes taking and making
- Exploring genres
- Progress reports
- Research
- Oral presentations of work in progress and “book launch”
- Group work and team building
- Reflection and evaluation
- Writing academic articles for submission to various faculties (perhaps built into faculty/course assessment?)

This 'storybook' approach, I felt, was unique and embodied a spirit of innovation, intellectual and cultural curiosity within the context of real life situations supported by meticulous research. The necessary academic processes and knowledge would be acquired and would occur in an integrated, collaborative environment, instilling simultaneously and incidentally the Monash principle of *ancora imparo* – 'I am still learning. In my view, the 2001 model would have resulted in graduates who had acquired the 'essential 21st century skills of computer literacy, knowledge reconfiguration, information management, problem solving in context of application, team building, networking, negotiation/mediation competencies and social sensitivity' (Gibbons as cited in The National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa, 2001:25). I did realise however, that in this approach would place an additional academic burden on the students as it involved a non-credit bearing task outside the requirements of their degree.

I failed to implement this initial model as academic development work was then viewed by Monash South Africa as an 'add-on support service' rather than a credit-bearing discipline-specific foundation course. However I still believe that the potential of this basic Pokemon model cannot be underestimated as its fundamental purpose was to ensure that 'all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community and economic life' (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough & Gee, 1996:60).

Part 2: Reflection in action

The 2005 model

**'I will travel across the land
Searching far and wide
Each Pokemon to understand
The power that's inside
Gotta catch them all'
Pokemon song. Television programme**

Four years after the conceptualisation of that first course, the current course is far removed from my ideal of LAS as 'a process of meaning making and contestation' (Lea & Street, 2000:34). I had 'travelled across the land

searching far and wide' but how true had I remained to the LAS ideal of promoting critical thinking, problem solving, self management, independent thinking and reflective learning (LAS Conference Proceedings, 2003)? In 2005 students were grouped according to their study unit and assessment task. The assessment task became the central focus of exploration and the vehicle for the acquisition of the necessary LAS skills. Preparation involved comprehensive discussion with the academic staff members who delivered the unit. Together we analysed, argued and debated the expectations of the assessment task with the aim of ensuring that we had a similar interpretation of it. Both the academic staff and the LAS staff member then developed criteria and guidelines for the students. Tutorial sessions were identified within the unit timetable and academic staff indicated which sessions they are able to attend.

Throughout the implementation and delivery of these sessions, I met with staff to ensure that there was ample time set aside for individual and small group consultations. The academic staff member coped with the content questions and I concentrated on the acquisition of LAS. The initial session focused on the task. It was discussed, analysed and unpacked with students – what did it mean, what did it involve, where should we begin? The students were taught the analysis process - identifying the process words (action required), the content words (what do I write about?), the requirements (the non-negotiable aspects of task) and the hints and cues (guidelines to assist the successful completion of task).

As the task unfolded, skills and practices were discussed, facilitated and developed (e.g. if set readings was a requirement - the 'skill' of reading – skimming, scanning, intensive etc was explained and practised prior to and during this stage). Attendance was not compulsory and pacing was dependent on the learners. They could also exit at any point or return when necessary.

The staff and student satisfaction with the programme is reflected in their comments

'... this exercise was very successful. Your input was excellent and the sessions were carefully presented and well received by the students. I definitely want to be part of the programme next year (2004) but perhaps we should start sooner' (Dr Linda Venter, COM 1010 unit lecturer).

'Very relevant and useful'; 'Time spent needs to be extended'; 'I had time to ask questions and Chris was very patient with me'; 'The course offered an alternative and more effective way to plan, think about and write essays'; 'It was a positive learning environment' (Selected student comments).

Attendance increased as students realised the value of the tutorials as a way of developing relevant, fundamental academic literacy competencies. At the end of the six tutorial sessions, these students and I mapped what they had learned and what they could then transfer to other tasks. This included pre-planning (discussion and analysis of the task); planning (developing mind maps from this discussion and analysis); demystifying key readings (extending the map and cross referencing the readings); selecting and evaluating relevant data; composing; integrating quotes (paraphrasing and summarising); referencing and citing; draft writing (reviewing, monitoring and editing). This current programme, in contrast to the 'ideal', has been implemented and its 'success' has been documented.

In higher education institutions there is an assumption that the necessary academic discourses must be attained. At MSA, it is the responsibility of the Language and Learning Services unit to design and create programmes that enable learners to enter and acquire these discourses quickly, easily and with the minimum of stress. The majority of the students felt that this approach had provided them with a sound foundation in the essential language and academic skills (Table 1).

Item	5	4	3	2	1
What is your overall assessment of the programme?	40	54	8	4	0
Acquisition of essential Language and					

Academic skills	32	51	23	0	0
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(5 being excellent and 1 being unsatisfactory)

Table 1 ***Data gathered from evaluation forms completed by students at end of a programme. n = 106***

Success was further enhanced by the close and careful collaboration between LAS and academic staff. There was an added advantage of staff growth and involvement as they participated in the development of their students' academic skills. Participation in the programme also provided an opportunity for lecturers to assess their own teaching and learning practices as they were encouraged to question their assessment methods and their content delivery. This element of collaboration, a partnership involving the 'co-production of knowledge ... workshops and one-to-one consultations' is widely accepted as a 'rich [and successful] model of practice' (James, Skillen, Percy, Tootel & Irvine, 2004: 136).

The major weakness of the 2005 current programme is that its focus is on learning and teaching for only one purpose, the best mark. It is assessment-driven and thus might be referred to as a 'survival' programme. Winch and Gingel (1996: 179) argue that 'assessment is not an unnecessary and unpleasant addition to the educational process of teaching and learning but something that is a necessary and vital part of such processes'. However, in attempting to provide a 'recipe' for students' success, I taught to the task, in the process 'ignoring any item of knowledge that [was] not directly relevant to passing the task' (Winch and Gingel, 1996: 179). It is possible that this approach was popular with students because 'many students perceive degree studies as being about learning the rules and playing the game in order to get good grades rather than about developing and expressing their own views' (Peters & Sutton, 2001: 1). I inadvertently created a programme which encouraged students to 'take the least line of resistance in a context where lecturers are the acknowledged repositories of knowledge and power' rather than students 'who challenge both power and convention' (Peters & Sutton,

2001: 2). Have I silenced the true voices of the students and constrained their 'possibilities for self-hood' (Ivanic, 1997:32) by focusing on their assimilation into the mainstream norms?

A reflective comparison

'Many Pokemon evolve naturalistically to become other Pokemon'

<http://www.godandscience.org>

Table 2 (Appendix 1) illustrates the evolution of the programme from the 'ideal' to the 'real'. It was an interesting and enlightening exercise and I feel it clearly demonstrates my struggle to retain elements of what I wanted to offer to students with what is currently offered. The most devastating aspect of the table was how quickly I reverted to the Study Skills Approach. In the desire to 'fix the immediate 2001 problems' being highlighted by academic staff, I attempted to create immediate solutions. Henning, Mamiane & PHEME (2001: 121) suggest that 'although the 'skills' approach is limited on its own, it should not be neglected' as it could provide 'a foundational academic literacy'.

However, I was concerned and disturbed by the decreasing numbers and the lack of interest amongst many of the students. Henning et al. (2001: 122) also suggest that study skills should be taught in 'non-generic workshops within the discipline [to ensure] that the discourse emerges slowly as well.' Although I had not read this paper at that time, I began to introduce discipline specific workshops in 2002; a shift to a more academic socialization approach. I would like to believe that these shifts were conscious but they were not. It was more of an intuitive, reflexive reaction to the dissatisfaction of my students and myself with the initial generic 'skills' approach.

As I continued to study this table, I realised just how far I had moved from what I believed. I needed to find ways to return to some of the principles of best practice and to reflect on the changes that had occurred in my approach in order to understand what had effected these changes. Had my current LAS

programme evolved naturalistically? Was it derived from real-life situations or was it merely a reflexive response to real-life demands?

Part 3 Looking forward – Reflection for action

In this final part of the paper I offer insights that resulted from this reflection on and critique of my practice - what had prompted and restrained my choices. These insights include working in isolation, being the sole provider, the complex South African LAS contexts and the need to consider who I am and want to be, my possible alternatives.

Working in isolation

'If they exchanged a Pokemon with another player, the communication cycle would be wider and wider' (Tajiri, cited in Tzelepis, 2002: 2)

Reflection is a 'special form of thought' (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Synonyms for reflection include think about, ponder about, consider, contemplate, mull over, and muse about. But these imply 'thoughtfulness' without any actual action. Schon (as cited in Hatton & Smith, 1995: 3) suggests that reflection should be intimately linked to action as professionals frame and reframe their often 'complex and ambiguous problems, test the various interpretations and modify their actions as a result'. Therefore if reflection is to have any value, it has to become critical and be symbiotically bound with action. Schon (as cited in Hatton & Smith, 1995: 3) refers to reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action, both involving 'demanding rational and moral processes in making reasoned judgements about preferable ways to act' (Hatton & Smith, 1995: 3). Farrell (1988) extends on this theme by including reflection-for-action, emphasising that the reflective process must include ways of planning and acting for future frameworks. McKee (2001: 138) warns that many methodologists '...tend towards a kind of 'transgressive' methodological approach, where we do whatever takes our fancy'. He suggests that we now need '... to think honestly about the epistemological possibilities and limits of this methodology - what we do and why we do it' as any methodology must be dissected to 'reveal the limits to the kind of knowledge it can produce ... our own central

methodology is woefully under investigated, and still largely intuitive' (McKee, 2001, 138).

While self-reflection is valuable for interrogating one's own practice, it tends to be subjective and limited by the boundaries of one's own knowledge, experiences and mindset. If reflection is to bring about change, then it should include multiple perspectives. I work alone. There is no other LAS staff member and choice of outcomes, interpretation of task; content and methodology are my sole responsibility. Academic staff accept my decisions with very little or no opposition. However conflict, collaboration and interaction with others of diverse skills, backgrounds and perceptions are essential elements of growth and development. This lack of challenge resulted in a 'lack of choice' as no opposing alternatives arose from our interaction. Perhaps this reflective chase has highlighted the urgent need for more than discussion – an urgent need to find, invite and include divergent voices from the current academic and support staff on this campus.

Being the sole provider

'As a trainer grows, they will become stronger, learn new attacks and sometimes even evolve into new and different people'
(<http://www.wizards.com/pokemon>,)

Being the sole LAS provider assumes that one has all the knowledge and skills to serve all stakeholders equally and adequately. MSA currently has three main focus degrees – Arts, Business and Economics and Information Technology. As the sole LAS provider, I am expected to have adequate knowledge of each of these areas. Percy & Stirling (2004: 54) suggest that having a foundation 'in language, literacy, learning and pedagogical theory [only] provides us with the tools to negotiate and 'unpack' the variety of discourses and teaching practices'. It does not however mean that we have understanding of the specific needs of a discipline in which we have no experience. Cazden et al. (1996: 9) suggest that replication of and assimilation into these varied discourses 'only really works if one already speaks the language of the mainstream. If one is not comfortably a part of the culture and discourses ... it even gets harder to get into and operate in these

networks'. I can communicate and replicate the Arts discourses easily; the Business & Economics with some competence but the world of Information Technology is still a major challenge..

This personal confidence (or lack of it) affected how keenly I became involved with a particular group of lecturers. I subconsciously avoided interaction and involvement with those areas where I was not comfortably part of the culture or discourses.

School	Total no of lecturers in each school	No of lecturers who incorporated the model into their teaching and learning (First semester 2005)	Time spent/ hours
Arts	16	8	32
Buseco	16	5	10
Infotech	13	3	7

Table 3 2005 lecturer contact time/ interaction across schools.

Although I have evolved into 'a different person', I am not sure if this resulted in 'new or stronger trainer'. Groups of students have failed to benefit from the LAS programmes because of the 'sole LAS provider' could perhaps not 'speak the language of the mainstream discourse' (Cazden et al., 1996: 5).

Complex LAS contexts in South Africa

'Each different Pokemon has different powers and abilities, ... they come in many shapes and sizes' (<http://www.wizards.com/pokemon>)

The MSA context has changed radically over the past four years. Student and staff numbers have grown from a mere 60 students and 20 staff members to 780 students and 65 staff members. The sixty 2001 students were fairly homogeneous – white South Africans from affluent families. Many were from schools with good educational records. The 2005 context however, is vastly different from this homogeneous group.

MSA now has a student community of almost 800 students from 25 different countries. The largest group are from Botswana followed by the South African and Zimbabwean groups: 80 percent of the students are Black and 20 percent

are White. I have learned that many of our students are HIV positive, that they are international students who feel isolated and alienated, that there are issues of xenophobia and that they constantly struggle to withstand peer pressure. The world in which they study is foreign and frightening. I now have a better and more comprehensive 'picture' of the 'clients' and their needs. I know that they are indeed a complicated, unique and complex combination of multiple social histories. Has this affected my choices? Am I truly cognizant of their situations, of the fact that they are simultaneously members of 'multiple lifeworlds, with identities that are multi-layered' (Cazden et al., 1996: 8)?

Cazden et al. (1996) argue that to be relevant, learning processes need to recruit and use as resources, the different subjectivities (interests, intentions, commitments and purposes) and the students attendant languages, discourses and registers. On reflection, the 2001 course would have integrated and acknowledged the students' subjectivities and multiple identity layers of 'being-doing-thinking-valuing-speaking-listening-writing-reading' (Gee, 1990:174) better than the 2005 course with its focus on the institutional discourses. Granville and Dison (2005: 105) argue that any LAS programme should not only prepare students to join 'the multiple activities of the academic community', it should also ensure that it is 'deeply situated in students' past and current experiences'. Although many students would argue that I provided them with academic discourses that were essential for their success, I believe that I effectively ignored these students' different powers and abilities, shapes and sizes as I prepared and developed new programmes. I had unintentionally become a 'promoter' of the dominant discourse.

Multiple roles of LAS staff

'Certain special people in this world decide to become Pokemon trainers'
(<http://www.wizards.com/pokemon>)

The 2005 LAS conference preamble states that it is directly relevant to LAS researchers, professionals, advisers, academics and practitioners. These constituencies were also addressed at the 2003 LAS Conference: LAS advisor (Catterall, Martins, Handa, Chanock, East & Maxwell), LAS staff, LAS lecturer (Percy & Stirling) or LAS practitioners (Chanock, East & Maxwell).

Zeegers (2004: 25) asks three questions 'Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?' but he does not ask the question 'Who are we?' Each of the labels implies a certain status, a level of power, a depth of knowledge, a specific role – researcher versus advisor; trainer versus facilitator; staff versus academics. I realise when I examine the approaches and programmes I developed from 2001 – 2005, that I have transformed myself several times. Prior to 2001, I viewed myself as an educator involved in the collaborative acquisition of multiple higher learning competencies. However the initial programme I implemented in 2001, relegated me to the position of 'fixer of problems'. I offered advice and simple and immediate solutions to problems. I now realise that I no longer want to find or claim a single, exact or 'correct' label. I am and need to be all of these. I am a designer of learning processes and environments who strives 'constantly to design and redesign my activities in the very act of my practice' (Cazden et al., 1996). Decisions should result from careful deliberation and investigation of the needs of the students not the time-consuming scrutiny of names or labels. I believe that this reflective chase is an attempt to recapture my original philosophy and remain a 'facilitator in the process of change and ... intellectual growth' (Zeegers, 2004: 28).

Conclusion

'Nothing is permanent and some day Pokemons will give their place to another toy' (Tzelepis, 2002: 3)

Cazden et al. (1996) insist that people do not 'learn anything unless they are both motivated to learn or believe that they will be able to use and function with what they are learning'. These are not new thoughts. As LAS facilitators, we want to produce students who are able to speak up and speak out, who are able to negotiate and engage critically with their life worlds. In South Africa, where the school sector fails to provide many students with the necessary baseline skills and quality education, higher education institutions, must and should provide innovative LAS programmes to enhance learning and guarantee students' prospects of success (Faller, 2004). LAS programmes should therefore constitute an arena in which all learners are

secure in taking risks, are able to build on and then constructively critique, apply, revise and innovate what they know and learn (Cazden et al., 1996).

Wenger (1998: 149) suggests that in order to decide 'where we are going', we need to 'define who we are by where we have been'. This reflective 'chase' has been invaluable as it made me realise it is the struggle, the pursuit, the process that is important. There is no LAS recipe, no single appropriate campus programme. Each year, each course, each group of students will result in the adaptation, creation, evaluation and revision of the ephemeral LAS ideal.

Appendix 1

	Pre 2001 The ideal	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 The reality
Model	Academic literacies	Generic study skills	Generic study skills & Academic socialisation	Academic socialisation Subject specific facilitation	Academic socialisation Subject specific facilitation	Academic socialisation Subject specific facilitation
Content & topics	Inter disciplinary	Generic	Generic	Subject related	Joint faculty tutorials	Joint faculty tutorials
Timetable arrangements	Set times envisaged	On need - random	Set times per school (2 periods per week)	Set times per school (2 periods per week)	Academic course tutorial times	Academic course tutorial times
Numbers	60	+/-120	+/- 180	+/- 250	+/- 380	+/- 750
Evaluation	Evaluation forms	Evaluation forms	Evaluation forms Student interviews	Evaluation forms Student interviews	Evaluation forms Academic staff interviews and feedback of result	Evaluation forms Academic staff interviews and feedback of result
Influences	Previous knowledge, experience, anticipated context, teaching and learning philosophy	Staff requests and expectations, Remediation – ‘fix it’, perceived student needs	Staff requests and expectations, Remediation – ‘fix it’, perceived student needs, reaching all students, continued mindset.	Staff requests and expectations, Remediation – ‘fix it’, perceived student needs, reaching all students, continued mindset, decreasing student attendance Relevance of material to student needs	Need for collaboration with staff and students, attempt to ‘return’ to ideal philosophy, Status established thus able to resist’ pressures’ of fix it model, resistance to pressures	Real understanding of immediate needs of students, working towards success, increasing numbers, attempt at scholarship, too assessment driven

Table 2: From ideal to real – change over four years

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