



Tensions in higher education: widening participation, student diversity and the challenge of academic language/literacy

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- presenting -

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Introduction/background

- **‘massification’ of Higher Education**
- **widening participation agenda**
 - **equity and social justice**
 - **social capital**
 - ‘strong economic reasons for increasing access’
(Osborne, 2003)
- **a fundamental tension between the widening participation agenda and the English language proficiency/academic literacy agenda**

- **Tension – what is it?**
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- **Sources of academic tension in widening participation**
 - diversity
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- **Tension – what is it?**
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- **Sources of academic tension in widening participation**
 - diversity
 - quality
- **Cultural capital, discourse, and the challenge of academic language/literacy**
 - issue of English language proficiency for *native* speakers
 - *proficiency,*
 - *academic literacy*
 - *professional communication skills*

- **Proficiency**
- **Academic literacy**
- **Professional communication skills**

- ***What*** should be tested?
- ***Who*** should be tested?
- ***How*** should they be tested?

- **Need to embed language development within the curriculum**
 - *quality of discourse*
 - *mindfulness*
- **Professional development**
 - *empathy*
 - *capacity and resources to distinguish language & literacy issues from other problems*

Conclusion

- tension between diversity and quality (general)
- tension between the widening participation and English language proficiency/academic literacy agendas (particular)
 - numerous dimensions
 - profound questions and challenges
- holistic solution requires fundamental reform (***tension as an agent of change***)