Basic design principles for learning designs to support knowledge transformation

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Published in:
Designing for situated knowledge transformation

DOI:
10.4324/9780429275692-10

Publication date:
2020

Document version:
Accepted manuscript

Citation for published version (APA):
https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429275692-10

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Chapter 13. Design principles for transfer and transformation of academic literacy

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This chapter focuses on models to support students’ development of academic literacy within a university setting and in the chapter, I discuss the concept of academic literacy in a knowledge transformation perspective. The aim of this chapter is to investigate 1) how to define the concept of academic literacy in relation to different approaches to transfer and forms of knowledge, and 2) what are adequate design principles for supporting students’ development of academic literacy? The purpose is hereby twofold: on the one hand, the purpose is to provide an analysis for understanding how different models of literacy support students’ transition into a university based on different conceptions of transfer (cf. Chapter 3), and on the other hand, to identify some design principles (cf. Chapter 10) that can inform areas of possible improvements for designing for students’ development of academic literacy. In this last perspective, the chapter relates to a pedagogical design question (cf. Introduction): how can designing learning opportunities and identifying transfer mechanisms support learners in transforming knowledge? The chapter finally discusses how the presented models of literacy in different ways support students’ transforming and resituating of knowledge across contexts.

1. What is academic literacy and why is it important to focus on?
Lea & Street (2006) point out three overlapping models as conceptualised approaches to academic literacy: 1) a study skills model, 2) an academic socialisation model, and 3) an academic literacies model. These three models are not mutually exclusive but can be seen as a way of both understanding the focus of research in academic literacy and of educational practice with the aim to develop students’ academic literacy. Lea & Street see the three perspectives in a way that each model successively encapsulates the other: the study skills model is part of the academic socialisation model, which again is part of the literacies model.
Figure 13.1. Model of academic literacy.

It can be discussed whether academic literacy can be defined as a *domain* (a certain content), an *activity* (defining certain ways of acting), or a *cultural practice* (cf. Chapter 4). Lea & Street define academic literacy as a cultural practice within disciplines “through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study” (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 158). This cultural practice is closely related to ways of using language and communication within a university practice and is therefore concerned with “the cultural tools and ways of behaving which are prevalent in a culture across specific practices and societal structures” (cf. Chapter 4). Studying at a university implies a certain way of dealing with the practice at a university and communicating in the academic community. This way of communication implies meaning-making and using academic language carried by certain genres and communication patterns. Academic literacy is a way of using language in a certain social group, which Gee defines as a Discourse: “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artefacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a
member of a socially meaningful group or “social network”” (Gee, 2014, p. 158). More specifically, academic literacy is a “secondary Discourse”. While primary Discourses are something we are initially socialised into, secondary Discourses typically do not come naturally but have to be gained through teaching and/or participation in social groups and institutions. To be a participant as a student at a university, students have to be familiar with the academic way of ‘thinking and acting’. At the same time, it is the university’s job to support the development of an academic set of practices that makes it possible for students to learn subjects and participate in the university practice. According to this perspective, academic literacy can be defined as “the ability to communicate competently in an academic discourse community” (Wingate, 2015, p. 6). This ability to communicate is not just students developing certain instrumental practical knowledge but can be understood as ways of behaving and acting in a social practice: “a dominant feature of academic literacy practices is the requirement to switch practices between one setting and another, to deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices appropriately to each setting and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes” (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 35). The development of an academic literacy practice enables students to act and participate in academic communities and domains that are characterised by being uncertain and challenging (Alexander, 2003).

Students’ development of academic literacy is crucial for students’ success at a university. For many students it is a challenge to understand and use a certain academic discourse and language, e.g. in academic writing. Snow & Uccelli (2009) point out typical features in academic language such as:

- the interpersonal **stance** with a non-dialogical and distant construction of opinion
- the **information load** of the academic discourse characterised by conciseness and density
- the organisation of information involves **explicit marking of text structures with an awareness** of the unfolding text as **discourse and use of a diverse, precise and formal repertoire** that includes appropriate discipline-specific terms.

Furthermore, students face the challenge of developing knowledge about academic genres and putting features of the academic language in relation to the genre conventions of their discipline. The focus on language here is not just a formal part of working and communicating at a university. The language is also a part of doing and knowing at a university. Carter (2007) emphasises the integrative relationships between knowing, doing and writing. He gives an example with a lab experiment (see Chapter 14). A lab experiment is designed to engage students in an activity through which they will learn about the scientific concept of the lab and empirical mode of reasoning about the physical world. The doing in the lab can be said to be directed towards different kinds of knowledge forms, e.g. procedurally realised, practical and experiential knowledge (cf. Chapter 2). A part of the doing and knowing is writing the lab report that frames the scientific way of knowing: introduction, methods, results, discussion: “It provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the relationships between the lab and the scientific concept of the lab and to frame the doing in the lab in structure for scientific reasoning” (Carter, 2007, p. 388). This example shows that academic literacy is not just a
formal part of studying at a university, *e.g.* learning the genre and features of a report (a domain perspective), but it is also integrated in the practice of doing research, acquiring knowledge and communicating about findings. Furthermore, this example shows that academic literacy is not just one defined competence or activity, *e.g.* academic writing, but a network of integrated competences: reading, co-operation, experimenting, documenting and writing. Academic literacy supports the students’ way of doing, giving shape to particular ways of knowing in a discipline and communicating this knowledge through specific academic genres.

It is important for universities to support students’ development of academic literacy and to understand the code of academia. One reason is that the student populations are characterised by diversity and widening participation. Wingate (2015) describes that in the UK, participation increased from 5% in the 1960s to 43% by 2010. In the 2018 report “Education at a Glance”, OECD estimates that an average of 58% of young adults in OECD countries will enter a bachelor’s degree during their lifetime (OECD, 2018, p. 195). For this new generation of first-time academics, a university can appear as an “institutional practice of mystery” (Lillis, 1999, p. 127), because they are not familiar with the conventions that inform working academics, they have different assumptions, and some are less prepared for academic studies and therefore need more support. Students’ transition into university is a crucial period and the success can have a significant impact on their future academic achievements. Supporting this transition is a task for the universities in order to bridge the gap between the students’ experiences and the culture of the university (Leese, 2010). As Archer (2007) points out, students from a wide range of backgrounds must be supported. Especially, the importance of support for students with first-year experience is documented as crucial (Nelson, Smith, & Clarke, 2012).

A second reason is that the culture of learning found at a university is very different compared to students’ previous education. A university, seen in the light of the Humboldtian understanding, has a close connection between education and research: “The teacher does not exist for the sake of the student; both teacher and student have their common justification in the common pursuit of knowledge” (Humboldt, 1970; Morgan, 2011, p. 331). Knowledge production at a university is open and complex and is for students based on collective engagement in research. Barnett (2012) sees universities as sites of open, critical and even transformatory engagement. University learning is ‘Learning for an unknown future’ where the uncertainty for the students consists of having to deal with the complexity of the modern world, a “world of information overload, of multiplying performance indicators, and of unpredictability in the environmental response to any intervention” (Barnett, 2012, p. 250). Furthermore, students are expected to independently manage their learning and adapt competences for handling academic tasks and participation. The university thus faces a challenge to support, in particular, new students’ transition from secondary education (*e.g.* high school) to tertiary education (*e.g.* university). This requires institutions to consider the approaches, the methods and the content of this support.
2. Approaches to support learning academic literacy

In this chapter, I will analyse Lea & Street’s three literacy models – the study skills model, the academic socialisation model and the academic literacies model – in relation to transfer theory presented in Chapter 3. The study skills model is related to the cognitive approach to transfer, the academic socialisation model is related to the situated cognition approach and the academic literacies model is related to the participatory approach to transfer. The purpose is to identify which learning opportunities for students’ development of academic literacy these different models represent, and to identify for each model a number of design principles that can support students’ transition into university.

2.1. Study skills model

The study skills model is based on a cognitive approach to transfer that sees academic literacy as transferable knowledge. The students are supposed to apply cognitive skills independent of subject-specific knowledge and with a focus on both propositional and procedural knowledge. Propositional knowledge could be knowledge about a typical structure for academic writing: introduction and research question, methods, results and conclusion. Procedural knowledge would be practical knowledge to actually follow and perform the structure in practice. The study skills model functions as a technical and instrumental tool, and the approach presumes that students can unproblematically transfer knowledge of literacy from one context to another. Study skills function as ‘transfer tools’; once learned, they can unproblematically be applied and used in different contexts. This approach is typically outlined in institutional programmes and courses for basic study skills based on the belief that academic literacy is a set of generic skills and that they are not linked to discipline-specific knowledge or conventions. The courses are therefore often run by staff or learning consultants. The student participating in the academic literacy courses is supposed to make structural connections between the course and the student’s own practice working with academic tasks. In order to solve these academic tasks, students must draw on the mental schemas and procedures learned in a course. The academic courses typically present examples of use and explanations and guidance of using the study skills based on “analogical transfer” (cf. Chapter 3), a movement of knowledge from one context to a new one.

In this approach, study skills can be seen as a general abstract, mental representation that can be applied to various content domains and “enhance thinking and learning” (Perkins & Salomon, 1989, p. 21). As an abstract mental representation, a study skill is not tied to a particular disciplinary domain but can be used in different domains; i.e. reading academic texts is a common challenge in e.g. Sports, English and Physics, even though the content domain is different. Perkins & Salmon give an example of how reading can be seen as an abstract cognitive skill: “Reading is a general cognitive skill, which people routinely transfer to new subject matters, beginning to read in a domain with their general vocabulary and reading tactics and, as they go along, acquiring new domain-specific words, concepts and reading tactics” (Perkins & Salomon, 1989, p. 21). An example of this understanding of a reading skill can be seen in Henderson & Hirst who present a workshop outline from a course in Academic Literacy from the University of Southern Queensland (2007) (Figure 13.2).
The study skills model can imply certain design principles understood as *general-substantive principles* (see Chapter 10), that can guide teachers, academic development practitioners and faculty management to support an intervention in practice with the aim of developing students’ academic literacy:

- Students have general knowledge about structures of academic writing genres and academic articles that can be applied in any subject context
- Students have knowledge of strategies and procedures for academic writing and academic reading
- Students have metacognitive strategies that support students to control and monitor their use of study skills.

### 2.2. Academic socialisation model

The *academic socialisation model* has a broader approach to academic literacy as a part of social context with a focus on students’ acculturation into subject-based discourses and genres. This model is based on a situated cognition approach to transfer. In this approach, students need to recognise the relevance of academic literacy knowledge and interpret and adapt to situational demands and possibilities. The kind of literacy knowledge that students need in order to work with academic tasks is dependent on what the students recognise as relevant knowledge and the students’ abilities to interpret and adapt knowledge in order to handle the academic task. The student has to transform the knowledge according to the situational demands and possibilities in which the
knowledge has to be used. The situational demands are typically linked to the disciplines as a certain context (cf. Chapter 4, where disciplines are described in both a domain and an activity context).

The aim of the academic socialisation model is to enculturate students into particular literacy practices and become typified members of a subject area and learn the ways of using literacy like members of a subject area community. Clarence & McKenna (2017) connect literacy practice with the structure of knowledge in the disciplines because it is from the disciplines that the “norms, values and textual practices emanate” (Clarence & McKenna, 2017, p. 19). In this perspective it is the disciplines that shape and determine what count as literacy processes of knowing and producing knowledge; a context for the way students have to read, write, think and act. Furthermore, these disciplinary discourses and genres are “relatively stable, and once students have learnt and understood the ground rules of a particular academic discourse they are able to reproduce it unproblematically” (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 227). This approach is reminiscent of the cognitive approaches in the study skills model, but the difference is that academic knowledge is not a generic practical knowledge. Academic knowledge has some “ground rules”, but these rules have to be situated in relation to the disciplinary context that defines how students use the academic knowledge. Russell (1995) compares learning a ball game with learning practical knowledge in different subjects. Each subject has its own way of understanding rules for ball games. Thus, one cannot learn basic ball training with the intention to master a lot of different ball games; football, handball, basketball etc. "There is no autonomous generalizable skill called ball-using or ball-action, that can be learned and then applied to all ball games" (Russell, 1995, p. 9). Russell’s example emphasises that e.g. writing a report is not the same in different subjects and the student has to learn the exact norms and practice for report writing in e.g. physics and history. Central to the academic socialisation literacy model is students’ learning of genres and activities that encourage students to become familiar with the disciplinary community where they are expected to effectively use the genres. The genre approaches see literacy practice, e.g. writing, as a purposeful, socially situated responses to disciplinary contexts and communities (Hyland, 2003). Genre can be defined as “staged goal-oriented social processes through which social subjects in a given culture live their lives” (Martin, 2005, p. 13). Writing a report is a social process because it involves communication with others (e.g. other students, teacher, a company), it is goal-oriented since the use of a genre is aimed at accomplishing an activity (e.g. documenting a research process) by means of language, and it is staged because it involves some steps and strategies (e.g. research, drafting, rewriting, editing, proofreading) through which one can achieve the purpose of the activity. In other words, genres are a social process of using textual artefacts in a specific institutional practice and community through which members can participate in particular communicative situations and achieve their community goals. A genre-based pedagogy offers students explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts that function as means to support the students’ negation with the norms of the academic traditions in which they are situated. Genre knowledge supports the students’ communicative actions, act of knowing and handling academic tasks and situations, because they can guide effective ways of getting things done and participating in academic situations. Genre pedagogy is based on the belief that learning is best accomplished
through explicit awareness of language and communication. A method in this literacy model is therefore genre awareness. Here, Johns (2008, p. 244) presents a Prompt analysis for students’ genre awareness in relation to a writing task:

1. GENRE NAME: What is this text called (its genre name)? What do you already think you know about what a text from this genre looks and ‘sounds’ like? For example, how should the text be organised? What kind of language do you need to use?
2. PURPOSE: What are you supposed to DO as a writer when completing this task? Are you asked to make an argument? To inform? To describe or list?
3. CONTEXT: If you are writing this task in, or for, a classroom, what do you know about the context? What does the discipline require for a text? Under what conditions will you be writing? For example, are you writing a timed, in-class response?
4. WRITER’S ROLE: Who are you supposed to BE in this prompt? A knowledgeable student? Someone else?
5. AUDIENCE: Is your audience specified? If it is your instructor, what is her, or his, expectations and interests? What goals for the students do the instructor have?
6. CONTENT: What are you supposed to write about? Where do you find this content? In your textbook? In lectures? Are you supposed to relate what you have heard or read in some way?
7. SOURCES: What, and how many, sources are you supposed to draw from to write your text? Have the sources been provided in the class? Are you supposed to look elsewhere? Are the sources primary or secondary?
8. OTHER SPECIFICATIONS: What else do you know about the requirements for this text? How long should it be? What referencing style (MLA, APA) should you use? What font type?
9. ASSESSMENT: How will your paper be graded? What does the instructor believe is central to a good response? How do you know? If you don’t know, how can you find out?
10. MAKING THE TEXT YOUR OWN: What about the paper you write can it be negotiated with the instructor? Can you negotiate the topic? The types of sources used? The text structure? If you can negotiate your assignment, it might be much more interesting to you.

These questions are examples of “visible patterns of interaction and tool use” (Chapter 3) that are designed to support students in engaging in these patterns and guide them in how to set writing strategies into play in situations of academic practice. By interaction with these questions, the knowledge of writing tasks becomes an emerging knowledge connected to a concrete writing situation. The situated cognition approach to using academic literacy is designed for students to engage in the role as experienced academic writers. The focus in this approach is on knowledge forms that are practical and experiential because the focus is on the “experience of acting” with emphasis on the adaptation and interpretation of the situational relevance of writing strategies. The academic socialisations literacy model is supported by design principles as:
• Students have developed an awareness of how academic strategies are part of a discipline-specific context with certain conventions and norms for participation, communication and language use
• Students have practical knowledge of using the discipline’s knowledge in specific disciplinary textual practice and academic situations
• Students can engage with academic challenges based on practical and experiential knowledge forms, and they are given opportunities to act as experienced researchers

2.3. Academic literacies model
The academic literacies model sees the literacy processes as “more complex, dynamic, nuanced, situated and involving both epistemological issues and social processes, including power relations among people and institutions and social identities” (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 228). Henderson and Hirst (2007) note about the term, ‘academic literacy’, that it “tends to hide any of the diversity that exists, thus restricting us to a singular view of literacy and a particular set of practices” (p. 27). Instead, it is important to understand academic literacy in the plural – as academic literacies. The aim of this model is that students should develop agency and situated awareness of the diversity of discursive practices in academia. This model also has, as the socialisation model, a focus on acts of literacy in disciplines. Furthermore, this approach emphasises the construction of identity within the context of higher education. In an educational perspective, the focus will help students to become aware of the norms of academia and engage students in considering the complex contexts in which they are working.

The model is based on the participatory approach to transfer (Chapter 2). In this approach the knowledge forms and view of transfer shift from individual cognition to the individual’s participation in the social practice as an act of knowing or the act of doing academic practice. Knowing academic literacy is the same as being able to participate in academic literacy practice without claims of cognitive grasps of academic literacy concepts. This approach recognises the complexity of learning academic literacy. For students’ participation in university practice, they have to, on the one hand, navigate in this new terrain and, on the other hand, develop their identity as academics. Students in this context have the challenge of learning for an unknown future and developing “human qualities and dispositions” (Barnett, 2012, p. 65). Barnett points out that learning for the unknown is twofold: 1) the task of preparing students for a complex world in which incomplete judgements or decisions have to be made, and 2) the task of coming to a “position where one can prosper in a situation of multiple interpretations” (ibid., p. 68). Academic literacy is based on an awareness of the situated disciplinary, but also on a cultural context and awareness of the students’ own possibilities, interests and disposition as students – their agency.

Mathieson (2011) emphasises the agency of new academics “in relation to the structural opportunities and constraints in a given context” (Mathieson, 2011, p. 246). Learning academic literacy moves beyond a formal introduction of study skills and focuses more on supporting students to actively develop an awareness of their new environment. This creates a space for students to critically engage with their literacy practice and develop their relationship with the
challenges facing higher education. As Mathieson puts it: “New academics may need to become culturally literate to survive and thrive in contemporary higher education, as well as consciously developing identities that are congruent with the complex environments they enter” (ibid., p. 246). Becoming an academic identity can happen through a process of ‘identity work’. Students are challenged to construct meanings through critically engaging in socially situated practices and hereby enact their own practice and their identity as academic identities and as members of a certain department.

What does this learning process, with the goal of developing academic agency, imply? First, it implies finding and articulating a voice with the empowerment to express oneself (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008). Second, it implies a situative awareness or situative readiness of the context and preparedness to deal with the situations in which one is challenged (Dohn & Hachmann, 2018; Endsley, 2017). In the context of academic literacy, the challenge for students is to develop patterns of participation related to a social practice and to engage with others around the practice of studying at a university. Transfer in this participatory approach is understood as “transformation of patterns of participation” (Chapter 3). This transformation of patterns is based on the students’ abilities to transform and resituate new practices according to the students’ experiences and interests and the demands and possibilities of the academic practice. This can be supported through “expansive framing” (Engle, Lam, Meyer, & Nix, 2012), especially in the form that allows students to assume authorship as a practice and a form which encourages students to draw on prior knowledge. 

Authorship as a practice means that students see themselves as being capable of handling unfamiliar situations using what they already know. An example of how teachers can frame and support students’ abilities to approach novel situations and develop a situative awareness of the academic challenges can be seen in the framework of the writing researcher Beaufort (2008).

Beaufort’s starting point is that if writing “… is taught with an eye toward transfer of learning and with an explicit acknowledgement of the context of freshman writing itself as a social practice, it can set students on a course of life-long learning so that they know how to learn to become better and better writers in a variety of social contexts” (Beaufort, 2008, p. 7). She argues that study skills can be difficult to convey through direct dissemination for professionals because they act as invisible tacit knowledge: "To instruct newcomers requires making that tacit knowledge conscious" (Beaufort, 2008, p. 15). Beaufort’s strategy is to make students aware of the context-specific nature of their writings – i.e. how they can analyse the context-specific nature of writing activities, and how they can handle a study situation in relation to the use of different resources. Beaufort therefore develops a conceptual model that shows how expert writers draw on five knowledge domains (Beaufort, 2008, p. 19):

- Discourse community knowledge
- Subject matter knowledge
- Writing process knowledge
- Genre knowledge
- Rhetorical knowledge
The model identifies in which knowledge domains writers must develop context-specific knowledge in order to solve an academic writing assignment. According to Chapter 2 on theory on different forms of knowledge, *Discourse community knowledge* and *Subject matter knowledge* can be seen as a mix of propositional, practical and procedurally realised knowledge. Students have to develop propositional knowledge of what an academic community is and how members of such a community communicate, think and act through e.g. journals and conference proceedings. *Subject matter knowledge* can inform how different disciplines function, how disciplines provide particular lenses or frameworks through which to explore, understand and act upon the world, how they define a problem, research on it and report on the findings. Furthermore, how subjects are based on different scientific traditions. Knowledge forms of procedurally realised routines and practical knowledge is related to specific disciplines and their different ways of thinking about and solving tasks, formulating problems and accessing and applying sources.

The *writing process knowledge* is based on a mix of the knowledge from procedurally realised routines and practical knowledge with a focus on practical knowledge, such as writing processes, reading processes, collaborative processes, etc.

*Genre knowledge* combines propositional knowledge (what purpose, structure and language characterises e.g. reports, essays, reviews?), procedurally realised routines (how can genre be used to do research, communicate and pass exams within an academic community?) and practical knowledge (the skilful mastering of a genre, e.g. doing a lab report in Physics).

Finally, *Rhetorical knowledge* also combines different knowledge from both procedurally realised routines and practical knowledge. Communication in academia demands knowledge about the communicative situation in which the student works: who is the audience, what expectations are there for my work and what rhetorical tools can support communicative work. To communicate is also a practical skill where students must act in relation to what Beaufort calls "the rhetorical moment".

The purpose of the students interacting with these five knowledge domains is basically to develop their experiential knowledge of knowing how to participate in an academic community of practice (cf. Chapter 2). Furthermore, they can use writing based on these five knowledge domains as a method to promote authorship and learn to generate their own solutions to academic tasks and situations. In this approach the academic task and situated awareness is explored through “embedded, processual complexities of thinking, understanding and acting in specific disciplinary contexts” (Haggis, 2006, p. 530). The challenge in this academic literacy approach is how to put the different knowledge domains mentioned above in action in order to develop patterns of participation and the students’ academic agency. As Flower states: "The meaning of a literate act will not lie solely in the resources on which it draws, the conventions in which it participates, or the context to which it responds, but in the ways writers use and even transform their knowledge and resources to take action" (Flower, 1994, p. 37).
The literacies model is based on the following design principles:
- Students have developed a situated awareness of patterns of participation in specific academic contexts
- Students are aware that participation in academic contexts implies resituation of different knowledge domains (Discourse community knowledge, Subject matter knowledge, Process knowledge, Genre knowledge and Rhetorical knowledge)
- Students can engage with academic challenges with regard to both the situated disciplinary context and the students’ own possibilities, interests and disposition as students – their agency
- Students can generate own solutions to academic tasks and situations.

3. Concluding remarks
Models of how to develop academic literacy reflects, in a learning design perspective, different ways to support transition into a university and the transformation of knowledge.

The study skills model aims at supporting students’ acquiring of generic skills, tools and techniques to handle their academic practices; the students shall learn how to study effectively through instrumental tools and techniques. This model has not the intention to resituate knowledge but focuses on what knowledge students should learn in order to participate in an academic practice. The study skills model is based on a cognitive approach to transfer where students are supposed to apply mental representations to handling new tasks. The students are challenged to transfer knowledge from e.g. an academic literacy course or academic literacy handbook to solve academic tasks in the students’ own practices. Design principles for this approach are e.g. that students should develop propositional knowledge of structures of the academic writing genre and procedurally realised routines for the academic writing genre. The academic practice appears in this approach as a static and given academic practice.

The academic literacy socialisation model is a response to a lack of transparency and understanding of the disciplines, the academic language and “the nature of process in the discipline” (Haggis, 2006, p. 529). The focus is on student inculturation in the university and the discipline’s practice through understanding and use of the discipline’s, often implicit, use of genres and discourses. Students should be supported in making the academic language explicit and acting in the context of a certain discipline and this specific discipline’s knowledge culture. This model is based on a situated cognition approach where the students have to interpret and adapt academic literacy knowledge in relation to the situative demands of the students’ specific disciplines and their academic tasks. Design principles in this approach are e.g. that the students should develop an understanding of a discipline’s specific conventions and norms for participation, communication and language use. Furthermore, that the students have developed practical knowledge of using the discipline’s knowledge in specific disciplinary textual practice and academic situations. The academic practice is in this approach a more situated practice that demands resituating actions based on knowledge of the discipline’s ways of thinking, traditions of doing and communicating research and handling academic tasks.
The academic literacies model is a response to a more complex understanding of a specific disciplinary context that demands a more critical, explorative and personal reflective understanding of the academic content. There is no guaranteed entry or easy transition into academia, and many students will experience the university as a challenge to their “values, assumption and habits” (Haggis, 2006, p. 531). The aim in this model is, on the one hand, both personal agency development and situated awareness of disciplines, and, on the other hand, a demand to develop a critical and reflective stance to the same context and the students’ roles in this context. This model is based on a participatory approach to transformation of academic literacy where students are supported to develop awareness of the context-specific nature of their handling of unfamiliar academic tasks and situations. Students are supported to develop a kind of academic agency that makes it possible to participate in an academic practice and in specific disciplines. The pedagogic approach here is what Haggis (2006, p. 531) defines as the idea of “collective inquiry into the nature of specific disciplines”. Academic literacy is dispositions for the collective and critical exploration of aspects of disciplinary practices and unknown futures. Design principles in e.g. this approach is that students should develop a situated awareness of patterns of participation in specific academic contexts and that participation implies resituation of different knowledge domains that both covers knowledge of e.g. the discourse community, the subject matter and genre knowledge.

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