

Displacing preconceptions and replacing capacities: Capitalising learning places in an Australian university

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Many learners exhibit preconceptions that frame and sometimes hinder their knowledge acquisition. Those preconceptions need to be harnessed and where appropriate displaced and replaced with more effective understandings if learning is to be successful. University educators have a crucial role to play in assisting this process. This paper examines the strategies deployed by the authors to displace learners' preconceptions and replace them with more empowering capacities in two distinct learning contexts in a single Australian university. The first is an innovative pre-undergraduate preparatory programme designed for students who would not otherwise enter university. The second is for a diverse range of university undergraduates undertaking environmental studies for the first time. The examination is framed by the notion of multiple forms of capital, some of which students bring with them to these two learning contexts and others of which need to be acquired during the respective course of study. The paper employs an exploratory case study design, augmented by a qualitative analysis of students' and academics' experiences. The interdependent processes of displacing preconceptions and replacing them with heightened capacities are demonstrated to be crucial ingredients of capitalising (on) sustainable and sometimes transformative learning places in an Australian university.