

Truth Telling, Renarrativisation, and Belonging: The Peregrination Pedagogical Framework for Supporting Equity Students in Higher Education

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Abstract

Students entering higher education through Enabling programs frequently experience themselves as outsiders in the academic field. These individuals often feel unfamiliar with, and excluded from, the norms, expectations, and practices of university study, with these perceptions shaped by prior educational experiences and internalised deficit narratives. In contrast, becoming an insider involves developing a sense of legitimacy, confidence, and familiarity with the academic environment, affording students to participate more fully in its practices. While belonging is widely recognised as central to student engagement and persistence, less attention has been given to the pedagogical practices that support the development of belonging among students who initially feel marginalised in higher education. Drawing on qualitative data from eight students enrolled in an Australian Enabling program, this paper examines how educator practices support students' journeys from outsider to insider in the field of university. Building on the Peregrination of Belonging model (James, 2024), the paper introduces the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework, which identifies three interconnected processes through which educators foster belonging and agency: truth telling, renarrativisation, and the development of a subversive habitus. Situated within pedagogical environments characterised by care and dialogic engagement, these processes support students to reinterpret their educational experiences and reconstruct their identities as legitimate participants in higher education.

Keywords: Enabling education; belonging; truth telling; renarrativisation; student identity.

Introduction

Across the global higher education sector, widening participation initiatives have significantly expanded access to university for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds. In Australia, Enabling programs have emerged as an important mechanism for addressing persistent inequities in higher education by providing alternative entry pathways for students who may not meet traditional admission requirements (James et al., 2024). These programs, also known as bridging, access, pathways, pre-tertiary, foundation, or FEE-FREE Uni Ready (FFUR) programs, are designed to support students in developing the academic skills, confidence, and knowledge required to engage successfully with university study. However, while Enabling programs have increased access, they do not automatically resolve the deeper structural and cultural challenges that



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many students encounter when entering the field of university (Bourke, 2012; Bourke et al., 2016; Bunn et al., 2020; James et al., 2024).

Higher education is not a culturally neutral space. Rather, it operates within a framework of implicit norms, disciplinary traditions, and institutional expectations that privilege particular forms of cultural capital and ways of knowing (James, 2024; Wilkins & Burke, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Students are frequently expected to conform their behaviour, learning practices, and communication styles to align to the unspoken ‘rules of the game’ that govern participation in academic environments (Bourdieu, 2005; James et al., 2026; Reay, 2022; Webb et al., 2002; Wilkins & Burke, 2015). For students whose prior educational and social experiences have not afforded them familiarity with these expectations, the transition to higher education can be both disorienting and confronting (James, 2025).

Within this context, Enabling education must be understood as more than a preparatory pathway that equips students with academic skills. It represents a transformative educational space in which students begin to renegotiate their relationship with learning, knowledge, and themselves as learners (Willans, 2010; Willans & Seary, 2007). Research has demonstrated that Enabling programs can foster self-efficacy, resilience, and academic confidence to begin the acquisition of the forms of cultural and social capital required to participate in the field of university (James et al., 2026; Larsen, et al., 2025; Larsen & James, 2022). However, the transition into higher education involves more than developing academic capability. It requires students and educators to reconstruct their sense of identity and to develop their understanding of themselves as ‘legitimate’ in the academic context (Braund et al., 2020, 2022; Hattam & Bilic, 2019; Willans, 2010; Willans & Seary, 2007). Core to this work for higher education educators is the central research question of this paper: How can higher education educators construct a sense of belonging and agency in students who feel like outsiders in the higher education context?

In addressing this question, the paper draws upon insights from previous research examining the experiences of students enrolled in Enabling education and proposes that belonging emerges through three interconnected processes. The first is truth telling (Humphry, 2013), where educators acknowledge structural inequities and make visible the implicit norms that govern participation in higher education. The second is ‘respeaking’ (Humphry, 2013), or as this paper refers to it, ‘renarrativisation’, where teachers, and then young people, reconstruct and renarrativise internalised deficit narratives to reframe their belief of being capable learners. The third is the development of a subversive habitus (James, 2024), where students cultivate the confidence and agency required to navigate and engage with the academic field. Together, these processes provide a framework for understanding how students might move from experiencing themselves as outsiders toward developing a sense of belonging and legitimacy in higher education. Rather than occurring at a single point in the student experience, these processes operate throughout the broader journey of transition into university study. By recognising the role of educators in facilitating this transformation, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions about how pedagogical practices in Enabling education can support the development of belonging and agency for students who have historically been marginalised in higher education systems.

Literature Review

Belonging, Equity, and Participation in Higher Education

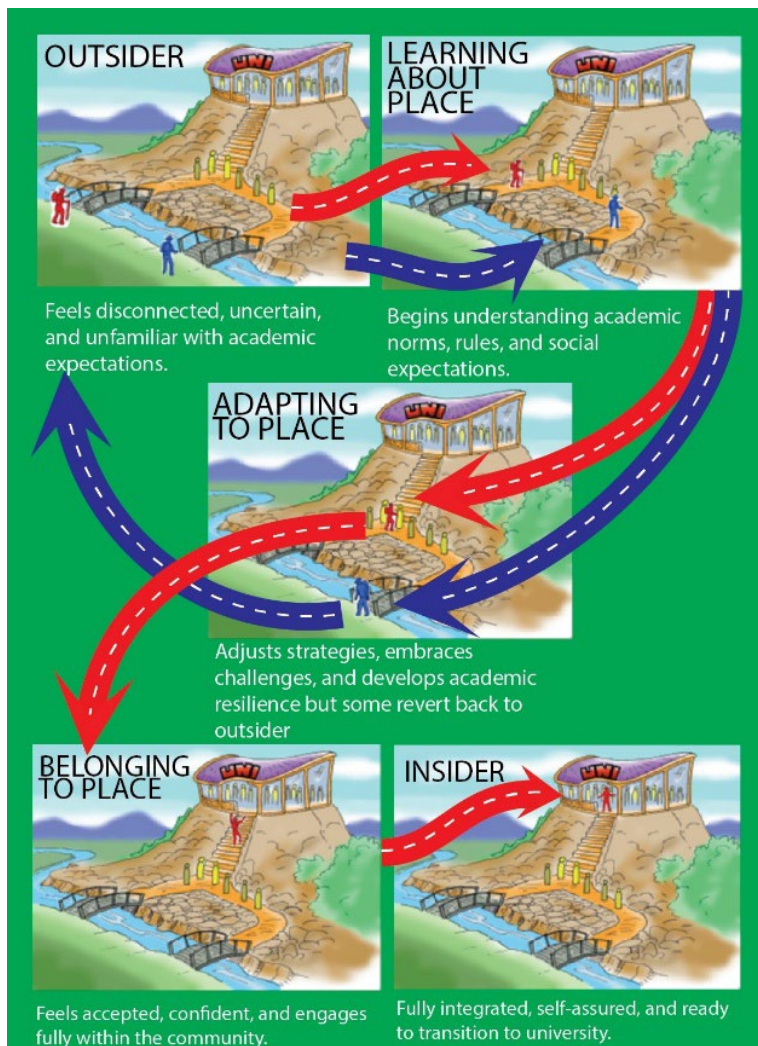
Belonging is increasingly recognised as central to student engagement, persistence, and success in higher education (Allen et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2022; Crawford et al., 2024). Students who experience belonging are more likely to participate actively in learning, engage with peers and educators, and persist through academic challenges, while students who perceive themselves as disconnected or marginalised are at greater risk of disengagement and withdrawal (Cullity, 2006; Pedler et al., 2022). Belonging reflects the extent to which students perceive themselves as accepted, valued, and legitimate members of the university community (Allen et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2022). For students entering higher education through Enabling pathways, belonging is particularly significant, as many navigate unfamiliar institutional expectations while simultaneously negotiating uncertainty regarding their legitimacy as university learners. Further to this, many students entering Enabling programs come from backgrounds characterised by disrupted educational pathways, socioeconomic disadvantage, family responsibilities, or extended periods away from formal education (Hodges et al., 2013; James et al., 2026). These intersecting experiences often shape students’ confidence and perceptions of academic legitimacy as they enter university environments that privilege forms of knowledge, communication, and participation not universally accessible to all learners (Bunn et al., 2020). Consequently, students may experience higher education as unfamiliar terrain, contributing to uncertainty regarding whether they belong in the academic environment (James, 2024).

These experiences cannot be understood solely through individual preparedness or capability. Rather, they reflect broader structural inequalities embedded in higher education systems (Bourke et al., 2016; Bunn et al., 2020). Universities operate through institutional norms and expectations that privilege particular forms of cultural knowledge and academic participation (Bourdieu, 2005; Webb et al., 2002). Students who have not previously encountered these expectations may experience barriers that extend beyond academic skill development, influencing how they interpret their place in university contexts (James, 2024). Institutional discourse frequently positions equity students through deficit-oriented language, including terms such as non-traditional, at risk, or underrepresented (Drury & Charles, 2016; James, 2024). While often intended to identify students requiring additional support, these labels can unintentionally reinforce assumptions that equity students lack the qualities required for academic success (Drury & Charles, 2016). Over time, deficit understandings may become internalised, shaping how students evaluate their capabilities and academic legitimacy. Harwood (2004) describes these internalised understandings as wounded truths: socially constructed narratives that influence how individuals perceive their potential and place in educational environments. Belonging therefore extends beyond social inclusion or emotional connection. It is closely associated with identity formation and academic agency, influencing students' willingness to engage with disciplinary knowledge, contribute to academic discourse, and persist through educational challenges (Allen et al., 2022; Tinto, 2023). Understanding how belonging develops for students entering higher education through Enabling pathways is therefore central to addressing issues of equity and participation in the sector.

Habitus, Capital, and Identity Transformation

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field provide a theoretical lens for understanding how structural inequalities shape participation in higher education (Bourdieu, 1977, 2005; Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Webb et al., 2002). Higher education operates as a social field governed by implicit expectations that privilege particular forms of cultural capital, including familiarity with academic discourse, institutional processes, and disciplinary norms (Lawrence, 2002; Xiao & Chen, 2023). Students entering university with exposure to these expectations are generally better positioned to navigate the academic environment confidently, whereas students lacking such exposure may simultaneously negotiate unfamiliar institutional structures and uncertainty regarding their legitimacy in the field of university (Reay, 2004; James, 2024). Habitus reflects the dispositions individuals develop through their social and cultural experiences, shaping how they perceive and respond to educational environments (James, 2024). These dispositions influence students' expectations, behaviours, and understandings of what feels possible in higher education. When students' prior experiences differ from dominant academic norms, a misalignment may emerge between students' existing dispositions and institutional expectations (Reay, 2004). For many students entering Enabling programs, this misalignment contributes to perceptions of being outsiders in higher education (James, 2024, 2025). Students entering Enabling programs frequently experience uncertainty regarding whether they possess the intellectual capacity, cultural familiarity, or academic capability required to succeed at university (James, 2024; Willans & Seary, 2007). These perceptions are often shaped by previous educational experiences in which students may have been positioned as underachieving or academically incapable. Despite these challenges, many students pursue higher education motivated by aspirations for social mobility, personal transformation, and future opportunity. James (2024) conceptualises this motivation as 'determined hope': a belief that participation in higher education can provide pathways toward different educational and life trajectories.

Participation in Enabling education therefore involves more than acquiring academic skills. It requires students to reconstruct understandings of themselves as learners and develop legitimacy in the field of university (Willans, 2010). The Peregrination of Belonging Framework (James, 2024) conceptualises this process as movement from outsider to insider status, where students progressively develop familiarity with institutional expectations, confidence in academic participation, and a sense of belonging in higher education (see Figure 1).

Figure 1*Peregrination of Belonging*

Identity transformation within higher education involves students questioning previously held beliefs about their capabilities and reconstructing understandings of themselves as capable learners (Willans & Seary, 2007). Central to this process is renarrativisation, through which individuals reinterpret prior experiences and reconstruct internalised deficit understandings into narratives of capability, resilience, and belonging (Harwood, 2004; Humphry, 2013). Through sustained engagement with supportive educational environments, students may begin to replace internalised narratives of inadequacy with stronger perceptions of academic legitimacy and capability.

Educators play a critical role in facilitating this transformation. Humphry (2013) argues that educators possess both the institutional authority and cultural knowledge necessary to make visible the implicit expectations governing participation within higher education. Through pedagogical approaches characterised by trust, dialogue, and relational care, educators create learning environments that support students to challenge internalised deficit narratives and reinterpret themselves as legitimate participants within the academic field (Motta & Bennett, 2018; Seary & Willans, 2020). Such approaches align with a pedagogy of care, which positions students as whole individuals whose educational experiences are shaped by broader social, emotional, and historical contexts (Motta & Bennett, 2018). Within these environments, students are more likely to engage critically with their assumptions about learning, reconstruct understandings of themselves as capable participants, and develop the confidence necessary to participate more fully in higher education. While existing scholarship has established belonging and identity transformation as central to educational transition, less attention has been given to the pedagogical mechanisms

that facilitate these developments within Enabling education contexts. In particular, there remains a need to better understand how educator practices support the reconstruction of student subjectivities and foster belonging and agency within higher education. Building on these insights, this study examines how pedagogical practices, specifically truth telling, renarrativisation, and the development of a subversive habitus, contribute to students' journeys toward belonging within the field of university.

Methodological Positioning

This study adopts a Bourdieusian theoretical framework (Webb et al., 2002) to examine how students entering higher education through Enabling pathways experience the development of belonging and academic agency. The analysis presented in this paper draws upon empirical insights generated through research examining the experiences of students enrolled in an Australian Enabling program (see James, 2024). This study explored the social, cultural, and educational trajectories of equity students as they navigated their transition into higher education. The broader research program from which this paper emerges utilised a case study methodology (Merriam, 1998) to explore the complex social and cultural factors influencing students' participation in Enabling education. In this research (James, 2024), the Enabling program itself constituted the bounded case, while the experiences of individual students provided multiple perspectives through which the broader phenomenon of transition into higher education could be examined. The data informing this paper are drawn from the narrative accounts of eight students enrolled in an Enabling program. Participants were selected as part of the broader case study through purposive sampling, with the primary selection criterion being that students had commenced their Enabling studies in the first teaching term of 2019. This approach enabled the research to follow a cohort of students from the beginning of their engagement with the program and to capture how their experiences evolved throughout their enrolment.

Data were generated through a series of semi-structured interviews, with each participant's interviews conducted across one year or for the duration of their study plan (from one to three teaching terms). The number of interviews ranged from five to 15, depending on the length of their individual study programs. Conducting repeated interviews across the study period allowed the research to capture the unfolding nature of students' experiences while also enabling key themes to be explored consistently across participants (Bryman & Burgess, 2002). The interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis. The analysis drew on Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of habitus, field, and capital, which provide a framework for understanding how social structures shaped individual Enabling students' dispositions and practices in the higher education context. Within this framework, higher education can be understood as a field governed by implicit norms and expectations that privilege particular forms of cultural capital specific to the higher education context (Webb et al., 2002). Students entering the field must learn to navigate these expectations while simultaneously negotiating the dispositions shaped by their prior socialisation and educational experiences.

The present paper extends the empirical insights generated through this research by examining how subjectivities can be challenged in Enabling education. In particular, it focuses on the role of educators in facilitating the 're-narrativisation' of self that allows students to challenge internalised deficit beliefs and develop a sense of legitimacy in the academic field. Through the analytical lens developed in this paper, James's (2024) findings are revisited to examine how pedagogical practices influence the ways students reinterpret their experiences and reconstruct their identities as learners. Attention is given to the role of educator relationships and dialogic interactions in supporting students to challenge deficit understandings and develop self-trust in the academic field. This analysis draws upon the concept of renarrativisation, which describes the process through which individuals reconstruct previously held beliefs about themselves in response to new experiences and affirming interactions. In this way, the analysis does not present new empirical data but rather reinterprets existing findings to foreground the pedagogical conditions through which identity transformation and belonging are enacted.

Findings

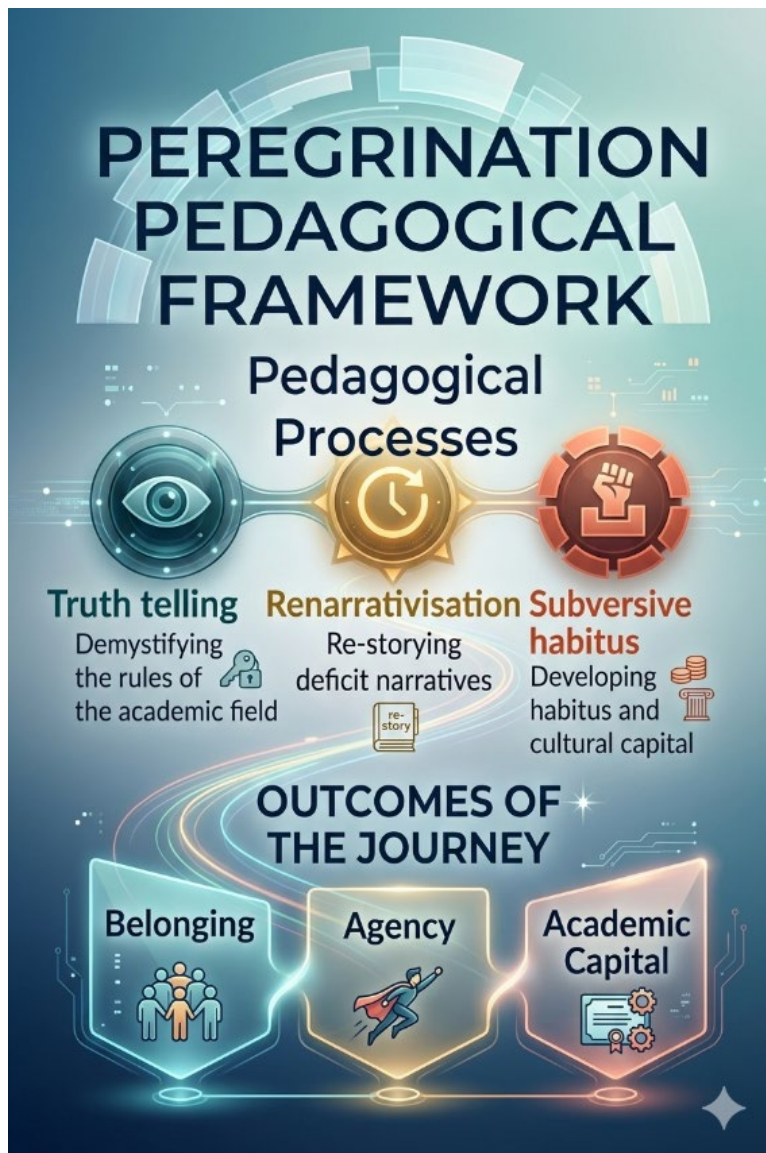
This paper presents the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework (James, 2024; see Figure 2) as a conceptual model explaining how educator practices support students' movement from *outsider* to *insider* within the sub-field of Enabling education. Emerging through re-analysis of narrative accounts from James (2024), the framework foregrounds the pedagogical conditions that support students to develop belonging, agency, and academic capital as they transition into university environments. Students entering higher education through Enabling pathways frequently begin their educational journeys perceiving themselves as outsiders within the field of university (James, 2024). These perceptions are shaped by prior educational experiences, socioeconomic circumstances, and broader social discourses that position equity students as lacking the forms of cultural capital traditionally associated with university participation (James et al., 2026). Consequently, many students arrive

believing they are academically inadequate or do not legitimately belong within higher education. The Peregrination Pedagogical Framework proposes that educators play a central role in disrupting these perceptions through relational pedagogical practices characterised by care, dialogue, and critical reflection (Motta & Bennett, 2018; Seary & Willans, 2020). Three interconnected processes underpin this transformation: truth telling, renarrativisation, and the development of a subversive habitus.

Importantly, these processes do not occur sequentially. Rather, they operate iteratively as students encounter academic challenges, negotiate institutional expectations, and reconstruct their identities as learners throughout their university journey (James, 2024).

Figure 2

Peregrination Pedagogical Framework



Truth Telling

The first process within the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework is truth telling. Humphry (2013) conceptualises truth telling as the deliberate pedagogical practice of exposing structural inequalities and making visible the institutional norms shaping

participation in educational contexts. Students entering Enabling programs frequently interpret academic difficulty as evidence of personal inadequacy rather than recognising broader social and institutional influences contributing to educational participation (James, 2024). Without explicit guidance, the implicit rules of the academic field remain hidden, reinforcing students' perceptions that they lack the intellectual capacity required to succeed. Truth telling disrupts these assumptions by making visible the structural and cultural dynamics that underpin higher education and the deficit understanding that is embedded in the way Enabling students perceive their position in the university context. Both Humphry (2013) and Gibbs (2019) argue that educators must take on the role of truth tellers by creating space for students to confront the limiting beliefs of others and imagine new possibilities for themselves. Through open dialogue, educators can challenge these embedded understandings, explain the conventions of academic discourse, and acknowledge the ways in which institutional practices privilege particular forms of cultural capital (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

Educator relationships emerged as a critical mechanism through which these deficit understandings were disrupted. Students consistently described educator care, belief, and responsiveness as reshaping how they understood themselves as learners. One participant recognised that an “academic genuinely cared and was there to support me in my academic journey” (James, 2024, p. 167). This recognition extended beyond emotional reassurance. It created conditions in which students felt sufficiently safe to ask questions, express uncertainty, and engage more openly with learning. Students also described how educator belief challenged previously internalised assumptions about capability. Participants' explanations demonstrated how they were able to transcend the power differential and benefit from the support provided by the lecturers once they recognised educators genuinely believed in their ability to undertake university study (James, 2024). In these moments, educator relationships functioned not simply as support mechanisms, but as pedagogical interventions disrupting previously established deficit understandings. This relational work extended beyond encouragement to practical responsiveness. One participant described how lecturers “actively worked to help me grasp the concepts” and implemented alternative strategies to “remove the barrier that dyslexia imposed” (James, 2024, p. 168). Such practices made visible that academic struggle was not evidence of inadequacy but rather part of navigating unfamiliar educational expectations.

These findings align with Humphry's (2013) conceptualisation of educators as truth tellers who expose hidden institutional expectations while challenging limiting beliefs students may have inherited about themselves. Through relational pedagogies characterised by openness, care, and dialogue, educators created psychologically safe environments where students could critically examine deficit narratives and reinterpret educational experiences previously understood as personal failure (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). Truth telling therefore functioned not only as acknowledgement of structural inequality, but as a pedagogical mechanism allowing students to challenge inherited assumptions and begin reconstructing their relationship with higher education.

Renarrativisation

While truth telling exposes structural conditions and deficit understandings, renarrativisation represents the transformative process through which students reconstruct how they understand themselves as learners. Rather than merely revisiting prior experiences, renarrativisation involves reworking identity and meaning through dialogue, reflection, and affirming educational experiences (Macapugay & Nakamura, 2024). Many students entering Enabling programs arrived carrying educational narratives shaped by previous experiences of exclusion, academic struggle, or perceived inadequacy (James et al., 2026). These narratives often contributed to deeply internalised understandings that they were not ‘university people’ and reinforced feelings of being outsiders in higher education. Renarrativisation plays a critical role in shifting students from internalised imposter identities toward a more agentic and capable sense of self.

Across participant accounts, students described substantial shifts in how they understood themselves academically. One participant described experiencing “a transformation from initially feeling like an imposter in the university environment” to ultimately embracing a sense of “being intelligent and capable” (James, 2024, p. 183). Another reflected on developing a “newfound sense of vitality” and confidence to engage in conversations and contribute ideas “without any lingering feelings of being an imposter” (James, 2024, p. 183). For some participants, this process involved a decisive break from previously internalised deficit narratives. Students described “no longer perceiving [themselves] as an imposter” and instead beginning to identify themselves as legitimate participants in higher education (James, 2024, p. 183). This shift extended beyond confidence alone. Participants increasingly viewed themselves as capable of participating in academic discourse and navigating university expectations. One participant reflected on becoming “capable ... to meet the expectations of university

life” (James, 2024, p. 189), while another recognised that participation in the program had “proved [they] had the capacity to study” (James, 2024, p. 190).

Importantly, these transformations emerged gradually rather than through isolated moments of success. Renarrativisation unfolded through repeated opportunities of affirmation, challenge, achievement, and reflection. Through sustained engagement with supportive learning environments, students progressively tested alternative understandings of themselves, replacing internalised deficit narratives with stronger perceptions of capability, resilience, and legitimacy. Renarrativisation therefore represents more than confidence development. It reflects deeper identity reconstruction through which students shift from deficit understandings toward agentic understandings of themselves as capable learners with legitimate places in higher education.

Subversive Habitus

The third process within the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework involves the development of a subversive habitus (James, 2024). Drawing upon Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of habitus, this process reflects transformation in students’ dispositions as they acquire cultural capital and develop increasing familiarity with university participation (Reay, 2021). Participant accounts demonstrated that this transformation extended beyond acquiring academic skills. Students increasingly adopted ways of thinking, participating, and engaging aligned with expectations of the higher education field (McLaughlin, 2026). Participants described moving from passive acceptance of information toward more evaluative and critical approaches to learning. Students reflected that they “did not simply accept information” but increasingly questioned evidence sources and critically engaged with information being presented (James, 2024, p. 183). Participants also described increasing confidence engaging in academic conversations and contributing within learning environments. Students reported feeling more capable of “engaging in conversations and expressing my thoughts” (James, 2024, p. 183), alongside increasing confidence navigating academic expectations. One participant described becoming “a capable adult able to meet the expectations of university life” (James, 2024, p. 189).

Importantly, these shifts reflected deeper transformation in students’ dispositions toward higher education rather than simply behavioural adaptation. Participants recognised that their “confidence had grown and my skills have improved” and increasingly believed in their “capacity to undertake higher-level studies” (James, 2024, p. 190). Students’ *sens pratique*, their practical feel for how to operate within the academic field, increasingly reflected familiarity and confidence rather than uncertainty or hesitation (James, 2024). Sector-wide work on Enabling pedagogies has shown that explicit academic literacy teaching and shared curricular approaches help legitimate students’ participation and make the rules of the field visible in order for them to participate in the ‘game’ of higher education (Hattam et al., 2024; Stokes, 2014). Through repeated engagement with academic practices, supportive educator relationships, and opportunities for critical reflection, learners begin to build a different truth about themselves. The notion of subversive habitus does not suggest students abandon existing identities or cultural backgrounds. Rather, it reflects development of hybrid forms of identity and agency that allow students to participate confidently in higher education while resisting deficit understandings previously shaping their perceptions of legitimacy (Crozier et al., 2019; Reay, 2021).

When combined, truth telling, renarrativisation, and the development of a subversive habitus support three interconnected outcomes within the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework: belonging, agency, and academic capital. Students develop a sense of belonging as they begin to recognise themselves as legitimate participants in the academic field. They develop agency as they gain confidence in their capacity to engage, contribute, and persist in their studies and they acquire academic capital through the development of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions required to navigate higher education successfully.

Discussion: Applying the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework

The Peregrination Pedagogical Framework provides a lens through which the experiences of students entering higher education through Enabling programs can be understood. This paper presents the argument that in Enabling programs, students’ understandings of themselves begin to shift as they encounter learning environments characterised by relational teaching and educator support. It is apparent that the pedagogy of care evident in these programs creates conditions of trust and emotional safety that allow students to express uncertainty and engage openly with the learning process (Searly & Willans, 2020). Through honest conversations about the expectations and challenges of university study, educators make visible the implicit norms that shape participation in higher education. While grounded in the context of Enabling education, these pedagogical processes are not confined to this setting. Students entering higher education through a range of pathways,

including first-year cohorts, alternative entry programs, and those returning to study after extended educational gaps, may similarly experience uncertainty regarding their legitimacy in the academic field.

These interactions reflect the importance of the role of truth telling in the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework. By educators explicitly discussing academic conventions and acknowledging the structural inequalities embedded in the higher education sector, they are helping students reinterpret their past experiences. Rather than viewing academic struggle as evidence of personal inadequacy, students may begin to understand these challenges as part of the process of learning as they navigate a new institutional environment. As students progress through their studies, this process intersects with renarrativisation. Students gradually begin to reconstruct their perceptions of themselves as learners. Early expressions of self-doubt become replaced by growing confidence as they experience success in assessments, receive encouragement from educators, and participate more actively in reflexive type activities (James, 2024). Through these experiences, students reframe earlier educational beliefs and renarrativise these to recognise their capacity to succeed in higher education. Over time, these processes contribute to the emergence of a subversive habitus (Webb et al., 2002). As students acquire academic knowledge and familiarity with university practices, their dispositions toward learning shift. These changes reflect not only the development of academic skills but also a transformation in how students perceive themselves in relation to the field of university (James, 2024). In this way, the development of a subversive habitus contributes directly to the accumulation of academic capital, while simultaneously reinforcing students' sense of belonging and strengthening their agency as learners in the academic environment. As such, the processes of truth telling, renarrativisation, and the development of a subversive habitus can be understood as pedagogical practices that extend beyond Enabling programs. They offer a transferable framework for educators seeking to support student belonging and agency across diverse higher education contexts.

On a broader scale, when considered alongside the phases of the Peregrination of Belonging Framework (James, 2024), the experiences of students as they transition through an Enabling program illustrate the progression from outsider to insider. Students enter higher education as 'outsiders', often uncertain of their place and influenced by prior educational experiences that shape their perceptions of themselves as learners. Through their engagement with Enabling programs, students begin 'learning about place', developing an understanding of the norms and expectations that govern participation in higher education. As they continue their studies, students move toward 'adapting to place', gradually developing academic confidence and recognising their capacity to participate in the learning environment. This progression contributes to a growing sense of 'belonging to place', where students begin to identify themselves as legitimate participants in the university community. By the later stages of their journey, many students demonstrate characteristics associated with becoming 'insiders', expressing confidence in their academic abilities and articulating longer-term educational aspirations (James, 2024). The movement across these phases reflects both a transformation in identity and the development of agency as students come to recognise their place in the field of higher education.

Within the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework, this transformation is made possible through the role educators play in creating pedagogical environments grounded in care and dialogue (Seary & Willans, 2020). When educators take on the role of truth tellers, they make visible the structural expectations and implicit norms of higher education, allowing students to critically reflect on previously internalised deficit narratives. Through this process, students begin to reinterpret their educational experiences and reconstruct their identities as capable learners through the process of renarrativisation. Over time, these shifts contribute to the development of a subversive habitus, through which students gain the confidence, agency, and cultural awareness required to navigate and participate in the field of university as insiders. Collectively, these processes give rise to three key outcomes: the development of belonging, the strengthening of student agency, and the accumulation of academic capital. Framed in this way, the Peregrination Pedagogical Framework offers not only a conceptual account of student transformation, but a pedagogical lens through which educator practice can be examined, enacted, and extended across higher education contexts.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that fostering belonging among students entering higher education through Enabling programs requires more than providing access to academic skills. Students often begin their educational journeys with subjectivities shaped by prior experiences of educational marginalisation and internalised deficit understandings. Supporting these students therefore involves pedagogical practices that enable them to reinterpret their experiences and reconstruct their understandings of themselves as capable learners. Drawing on empirical insights from student interviews, this paper introduced the Peregrination

Pedagogical Framework, which identifies three interconnected processes that support students' journeys from outsider to insider in the field of university: truth telling, renarrativisation, and the development of a subversive habitus. Situated within pedagogical environments characterised by care, dialogue, and relational engagement, these processes enable students to challenge internalised deficit beliefs and develop the confidence, skills, and knowledge required to participate fully in higher education. This reflects the accumulation of academic capital, of which academic skills are only a small part, alongside the development of belonging and agency. The findings highlight the central role educators play in shaping students' experiences of belonging. When educators engage students in honest conversations about the expectations of higher education and create spaces where uncertainty can be expressed safely, they open opportunities for identity reconstruction and academic agency. These outcomes—belonging, agency, and academic capital—are not discrete endpoints but interrelated dimensions of student transformation that emerge through sustained engagement with pedagogical practices grounded in care, dialogue, and critical reflection. Through such practices, Enabling programs can function not only as pathways into university but also as transformative educational spaces in which students begin to recognise themselves as legitimate participants in the academic field. Although developed within an Enabling context, the framework has broader relevance for educators working across the higher education sector, particularly in supporting students navigating transition, re-engagement with study, or non-traditional entry pathways.

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Please cite this article as:

James, T., Barnes, N., & Muir, T. (2026). Truth telling, renarrativisation, and belonging: The Peregrination Pedagogical Framework for supporting equity students in higher education. *Student Success*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.63608/ssj.4023>

This article has been accepted for publication in *Student Success*. Please see the Editorial Policies under the 'About' section of the Journal website for further information.

Student Success: A journal exploring the experiences of students in tertiary education.



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