Study Skills: Neoliberalism's perfect Tinkerbell.

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Abstract
We argue that current approaches to Study Skills support are presented as being a panacea for resolving the issues presented by neoliberal approaches to educational expansion. We argue that for such a panacea to be believed pedagogically effective, four key tenets must be adhered to: Study skills is a definable entity; it is valuable for every subject; it can be embedded, and; Study Skills helps students succeed in their subjects. We argue these tenets are devoid of any sound pedagogical basis, yet that they are ideal for, and align with, neoliberal ideologies and free market political economy. We consider the organizational structuration of Study Skills as underpinned by Lukes's third dimension of power, outlining how Study Skills represents a constitutive fantasy, a magical Tinkerbell for all to believe in that solves everyone's problems. We propose HE dispels this Tinkerbell by ceasing to believe in it, and instead resources subject-based support.

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Introduction

"No. You see children know such a lot now, they soon don't believe in fairies, and every time a child says 'I don't believe in fairies', there is a fairy somewhere that falls down dead" (Barrie, 1911).

'Study Skills' support assumes many titles – it can be 'Study Skills', 'Academic Skills' 'Academic Support', 'Writing support', or similar. Nevertheless, at its core are common rhetoric and claims. These can be easily located online. For example, by appealing to 'Current Students' that "Whether you're struggling with your workload, don't fully understand the content, or just think your marks could improve but aren't sure how, there are a range of people, places and programs that provide academic support" (Newcastle, 2020). Alternatively, with help in 'Developing your Skills' the "The Academic Language Support Service, as well as the Online Writing Centre offer support and a wealth of resources for both home and international students who want to make the transition between ordinary English and the academic language expected from you in your work at University" (Loughborough, 2020). Such claims are made globally. The University of Melbourne, for example, has an 'Academic Skills Hub' with the strapline 'Enabling students to realise their full academic potential and achieve excellence.' In line with other HE institutions it has resources 'For undergraduates', 'For Graduates' and also, importantly, 'For Staff'. The latter with the links 'Embed academic skills (workshops, resources, training, etc)' or 'Refer a student' (Melbourne, 2020).

We do not consider this information new or surprising. Such support is ubiquitous in HE worldwide. Increasingly, such support is provided by centrally based units, commonly located in the library. From this centre, support flows for 'academic skills', 'workshops for study skills', 'academic writing', 'essay writing', 'referencing', and so on, offered or requested where required. Increasingly, staff can ask for help from the centre to 'embed' skills into their curriculum (cf. MacFarlane, 2011). The belief is that such support is precisely that: support. It is believed to help students and lecturers, to improve the 'student experience', to give students the support they need, lecturers the confidence to send students, and the peace of mind to know that if students are struggling, support exists to help. This belief is, however, only sustainable if Study Skills does what it claims to; but does it? Is the belief it helps with the elements of academe it claims to accurate? Or is it something that cannot do what it claims to do? Is it therefore something which exists purely because people either believe, or are perhaps channelled to behave in ways, or 'routinized' (Giddens, 1984) to believe, that it works? Perhaps because it ideally helps serve and further the ideological interests and political economy of the dominant paradigm in today's globalizing world and in HE worldwide: neoliberalism? And even if it may be persuading people to act in ways that run counter to their own best interests (Lukes, 2004)?

As far as the authors are aware, no published peer review research involving components such as control groups (cf. Sternberg & Bhana, 1986) demonstrate the success of Study Skills support. Indeed, any control group type research that exists where the performance of students who attended 'learning skills' workshops has been compared with the performance of those who did not, finds "they did not perform any better or worse than the students who did not experience the learning skills sessions in their first-year

assessments" (Ramsden, 1987, p.279). Often, studies note that teaching generic skills is actually ineffective (Doyle, 2019), and, notably, any studies that do claim the efficacy of Study Skills commonly present data that show the impact of subject specific support rather than Study Skills (e.g. Cook et al., 2019 below, also Doyle, 2019; Kirschner et al, 2006). Most confirmatory material has "amounted to little more than user testimonials" (cf. Sternberg & Bhana, 1986) in the form of reviews or self-claims in respect to core Study Skills texts (e.g. Cottrell, 2019); in surveys relating to the perceived importance (Abayadeera & Watty, 2014) or ability to do study skills (Rodriguez & Armallini, 2017); or in enhancing students' ability to do study skills (Mason, 2019) rather than improve subject study.

Is it the case then, as will be argued here, that Study Skills is in fact a constitutive fantasy, a collective belief that structures 'reality' to protect believers from something lacking or unpalatable and serves someone else's interests? Analogously, In J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan (1911), Tinkerbell only lives because the audience believes in fairies. Concomitantly, when people cease to believe in fairies, fairies cease to exist. We argue here that, in the same way, Study Skills exists because people believe in its power to fulfil the claims it makes of itself, and that once people cease to believe in its power, then more pedagogically suitable alternatives can be explored.

The remainder of our paper is structured as follows. Firstly, we consider both the pedagogical tenability of Study Skills, by questioning four tenets upon which the belief that Study Skills is effective must rest. Secondly, we argue instead that the relationship of Study Skills to the ideology and political economy of neoliberalism (Higgins & Larner, 2016; Bonnano, 2017) is both an extremely close one, and a highly reflective one. Thirdly, we turn to the structuration and power underlying Study Skills approaches and their appeal. Here we consider the organizational structuration (Giddens, 1984) of Study Skills through the perspective of Lukes' (2004) third dimension of power, that being "'to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things'" (Lukes, 2004, p.11). We suggest that Study Skills is organized, promoted and 'reified' to persuade and 'routinize' people over time to act and follow a course of action that runs counter to their best interests. We conclude by arguing that people (students, lecturers and others) cease to believe in this Tinkerbell, and focus on providing more pedagogically effective subject specific focused student support where it is felt needed.

The pedagogical tenability of Study Skills

Study Skills, in one form or another, is commonly considered beneficial in the HE literature. Some studies champion 'generic' approaches to Study Skills (e.g. Gettinger & Seibert, 2002), and even though others suggest we 'do away' with generic approaches, they simultaneously advocate Study Skills be embedded in the subject (Wingate, 2006; 2007), thereby enforcing the belief that Study Skills, in this form, are effective. Nevertheless, critiques of student support and learning from other fields exist. For example, the field of educational psychology presents strong evidence that minimal pedagogical guidance in student learning is ineffective, and that students need close guidance through subject-based models and examples (Kirschner et al., 2006). Also, research in vocational education notes the "chimera-hunt" nature of the "disastrous exercise in futility" that is the "pursuit of such

skills" as core transferable skills (Hyland & Johnson, 1998. p.170). Yet, such arguments have not been applied to any extent as far as these authors are aware in relation to Study Skills. Indeed, in seeking support for their own learning, the belief is adhered to that students must be independent and develop their ability in 'learning to learn' (cf. Wingate, 2007) in a learning focused (as opposed to teaching focused) paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

Here, we argue the belief that Study Skills is pedagogically effective consists of the following four key tenets, which we outline here first and then consider in greater depth below:

- **Tenet 1:** It has to be believed that Study Skills is definable and identifiable, as, if it were believed not to be, what exactly is it that is being learned or taught?
- **Tenet 2:** It has to be believed that the 'skills' that Study Skills teaches transfer to all contexts and subjects, as, otherwise, how could they be taught in generic classes or through generic materials, and what would be the value in teaching them?
- **Tenet 3:** It has to be believed that Study Skills can be embedded into a subject, and work with the subject to help support students, as, otherwise, why would try to do so? And why not simply provide extra support in the subject itself?
- **Tenet 4:** It has to be believed that when students' subject performance improves, this is the result of their having attended or accessed Study Skills, as if this were not believed to be so, what would be the value in having Study Skills?

Tenet 1: Study Skills can be defined

For the belief to be maintained that Study Skills can be defined, there are arguably three key elements. Firstly, definitions of 'Study Skills' need to be uniform and clear. Secondly, the interpretations of what characteristics constitute 'Study Skills' need to be consistent. Thirdly, 'Study Skills' as a key term should be used to describe what is undertaken in such support.

Regarding the first of these elements, Study Skills is *not* defined uniformly or clearly. For example, one definition states that, "generic skills are concrete measurable skills which might be described as the 'what' of learning in contrast to metacognitive and subject-related skills which relate to the process or the 'how' of learning" (Allan & Clarke, 2007, p.72). Yet, in another, "study skills are approaches applied to learning that assist students to be successful in schools in a way of passing an exam or even obtaining good grades" (Bulent, Hakan & Aydin, 2015, p. 1355). Further, and alternatively, that "generally, study skills are those skills and habits which are necessary for understanding and retrieving information" (Wolfe, 2009, p.262). Many others also define Study Skills differently (e.g. Entwistle, 1960; Bailey, 2010; Durkin & Maine, 2002). Thus, no single definition of 'Study Skills' exists and, consequently, for pedagogical considerations, whilst it may still be possible to deliver it in different subject areas from the centre, that Study Skills cannot be defined makes it more of a challenge to identify or encapsulate it. Notably in relation to neo-liberalism (see below), such a wide range of definitions enhances the universalizability of Study Skills, meaning it can be delivered to a whole range of subject areas by those who do not need to have specific specialist subject knowledge.

Regarding the second element of what core characteristics constitute 'Study Skills', there is *no* consistency. For example: "many researchers accepted that studying skills include the behaviours such as preparing for exams (Purdue & Hattie, 1999); doing homework, doing revision, preparing for presentations and projects (Wagner, Schober & Spiel, 2008); use of library (Demircioglu Memis, 2007)" (Bulent, Hakan & Aydin, 2015, p.1356). Alternatively, that "according to Hoover and Patton (1995), study skills include the competencies associated with acquiring, recording, organizing, synthesizing, remembering, and using information" (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002, p.350). Moreover, the distributed importance of these 'skills' is inconsistent, with particular 'Study Skills' are. For example, that "lecture comprehension is the key study skills competency for college students" (Wolfe, 2009, p.264). Consequently, as Study Skills is considered to have many different core characteristics, pedagogically, it is challenging to know what to focus on.

In terms of the third element, there are many different terms used to denote 'Study Skills'. These could be "generic skills" (Allan & Clarke, 2007, p.72); "study skills" (Bulent, Hakan & Aydin, 2015, p.1355); "studying skills" (ibid. p.1356); "academic skills" (Barkas, 2011, p. 265), or that "the terms study skills and study strategies are used interchangeably" (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002, p.351). All these issues in relation to defining Study Skills are mirrored in the vocation related education literature. As Hyland and Johnson (1998, p.165) note: "in spite of the widespread use of skill-talk by people on all sides of education and industry, there has never been any agreement about the meaning or applicability of the concept of skill in education and training." Pedagogically therefore, once again educators are faced with the dilemma that it is challenging to identify what to teach and focus on.

In other words, it is not possible to define 'Study Skills' because there are such wide-ranging definitions of the term, of what constitutes the term, and of different terms for the same concept. This make it extremely challenging to conclude what is needed or how it should be applied. On the one hand, it is possible to see a 'Study Skills' argument along the lines of: the fact that there are so many different elements is actually a *benefit* as it means it can be applied to anyone and every subject. On the other, this is meaningless when we consider (see below) that such elements become unique in the context of the subject and cannot be removed from it (cf. Pilcher & Richards, 2016; Richards & Pilcher, 2019). Critically, if we cannot say what it is, we cannot describe to students what is needed. In other words, it is pedagogically untenable as it is not feasible to teach something with such a wide range of definitions, such a wide range of categories and such a wide range of different terms to describe it.

Tenet 2: Study Skills consist of generic, and thus transferrable skills

The belief that Study Skills are generic, transferable skills is highly appealing, and can be found in early (e.g. Entwistle, 1960) and more recent literature (e.g. Mason, 2019). For example, that "study skills are associated with positive outcomes across multiple academic content areas and for diverse learners" (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002, p.350). Further that, "study skills are critical to academic success, particularly given the independent nature of postsecondary education" (Wolfe, 2009, p.262). Indeed, as Gilbert et al (2004, p.375) note, "the development of generic skills has been motivated by the *belief* [our italics] that there are skills which all graduates should possess, and which would be applicable to a wide range of tasks and

contexts beyond the university setting." Here then, where there is a belief in the transferability of generic skills, their value for employability (contra. Hyland & Johnson, 1998), or for learning is often cited. Pedagogically, however, this assumes that the skills required to be a bricklayer transfer to those required to be a chef, or an accountant (cf. Hyland & Johnson, 1998). Yet, if educators deliver one Study Skills class to bricklayers, whether the same class will transfer to chefs or to accountants is questionable, given each individual will require knowledge of very different applications of the skill of, e.g., 'writing' or of what a 'report' should consist of and do?

Arguably, it will not transfer (Richards & Pilcher, 2019), and both extremely negative student perceptions of generic courses, and a vast body of subject specific 'Skills' literature exist. Regarding negative student perceptions, much literature reports that students' value discipline specific support over generic skills. For example, Durkin and Main (2002, p.25) found that for the approaches they studied, "attendance rates of 80 and 87 per cent for the two discipline-based approaches, compared to nil attendance for the generic Study Skills course, indicate a high level of student motivation for discipline related support." Further, in other research, that findings, "suggest that students value those aspects of the program that are focused on the content of the course rather than the more generic language and academic skills" (Baik & Greig, 2009, p.410). As suggested by Wingate (2007, p.394) "obviously, extra-curricular skills courses cannot help students to assimilate into the practices of their discipline." In the words of a lecturer interviewed by Bailey (2010, p.5) "Study Skills is patronising to students. It abstracts out an organic process and disconnects it from the real context."

Regarding subject specific Study Skills literature, much literature is devoted to defining 'Study Skills' as subject-specific skills. This is both for skills that are specific to a subject, and those delivered specifically *in* a subject. For example: 'fundamental movement skills in young children' (Zeng et al., 2019); 'communication skills' for Nordic pharmacy students (Svensberg et al., 2018); 'patterning and spatial skills in early mathematics development' (Rittle-Johnson et al., 2019) and; 'non-technical skills through virtual patients for undergraduate nursing students' (Peddle et al., 2019).

Thus, many skills specific to particular subjects exist (e.g. a historian may not need to know 'fundamental movement skills in young children'), and even those skills ostensibly applicable in more than one area must be appropriated to the specific discipline context in order to be any use. To draw on the work of Powell (1968, cited in Hyland & Johnson, 1998, p.45) to illustrate why this is important: "epithets such as 'careful', 'vigilant', and 'thorough' are without meaning until the details of their context and application have been filled in and, thus 'it follows from this that they will be field-dependent and of low generality'." As Wittgenstein observes; with words, "what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their *application*[2] is not presented to us so clearly" (Wittgenstein, 1953, PI, 11). Similarly, rather than attempting to study 'Study Skills' in a generic, transferable form, the 'skills' must be applied in their context, and must inevitably differ.

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Tenet 3: Study Skills can be embedded into a subject area

Accepting that Study Skills can be 'embedded' in a subject is essential to believing Study Skills are valuable. Much research advocates and promotes (but does not provide proof for) this belief, for example, "suggesting that the embedding of these skills within subject modules over a three-year program *might* [our italics] be efficacious" (Allan & Clarke, 2007, p.73). Other research claims its "findings indicate that students value a highly discipline-specific approach to language and academic skills support and that regular participation in a content-based ESL program can lead to positive learning outcomes for students" (Baik & Greig, 2009, p. 401). Further, that "academic skills, including writing, study and key skills, are more effective if taught in a subject / disciplinary-specific context" (Barkas, 2011). Many other articles argue similarly (e.g. Wingate, 2006; Kennelly, Maldoni & Davies, 2010; O'Neill & Guerin, 2015).

Such literature argues that although generic Study Skills approaches are ineffective, it is still 'Study Skills' that are being taught. Here, arguments generally state that Study Skills are important, but are only effective once 'embedded' in the subject. Inevitably, the belief here is that what is being taught, and what helps students, is Study Skills. Yet, if, as shown above, subjects are so very different, and the skills they require are so subject specific, a key question arises: is it possible to 'embed' Study Skills in the subject, or is it in actual fact the subject itself that is being taught? Indeed, when Baik and Greig (2009, p.401) write that "students' value a highly discipline-specific approach to language and academic skills" they illustrate their argument with the findings that a content-based course was what students' valued. In their case, the course was an adjunct tutorial to a module of 'European Architecture', and was thus an additional course that covered language and academic skills, and also subject content. In student feedback, the students highlighted how the key aspects they found useful were 'reviewing lectures' (72%) and 'exam revision' (over 50%), but aspects such as 'Study Skills' (5%) or 'grammar' (5%) were not valued at all. Similarly, Durkin and Main (2002, p.24), when relating the success of "discipline-based study skills courses" drew the conclusion that "the key factor in determining their effectiveness is that they are discipline-based rather than generic. They are therefore fully embedded in the degree course" (ibid., p.26). Critically, Durkin and Main go on to note that "all the materials used are directly relevant to the students' degree and the assessments" (ibid., p.26). Here again then, it was the subject that was being taught rather than Study Skills, and, notably, "throughout the course sample answers and assignment/examination questions from the BBIT [BSc Business Information Technology] course were used to illustrate the teaching" (Durkin & Main, 2002, p.29).

Many similar examples exist (Hill, Tinker & Catterall, 2010; Hilsdon, 2018; Kennelly et al., 2010; Kerby & Romine, 2009), and, notably (see section on neoliberalism below), such subject embedded courses are successful because they use subject specialists to deliver the material. As Kennelly et al (2010, p.61) note: "discipline management specialists working in conjunction with English language specialists provide a reconsideration of teaching and learning strategies and modes of assessment that lead to better outcomes." This element is particularly notable in an example reported by Cook, Thompson and Diaz-Lopez (2019) where first year undergraduates were initially taught Study Skills on a compulsory zero-credit bearing course, but it was found students had low engagement. Consequently, the subject tutor leading the project redesigned the course so it "pursued an embedded approach, and

aligned the course with a compulsory credit bearing course 'Introduction to Politics and International Relations'" (Cook et al, 2019, p.1). Here, the course was thus taught in the subject by a subject specialist. Yet, it is nevertheless still believed that skills are being taught, as here "this meant that the skills were designed to support the assessment in IPIR [Introduction to Politics and International Relations] (essay and exam), and the skills and exercises were conducted in the context of the reading materials on the course" (ibid, p.1). We argue that such beliefs and claims that it is Study Skills that are being embedded are misplaced, and that instead, students are being taught the subject. Even highly discipline-specific approaches to language with the support of approaches such as Academic Literacies (Lea & Street, 2006) would need the benefit of subject specialists and, if successful, would be similar to 'embedded' Study Skills in that they would be teaching the subject discipline.

Tenet 4: Mastery of Study Skills enables subject success

Accompanying a belief in the three tenets above is the concomitant belief that students' successful performance is due to the success of Study Skills provision rather than in-depth content based study and high-level subject mastery. A belief that Study Skills provision helps in this way is integral to believing that the Tinkerbell of Study Skills exists, as if this were not the case, what would the value be in having or promoting it?

Yet, it is arguable that attributing any improvement in subject knowledge and ability to Study Skills when it is the subject that is being focused on is an error of confusing cause and consequence (Nietzsche, 1888). By way of illustration, Nietzsche relates the story of the famous Italian person Cornaro, who was celebrated for having great longevity as a result of his meagre diet, whereas in fact it was his genes for longevity that led to his only being able to follow a meagre diet. Analogously, rather than effective Study Skills being an indication of subject mastery in students, it is arguable that it is subject mastery in students that enables the display of effective Study Skills. As noted by Finkel, (2018, p.28), "the skills needed to be flexible, agile and collaborative *are developed by mastering content[3].*" Such skills would be highly context-bound and, corroborative of the argument that such skills are not transferable, then the demonstration of them will not be either. In other words, if Study Skills themselves are not transferable, then neither is evidence of them; the person who can demonstrate good presentation skills in astro-physics could only do so with subject mastery, and, if asked to demonstrate such skills to talk about design or history, would arguably be at a loss for words. This, however, would not be indicative of poor Study Skills, rather, it would show a lack of subject mastery.

Study Skills and neoliberal ideology and political economy.

Believing that Study Skills is the cause of success, and can be embedded into a subject course, because it has core transferable characteristics valuable to all regardless of its many definitions, may be pedagogically untenable, but to neoliberal ideology and political economy it is a perfect fit. Neoliberalism, or neoproprietarism given its close links to the sacrilization of property (Piketty, 2020) has been defined in many ways (Peck, 2010) and is underpinned by numerous concepts of rights and laws (Plant, 2011). Nevertheless, despite these differences,

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[3] Our italics

and despite differences in opinions amongst neo-liberal thinkers regarding elements such as the extent of the involvement of the state in society (Plant 2011), a number of commonalities in relation to neoliberal ideology and political economy exist. Importantly, regarding how accepted neoliberalism is, it is noted that since the 1970s and 1980s, it has established "an increasingly stubborn grip" with "its ideology of pro-market governance…. become[ing] increasingly normalized" (Peck, 2010, p.xi). This is with the results that "to many, neoliberalism has become practically indistinguishable from the alleged "logic" of globalization – it seems to be everywhere, and it seems to be all there is" (Peck, 2010, p.xi).

Regarding common themes of its ideology, "fundamentally, proprietarian [and hence neoliberal] ideology rests not only on a promise of social and political stability but also on an idea of individual emancipation through property right" (Piketty, 2020, p.120). Integral to this ideology is a "discourse of meritocracy and entrepreneurship" (Piketty, 2010, p.2), where the concept of human capital, i.e. that "earnings would rise with the amount invested in education and training" (Becker, 2011, p.xiii) is closely linked by many as "a logical component of the capital structure of the economy" (Lewin, 2011, p.146) and with neoliberal thinkers such as Von Hayek. For neoliberals, the role of the state in society is minimal (or nomocratic (Plant, 2011)): to protect people's negative rights to pursue particular goals rather than provide and direct benefits and positive rights for people (or telocratic (Plant, 2011)). Similarly, this then ensures a generality and universality in what is administered: "generality and universality are part of the nomocratic order and the movement from telocratic to nomocratic orders is part of progressive human development" (Plant, 2011, p.36). For neoliberal ideology, such universality means all laws should be what Plant (2011, p.37) terms 'compossible' or, "capable of being discharged by all people in similar circumstances….. [and]… capable of being claimed simultaneously by all right holders."

The superiority of free markets and of competition as being the guardians and guides of economic development (cf. Hayek, Friedman, Becker etc) is also key to neoliberal ideology, and where the state and the law are involved, it is to ensure that conditions for the free market and competition are created (Plant, 2011). In turn, this means that with regard to political economy, neoliberalism is underpinned by competitiveness, which in turn is considered to lead to greater profitability and economic development (Hayek, 1980, Friedman, 1982).

Simultaneous to neoliberalism's ubiquitous encroachment in relation to thinking about globalization and economics (Peck, 2010), is its ubiquitous encroachment in education and in the HE sector (Olsen & Peters, 2005; McCarthy, 2009; McGettigan, 2013; Malkin & Chanock, 2018). In education, and particularly in HE, neoliberal ideologies are considered to underpin numerous managerial approaches to political economy goals of maximising profits. These consist of increased massification (McCarthy, 2009; Thornton, 2015) of student numbers, of virtualization (McCarthy, 2009) through ensuring materials and content are available and deliverable online, and by bottom-line fiscalization through cost cutting and by outsourcing roles and through increasing temporary contracts to staff who are able to teach a range of areas (Universities and College Union, 2013, cf. MacFarlane, 2011). Further, neoliberal goals of universalizability (Plant, 2011) are reflected in the fact that "neoliberals want educators to be neutral providers of decontextualised information" (Saunders, 2007, p.4) that is accessible to all, and deliverable to all. Moreover, neoliberal ideas of human capital

(Becker, 1993) and individual investment operate within the ideologies of individuals as being responsibilized (Bonnano, 2017) to direct and take care of their own learning, and to be resilient (Higgins & Larner, 2017) and to ensure they do well.

What then, of how these ideas align with Study Skills? Firstly, the idea of Study Skills as being delivered from the centre and of value to all (Tenets 1 and 2 above) aligns perfectly with neoliberal ideas of universalizability (cf. Plant, 2011). It also aligns with ideas that human beings without any high level of subject knowledge can deliver it (cf. Saunders, 2007, and Tenet 3 above) and be thus employed on less favourable (Universities & College, 2013), or more economically competitive (cf. Hayek, 1982), contractual terms. It is also highly reflective of a light-touch nomocratic type body (Plant, 2011) that students may go to should they wish to, thereby protecting their negative rights (cf. Hayek, 1982; Plant, 2011). Yet, it is not forced upon them as would be in a telocracy (Plant, 2011). Admittedly, where lecturers request that Study Skills be embedded in their programs, this can be interpreted as more telocratic in aim. However, this must be balanced with the fact that the existence of Study Skills support allows management to justify neoliberal political economies of massification (cf. Thornton, 2015), as the help exists for lecturers and students despite larger classes, and also with the fact that where students find such support effective, it is the subject-content that is valued (contra. Tenet 4). Furthermore, as it is named Study Skills, it can still be marketed and framed as being universally applicable to all (cf. Hayek, 1980). Importantly, Study Skills also allows the institutions to shift the responsibility for learning to the learners, who are expected to be responsibilised (cf. Bonnano, 2017) and resilient (Higgins & Larner, 2017) to access the support available if required. This could be "Whether you're struggling with your workload, don't fully understand the content, or just think your marks should improve but don't know how" (Newcastle, 2020). Critically, it allows an institution to argue that if students do not do well, it could perhaps be because of their failure to take advantage of the support on offer to them (cf. Tenet 4), and this argument could be made to both students, and also to lecturers. Finally, an effective Study Skills centre can be used as an effective marketing tool to appeal to prospective students (McGettigan, 2013), thereby helping institutions sell themselves in a competitive market (cf. Hayek, 1980), and (in a neoliberal ideology) improving the quality for all; as the former UK Universities Minister David Willetts encapsulated this ideological view of neoliberal reforms of education in the UK: "It's the rising tide that lifts all boats" (Willetts, 2011).

Structuring and persuading people to act against their own best interests

How has the current system come about? and How is the current system able to justify its existence? We consider these questions in turn here although they do overlap at times. In relation to the first question, how has the current system come about? We draw on the work of Anthony Giddens (1984), specifically that of structuration theory. Current Study Skills approaches have evolved over a long period of time (cf. Giddens, 1984) as neoliberalism has embedded itself (with pace from the 1970s and 1980s onwards (Peck, 2010; Piketty, 2020)), and has become the system of how students and staff now approach Study Skills. In other words, the system of study skills exists through a duality of structure (Giddens, 1984) whereby

the system itself has been formed over time, and simultaneously reinforced and continued by people carrying out the practices within it, who are "chronically implicated in its production and reproduction" (Giddens, 1984, p. 374). In this way it is routinized in line with neoliberal ideologies and political economies, whereby "routine, psychologically linked to the minimizing of unconscious sources of activity, is the predominant form of day-to-day social activity" and that "in the enactment of routines agents [i.e. human beings] sustain a sense of ontological security" (Giddens, 1984, p.282). The ontological security is provided by how well Study Skills matches and supports the dominant paradigm of neoliberalism.

Notably, in terms of individuals' actions, Giddens talks of two types of consciousness. One is discursive consciousness, where individuals are able to articulate verbally why they are doing what they do, and the other is practical consciousness, which Giddens (1984, p. 375; p xxx) describes as individuals acting according to what they "know (believe) about social conditions" but where "a very wide area of knowledgeability is simply occluded from view." Analogously, Lecturers can recommend Study Skills, and students can verbalise the value of Study Skills, but the actual knowledgeability of what goes on in Study Skills support may not be known until it is attended. And yet, by continually recommending Study Skills to students, and by students continually attending Study Skills Support, its structure is continued. To use an analogy from Giddens, staff and students have had the walls of the room in which they can move around slowly built for them and they have become accustomed to them, but these walls limit where they can go and obscure what alternative paths are beyond them.

Giddens also comments on the importance of critiquing and questioning the status quo and existing social systems, and it is in this vein that we turn to the second question: How is the current system able to justify its existence? Here we draw on the work of Steven Lukes (2004 (1st edition 1976)). Lukes outlines three dimensions of power. One dimensional power focuses on observable behaviour, overt conflicts and the manifestation of political participation through people's choices, decisions, and actions. Two dimensional power considers both overt and covert observable actions, and both decision and non-decision making. Three dimensional power then considers the use of power in a way so that people act (or refrain from acting) against their own best interests and desires. It is through the use of this third dimension, we suggest, that neoliberal ideologies and political economies have been able to structure approaches to Study Skills to attain their current form.

Lukes's work in its first edition generated much debate and critique (see Bradshaw 1976; Isaacs 1987) which Lukes addressed in a later edition by drawing on the work of Charles Tilly (1991) to incorporate both structures and behaviour (cf. Giddens, 1984) into the third dimension of power. This could be through the use of structures (Giddens, 1984, Isaacs, 1987) encouraging behaviour (or a refraining from behaviour) in particular ways (Lukes, 2004). It could be through conscious or unconscious interests and desires (Bradshaw, 1976, Giddens, 1984) that are motivated by accurate or false beliefs (Dowding, 2006). This in turn addresses the problem formulated by Tilly as: "'if ordinary domination so consistently hurts the well-defined interests of subordinate groups, why do subordinates comply? Why don't they rebel continuously, or at least resist all along the way?'" (Tilly, 1991, cited in Lukes, 2004, p.11). In answer to this question, Tilly cites a list of seven checkpoints:

1. The premise is incorrect: subordinates are actually rebelling continuously, but in covert ways.

2. Subordinates actually get something in return for their subordination, something that is sufficient to make them acquiesce most of the time.
3. Through the pursuit of other valued ends such as esteem or identity, subordinates become implicated in systems that exploit or oppress them. (In some versions, no.3 becomes identical to no.2)
4. As a result of mystification, repression, or the sheer unavailability of alternative ideological frames, subordinates remain unaware of their true interests.
5. Force and inertia hold subordinates in place.
6. Resistance and rebellion are costly; most subordinates lack the necessary means.
7. All of the above. (Tilly 1991: 594)."

If these points are considered in relation to current approaches to how Study Skills provision forwards neoliberal ideologies and political economies, there is much resonance, particularly with points 4, 5 and 6, although also with points 1, 2 and 3 (and by implication point 7). With regard to point 1, it is possible subordination is occurring by both lecturers (see Bailey, 2010, above) and students (see Richards & Pilcher, 2014), although we surmise many individuals are routinized into following the current system and also do not have the knowledge to question the system in their practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984). Further, the opportunity to rebel is arguably scant, particularly given the increased massification of HE and the way in which lecturers' time is allocated (cf. Erickson et al, 2020). Regarding points 2 and 3, there are many HE employees working in Study Skills, with quite senior positions if the management is considered. We note that in Australia, there remain well-remunerated posts in Study Skills support. However, the percentage of Language and Learning Advisors holding academic positions is decreasing (from 67% in 2007 to 45% in 2015 (Barthel, 2015), and 39% more recently (Malkin & Chanock, 2018)) with the increasing trend to create general or professional positions for such roles rather than academic positions, in an attempt to bottom line fiscalise (Tran et al, 2019). Furthermore, other employees such as library staff are often 'up-skilled' to deliver Study Skills support classes (MacFarlane, 2011).

Regarding point 4, we suggest current Study Skills approaches achieve 'mystification' by promising support that will be effective. In turn, people are routinized (Giddens, 1984) to follow a system with their practical consciousness being unaware of the issues involved, and this causes people to behave in ways that go against their own interests (Lukes, 2004) whether consciously or subconsciously (Giddens, 1984; Dowding, 2006). In addition, the 'sheer unavailability of alternative ideological frames' in the form of greater subject specific school based and decentralised support focused in a teaching paradigm (contra. Barr & Tagg, 1995) means little alternative for additional help for students or lecturers exists. This should also be contextualised in the ubiquity and dominance of the neoliberal paradigm (Peck, 2010)

In relation to point 5, students (and lecturers) arguably have 'inertia' in acting to create more suitable alternatives. Moreover, the system 'forces' them to seek help from the available support and expects them to be responsibilised individuals (Bonanno, 2017). Also, the 'force' is exerted on lecturers to teach increasing numbers of students (McCarthy, 2009) and have increasing workloads (Erickson et al., 2020) as Study Skills provision exists to support the students. In both cases, lecturers and students may be unaware of their own true interests of what would work most effectively, and are routinized (Giddens, 1984) to act (or refrain

from acting) against their own best interests (Lukes, 2004), even if they are aware this may be the case (e.g. Bailey, 2010; Richards & Pilcher, 2014).

Regarding point 6, students may lack the necessary means to resist or rebel, and perhaps the knowledge, as they have been subject to the 'mystification' that Study Skills delivered from a centralised unit is what they need. Also, lecturers are increasingly being 'silenced' and placed on short term contracts (Erickson et al., 2020) and thus find rebellion costly. Furthermore, they lack the necessary means to resist and themselves may have been subject to the 'mystification' that Study Skills is what students need. Thus, when current approaches towards Study Skills provision are considered we argue they align very closely both with how society is structured and individuals are routinized across time and space (Giddens, 1984) and also with Lukes's third dimension of power, and that together these ideas provide a possible explanation why such approaches that are pedagogically untenable persist and prosper. In this way current approaches to Study Skills support are believed to be effective, creating the perfect Tinkerbell for neoliberalism.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that a belief that current Study Skills support approaches are effective creates a perfect Tinkerbell for neoliberalism. No evidence exists to demonstrate the effectiveness of Study Skills approaches. Indeed, where evidence does exist for effective support, it demonstrates (an often simultaneous) lack of effectiveness of Study Skills, and valued effectiveness of subject-specific content. We outlined four tenets that any belief in the effectiveness of Study Skills approaches must adhere to if the claims that Study Skills approaches make for what they do are to be considered accurate. We have argued that pedagogically these belief tenets are untenable, but that they are perfect in enabling neoliberalism, by aligning closely with both neoliberal ideology of responsibilised individuals in a meritocratic order, a 'light touch' nomocratic structure, universalizability, and also political economy of competition, massification and bottom line fiscalization.

We have suggested that such a belief system continues because individuals have been routinized into following it with the justification of neoliberal ideology and political economies, and because they are encouraged to act (or remain inert) against their own best interests. A sufficiently large body of staff now exist who deliver these approaches and whose livelihood is dependent upon them, the approaches themselves are successful in mystifying students and lecturers that they work, they are structured to routinely follow what exists, and there is a dearth of alternative ideological frames available for them to draw upon. What is more, students and staff lack the necessary means to rebel, and force and inertia hold them in place.

What then, is the alternative? It is our hope, and contention, that if people cease to believe in the Tinkerbell of Study Skills, the Tinkerbell of Study Skills will cease to exist. We hope to have set out why Study Skills is such a Tinkerbell above, as well as provided a possible explanation as to how this Tinkerbell continues to exist. Once people cease to believe in Study Skills, we argue that what students really need for support is close guidance and additional help from academics in the subject they are studying (Cook et al., 2019; Doyle 2019; Kirschner et al., 2006). In this way, there would need to be a reversion towards a teaching paradigm

rather than a learning paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995) where there is more specialised subject support delivered by Academics. This would involve, we suggest, employing greater numbers of subject specialists to help deliver additional support, and recalibrating the support given by existing staff to more subject specific areas. This may be considered impractical and overly expensive, yet if the UK government can fund the institutions of Oxford and Cambridge to continue to support their own tutorial systems (McGettigan, 2013) we argue similar funding can be given to other institutions to support students there as well.

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