

RESEARCH ON GENRE LEARNING FOR RE-IMAGINING THE PEDAGOGY OF WRITERS' RETREATS

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ABSTRACT

Writers' retreats were originally conceived of as quiet spaces away from the workplace where academic staff would have uninterrupted time to focus on writing. Recently, however, the literature has referred to 'structured retreats' (Murray 2010, 102) which allow for 'information giving' (pedagogy) and participants' discussion of writing in progress.

Keywords: writing retreats, genre, pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Writers' retreats were originally conceived of as quiet spaces away from the workplace where academic staff would have uninterrupted time to focus on writing. Recently, however, the literature has referred to 'structured retreats' (Murray 2010, 102) which allow for 'information giving' (pedagogy) and participants' discussion of writing in progress.

The team of facilitators who conceptualised the writers' retreats described in this article have followed this structured model and we have tailored the retreats to meet the needs of the participants. Many of the writers at these retreats do not regard themselves as experienced in academic writing for publication. They are often committed and gifted teachers who may be in part-time or contract positions in their institutions. Many of them are working toward postgraduate degrees. Some may be writing in their second, third or fourth languages and most have had little or no experience of writing educational research articles for publication. These participants are drawn from two different groups – the first group are academic staff teaching on extended curriculum programmes across the four higher education institutions in the Western Cape of South Africa; while the second group are tutors and mentors from across the higher education institutions in South Africa.

To meet the needs of this group, the retreats we offer have opted for a strong professional development/ pedagogical element as we set out to support the staff in *learning* to write for publication. Over the past seven years we have been developing 'publishing pedagogies'

(Aitchison, Kamler and Lee 2010, 4) as we evaluate our methodologies, reflect on them and revise them. We have used a genre based pedagogy which sees genre as a 'frame' (Bazerman 1997, 19) for learning in order to support the writers in their writing.

In the context of these retreats the article sets out to empirically explore the question: How can research on genre learning and acquisition in academic contexts inform the pedagogy of writers' retreats? The article will review the literature on genre based learning and teaching and describe the particular approach we have developed for our retreats as well as the logic behind this approach. It will note that it is important to make tacit knowledge explicit by prompting students to analyse the formal features of the research article and providing maps/models of textual features, while at the same time emphasizing learning by discussing writing and genre and offering peer and mentor feedback. However, as the vast literature on this topic indicates, the teaching and learning of genre is complex and this article will explore one of the thorny issues relating to genre acquisition, i.e. the impact of prior genres on the new genres to be acquired (Paxton 2013). It will do this firstly, by exploring the literature and secondly, by means of a case study of three writers writing and talking about their writing at our retreats and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Genre is no longer understood as simply a text type or form – what is described as the 'container model of genre'. Genres have been reconceived through the work of theorists from literature (Bakhtin, Derrida), linguistics (Halliday and Swales) and rhetoric (Carolyn Miller) as much more than just forms; they are rhetorical and semiotic situations within a social context. Genres are dynamic and evolving and essentially about making meaning (Devitt 1993).

According to Bitzer (cited in Pare 2010, 35) a genre '... includes the audience for the discourse, the ... motivating force that elicits the discourse, and the context or constraining conditions with which the utterance is made'. As I have indicated we use Bazerman's metaphor of genre as a 'frame' to introduce retreat participants to the notion of genre. I reproduce his explanation of this metaphor below because it illustrates the power of genre as a shaper of not just texts, but meanings and social actions:

Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact. Genres are the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative actions with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the familiar. (Bazerman cited in Swales 2004, 16).

Freedman's immersion model of genre teaching led to debate and extensive research which

sought to understand whether explicit or implicit approaches to the teaching of genre were more effective. Most of this research was conducted with children who were learning to write in different genres. Freedman (1987, 101) argued that there were no benefits to teaching genre and advocated implicit teaching of genre to students because her research indicated that students start writing with only 'a dimly felt sense' of the new genre they are attempting and they formulate and modify this sense as they write. Freedman's research indicates that collaboration in the form of feedback from peers and mentors is a key factor in the acquisition of genres because it gives the writers a sense of what is expected in the community or field (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 119).

However, much subsequent research has shown that explicit teaching of genre does have a place. Devitt's 2006 findings (cited in Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 117) challenge Freedman's claim that there are no benefits to explicit teaching of genre and propose contextualised approaches to the teaching of genre as well as explicit teaching of 'genre awareness'. In Bawarshi and Reiff's 2010 overview of intercultural research on genre within academic settings, studies such as those of Cristovao (126) and Guimaraes (127) show the importance of explicit genre teaching in schools in Brazil. Hyon (cited in Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 129) argues for explicit teaching of genres to students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. She maintains that explicit genre teaching is helpful for English Second Language (ESL) university students as they have not had as much experience of English-language genres as first language speakers. This would apply to many of the participants on our retreats for whom English is a second, third or fourth language.

Kapp and Bangeni (2005) in their study of multilingual first year students at a South African university, argue for both explicit and implicit teaching of genre. They argue that 'while a genre approach is a key resource for providing metaknowledge of discourse conventions, it does not provide the ... writing space to enable students from outside the dominant discourse to become critical participants' (Kapp and Bangeni 2005, 110–11). They describe how teaching the genre of the social science essay allowed students entry into the discipline but they note that while students can learn from explicit teaching of forms, immersion in reading and writing the genres of the discipline was crucial for giving them a 'metalevel understanding of the genre' (Kapp and Bangeni 2005, 125). Bawarshi and Reiff summarise the debate about explicit or implicit teaching of genre by saying that whether genre teaching adopts an explicit or implicit approach, scholars seem to agree with Freedman's comment that, 'explicit teaching must always be done in the context of, or in very close proximity to, authentic tasks involving the relevant discourse' (Freedman cited in Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 184).

Recent studies of how genres function socially and ideologically have led to approaches to the teaching of genre that raise awareness of how genres evolve and change. In Paxton (2013) I argue that a particular genre is fashioned and textured by the identity of each new creator, and inevitably echoes aspects of the creator's persona and their social, historical and cultural context. This fashioning and shaping could be described as the writer's voice – in other words genre can be seen as 'a vehicle for expression of voice' (2013, 151). This study of two postgraduate students showed how prior genres impacted on new genres being acquired and a number of other studies have confirmed this research and shed more light on the impact of location and experience on the shaping of the genre. For instance, Devitt's 2007 findings suggest that new academic genres are defined against prior or antecedent genres. She argues that writing is a highly situated act and a change in location can change the genre so that what writers may have discovered in learning about one genre may not transfer smoothly but it does not mean that what they had learned did not serve them at all. It may have served them in a different way. Writers often perceive newly encountered situations as sharing some elements with prior situations and so they use prior genres when writing about new ones. When the genre shifts location even slightly, it 'may have the same name but it is a different game' (Devitt 2007, 219). She says,

... writers use the genres they know when faced with a genre they do not know. These genres are not in fact transferable; they do not meet the needs of the situation fully. But as antecedent genres, they help writers move into a new genre; they help writers adjust their old situations to new locations. (Devitt 2007, 222).

However, both Anson, Dannels and St Clair (cited in Bawarshi and Reiff 2010) and Devitt (2007) show that prior genres may hamper as well as help genre performance in a new genre. Bawarshi and Reiff's own study (2010, 124) indicates that successful performance depends on the flexible use of prior genre knowledge. In their study of first year students they noted that some students stick too closely to prior genres even when the situations and tasks did not call for them. Others learned to abstract strategies from prior genres and reformulate them to new situations and tasks. Mitchell and Andrews (cited in Bawarshi and Reiff 2010) show in their study of secondary school students writing in history, that instructors can avoid teaching genres as forms by constantly linking form to context and by having students explore how formal features are tied to theoretical and social actions, a type of teaching that better ensures the transfer of genre knowledge to performance of genres in the same context or new contexts. For instance, in the writing of research articles it might be useful to explore how the idea of a niche or gap in research articles probably originates with the belief that the PhD must identify a gap

in the research so as to make an original contribution to knowledge.

For this project, in which I am seeking to reflect on the use of the genre based approach to assist writers at writing retreats, I am particularly interested in how we can learn from analysing our students writing and thus refine what we do in the pedagogies and particularly the genre pedagogies we use.

OUR WRITING RETREATS AND THEIR PARTICIPANTS

The first group of participants in our retreats are university teachers employed to teach on Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs). These are programmes offered to a minority of students in the country who are seen as 'talented but underprepared for university' (CHE Report 2013, 70). The minority nature of these programmes has affected the way the programmes are regarded in their institutions. They are often seen to have low status and consequently are marginalised academically and administratively. Staff are sometimes not granted academic status and are employed in insecure short term contracts which has had negative consequences for continuity and professionalization. Yet, as I have indicated, they are frequently dedicated and passionate teachers and there is considerable evidence of the success of these programmes in widening access and improving student performance (CHE Report 2013, 72). These teachers often find themselves in the role of having to justify the importance of their programmes and inevitably the pressure for accountability is high.

The second group are tutors and mentors from thirteen higher education institutions across the country who were invited to reflect critically and evaluate the effectiveness of their tutoring and mentoring practices in an effort to strengthen student learning. They were offered the opportunity to attend a writing retreat so that they could write up and share their findings in peer reviewed journals. They were promised that there would be follow up support and critical review from expert writing coaches.

Participants from both these groups have often had very little experience of publishing in academia.

OUR RETREATS

We have adopted a mixture of pedagogical approaches to teaching genre, but our approach might be described as a more text-based or linguistic model drawing on the Hallidayan socially based system of textual analysis (also known as the Sydney School) and Swales' ESP/EAP approaches (Johns 2002, 7). Swales has developed an approach to teaching specific genres by analysing the formal and functional features of texts and relating those features to the values

and rhetorical purposes of discourse communities. We have found Swales' (1990; 2004) text-based theory of rhetorical moves emerging from his genre analysis of the research article very useful and we have adapted his work to fit our context and our participants.

In our first workshop on a retreat, experienced writers among the participants and the facilitators share their journal writing experiences, describing the reviews and the feedback they have had from different journals. Participants are then introduced to the notion that writing for journals is a scholarly conversation and that it is quite important to be familiar with that conversation and to have a sense of one's audience when one submits to a particular journal. The writers then spend time in groups trawling through journal websites to discover a sense of the identities of particular journals and they try to name these and categorise them using labels such as 'specialist/generalist', 'formal/informal' etc. They are encouraged to select a journal for the article they are writing and to be clear about the 'Aims and Scope' of the journal, as well as to read articles from recent editions in order to link their articles to themes running through the journal and thus add to the scholarly conversation. They are then introduced to the concept of genre and the importance of genre awareness in reading and writing. Finally, they work in groups to skim and scan four or five journal articles which use different genres; they are asked to describe and name the genres, using labels such as 'conceptual' or 'theoretical', 'reflective', 'narrative', 'quantitative or qualitative research' etc. In this way they get an understanding of how contexts shape responses e.g. a very large study across a number of institutions will produce quantitative data for a quantitative research study. They are asked to think about the clues they are using to name these genres e.g. the linguistic and rhetorical patterns as well as the form or structure of the article.

Most participants are working on educational research articles, so in subsequent workshops we introduce them to the styles and structures across the main sections of the research article with particular emphasis on the educational research article, although we do point to the way styles and structures vary across the disciplines. We illustrate the possible formal moves of the abstract by encouraging participants to write the abstract as a brief story¹ that starts with the words, 'Once upon a time researchers believed that ...' so they learn to locate their research in terms of what has already been written on the topic. They add to the story by identifying the particular question or focus of their research, report on what they did and what they found and finally to write about how these findings have changed the way they think about the topic. Kamler and Thomson (2006, 126) suggest that this last move in the abstract answers the 'so what?' and the 'now what?' questions. The participants share their 'stories' and discuss them and we find that writing the abstract in the informal language of a story is quite

empowering because it helps to simplify their thoughts and allows the writers to see the thread in their 'story'. The next step is to read abstracts from other novice writers and from published journal articles and critique them and identify the moves. They then revise their own abstracts.

We also offer workshops on writing the Introduction, the Literature Review and the Results or Data Analysis sections of the research article. These workshops follow the pattern of the workshop on abstracts described above, moving back and forth between teaching the formal features of the section, giving participants time to read these sections in published journal articles and identify the moves and the linguistic features. Participants are encouraged to do a critical analysis describing what changes they might make to improve the section. They are also asked to read reviews of journal articles to get a sense of what reviewers are looking for and then finally they work on producing or revising these sections in their own articles and giving feedback to their colleagues.

In teaching the formal features of the Introduction we introduce them to the CARS (Create a Research Space) model first developed by John Swales (1990). The CARS model is useful because it helps them to contextualise the topic by pointing to the conversations around the topic – 'Establishing the Territory' (Move 1), then 'Establishing a Niche' (Move 2) in order to join this conversation and finally 'occupying' that niche or 'Presenting the Present Work' (Move 3) (Swales 2004). This can also assist writers in clarifying their central argument. Structures for the literature review and data analysis sections do not fall into neat models like the CARS model but we assist them with developing voice and coherence in these sections and we point to some of the typical linguistic and rhetorical patterns. Therefore, our approach to the teaching of genre is both explicit – teaching the formal features – and implicit – writers are immersed in reading, writing and talking about genres with opportunities for metacognitive reflection on the process as well as opportunities for giving and receiving feedback in peer review groups (Freedman 1987; Bawarshi and Reiff 2010).

We try to create a supportive atmosphere at the retreats and participants work in groups or pairs with a mentor or critical reader assigned to each group. Groups meet regularly (4 or 5 times during a 3 day retreat). Readers are encouraged to be respectful, generous, affirming and honest in their feedback. They are advised to make positive comments first, then any critical comments (feedback sandwich) and to acknowledge their own personal perspective on the writing and what works for them.

Evaluations gathered at the end of each of the retreats has indicated that the genre approach described above has been fairly successful in supporting the writers. Many respondents acknowledged the support they had had in revising and rewriting their abstracts, introductions

and literature reviews. Some excerpts from the evaluations illustrate the kinds of comments that were made,

... the specific (genre) framework tools have given me a very easy and logical 'in' to what started off as quite a messy product and has helped organise my thinking.

The inputs on journal writing provided some very useful 'tools' for producing my article. I have completed both the abstract and the introduction and am reworking the literature review using the tools.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS OF INVESTIGATION

In the more recent retreats this year² we have introduced a formal system of supporting writers beyond the retreats. Mentors are employed to continue assisting the writers until they submit their articles – advising them how to deal with comments from reviewers, if necessary. As one of these critical readers/mentors, I have been involved in this process of reading drafts, consulting and giving feedback face-to-face, online and sometimes on skype. In this process I observed that many of the writers were having some difficulties with the writing of the results/discussion and conclusion sections of their articles which they often have not had time to work on at the retreats.

This provoked my interest in the value of explicit and implicit genre teaching and, particularly, in the impact of antecedent genres on the new genres we have taught. Therefore, I decided to explore these issues more closely using genre analysis.³

Genre analysis, located as it is 'between textually oriented and socio-cultural methods, enables a pluralistic methodology, integrating multiple methods and data sources in the study of genre' (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 109). I have used an ethnographic approach involving sustained engagement in the writers' worlds, thus the writers and I have been immersed in an ongoing dialogue around their texts. This is what Lillis (2008) refers to as 'talk around the text' which facilitates the interpretation and analysis of students' text production and consumption practices from the writers' perspective. In addition, I collected and analysed a range of data including literacy-history interviews, evaluations, observations and photographs of the writers during writer's retreats and multiple drafts of their writing over the past year. I have thus been involved with the writers both as writing teacher and researcher. I conducted literacy-history interviews to get a sense of what prior genres might be influencing their writing. In this article I will focus on three of the eight writers I have been working with on this project. These three have either submitted their articles or are in the process of submitting them. The reason I have chosen not to discuss the other writers is that they still in the very early stages of writing up their research and I have not yet seen full drafts of their journal articles. All participants of these

retreats signed consent forms agreeing that their texts and the interview and evaluation data could be used anonymously for research purposes; I have therefore given these writers pseudonyms.

FINDINGS FROM THE CASE STUDY

Reporting and promotional discourses as antecedent genres

All three of these writers currently work in academic development/extended curriculum programmes at different institutions in South Africa and they had all collected data from large research projects using surveys to understand the effectiveness of their units or of their tutorial programmes.

In an interview with one of these writers whom I have called Lerato, Lerato told me that she carried responsibility in her faculty for student retention issues. This included factors affecting the academic performance of undergraduate students, student learning, development and support. Most of the writing she did in her current position was in the form of oral or written reports to the faculty or the university on these issues. She also had experience of writing one educational research article. Lerato had revised her abstract and introduction and was working on her literature review by the time she left the retreat. In the full drafts that I was sent after the retreat I noted that she was drawing on this reporting genre, which was a familiar current and prior genre. In these drafts she was using the kind of discourse that would have been familiar to her in reporting back to her faculty. In the Discussion and Conclusion sections of her first draft she tended to focus on the finer details relating to tutor co-ordination and training in her faculty and was concerned about what could be done within her faculty to fix the problems she had identified. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from her Conclusion in an early draft,

Fortunately, as is the case in most tutor programmes, the A_STEP does provide training for the peer tutors. However, one of the challenge is their continuous training and development. Probably if their class time table is aligned and they co-tutor with the lecturers they will have time to attend further training and development.

She clearly had her local faculty and university audience in mind rather than an audience for an international journal which might not understand the SA higher education context, her reference to 'the A-STEP' or the intricacies of aligning class time tables. Writing for a wider international audience would require her to generalise her findings by developing a set of recommendations or principles of interest to an audience of international readers in an international journal. As Bitzer (cited in Pare 2010, 35) has noted, a genre incorporates the audience, the motivation and

the context in which the utterance is made. In writing the research article, Lerato might have been using the same research and the same data she had used in reporting back to the faculty but when location changes so does the genre and the audience. This reporting genre as part of her genre repertoire has served as a resource for her in finding her way to the new genre but it will need adapting to the new audience and context.

Another of the writers, Nina, had been a secondary school teacher for many years, before joining the Communications department at her university and then moving to the academic development department in 2010. This was the first academic article she had written in the educational research genre. She explained that she had undertaken the research in order to understand the effectiveness of her unit and the work that it was doing. As I have indicated earlier, the minority nature of extended programmes or academic development units in South African universities means that staff members often have to spend a lot of time justifying the importance of their programmes and promoting the work that they do because the pressure for accountability is high. In fact, like many academic development units across the country, her department has developed brochures and pamphlets promoting the work of the unit and these are distributed to staff and students in the university and beyond. The discourse of advocacy seems very evident in Nina's early drafts. In the excerpts below she pre-empts the findings of the very valuable and extensive study she has done by advocating the work of her unit in her Introduction before she has discussed the study and its findings. Below are excerpts from her 2nd and 3rd drafts:

This study seeks to show the link between learning development interventions and student success. Students benefit by exposure to study skills, time management, consolidation skills, cognition, critical thinking skills, reflection and self-evaluation.

This paper, is premised on the idea that learning development offers students in higher education authentic support and interventions thus enhancing opportunities to succeed.

In her second draft she describes the aims of the study as seeking 'to show the link between learning development interventions and student success', yet follows this immediately with a claim that students *do* 'benefit' from learning development interventions, implying that the interventions *are* linked to success, rather than allowing the results of the study to reveal this. In the third draft she indicates that the article is 'premised' or based on the idea that learning development offers students 'authentic support and interventions', however her study has yet to prove this.

Swales indicates that 'positive evaluations' of the research seem to be increasing in contemporary research paper introductions, and he includes a step in his revised Move 3

(Presenting the Present Work) which he calls 'Stating the value of the present research' (Swales 2004, 232). He says that, 'in appropriate circumstances, early positive evaluations, early justifications and early clarifications can work to both impress and reassure the reader that the paper is worth pursuing' (Swales 2004, 232). However, Swales' illustrations of this step indicate that this positive evaluation comes in the form of a justification of methods or the value of the research, rather than anticipating the results of a study which is what Nina has done. It could well be that in presenting this step in our workshop we had not been clear enough about what was required and that Nina misunderstood what this step entailed, but there are many further indications in different sections of her early drafts that her writing has been influenced by a discourse of advocacy. Nina and I spent time in discussion and negotiation of this and in subsequent drafts she has moved away from using this promotional language. As Devitt suggests prior genres may 'help writers move into a new genre; they help writers adjust their old situations to new locations' (2007, 222) and this seems to be what Nina is doing. Ongoing feedback and support has been crucial in this adjustment process.

The influence of scientific genres

Like many of the staff in academic development in South Africa, Martjie currently holds an administrative, rather than an academic position in the academic development work she does in her institution. In her interview, she explained that writing research articles for publication was seen as somewhat 'superfluous' in this role. She writes peer review reports and does a lot of presentations in the faculty and in the university and she shares Lerato's difficulties in adjusting her voice for an international audience. But, in her interview, she also spoke of her previous career as a mathematics lecturer in a Science faculty where she had taught for twenty-six years. She said that most of her journal publications dated from that period and that she had learned during that time to write scientific research articles. Although the article she is working on at the retreat is situated in higher education and describes a qualitative research study, Martjie's writing is clearly located within scientific discourse and follows the IMRD (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) structure typical of scientific research articles. With the help of explicit teaching of the genre of the abstract and introduction on the retreat, Martjie had developed a clear argument for her article in these early sections. However, there were definite signs of the influence of her antecedent genre when it came to the Results section because she simply summarised and reported on the results of her study in the form of tables – there was no interpretation of the results and the thread of her carefully developed argument was lost. She believed that in scientific research articles the Results section should not include

interpretation of her data because the interpretation was done in the Discussion section. Yet Swales' corpus analysis (2004) of Results sections of articles indicates that nineteen out of the twenty papers studied did some interpretation of the Results. In a qualitative research article reporting on surveys and interviews, Martjie's argument needs to be the major organiser of the text, but by leaving out any interpretation in the Results section, she was having difficulty developing a coherent extended argument for her study.

In consultations with her I suggested that in a qualitative study such as hers, reporting on interviews and a questionnaire, the Results and Discussion could be combined; in this way she would avoid having to repeat her results again in the Discussion section and her argument would be strengthened. Therefore, it seems that, after the retreat, as Martjie worked on her Results and Discussion sections, her prior genre assisted her in structuring her article but there were mismatches. All these writers will find that it will take time, focused feedback, revising and redrafting to adjust to the new genre. But as my earlier research (2013) has indicated, genres are not fixed but are ever-evolving, therefore, as these three writers acquire the new genre they will give it new shape and texture reflecting their own social, cultural and historical contexts.

CONCLUSION

I have tried in this article, through a description of the pedagogy used on our retreats as well as an exploration and analysis of three writers and their writing, to show how explicit and implicit approaches to genre work alongside one another in supporting academic staff who are writing for publication. Explicit genre based teaching may be particularly important for writers who are not familiar with research article writing and who are speakers of English as an additional language. As the writers indicate, explicit teaching of the sections of the research article gave them a template for getting started with their writing.

Antecedent or prior genres have emerged as being particularly influential in providing a resource for the writer to draw on. Data and descriptions from the three writers illustrated in the case study indicate that achieving an effective text needs decisions which relate to the context, the voice and the audience, and that the formal genre rules learned in advance might not assist them with this. While writers can learn from explicit teaching of forms, the experience show that it was the extensive 'talk around text' in the form of consultation and feedback after the retreat that enabled the writers to align their writing with the appropriate genre. This is what the literature (Freedman 1987; Devitt 2007; Bawarshi and Reiff 2010) would describe as an implicit approach to genre teaching.

The research has identified some of the antecedent genres that the writers drew on, and in

future facilitators will be able to use this evidence of writers' prior genre knowledge to inform strategies for teaching retreat participants how to access the new genres. It may mean that we need more time in our retreats to focus on prior genres that participants might have used e.g. reports to faculty on surveys, or marketing of academic development programmes, and to allow participants to study how genres work rhetorically and how they interact with location and situation.

Thus, the article provides evidence of how important ongoing research into genre learning and acquisition can be in informing and shaping the pedagogy for re-imagined writers' retreats.

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NOTES

1. We are grateful to the University of Queensland <https://www.uq.edu.au/student-services/phdwriting/phfaq02.html> for this very generative idea.
2. The retreats this year have been funded by the DHET NCTDG Project which has focused on improvement of teaching and learning in South African universities through researching and evaluating Teaching Development Grant (TDG) projects in the First Year Experience (FYE) initiatives, Tutorials, Mentoring.
3. Although these retreats have been offered collaboratively by a team of facilitators, the research has been done by the author of this article, therefore I use the first person when discussing it.

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