



# Where Have All the Teachers Gone: A Case Study in Transitioning

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# Why am I doing this study?

- ex post facto qualitative study to elucidate the concepts and iterative processes involved in transitioning
- I relate the thresholding and transitioning process of Mr. L, a novice academic, towards becoming a confident citizen of Academia by referring to a semi-structured interview with Mr. L
- told his own story of this journey as a novice and the lecturer who guided him from the threshold of Academia through his own, personal transitioning process. His narrative is one of 25 student narratives forming part of a project on novice student thresholding and transitioning.
- In this presentation I will, therefore elucidate the process of thresholding and the transitioning process, the role of the lecturer-mentor in this process and the sanctuary in which the process takes place. As a clarifying example of this process I will relate the case of Mr. L.

# How did I approach this paper?

- autobiographical narrative of Mr. L, as **case-in-point example** of
- the thresholding moment
- the process of transitioning into Academia
- role of the lecturer-mentor
- the multi-logic space that facilitates the process
- hermeneutic phenomenology and interpretivism as methodological tools

# Life is transition

My life  
has changed,  
and I'm changing  
with it.

- Sophie Kinsella

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# Where have all the familiar beacons gone?

## Thresholding and liminality

- **Thresholding** is event or point of orientation where a change of relationships as well as practices and roles in a person's life are evident
- **Thresholding** refers to a static process, almost a moment frozen in time; a reflective pause, a contemplative plateau whereas **transition** refers to an active process, based on a clear decision to proceed
- **Liminality** refers to a process of inevitable transition characterised by a certain amount of insecurity and yet provides the potential for creative innovation

“Where have all the teachers gone? Oh, when will they ever learn?”

## **Lecturer-mentor as paraclete**

- A **lecturer-mentor** is accessible and approachable, non-judgemental, intuitive and empathetic to the needs of students
- A mentor becomes a **paraclete** when she takes on the role of advocate or helper; an intercessor to students on their journey into Academia for which they receive no roadmap or GPS co-ordinates
- A lecturer-mentor walks parallel to novice-students (i.e. accompanies them) on their journey of transition

“Where have all the students gone? Gone to classrooms every one.”

## **Academic sanctuaries**

- The lecturer-mentor designs and creates pedagogical multi-logic spaces of safety or **sanctuaries**
- **Pedagogic sanctuaries** help mediate the process of learning and teaching, assist all role-players to interpret and construct appropriate sets of mutually beneficial understanding
- reconceptualising dialogue as **multi-logue (multivoicing)**
- tools and strategies are designed, selected and operationalised to provide enough learning scaffolding eventually to become authentic additional voices in a particular, contextualised pedagogic **multi-logueing sanctuary**

## A case in transitioning: **When will I ever learn?**

- a semi-structured interview with a student (for ethical purposes I will refer to him as Mr. L ) doing dissertation part of his bachelor's degree in the faculty of Law at a tertiary institution
- he allowed me an insight into his own, personal academic transitioning into Academia, a multi-faceted journey spanning six years
- represents the journey of many students I have so far interviewed as part of this research project

# A life changing event

- He pinpointed his transitioning into Academia, which was a life changing event for him both academically and emotionally, as a specific moment in his second year of studies.
- *Mr. L: "It seems I have been at the brink for more than a year, sometimes hovering close to the edge at other times retreating. But one day I was listening to this professor and I suddenly got it, ...what I had to do you know, and from then on there was no stopping me! There was no more fear, I knew she would help me if I got lost..."*
- If education implies learning to see life from a different perspective, the multi-logueing sanctuary should provide both lecturer-mentor and novice student such a space which is grounded in a collective sense of belonging, as well as determination from both.
- Only then can the student transcend effortlessly across the first threshold into Academia

# Where Have All the Teachers Gone?

From what I learnt from the narratives of the novice students, the narrative of Mr. L as example, there is a great need for mentor-lecturers in tertiary institutions.

We should not talk to our students, we should listen to them.

Novices want and need us to teach about life, not only knowledge and skills. Mentor-lecturers are not bound by curriculums and syllabi. They connect the material at hand, in a way that feels spacious and free, connecting it to experience, and so they shed light on students' experience.

Students in transitioning need prototypes (paracletes), freedom of speech (sanctuaries) and guiding beacons that will lead them over the threshold of Academia.

**Thank you**

