

Pat Thomson

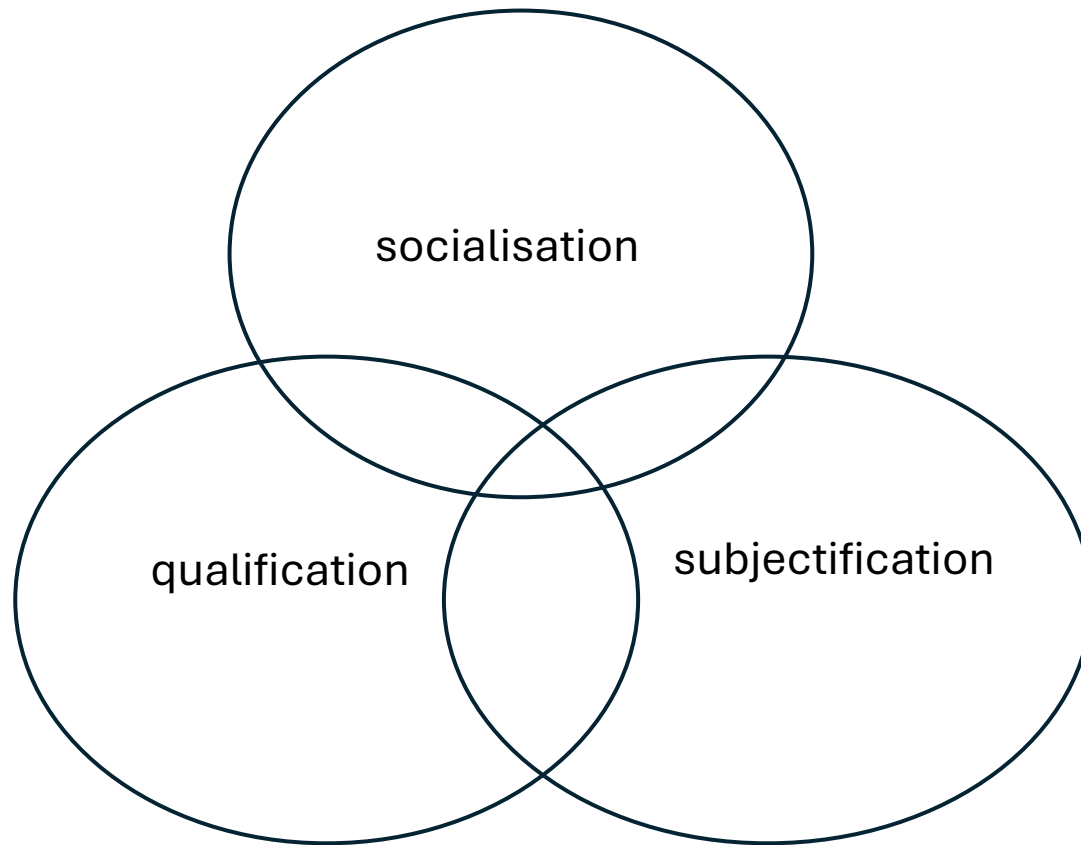
Reflections on equitable excellence



What is equitable excellence for?

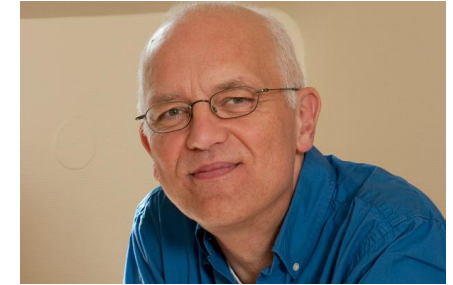
....the wisdom of
respectfully knowing
how to live well in a
world living in...

yindyamarra
winhnganha -
Wiradjuri



How do schools achieve this?

Gert Biesta



Qualification: Providing students with the specific knowledge, job skills, and understanding needed to do things and make a living.

Socialisation: Introducing young people to existing cultures, traditions, and social ways so they know how to fit into society and communities.

Subjectification: Helping students become independent thinkers and active agents of their own lives rather than passive objects.

What have we heard?



Professor Irabinna Rigney told us that schools must build on the existing cultural assets, lived experiences, and prior knowledge that Aboriginal children bring to the classroom, rather than expecting them to leave their culture at the school gate.



Professor Scott Eacott told us that we weren't doing very well on the equity part of excellence but that public education did much of the equity "heavy lifting". He argued for systemic reform via four inter-related components : choice, context-sensitive autonomy, accountability and moderation.



Dr Kristin Alford told us we needed to be futures focused and think creatively.



Professor Mel Ainscow told us that no school could be considered excellent if it wasn't inclusive. He told us to pay attention to: process; barriers; presence participation and achievement; and high-risk groups.



Professor Marnee Shay told us about moving beyond deficit views to adopt a partnership and strengths-based approach which grows excellence rather than measure disadvantage



Associate Professor Fiona Longmuir told us that unsustainable workloads, systemic demoralisation, and a lack of public appreciation are driving a severe retention crisis, particularly among mid-career Australian teachers. We also need joy!



Professor Sandra Miligan told us that assessment ought to be more holistic, focus on growth, shift away from rankings and assess capabilities via learner profiles based in teachers' systematic judgements of authentic student work.



Professor Martin Westwell told us that elevating attainment for the most disadvantaged students will lift the system's performance and drive overall excellence across the entire system. This means ensuring every student has the baseline capability to think, make choices, and pursue their own chosen future path.

There have been thirty six school presentations about what this looks like in and as practice.

Leaders who work for equitable excellence

- **Conduct Equity Audits** using data to locate gaps in the school e.g. which students are underrepresented in “top” classes or overrepresented in disciplinary actions
- **Challenge Deficit Thinking** by addressing deeply held, biased beliefs among staff/governing body
- **Foster Cultural Literacies:** by supporting staff to adopt inclusive teaching strategies that honour different languages and cultures. They intentionally build meaningful relationships and trust with families who may have had negative experiences with schooling in the past
- **Shift to Positive Accountability:** Instead of using test scores to punish students (or teachers) they see accountability through a civic lens. They look at how their school fits with a broader view of what constitutes a just society

Challenges

Research* in Australia suggests that the pedagogical practices that affect equity are:

1. Intellectual quality - starting from high expectations for all, working with deep knowledge, higher order thinking and substantive communication
2. Connectedness - linking abstract knowledges to real work experiences, languages, interests and understandings of students
3. Recognition of difference - every student belongs and is someone, teaching is relational and inclusive.

However, teaching the most disadvantaged students often focuses most strongly on 2 and 3.

* See the QLRs research project and the subsequent work on Quality Teaching Rounds led by Profesor Jenny Gore

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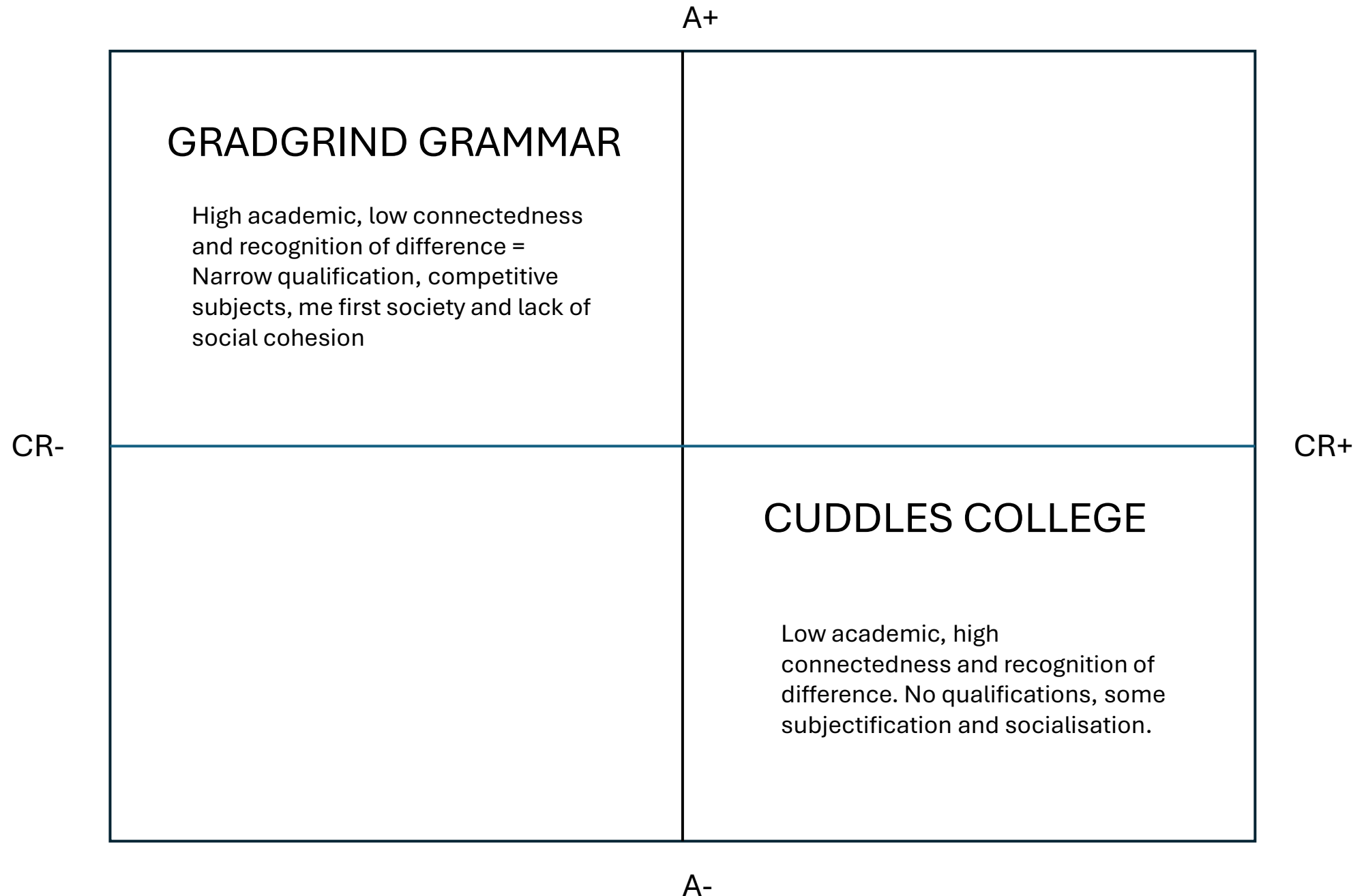
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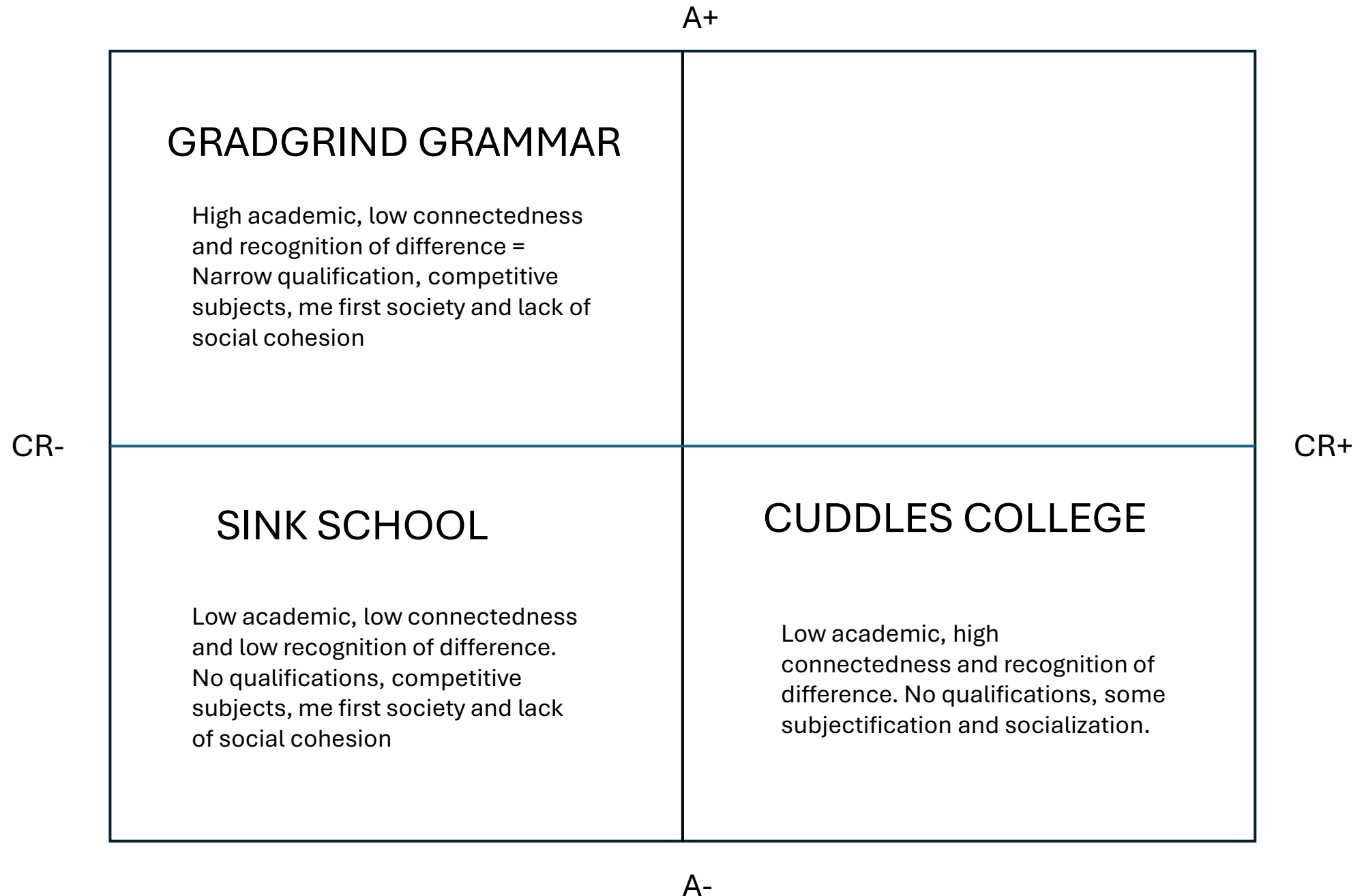
High academic, low connectedness
and recognition of difference =
Narrow qualification, competitive
subjects, me first society and lack of
social cohesion

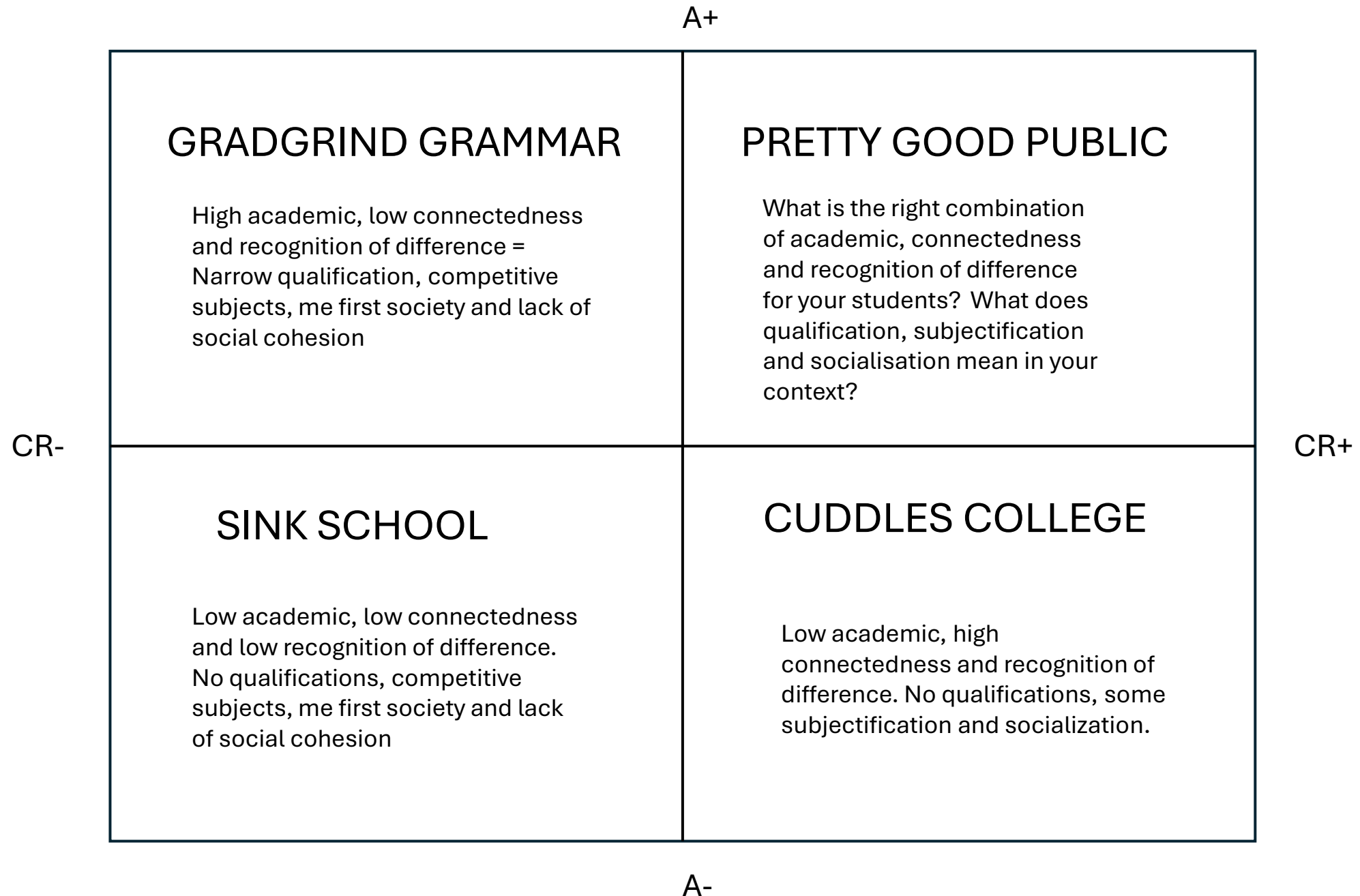
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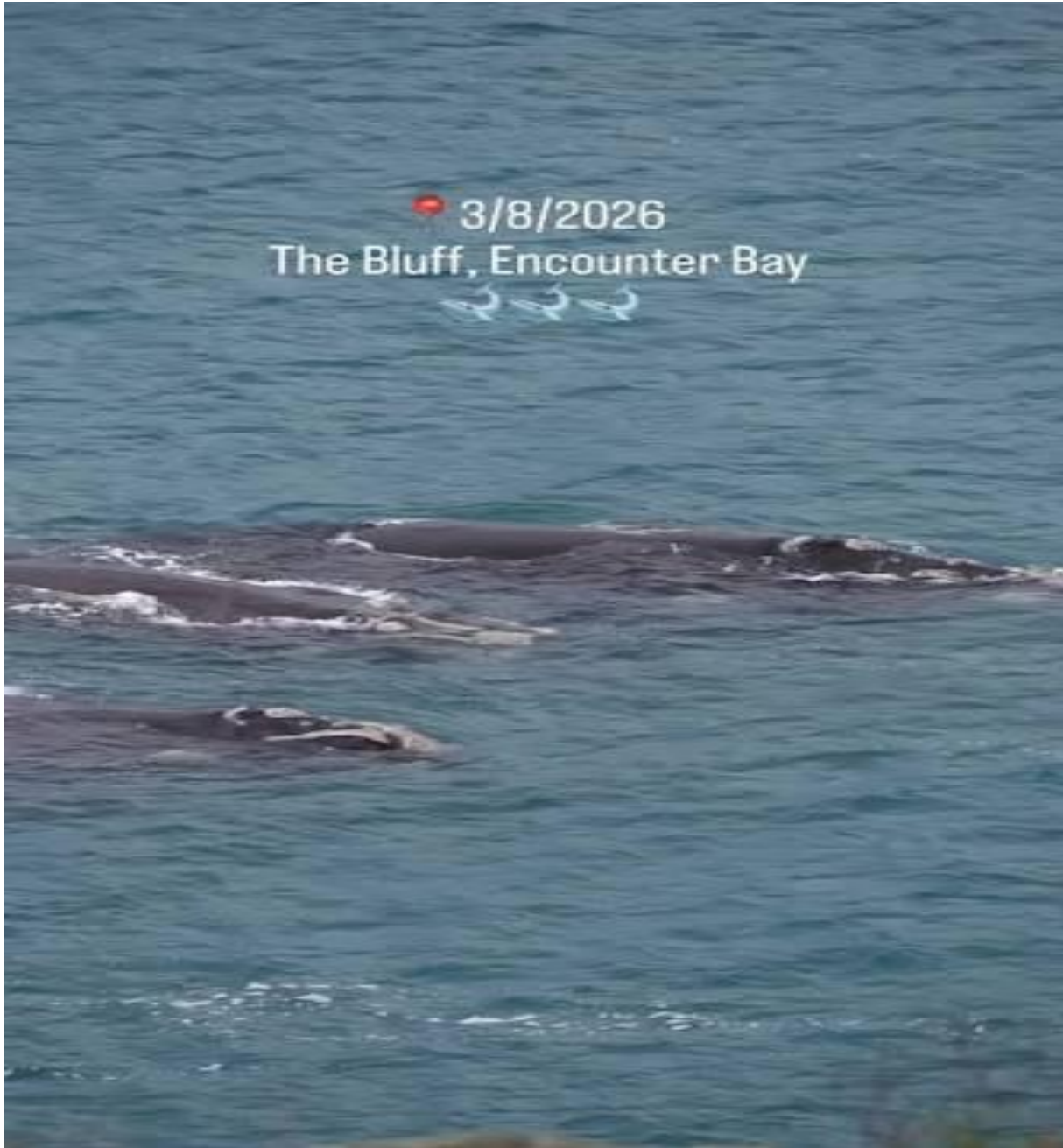
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Thankyou