fine print

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Editorial

This edition of *Fine Print* brings you a spectrum of views from across the adult language and literacy field.

Turn the first pages to read John Cross' presentation at a recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation symposium on Lifelong Learning. Cross challenges the Australian government's policy around adult learning, which favours the structure of competency-based learning and vocational education over the more informal learning that occurs in adult community education. The strength of ACE and Neighbourhood Houses is in the preparatory stages of learning, but this stage of learning, which doesn't fit neatly into an outcome structure, does not attract policy and funding. Subsequently the ACE sector is under-funded. Cross advocates for public education about the benefits of ACE to ensure an effective consumer voice, because the voice of the disadvantaged student is not loud.

The tug of war between competency-based training and a learning-to-learn focus continues in an article by practitioners at Swinburne University TAFE division. In a research project on learning styles, the authors explored links between disinterest in learning and school under-achievement, and the styles of teaching used. The steps of research and results are well detailed. Perhaps the most notable outcome of the research was that student motivation to learn increased as knowledge of their individual learning styles was established.

In his article 'Epideictic discourse: the rhetoric of memory, praise and hope', Rob McCormack throws another spanner in the works for both competency-based training and the popular pedagogy of critical literacy. McCormack argues, passionately and convincingly, that by abandoning epideictic discourse—the discourse of ceremony and loyalty that celebrates our underpinning cultural values—our community is at risk of becoming alienated from itself. It will become routinised and lacking in spirit, ideals and soul such as is reflected, McCormack asserts, in the political correctness of Australia's progressive class. McCormack leads us to question whether our teaching contributes to deepening the community's commitment to its own values, culture and history.

The concentric rings of research circles are spreading. Kerrin Pryor reports on a research circle that explored literacy support offered in training packages. With reference to aged care training packages, we are reminded that while AQTF and training packages advocate the importance of literacy support, organisations are not resourced to provide it. The research makes recommendations of what is needed to ensure training packages really do deliver to learners, industry and the community.

In Practical Matters Debbie Soccio gives us something to learn and practice during the summer break. Download Microsoft XP Photo Story, and then follow her clear and encouraging instructions to create your own digital story. It seems easy. I'll be giving it a try!

Open Forum adds to the discussion on competency-based training with an explanation by Lynne Fitzpatrick and Liz Davidson from the Curriculum Maintenance Management Team as to why and how the reaccreditation process takes place. Yes, the CGEA is up for reaccreditation in 2006. Read what eight literacy practitioners have to say about the strengths and weaknesses of the CGEA. An interesting question posed by one teacher is, have the literacy needs of the community changed since 1992 when the underpinning concepts of the CGEA were laid down? It is important that all CGEA teachers read this initial consultation to prepare to contribute to the reaccreditation.

In Foreign Correspondence we are taken on a delightful journey to meet Margi Gibb's Tibetan refugee students in their Indian classrooms. In Beside the Whiteboard Elizabeth Connell reflects on her teaching career.

Jacinta Agostinelli

The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) aims to lead the adult literacy field through identifying issues of importance to practitioners and facilitating positive change. This is achieved through networking, professional support, the sharing of information and the promotion of best practice.

Adult learning: removing barriers, not creating them

by John Cross

The Federal Government emphasises competency-based learning and vocational education, and pays little attention to the informal learning provided by adult community education and Neighbourhood Houses. Because this preparatory learning has no real outcome structure and disadvantaged students have no real voice, the ACE sector is under-funded. One suggested solution is to create a consumer voice about the benefits of ACE.

Structures and barriers

Learning is a fundamental, naturally occurring activity. Like sleeping and eating, learning is a survival instinct, something that we all do automatically, without much effort or thought. No matter one's place within—or outside—society, one will learn through everyday activities and occurrences.

When we talk about lifelong learning in the context of government policy, we do not mean this instinctual activity but, rather, what might be termed 'structured learning'.

What do we mean by structured learning? Structured learning means that the learning activity is sequenced in such a way that it has a beginning, middle and end. Each new piece of knowledge or each new skill is introduced strategically, not haphazardly, so that it connects to a skill or piece of knowledge gained earlier.

The process is characterised by a steady progress, steady accumulation over time, taking the learner towards a goal or several goals. Structure can also mean that a specific parcel of time is apportioned for learning activity and that during this time learning is the primary focus of activity. Structure can suggest that participants in the learning process have roles that are defined by where they stand—literally and figuratively—in relation to others. Structure can be good. It can help maximise the effectiveness of the learning.

But there is a point at which learning structures can become a barrier, an obstacle to effective learning or an active disincentive to participating in the first place. This is especially true for the socially disadvantaged who already face considerable structural barriers and are disinclined to face any more, even though positive outcomes may be achieved down the track.

Learning is not necessarily easy, in fact there is one school of thought that claims learning has to be a challenge in order to be effective. However, it should not be harder than it needs to be.

To be effective, any adult learning policy or practice must incorporate at its core, and allow to flourish, the fundamental and well-established principles of adult learning. While these have been expressed in many ways, they essentially boil down to two things: placing the learner at the centre of the experience, and flexibility.

I want to propose three strategies that will help ensure that the principles of adult learning are woven into the fabric of lifelong learning policy and practice:

1　Valuing all venues and forms of learning.
2　Valuing all outcomes of learning.
3　Empowering learners and potential learners.

I now want to spend a little bit of time expanding on the three basic principles that I have proposed. My focus is on adult learning and I speak from an Australian perspective. Furthermore my comments are informed by my experiences with an adult learning advocacy organisation. In other words from outside, not within, government.

1　Valuing all venues and forms of structured learning

No one form of learning or type of learning provider can be expected to service all the learning needs of an entire community, or indeed a single individual, throughout their life. Government policy and discussions about learning must facilitate and promote a smorgasbord approach, promoting a range of learning venues and modes to meet a range of community needs and individual situations. Nobody benefits when a learner finds herself or himself in an ill-suited learning environment.

In addition, when talking about the socially disadvantaged there is a need to concentrate on the preparatory work—the early stages of the learning pathway—that needs to occur before you can even think about qualifications.

In Australia, many of the learning needs of the socially disadvantaged are not met by large well-funded formal

institutions such as universities and technical colleges, but by community-based learning providers—neighbourhood houses, community education colleges, community groups and local libraries, places that may be considered informal learning venues.

Neighbourhood houses often provide the first step on the structured learning pathway for the poor, for people recovering from addiction or depression, for refugees and for women who have suffered domestic violence, among others. Neighbourhood houses are an environment where individuals can develop a strong sense of self-worth.

What goes on in a neighbourhood house may not be glamorous and may not lead to a high qualification or indeed any formal qualifications at all, but these venues play a vital role in introducing the socially disadvantaged to the options in front of them, empowering them to make choices and helping them overcome or remove barriers. In Australia, neighbourhood houses have yet to obtain realistic government funding despite the vast amount of programs and services they provide to communities.

Social groups and clubs—such as seniors' computer associations, environmental protection groups and volunteer fire fighting associations—are places where considerable and valuable learning takes place, especially amongst people who are turned off by formal learning environments.

Museums and galleries are also valuable adult learning venues, and could provide a whole lot more adult learning, especially for people with poor literacy skills or who learn best through visual stimulus, if given encouragement to do so.

In a similar vein, libraries provide numerous opportunities for adult learning, ranging from peer education programs for computer skills to discussion forums among people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Peer education, including mentoring, is another effective learning mode for the socially disadvantaged—indeed for all of us—but it is often overlooked in terms of government policy and funding, possibly because it doesn't sit well with administrative systems.

Learning circles are a peer education tool with a century-long tradition and proven effectiveness among the socially disadvantaged. Indeed, the methodology grew out of socially disadvantaged communities in northern Europe and in America.

Learning circles or study groups do not require an expert—a teacher in the traditional sense—but instead engage a facilitator who helps participants pool their existing knowledge and develop new skills or understanding collaboratively at their own pace and under their own steam. The strength of the methodology, especially for the socially disadvantaged, lies in the fact that participants are empowered to steer the learning activity themselves, and their existing life skills, strengths and wisdom play an active part in the process.

A success story

Recently, in Australia, a successful learning circle program was developed to help lone parents, especially women, enter the workforce. Conducted in a lower socioeconomic outer urban area, the learning circle was highly effective in helping participants identify their options, and gave them the confidence and skills to pursue their learning or employment pathways.

As a result of this non-formal program, some participants developed the desire and skills to go onto more formal study. Others are now active volunteers in the community. Although the program did not lead to formal qualifications, many of the participants found employment simply on the strength of the generic skills learned and the confidence gained.

The things most valued by employers—interpersonal skills, lateral thinking, a positive outlook, an ability to cope with change, and a positive attitude towards learning—are more likely to develop in informal learning environments than in formal programs designed around the development of a specific skill set.

> **neighbourhood houses often provide the first step on the structured learning pathway**

If nothing else, participation in an informal learning activity can help an adult develop a love for learning—or at least positive feelings about it, a love that will be conveyed to the children in their lives, encouraging them to stay at school longer and, through this, help the next generation escape the cycle of social disadvantage. This is how a learning society is born, through fostering a love of learning.

If we are genuine in our wish to overcome the problem of social disadvantage, there should not be, among the different forms of learning modes and venues, a hierarchy of status that replicates that of the wider society. Learning is learning no matter where or how it occurs.

Policy, and especially the way funding is allocated, should not create a situation in which the venues and modes that are

most effective for, and most favoured by, the socially disadvantaged are themselves the most disadvantaged forms of learning within the community of learning providers. Adult learners who have participated in one form of learning should not have to face the barrier of snobbery as they try to have their previous learning activity acknowledged at another learning venue.

> ## no amount of retraining...can overcome work shortages, racism, sexism or ageism

Although results are difficult to measure and progress may be slow, and achievements may in the big picture appear almost insignificant, informal learning modes and venues play a vital role in the lifelong learning community. Their outcomes are just as valid and valuable as the more formal, higher-profile, forms of learning.

Policy and practice around lifelong learning, especially for the socially disadvantaged, must acknowledge the importance of the preparatory groundwork and the effectiveness of less formal learning modes and venues in giving the socially disadvantaged the skills and also the confidence to play a more active role in society.

The funding of informal learning requires patience and faith—something that does not sit well with government accountability systems nor the general public, which holds governments accountable—but this does not mean that these learning modes and venues of adult learning are any less important or less effective than those that are easier to quantify. Nor does it mean these modes and venues should be absent from government-sponsored promotions of adult learning options.

2 The importance of valuing all outcomes

Adult learning, in the Australian policy environment at least, has been increasingly formulated solely as a pathway to employment. I am not convinced that this serves the interests of the socially disadvantaged well.

The focus on formal vocational training can make the initial engagement with learning frustrating, if not downright threatening, as it can rush or curtail the learning process or place undue stress on outcomes rather than process.

While obtaining a certificate may be important for some learners, and indeed a matter of great pride, the processes around giving the qualification should not obscure, limit or

prevent the full and effective transference of knowledge and development of skills. We must be careful not to focus on the attainment of certificates at the expense of ensuring good learning experiences.

Moreover, while the attainment of formalised competencies may allow for an incredible boost in self-esteem, the flip side is the ever-present possibility of failing to reach these externally determined benchmarks. A sense of failure—or even the possibility of failure—does not seem to be a constructive message to be sending to the socially disadvantaged, especially those making their first hesitant steps back into the world of structured learning.

But there are other problems with adult learning policy and practice that revolves solely around competency-based training. For many people—for example the elderly or the self-employed—the attainment of a qualification, or participation in a learning program developed around an off-the-shelf package of competencies, is not relevant to their needs. For these people, the promotion of competencies and qualifications may actively work as a disincentive. It may create an impression that structured learning is more trouble than it is worth, or that it lacks the flexibility to address their specific and immediate learning needs in a timely manner.

For other cohorts, an exclusive focus on the vocational outcomes of learning creates the impression that learning will automatically lead to employment. This is not always the case. In many regions there are insufficient employment opportunities. Discrimination against older people or people from specific ethnic backgrounds, rather than a lack of education or skills, may be the principal reason why unemployment among certain cohorts is prevalent in some areas. No amount of retraining that an individual undertakes can overcome work shortages, racism, sexism or ageism. This is where community-wide learning programs to foster entrepreneurship, civic renewal, leadership and diversity all come to the fore in helping the socially disadvantaged.

Beware false hopes

In addition to establishing false hope, an exclusive focus on learning for work can also overshadow the other very powerful benefits of participating in learning activity. If we only honour the narrowly defined vocational skill outcomes of learning, we are potentially devaluing the equally important generic, personal and health outcomes that may be derived from the same learning activities.

Other reasons for learning must be promoted, and the non-vocational outcomes of structured learning must be monitored and reported on just as diligently as the vocational. These outcomes include learning for better health, learning to

achieve better relationships, learning to become more actively involved in civil society and learning to care for others. Each of these outcomes leads to very real economic benefits by helping to reduce public spending on health, crime and family dissolution.

As the Centre for Research into the Wider Benefits of Learning reported in May 2003: 'Participation in adult learning contributes to positive and substantial changes in health behaviours' including in the rate of giving up smoking, reduction of alcohol consumption and taking up more exercise. The report also commented that the 'effects of taking leisure courses on the adoption of health practices are particularly persuasive.' (Leon Feinstein et al, *The contribution of adult learning to health and social capital*, Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, May 2003).

Sadly, the vocational emphasis of adult learning policy has created a culture in which non-vocational learning and non-vocational outcomes are given little value. For example, recreational learning is dismissed by policy makers as being the frivolous indulgence of middle-class white people and as such outside the realm of government policy. Although there is clear evidence to show that so-called leisure learning has significant individual and community benefits—the impact of which can be measured in real economic terms—federal government policy, funding and consumer advice does not, in my country at least, encourage the socially disadvantaged to participate in non-accredited, non-vocational learning activity. This is despite the fact that of all social cohorts, the socially disadvantaged are the most likely to suffer from the health and other social problems that leisure learning can so clearly and positively help to address.

I am not critical of competency training packages *per se*, and I understand that Australia is a world leader in this area, but there are limits to the usefulness of an adult learning policy built around vocational training packages. Competency-based training should be viewed as only one part, not the whole, of adult learning policy.

The full range of learning outcomes needs to be valued within policy—and acknowledged in promotional work—so that practice can accurately honour and serve the diversity of motivations people may have for engaging the services of structured learning.

3 Empowering learners and potential learners

If the purpose of learning is to empower, then the practice of learning should not disempower. The process of education should enhance personalities and desires, not inhibit or prevent them.

The socially disadvantaged are already silenced—they are looking to education for a voice and an opportunity for expression. They should not be forced to radically change who they are, or who they strive to be, in order to participate in structured learning.

To be truly effective, policy and practice should be developed in collaboration with, but not developed externally for, the learners who will participate. Evaluations of adult learning policy and practice must take account what learners consider to be meant by the word 'quality', and must undertake measurements of effectiveness in terms of whether learners' needs and expectations are being met.

As difficult as it may be to capture the voice of learners, and as hard as it may be to meet some of their requests, every effort must be made to ensure that their participation in the formation of policy and practice is equal to that of education professionals, government and industry.

While many of the socially disadvantaged will not have formal education, they do have life experience, desires, preferences and wisdom that are not only important to consider, but also present valuable insight into the learning strategies that will—and will not—work for these audiences.

Just because someone does not have formal qualifications or social standing, or because someone expresses their ideas crudely, does not mean that they are dumb or unable to contribute constructively to the development of systems that will impact upon them and which are supposed to serve their needs.

While some learner requests may be impossible to meet, others will undoubtedly be easily met and may even lead to more efficient use of available resources. Listening to the disengaged, and designing policy and practice in consultation with them, is a shrewd way of ensuring maximum return on the investment.

Of course, simply asking people what they want is not enough. Their answers are likely to be restricted by any notions they already have about learning, probably derived from school-based education. To ensure learners' voices are clearly heard, and to ensure their requests and choices are informed, investment must be made to help the wider public learn about the mechanics and potential of adult learning. To create an effective consumer voice, the whole of the community needs opportunities to learn about learning.

Making learning good again

People generally do not have an aversion to learning. Learning is a survival skill—it keeps you alive and it gets you ahead.

Identifying and accommodating preferred learning styles

by Marilyn Allen, Cheryl Humphries, Jacinta McBurney and Marina Makushev

Competency-based training, or learning-to-learn? And what about the learner? When a group of practitioners investigated the connections between teaching styles and student under-achievement, one finding was that student motivation to learn increased as knowledge of individual *learning* styles was established.

This article details a research project on learning styles undertaken by teachers in the Access Department at Swinburne University TAFE division. A team of four teachers representing Swinburne's different campuses (Croydon, Prahran and Wantirna) participated in the research and was responsible for planning and delivery to a separate target group.

The area of learning styles was selected as the focus for the research because the identification of an individual's learning style can significantly impact on one's ability to successfully engage in learning, increase their self confidence as a learner and give them a greater degree of control over their own learning. Through the identification and implementation of a preferred learning style, the learner may address their personal barriers to learning and begin to address their personal learning needs. From a teacher's perspective, the identification of the learning needs of a group of students informs the planning, delivery and assessment of classroom lessons. Delivery is tailored to meet the needs of students to enhance motivation and participation, and to provide an environment where learning is a positive and empowering experience.

The aims for the project were articulated as benefits for the learners, teachers and the project team. For learners and teachers the aims were to:
- assist students and teachers within the targeted groups to identify preferred learning styles.
- encourage greater consideration of addressing individual learning styles in the planning, delivery and assessment stages of classroom lessons.
- assist students to seek out ways of implementing their preferred learning style and therefore meet both personal and required learning needs and goals.

The aims for the project team were to:
- investigate past and current research.
- apply and test a sample of influential learning styles theories.
- develop skills in the development of action research project work—planning, implementation and evaluation.
- enhance reporting skills.
- identify positive outcomes and embed outcomes into teaching practice.
- encourage others to incorporate an awareness of learning styles into their teaching.
- develop and enhance research skills that can be built upon in future projects.

Positive and productive engagement in learning has been identified as a significant issue confronting educationalists over the past two decades. Glasser (1986) and Brashnig (date unknown) describe the challenge of engaging learners, addressing the issue of disinterest or passive participation, underachievement and school stress as a fundamental concern for the teacher and the style of teaching adopted. Both Glasser (1986) and, later, Brashnig proposed the restricted methods and approaches of delivery used within most education settings as one of the primary reasons for learner disengagement.

The idea that people do not learn in the same way, according to a single formula (Sonbucher:1991), has progressed and become the subject of ongoing research that is profoundly relevant to both teacher and learner. Researchers have identified different learning styles: (Honey and Mumford: 1986); cycles of learning (Kolb: in Jarvis et al, 1998, p. 48), and multiple intelligences (Lazear: 1990) to name just a few areas of research. Further to this research has been the development of tools that can be used by both teachers and learners to identify a particular learner's unique way of learning.

Leading on from this, practitioners have looked for ways to deliver training that acknowledges and encompasses a range of possible learning styles, and information has been made available to assist learners to implement strategies to enhance their learning by focusing on their own particular way of knowing (Spicer: 2005). Awareness, understanding and willingness by teachers to accommodate the needs of learners are of paramount importance in engaging learners (Lazear: 1991a). For the learner, the identification of their own unique way of knowing is vital to their positive and active

engagement in the learning process and to facilitate their learning (Prashnig).

Project resources

A number of materials and resources related to identifying learning styles were collected, modified or created for presentation to the different student groups. The challenge was in catering to the diverse needs of youths, adult learners from a non-English speaking background and adults with a mild intellectual disability, all within the project. These resources included a range of inventories: learning styles inventory (Sonbucher, G.M., 1991); multiple intelligences inventory (*www.ldrc.ca/projects/miinventory/mitest.html*); vision, auditory and Kinaesthetic (VAK) surveys and memory activities, and the 'Are you right-brained or left-brained?' inventory. Other resources and handouts included the 'Barrier Game' drawing handout (Watcyn-Jones P. 1995); role plays, videos, newspaper articles, visual prompts, memory test word lists; extracts from 'Seven ways of teaching' (Lazear, D., 1991b); vocabulary and instruction sheets. Information on the sources for resources is included in the bibliography.

Learning styles tools

Learning styles tools are referred to by number in some of the group reports. They are:

1 Vision, auditory and Kinesthetic (VAK) survey (source unknown).
2 Learning styles inventory (Sonbucher, G.M., 1991).
3 VAK memory activity.
4 Are you right-brained or left-brained? inventory (source unknown).
5 What are my learning strengths? multiple intelligences inventory *www.ldrc.ca/projects/miinventory/mitest.html*

Group profiles

Four different groups were selected to be apart of the investigation into learning styles. Each of these groups was identified because of its unique learning needs. Because of space constraints this article focuses more closely on the presentation to, and findings for, two of the four groups.

Group A

Return to Study students were enrolled in Introduction to Psychology as part of their return to study through the Certificate in General Education for Adult (CGEA). They are of mixed ages and cultural backgrounds, and may have been educated in another country or have returned to study after a significant break. The learning styles project material was presented to this group over five morning sessions of two hours. The group totalled 11 participants—three male and eight female.

Students were enthusiastic to discover their personal learning style. Most students were not surprised at their own results.

Perhaps students know on an intuitive level which style suits their learning the most. An interesting discussion on the potential limits of classroom-based learning followed, highlighting problems for kinaesthetic learners in particular.

> ## perhaps students know on an intuitive level which style suits their learning

Interestingly, the three students who were strongly kinaesthetic were asked to use touch, and had the opportunity to group items physically—yet none did, whereas many of the other learners used some form of categorising or grouping method to help them.

Student feedback on the memory aids from the video was that they were unhelpful and 'only add more information and complications' to the task of remembering. However, this may reflect more the level of their current education and learning experiences, as the exercises have been purposely designed by experts to facilitate memory retention and recall.

By the end, all students were able to demonstrate clear understanding of the different learning styles, their own style, and what they need to be more effective learners.

Group B

Mildly intellectually disabled (MID) students were enrolled in the Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy. The focus of this class was to empower students with a mild intellectual disability to participate to their potential in the workplace and community through the development of functional reading and writing skills. Students have limited reading and writing skills. The learning styles project was presented to this group over three morning sessions of three hours, with one support worker present to assist the students. The group totalled ten participants—eight male and two female. There were nine students in the first session and ten in the second.

The presentation of the learning styles experience was modified to take into account the cognitive skills of students—such as shorter time blocks, opportunity to talk about the process and practise tasks that were relevant and valuable for students, building self confidence and encouraging a willingness to 'have a go'. The sessions were broken down into covering one small aspect of learning styles at a time, with the aim of building on the experience throughout the year.

Group C

Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning (VCAL) students (16–19 years) were enrolled in the Performing & Visual Arts

and Multimedia subjects as components of their VCAL. Students were identified as 'at risk' of leaving school early or having a low level of literacy or a specific learning disability. The learning styles project was presented to this group over three morning sessions of four hours. The group comprised six male and seven female students.

Session 1
Session began with the VAK memory activity. All students participated. Discussion followed regarding clear definitions of each style and how they differ.

Session 2
VAK survey completed. Students read article from *Emerald Hill Weekly* and wrote about own learning style, including definition and a personal point of reference—an example of when they effectively learnt something showing use of their learning style. Work done where students identified strategies they could use to assist with learning.

Session 3
More discussion, sharing of ideas and answers to the above. There was debriefing regarding strongly kinaesthetic learners feeling as though they had not been adequately catered for in school. Students looked at how they could implement strategies.

The exploration of how to best learn generated high interaction and lively discussions. Issues around auditory learners not having very good listening skills also came to the fore!

> **another...felt released to simply jump into future class activities rather than asking a million questions**

Students were found to be mainly kinaesthetic, perhaps reflecting their change from VCE to VCAL where applied learning is assessed by demonstration of competency.

There were some differences in results between the two sessions, perhaps due to the difference between a memory test and a self-reflection exercise. While one student with a diagnosed learning difficulty disagreed with his results from both tests (he tested both times as auditory, but felt he was visual and kinaesthetic), the majority of students commented on the overall accuracy of the results. Some did express concern about being pigeonholed into a particular learning style, as they didn't like being labelled. The strongly

kinaesthetic learners in the group also needed debriefing as they felt they had not been adequately catered for in school.

Encouraging the VCAL students to reflect on their experience of first learning to drive a car (as it is a current new activity for them) proved a very effective way of getting them to think about how they learn. They highlighted other factors that they felt affected their learning, such as:
- connection with teacher (if they liked them or not)
- connection with subject matter
- environment
- motivation
- engagement
- learning path or continuum from novice to expert, and where they fit
- being ready to learn.

On the whole, the outcome of these sessions was positive, with the students genuinely considering implications for their learning and how they could implement strategies to enhance it. One kinaesthetic, for instance, reflected on being self-taught when it came to violin playing, not having read music or having been told how to play. Another who tested as kinaesthetic felt released to simply jump into future class activities rather than asking a million questions. A visual student decided that seeing the answers would help her with future learning.

Group D
Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA) youth students (15–17) were identified as 'at risk' due to low levels of literacy and/or behavioural challenges, or other factors ranging from homelessness to mental health issues. The learning styles project was presented to this group over three morning sessions of four hours. The group comprised two different sets of students, the Wednesday class of ten male and six female students (16 total), and the Thursday class of eight male and four female students (12 total).

Sessions were delivered in the context of the term's theme, From Disability to Ability. Students had just finished learning about historically famous people and contemporary celebrities who have achieved success despite their learning disability. As many students themselves are struggling with some form of *dis*ability—whether learning-specific, behavioural like ADHD, or low self-esteem—this paved the way beautifully for learning next about the brain and students' own learning styles as a path to self-empowerment, improved academic performance and positive achievement in life generally.

Each session was planned according to the methodology recommended in the book *Seven ways of teaching* (Lazear: 1991b) for teaching content-based lessons:

1 Awakening intelligence—triggering awareness of our multiple ways of learning through the senses.
2 Amplifying intelligence—deepening the experience and understanding of these multiple learning styles and strengthening the capacity to use them.
3 Teaching for/with intelligence—developing ways of applying different learning styles to a specific lesson goal.
4 Transferring intelligence—applying learning styles to real-life situations and ultimately integrating them into our ways of living.

students in both classes showed a preference for right hemisphere functioning

While these four steps are intended to assist teachers design and deliver lessons that address multiple intelligences, they presented a useful framework for guiding students through the process of learning about learning styles in general. The last two steps were also appropriated for involving the students in action-based learning, where they themselves took some responsibility for practising and extending the exploration of their own learning styles beyond the immediate classroom experience to future applications, and ways of dealing with other challenges in daily living.

Session 1
The aim of this session was to introduce students to the concept of learning styles in general and specifically to the roles of hemispheric dominance and the visual-auditory-kinaesthetic modalities in learning.

The session began with a discussion about a time where students can remember learning to do something new. They had to engage their senses to recall as much as they could about the experience, how they did it and how it felt. The teacher assisted with 'cue' vocabulary. This was the 'awakening' stage of the lesson. The 'amplifying' stage comprised discussion and illustrations/activities on the board about the brain, its basic structure, hemispheric functions and primary modalities, followed by a left brain/right brain survey (Tool 4) and a learning styles inventory (Tool 2). Next—the 'teaching' stage—students came up with an item each for a grocery shopping list that the teacher dictated to them, while they individually 'took notes' using any of the strategies identified for their dominant hemisphere (for example, listing vs. mind mapping). Students also completed the VAK memory activity (Tool 3). Finally, in the 'transfer' stage, students discussed their experiences, perceptions, ways and contexts of applying the learning styles explored in this session.

Session 2
Multiple intelligences was the focus of this session. Due to time constraints, it was decided that only three of these 'Seven ways of Knowing' would be explored:

1 visual/spatial intelligence
2 musical/rhythmic intelligence
3 interpersonal intelligence.

The 'awakening' stage of the lesson involved students thinking of a movie they either really liked or really hated, and sharing what stood out about it the most for them—the images, the music/sound effects or the human drama. For the 'amplifying' stage, students were led through some information handouts. In the 'teaching' stage students grouped themselves according to their highest ranking learning style within this selection. Those that scored highest for another learning style, for example verbal/linguistic or bodily-kinaesthetic, joined the group that was their next highest score. Those that scored highest equally across the three styles selected joined either the group of their preference or the one with the lowest number of students, to even up the group sizes. All groups were required to attempt the tasks assigned for the selected styles. These were:
• the Barrier Game for the visual/spatial intelligence, where they had to draw the object, in the exact place, stated by the teacher
• describing the sounds/music/songs that could context-ualise a picture of their choice, to build a story about it or create a song/rap about that picture for the musical/rhythmic intelligence
• for the interpersonal intelligence—role-play their choice of character from the list provided, to show the interaction between these characters in a plane crash-deserted island scenario (like the current TV show, 'Lost').

Finally, in the 'transfer' stage, students analysed their experiences and discussed ways of effectively applying the learning styles explored in this session in other contexts.

Session 3
The aim of this session was to recap the learning styles explored and lessons learned over the previous sessions (a fusion of the 'awakening' stage with simple, quick sensory activities to animate the revision, and the 'amplifying' stage) and undertake a memory test as a summative experience. To do this, students grouped themselves according to the learning style of their choice, but performed the task of selecting 20 words to memorise individually, using their choice of strategy for that style (the 'teaching' stage). At the end, students shared their experience and insights (the 'transfer' stage).

On the whole, the findings were not surprising. That said, while students in both classes showed a preference for right

hemisphere functioning as predicted using the left brain/right brain tool, the overwhelming dominance of that preference in the Thursday class (not one student registered as left-brained) was amazing. The students were fascinated to learn what their results meant, and the sighs and 'yeahs' on examining their personal school experience in this light showed that the dissonance between their hemispheric preference and the curriculum taught in the secondary school system resonated with them.

> **stronger outcomes were evident from the students' opportunity to express an opinion about the subject matter**

The popularity of the 'manipulating' (kinaesthetic) learning style among the males in the Wednesday class was expected. That 'listening' and 'speaking' tied for the highest ranking learning styles for the female students was also true to character in that group. While similar results were expected with the Thursday class, the actual finding that most students here—both genders—learned best by listening (equalled by 'speaking' for the females) solicited a chuckle from the teacher who, on reflection, realised that this was indeed the case. Again, as with Tool 1, students expressed strong support for the accuracy of their results.

Interestingly, these findings for the Wednesday class were corroborated by the VAK memory activity (Tool 3). Not so with the Thursday class. The males presented strongly in the visual modality, while more females presented as being kinaesthetic. What this highlights is the anomaly that can arise between self-perception and behaviour during the actual 'doing'.

It was interesting to observe that over both classes only two students ranked high scores in all the learning styles. One student, on the other hand, showed significantly low scores across all.

Findings during the experimentation with these multiple intelligences include:
- Almost all students responded extremely positively to the visual/spatial activity even though many had not ranked as such (student feedback: it was the fun factor).
- Just because a student scored highly as visual didn't mean they like drawing (highlighting the need for choice in strategies within a style category).
- Even students who ranked highly as 'musical/rhythmic' struggled with the given task (again highlighting the above point, or even the need to modify the task itself).

- Most students, shy or not shy, hate being put on the spot to perform (as required for the interpersonal task—only one student absolutely loved it and really got into his role).

This last point illustrates the importance of considering variables that can influence performance on a task and subsequent results, such as:
- mood on the day
- distractions
- hunger level
- time length given on a task.

Even allowing students to group themselves according to their preferred learning style for an activity can skew the accuracy of results, especially when second and third preferences are one or two points apart and a student might actually perform better using a strategy for the group he or she hasn't joined.

Impact on students
The teachers reported a high level of motivation and interest in the sessions given. Students seemed very engaged in the process of identifying how they best learn and what strategies they could use to enhance learning in the future. The process for them was one of empowerment through raised self-awareness and self understanding, which translated into practical strategies of how to more effectively participate in, and benefit from learning. In a control exercise as part of this project, students implemented strategies reflecting the needs of their particular learning style, resulting in higher outcomes in a memory test. Time will tell whether they will continue to implement these strategies. At the very least, they have the tools now to utilise their choices.

In the case of Group B, stronger outcomes were evident from the students' opportunity to express an opinion about the subject matter, rather than from the realisation of an individual learning style. In the youth and VCAL groups on the other hand, there was a realisation by students that their previous experience with education and the resulting 'at risk' issues were catered for in reflection of their learning styles, and what was offered in previous classrooms. It would seem that one challenge is the high number of students in classes in schools, as opposed to lower numbers in TAFE. There were not necessarily purely behavioural or 'my fault'. Awareness was gained that perhaps there was a systemic problem in which where their learning needs were not met, and there was a feeling by students of being 'let down' in previous settings. While the TAFE system cannot claim to be all things to all people, especially with resource limitations, there does seem to be a broad variety of students catered to.

Impacts for delivery and teachers
There was overwhelming agreement amongst teachers that this project provided a useful reminder of the importance of

delivery that catered to a wide variety of learning styles and needs. This deepened awareness is reflected in these teachers' broader view and understanding in lesson preparation. However the greatest learning need for VCAL and youth groups is to engage and motivate. With all groups, the greatest barrier to learning for the majority was an extreme lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Where increased time is allocated to understand and digest information, greater learning occurs.

Impacts for curriculum development

The research confirmed the suitability of the course and course content for the VCAL group. Primarily kinaesthetic learners, the use of competency-based training and assessment caters for those learners—who commented on their increased confidence and capability in being able to do, rather than talk about doing, in an environment that is primarily focused on active assessment rather than assessments. Students in the other groups also voiced preference for a multi-styled and multi-paced curriculum.

Implementation and evaluation

The development and implementation of this project has seen a range of positive outcomes for both students and teachers. We hope that projects such as this continue to receive funding because learning difficulties cut across a whole range of students, and the frustration felt by these learners and their teachers can be reduced through increased awareness about why these difficulties exist, and devising strategies for minimising them. The growing numbers of young people entering the TAFE sector in particular show the importance of addressing diverse learning needs through the design and delivery of classes that accommodate a range of learning styles—a need compounded by widening generational differences. (Perhaps there's a research opportunity here?)

Considering the mounting pressures on teachers to engage their learners, keep them motivated, and empower them, it is imperative that we continue to investigate more ways of improving our methodologies. In doing this, we revitalise ourselves as teachers. That is why projects such as this are so valuable. By broadening our perspectives, they not only foster best teaching practice—they accelerate it.

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Epideictic discourse: the rhetoric of memory, praise and hope

by Rob McCormack

Within classical rhetoric, epideictic discourse was one of three valued forms of public discourse—the others being forensic and deliberative discourses. Epideictic discourse—which was often viewed as a slightly frivolous form of pomp and ceremony—was fundamentally political, a call for a community to itself, to be aware of itself, to remember who it is, to come together as a self/community. To 'be'.

In this article I will (based on the assumption that some readers may not be familiar with classical European rhetoric) outline Aristotle's three genres of public speech: forensic discourse, deliberative discourse and epideictic discourse; suggest why epideictic discourse has lost favour and been discredited as a preferred mode of discourse in formal education; and suggest all communities need to be underwritten by regular and discourse events. I will argue that epideictic discourse is especially important in today's times however you name them: post-modernity, reflexive modernity, fluid capitalism or pro-futurity. Times in which the naturalness and taken-for-grantedness of nation, community and identity have been peeled back, and their contingency and constructedness revealed.

Although I have developed and taught a tightly structured epideictic curriculum for Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory of Australia over a number of years, I will not describe this curriculum nor make any specific pedagogic suggestions about how to teach or foster epideictic. Except to say this: my interest in ancient rhetoric, in particular epideictic rhetoric, came from trying to find a way to mediate where aboriginal adults were coming from in terms of their language, and where they needed to get to in using language for academic study, professional life and community leadership, even though I think this is a region of the language curriculum that should be renewed. There is no time. However, if there is time I may recite a few very short slogans produced by students of this course, just to give a sense of educational scope of epideictic as it ranges across the whole gamut of emotions—from playfulness to pain to politics.

Since I am fundamentally a reflective educator, not a linguist of any stripe, I won't try to align the concepts of classical rhetoric with any concepts within Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory. Although there clearly are many intriguing echoes and continuities, I leave that to the experts. The reason I turned to rhetoric is that it is the *original* productive discourse analysis. Rhetoric was taught not just as a science—as a way of analysing discourse—but as an art,

as a form of know-how that could be both consciously but eventually spontaneously mobilised to produce powerful and persuasive discourse. Moreover it is a curriculum of the *longue duree*. It has evolved and kept its shape through all sorts of transformations over a time span of 2300 years. In Halliday's terms it is the closest thing we have at a naturally evolved formal language curriculum.

Fundamentally, what I am going to argue is that current theorisations around the notions of democracy, the public sphere and critical literacy all need to be supplemented by the concept of epideictic rhetoric. More specifically, I argue that if we return to classical rhetoric, a curriculum which emerged precisely in order to foster the kind of political discourse that supports a good polis, we will find there a forgotten and largely repressed mode of public discourse: epideictic, the discourse of ceremonial praise.

And so my argument is that we need to reinvent this mode of discourse, as well as a pedagogy for training students into it, if we are to reinvigorate political life and redress the rampant cynicism and withdrawal from political involvement among the general population, and more specifically, if we are to assist the Left to reinvent itself as a platform of positive values and hope rather than being perceived as a party of carping negativity and joyless criticism. I want to praise the discourse of praise and criticise the discourse of critique.

Roughly 2300 years ago, Aristotle lectured on the arts of the rhetoric with a practical series of instructions for public speakers and for teachers of public speaking. He classified public speech in three genres.

1 Forensic discourse

Forensic speech is where people argue the rights and wrongs of a case. It is the speech of prosecutors and defence in a dispute or court case. It is your classic argument where people trade and argue interpretations of 'what was done' and who was to blame. The purpose of forensic discourse is to persuade a judge or jury of the guilt or innocence of the person charged.

Especially because Greek citizens often had to defend themselves against accusations with serious consequences, even death, with almost no prior notice or professional assistance, forensic discourse became the most fully developed and highly technical of the three forms of public discourse. As a result, ancient rhetoric developed a full arsenal of explicitly defined and taught strategies, tactics and procedures for engaging in this discourse situation. In fact, most of the rhetorical curriculum dedicated to the creation of arguments is aimed at forensic speech.

forensic speech is alive and well in our courtrooms

As well, the area of what was known as status theory developed detailed procedures for working out what exactly was the key underpinning issue on which a case would swing, what matters were relevant to this underpinning issue, and finally in what order to conduct one's case depending on whether you were defending or prosecuting, as a result of first determining what your opponents strategy was likely to be. We are all fairly familiar with this type of strategic thinking from watching movies and TV series about barristers. But what we don't often realise is that barristers have been inducted into a technology of argument, a technology derived from status theory in classical rhetoric.

Forensic speech is alive and well in our courtrooms, although the fact that there is such a disjunct between the professionalised judicial system and the general public is a matter of deep concern from a rhetorical point of view.

2 Deliberative discourse

Aristotle's second form of public speech is deliberative discourse. Deliberative discourse is the discourse involved in decision-making. It is the discourse of discussing, debating, arguing—not over the rights and wrongs of something that has already been done, as in forensic rhetoric, but of arguing about what's the best thing to do, debating the pros and cons of different action plans or policy proposals for the future. In short, deliberative rhetoric is concerned with policy formation, with arguing for and against suggested policy. It's the sort of discourse we associate with conventional politics and political commentary in current affairs programs, newspaper columns and editorials.

At least since the New Left during the 60s there has been a strong revival of the notion of 'deliberative or participatory democracy' in opposition to the 'party-based representative political system of liberal democracy'. Deliberative democracy is the idea that the people must participate in the political process

of policy formation. Theoretically, the notion of deliberative democracy tends to be associated with Habermas' later theorising in which modernity is posited as a dialectical conjuncture between/of two forms of rationality: instrumental rationality which is the rationality of the social system, and communicative rationality which is the rationality of the life-world.

Deliberative democracy is an effort to construct a public sphere or civil society that is not hostage to the manipulations of the instrumental rationality and imperatives of the economy and of a functionalised bureaucracy.

Unfortunately, Habermas is a neo-Kantian and he views the public sphere as a reinvention of Kant's tribunal of reason. The deliberative public sphere for Habermas is a region of argument in which policies are tested against the standards of reason. Thus Habermas retains Kant's *homo duplex* theorem, so that a person is, as it were, split into two: on the one hand their identity as defined by language, culture, history, embodiment, experience and identification; on the other there is their higher self, which identifies only with the discursive power of the stronger argument. The former, the realm of rhetoric, interprets social life through the optic of emotionally charged and habituated prejudice; the latter views social life through the serene and impartial vantage point of reason which consists of the mobilisation of neutral cognitive procedures.

I won't delve too deeply into the concerns of deliberative discourse but will raise two questions:
- Is deliberative discourse a sufficient grounding for a democratic politics?

The second question shifts to the educational arena and asks:
- Is critical literacy a sufficient pedagogy for nurturing and cultivating deliberative discourse for a democratic politics?

I suggest the answer to both questions is 'no'. No! Deliberative discourse is not—on its own—a sufficient public discourse to ground a democratic politics. And No! Critical literacy is not a sufficient pedagogy to nurture or cultivate a deliberative discourse for a democratic politics. What I will argue is that in both cases what is missing is epideictic discourse.

If people sense that they can only enter the public sphere at the expense of their identity and life-world, then that public sphere will be experienced as a place of coldness and alienation, a denial of self, not an expansion of self, and certainly not an expression of the sovereignty of the people.

The idea of criticism
Critical literacy is based on the notion of criticism or critique coming from the 18th century Enlightenment. This notion of criticism is based on the idea that people need to be

enlightened. That is, presently they are guided by fraudulent ideas and these ideas need to be criticised so that they can base their lives and actions on true ideas. People's ordinary ideas are ideologies, ideas that mask reality and the truth. But they can be corrected by following the path of reason and learning to 'see through' these deluded ideas. This concept of 'enlightenment through critical reason' has its own history. It echoes Plato's famous cave analogy in which citizens are like cave dwellers, condemned to knowing only the reflected shadow of things, never the things themselves.

criticism... is a central idea in western civilisation

For both Plato and the Enlightenment, reason and criticism are based on a very strong notion of truth and of the truth-as-one. There is only one true way of seeing things, one way to act justly. If there are differences in the way we see things, these differences show that some of us have fallen into superstition or ideology. These people need to be brought into the 'truth' by submitting their ideas to criticism. So, both reject the 'to and fro' of a more embodied rhetorical discourse, and attempt to substitute a more transcendent epistemology for dealing with social life.

Criticism is not an innocent thing. It is a central idea in western civilisation, and to put it bluntly, it is the claim that western civilisation knows the truth and thus has the right to criticise and enlighten others who disagree with them. I hope you can sense the dogmatism, even totalitarianism haunting this tradition.

If, for example, I live in the light of reason and you live within the delusions of ideology, then nothing that you say counts for me—except as evidence of your delusions. You have to take me seriously, but I don't have to take you seriously. This practice of criticism has a strong smell of superiority about it.

Politics needs, positive values
I have not the space here to argue fully what I now need to say, so I will resort to simple assertion. It is the reliance on criticism to ground its deliberative rhetoric that is robbing the Left of its political support. As George Lakoff has pointed out, the Democratic Party in the US has allowed the Christian Right to claim a monopoly on positive values, whilst the values of the Left are framed as negative political correctness—as envy and resentment.

The problem is that criticism cannot give any voice or substantive body to its values because they are so universal they are emptied of all content. Moreover these values are

not so much evoked as values of the audience, but as values held against the audience. I think this is what the notion of 'political correctness' must mean—a value that is invoked as valid and binding for an audience, whether or not that value is espoused by that audience. In other words, rather than being grounded in or expressing the *sensus communis* and way of life of the audience, it gains its validity from some transcendental source and is simply imposed from the outside.

I believe we can read much of recent Australian political history, especially from Pauline Hanson onwards, as resulting from a progressive intellectual elite wishing to impose its own values on a general population that does not feel answerable to these values.

3 Epideictic discourse
What is missing from a deliberative discourse that relies on criticism as its dominant mode of discourse is Aristotle's third form of public discourse, epideictic rhetoric. Epideictic rhetoric is a discourse that calls on the audience to reconnect with the values, the history and the hopes that bind that community together into a fellowship of humanity. Epideictic discourse is a discourse aimed at strengthening the bonds of loyalty, commitment and community.

It is a discourse that tries to deepen its audience's identification and commitment to the values, principles, culture and history underpinning their way of life. It is the rhetoric of special occasions, when a community is celebrating and intensifying its sense of itself. Without regular epideictic rhetoric, a community inevitably becomes alienated from itself and falls into factionalism or a routinisation that is unmindful of the spirit, of the horizon of meaning and the ideals that give that community its heart and soul. Without epideictic discourse, a community tends to lose contact with its origins, its essence, its hopes, its aspirations, its loyalties and its ethics.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969 pp. 49–55) put it thus:

> The purpose of an epideictic speech is to increase the intensity of adherence to values held in common by the audience and the speaker … The speaker engaged in epideictic discourse is very close to being an educator. … Any society prizing its own values is therefore bound to promote opportunities for epideictic speeches to be delivered at regular intervals: ceremonies commemorating past events of national concern, religious services, eulogies of the dead, and similar manifestations fostering a communion of minds.

For example, it would be interesting to analyse educational conferences from an epideictic point of view and ask:
- Is this conference primarily an epideictic event punctuated by academic papers and presentations, or is it really just a

set of papers punctuated by phatic irrelevant outbursts of praise, good will, fellow feeling and solidarity?

- Do regular conferences such as this embed the educational community into publicly displayed and embodied emotions, friendships, and dispositions, or could the actual co-presence of the conference simply be replaced without loss by a website containing the papers?
- Are educational conferences really epideictic ceremonies in which, and through which, the educational community celebrates and intensifies itself as a community of practice, enquiry, memory and hope?

According to a more contemporary theorist, Jeffrey Walker (2000 pp. 9–10), epideictic discourse is:

> that which shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives; it shapes the ideologies and imageries with which, and by which, the individual members of a community identify themselves; and, perhaps most significantly, it shapes the fundamental grounds, the 'deep' commitments and presuppositions, that will underlie and ultimately determine decision and debate in particular pragmatic forums. As such epideictic discourse is not limited to the reinforcement of existing beliefs and ideologies, or to merely ornamental displays of clever speech … [W]hen conceived in positive terms, … epideictic discourse reveals itself (as Perelman recognised) as the central and indeed fundamental mode of rhetoric in human culture.

Critical literacy as a hermeneutic of suspicion is too afraid of epideictic discourse, of its ritualism, of its bullshit, of its clichés, and sentimentality. Right from Aristotle himself, epideictic has been suspected of being more an extravagant exhibition of virtuosity than a serious contribution to the political life of the community or city. For most educators today, especially secular progressive educators in public education, epideictic is something that is faintly embarrassing, something you squirm at. Epideictic is the sort of discourse that is most naturally, most sincerely and most enthusiastically performed by conservatives, religious leaders, military leaders, business leaders, politicians and private school principals. It is the sort of discourse that has been ostracised by modern, liberal, secular, neutral, public education. Unfortunately this means that the teaching and learning of epideictic has been pretty much left to Dale Carnegie and Toastmasters.

And yet, it is precisely the emotions expressed in epideictic discourse that help bind psyches to the underpinning values of the *sensus communis* and underwrite the values of political deliberation and action. So from this perspective, concerts or discourse by rock musicians—whether about political violence in Ireland or about poverty in Africa—are important acts of epideictic rhetoric. Of course talk or music on its own never achieves anything, but neither does anything very much get achieved without talk—especially prior epideictic talk. Talk can create social pressure, solidarity and people power, and bring these to bear on the deliberative discourse of political players.

Cicero argued that cities or political communities were first formed through the powers of rhetoric, not through the powers of legislators or military leaders. I would also argue that although the constitution of modern states may not seem to be built on epideictic speech, but rather on the literate acts of legislators and constitution-writers, this is in a sense an illusion. I would argue that it is precisely because the Australian constitution is not built on epideictic speech that it is unfinished and incomplete. The Constitution will move towards completion only when it is truly built on epideictic discourses that call Indigenous Australians into full citizenship as first Australians. The liberalism of Australian mainstream thought may feel that it can sidestep the 'multicultural question' and 'the treaty question', but it can't. But nor can it be rammed through by fiat by a politically correct progressive class.

On any account, there is a huge deficit of epideictic discourse in Australia that needs to be made good before we become a fully constituted nation. The secure world of modernity and its predicability based on the expertise of the social sciences has been losing legitimacy for about 30 years. In one sense it is almost gone. The formative context of epideictic has been the funeral: the ceremonial recognition of loss that fulfils the need to re-establish a faith in the future as a domain of hope. Our globalising world of risk throws up more and more events—especially tragic ones that call out for a voice able to give expression to the suffering, the outrage, the tears, the need for solidarity in suffering, healing and renewal, whether it be Australia 1788, New York 2001, Madrid 2002, Bagdad, Bali, Lebanon, Aceh 2004, or London, 7/7. Let's not just criticise or subvert the existing epideictic of power—let's produce a counter-epideictic that is even more persuasive and more powerful.

This article was first delivered as a paper at the International Systemic Functional Congress (ISFC2005), University of Sydney, 20 July 2005.

Dr Rob McCormack, calling himself a 'second-chance educator', works in adult basic education and academic language and learning. He champions the relevancy of classical rhetoric as a source of concepts and pedagogic practices, and several years ago drew on this to design two foundation study units for Indigenous adults undertaking higher education at the Batchelor Institute, N.T.

Literacy support and aged care students

by Kerrin Pryor

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and training packages advocate the importance of literacy support, but organisations are not resourced to provide it. This is particularly the case with aged care training packages. Adequate funding must be provided if training packages are to deliver to learners, the community and industry.

The Eastern Metropolitan Region of Adult, Community and Further Education received funding from TAFE Frontiers to auspice a knowledge management research circle in their region. It consisted of organisational representatives from four adult community education (ACE) providers, who sought to use the research circle to develop the management and delivery of the aged care services training package in the region.

The research circle met several times to define and scope out their projects, guided by Allie Clemans from Monash University. The projects were carried out individually, but group members provided each other with useful resources, support and networks in order to obtain information pertinent to their projects. While aged care was of particular interest to the participants, in most cases the products that have been developed apply to any VET training program or aspect of delivery. The four projects have yielded four products. What follows is a report on the project that identifies ways to think about, and reasons to provide, literacy support for learners participating in aged care programs.

Context

As a coordinator of aged care courses and a long-time tutor of basic adult literacy, I am interested in language and literacy support for aged care students. The aged care industry is demanding more proficient language and literacy from its care workers. Personal care assistants are required to read and apply client care plans and policies, contribute appropriately to written progress notes on a daily basis, and engage in clinical aged care discourse with other health professionals. These skills are highly sought after. Accurate and appropriate documentation ensures quality care for the elderly and enhances accreditation and regulations standards, which are crucial for ongoing funding for aged care facilities. New workers are expected to hit the ground running with an operational aged care discourse.

Individuals enter aged care courses with a wide variety of language and literacy skills. Those with existing literacy skills that are lower than the standard required by the industry tend to struggle with the writing and reading requirements of both the classroom and the workplace. This jeopardises their success as a student and as a potential employee.

Generally students must complete approximately 480 hours of training that includes up to 120 hours of work placement.

The curriculum alone may not ensure adequate literacy skills have been attained for success in the workplace. National strategies are increasingly attempting to raise awareness of the literacy requirements in training packages, but for most of the time the variance and depth of literacy skills are still implied and not made explicit. The contention behind the 'Built in—Not bolted on' perspective on literacy and training implies that all teachers are literacy teachers (Bradley 2000; Lonsdale & McCurry 2004), and that literacy learning can always be embedded within the delivery of training package competencies. However the 'building in' of literacy may not be the answer to straddle industry and individual literacy needs. As Dawe (2004:79) states, 'In some cases generic skills such as language or learning skills may need to be taught separately and prior to further training.' Furthermore, a lack of capacity or skill in the teaching workforce can be a barrier to effective literacy provision (McKenna and Fitzpatrick 2004).

An examination of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), a standards document that guides all TAFE and ACE providers of accredited training, underscores the project's concerns. Under Standard 1.8 we need to manage risk in relation to literacy and numeracy support for our students. There are risks if our learners do not achieve the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills they need to successfully participate in training, and importantly, to perform competently in the workplace. These risks pertain not only to the RTO and learners but also to the broader society, considering the duty of care attached to aged care work.

Under Standard 6 of the AQTF we must document the process we will follow to provide literacy assessment and support. While this does not say we must assess every student, we must have awareness of who may need support and strategies to implement this support.

Standard 9 requires us to develop the learning potential of the individual so that they may perform at the required Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level in the

workplace, and that individual learning and assessment strategies are negotiated with the learner. This has implications for an analysis of assessment tasks (especially written tasks) to ensure they do not demand more literacy ability than what is actually required in the workplace. Furthermore, individuals who require literacy support need to be consulted and a training plan that accommodates their needs must be negotiated with a nominated 'literacy expert' person and the coordinator and/or industry expert.

literacy has become an essential part of the aged care program

Identifying literacy support as embedding literacy in curriculum and, on the other hand, as addressing individual needs in a well-informed LLN pedagogy as is positioned in the AQTF, can appear a paradox. The problem we face as VET training providers then, is to ensure that our graduates of aged care courses are confident users of their industry's language and literacy. This aspect of job readiness is as important as the more practical components of the job. To facilitate success for our students we must then give sufficient support to the development of the associated and underpinning language and literacy skills. So how should we approach this problem? What is the perceived need for literacy support from both the providers and students' perspectives, and what strategies if any are providers using to address this concern?

The problem—from an ACE provider perspective

At Upper Yarra Community House (UYCH) Learning Centre, tutors and coordinators were aware of small numbers of students who struggled with the reading, writing and language aspects of their studies. The areas of difficulty were mainly comprehension of written assignment tasks, basic writing and critical reading skills. The three-day return to study course that had been delivered over the past two years to Community Services students had helped in preparation for study. However, specific support was required in individual cases. We needed to explicitly recognise the types of literacy support required. This involved identifying those needing extra support before the training started, and assisting placement organisations who would then be in a better position to support the students in their studies.

The first step was to link managed care units to the National Reporting System (NRS) criteria and level, then develop a support indicator tool to meet the literacy concerns we had identified. The tool is divided into two parts. Part one consists of an interview where oral skills are demonstrated and a text is read aloud. Part two consists of written comprehension questions concerning an industry-related text, writing a letter requesting leave and numeracy problems.

Student responses to the oral, reading and comprehension, writing and numeracy tasks are collected and matched to an NRS level. The student's identified NRS level is then compared to the NRS level required by the certificate. The type and amount of support is analysed by comparing the gaps between these two criteria. Utilising the notes taken by the interviewer and the written responses, strategies are suggested to address the areas of anticipated support required by individual students.

At UYCH, study support mornings were offered every second Friday morning for three-hour sessions. These sessions were factored into the course's timetable for the first term and all students were encouraged to attend. The first hour or so of the session was planned for grammar, spelling and vocabulary around the content of the course and workplace communication requirements. The remaining two hours was flexible, filled with group and individual discussion or tuition and assignment completion. Students often used this time to debrief about their new workplace experiences and speak and explore their care work discourse. We called these sessions study support to avoid any negative connotations that support in literacy can sometimes create amongst students.

The research problem

Given the way in which literacy has become an essential part of the aged care program, the AQTF standards and the issues experienced by students and providers in receiving and offering literacy support, I was very interested in finding out if students had benefited from the study support and what the views and approaches of other coordinators are on literacy support. The research question that guided my project was: 'What are the benefits of language and literacy support to aged care students and in what ways is it best approached in the region?' I hoped to highlight the need for literacy support in aged care training, identify the perceived benefits/costs of students gaining literacy support, share existing strategies for literacy support in the region, and identify best practice in literacy support.

Approach

To gather appropriate data, I interviewed three ACE providers of the Certificate III in Aged Care. During the interviews we discussed the following themes; the perceived need for literacy support, the costs and benefits of offering literacy support and the ways that it could be or was being offered. Two of the providers were medium-

sized community houses that deliver a range of VET courses as well as broader community-driven programs. The other provider's organisation was a large provider of community services and courses.

> ## only one provider offered literacy support as part of the course

I also interviewed four learners who had participated in the study support sessions I had provided in my role as literacy teacher and aged care course coordinator at UYCH learning centre. These four students volunteered their participation and time to be interviewed. We discussed the type of support they believed they had received, and the benefits of this support to them as students and future aged care workers. The learners were all female, with their ages ranging from early thirties to middle fifties. All students were returning to study after a lengthy time. For one student, it had been over 30 years since she had attended any formal schooling. Notes were taken at the interviews. The data was then collated into matrices and themes and patterns identified.

Summary of coordinator responses

Only one provider offered literacy support as part of the course. Both industry and classroom demands were reasons for offering literacy support, although one provider saw no reason to offer support because all students should have the skills before entry. Generic skills such as time management and personal organisation could be enhanced through literacy support sessions. One coordinator thought that three or four out of twenty students would need literacy support. Another acknowledged that there were students who currently needed literacy support but were not receiving it because of under-resourcing.

Two providers used pre-course interviews to identify literacy needs. One provider interviewed students noting the verbal exchange and asked students to respond in writing to the question 'why I want to be an aged care worker'. This initial assessment asked learners to also answer comprehension questions after reading a short text. Another provider who used a pre-course interview format was less formal in their approach and often relied on tutors to identify needs once the course had commenced. No formal assessment was used at the third provider because they felt they were not qualified to do so. Needs were identified through tutors, or as students identified themselves.

The idea of embedding was described as relevant literacy skills introduced and practised in classroom activities and

delivery. There was an expectation on tutors to deliver training that was appropriate for the industry, and by default this training included literacy requirements. In response to my question about this approach as a way of dealing with literacy needs among students, two respondents advocated embedding literacy in the curriculum, while one believed adding on might be necessary for those who needed further help. For one provider, embedding literacy ran the chance of frustrating those students who did not have any literacy issues. All coordinators cited funding or lack of resources as constraints when thinking and planning for literacy support.

Summary of learners' responses

Students identified support they received as help with grammar and spelling, the personal dictionary that assisted their learning of new vocabulary, moral support and general information about the course. Other issues covered in the sessions, such as time management and general expectations of their roles as a student and a worker, were cited by learners as helpful. All enjoyed the discussions that centred on expectations of the course, particularly the assignments. The confirmation of being on the right track was a common theme. Being apprehensive, nervous, lacking information, needing encouragement and requiring feedback were common across all respondents. This included the sometimes-difficult task for new learners of understanding assignment instructions. The learning from each other's work placement experiences and the peer coaching that took place was also deemed helpful. Students emphasised the importance of time to discuss the formal learning in an informal manner and the flexibility in the sessions.

Findings

The benefits of literacy support are three-pronged:
- Industry in supplying more competent workers.
- Tutors in having more competent and engaged learners.
- Students in feeling confident in their new learning role and achieving a certificate with job prospects.

Providers generally see the issue of literacy as reading, comprehension and writing skills related to specific industry requirements, and to the reading and writing components of the course. Literacy was not seen in a more holistic sense.

However, it is apparent from the student's perspective that they experienced more than the provider's notion of literacy. Student responses emphasised the benefits they gained as feeling confident, allowing the correct interpretation of assignment questions, oral affirmation from both their peers and tutors, and feeling 'on track'. Students identified having the space and time to discuss and unpack the requirements

of the course in an informal manner as an important benefit, more so than the explicit literacy strategies used in the course such as the vocabulary dictionary.

Although it was deemed important to identify those students before commencement, there appears a reliance on the tutors to identify students with literacy needs once training has begun, and to take responsibility for bringing these students up to industry standards within class time. Discussions with providers indicated that for some individuals, the delivery of literacy training needed to be individualised and sometimes added on. Furthermore, most tutors in aged care are trained nurses with no literacy training experience. Therefore this expectation of tutors could be unrealistic.

While the AQTF and training packages advocate the importance of literacy support, financial resources constrain the ability of organisations to provide it. The cost of setting up infrastructure for interviews and assessment of new students, and implementing the support in the form of individual tuition or study support sessions, puts undue financial burden on the organisations. The ability of organisations to access literacy specialists is also a constraint.

Project recommendations

It is appropriate for literacy support for aged care programs to be placed within two discourses. First, the classroom/ learning discourse which students seem to emphasise strongly, and second, the discourse of the workplace they are hoping to enter, which the providers emphasise. The development of student-learning identities should be explicitly addressed in the models of literacy support provided. For underpinning literacy skills to be acquired, students need to be engaged with active learning. Study support sessions may play a role in building their learning confidence, and consequently improve the literacy skills specific to the industry. A number of recommendations emerged from this project:

- Professional development for aged care tutors is necessary to improve their understanding of literacy issues.

- Tutors with literacy specific training, as well as knowledge of the aged care work training package, are needed to facilitate literacy support.
- Closer links with literacy specialists within the organisation, or in partnership with other organisations, should be forged.
- A standardised literacy support indicator tool could be developed and made available to all aged care coordinators.

If literacy support is seen as a mandatory element of the training of aged care workers, and necessary to meet the standards of the AQTF and training packages, funding is necessary to recognise and support organisations in their endeavour to manage literacy support.

Kerrin Pryor is a coordinator of education and training for ACFE courses at Upper Yarra Community House, and has taught adult literacy, communications and return to study skills for almost 20 years. She has a social science degree and is currently undertaking a graduate diploma in education, specialising in literacy studies.

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What people dislike—what can turn them off—are the accoutrements of formal education: the paperwork, the classrooms, the assignments, the impersonal architecture, the pace, the inconvenient session times, the off-the-shelf curriculum packages, the power structures, the pressure to play an uncomfortable role, the lack of control, the feelings of inadequacy… in other words the trappings of structure. Such attributes are especially confronting when they do not appear to serve the learners' immediate interests. No good can come from making the world of learning a depressing or disagreeable place.

Best practice does not come about from increased resources, although this helps. Best practice is born of innovation and from a commitment to, and application of, fundamental principles to both means and ends of the learning process. By valuing all forms of structured learning, by valuing the many different outcomes of learning, and by using learners as a resource to guide policy and practice—or in the case of peer learning, engaging learners as teachers—considerable steps can be made towards more effectively engaging the disadvantaged and the disengaged.

This article was presented as part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) symposium on Lifelong Learning in Taipei, Taiwan, in July 2004.

Until 2004 John Cross was research manager for Adult Learning Australia, and also worked as the national coordinator of Adult Learners Week. He is now executive officer with Museums Australia. John has written a number of publications about adult education, including *Understand your world: the Adult Learners' Week 2003 literacy scrapbook*.

Eight easy steps to a digital story with Microsoft XP Photo Story 3

Digital storytelling is a major innovation in adult literacy educators' use of information and communication technologies, helping users create texts that communicate more than mere words on a page. Debbie Soccio (with due credit to Microsoft XP Photo Story 3 Support Materials) shows us how to get going with Photo Story 3.

There are many packages available to help you and your students build digital stories. However, Microsoft's XP Photo Story 3 is an easy step-by-step wizard-based program. It is easy to use and is in many ways self-explanatory in how it builds stories. Photo Story 3 has a series of key characteristics that make it accessible, even to those with minimal literacy and/or technical skills:

What you need to know up front
You need:
- a Pentium III computer with at least 256mb RAM.
- Windows XP (It is a Microsoft download after all). It is available from *www.microsoft.com*, although download via a dialup connection will take a while.
- Windows Media Player 10 (a free download). The final project plays through Media Player 10. If you try to run the finished program through anything less than Media Player 10, it will ask you to download the latest version.
- A selection of digital photos/images stored in computer files. Photo Story 3 requires the importing of jpeg files for pictures. Microsoft PowerPoint can also be used to make slides, which can be saved as jpeg files and imported in the same manner. However, Photo Story 3 does not allow the importing of video / moving pictures.
- A microphone and speakers—a headset is best. Photo Story 3 includes an inbuilt audio recording system that lets you record directly into a selected photo (but this recording cannot be changed to another photo unless audio is re-recorded).

Even though you might be itching to get going with the software, there are a couple of 'housekeeping' issues. You need to think about the story you (or your learners) are going to create: what it is you want to say, and to whom? And you also need to prepare—that is select and store the images, music and sound effects you might want to use in your story. The more time you spend on your story plan, the better prepared you will be once you begin using the software. So take the extra time to develop your story and organise your files before you begin.

Preparing a storyboard
It is a good idea to consider the purpose and intent in building the story and know who your audience is. In this way, the mood of the story can be developed to match the juxtaposition of both photos and music. You might like to consider these questions in helping you plan your storyboard:

1. Who or what is your story about?
2. What is the main reason for telling your story?
3. What type of story are you telling—an adventure, a special person, travel, a special place, report, a special event?
4. What do you want the reader/listener to learn or feel?
5. What kind of emotions does your story have in it—sadness, fun, happiness, reflection, or none?
6. What kind and what tempo of music will match the story—fast, slow, soft, loud, traditional, modern, a mixture?
7. Where does your story take place?
8. How does your story begin?
9. List 8–10 things you want to tell us about the person, event or place.
10. How does your story end?

Now you are ready to put together your photos, your script, and your words onto a storyboard. There are a variety of ways this can be done. You can make a template that suits your needs. This is one example:

Picture	1	2	3	4
Written text	....	....	....	....
Voiceover text	....	....	....	....
Sound	....	....	....	....
Music	....	....	....	....
Effects	....	....	....	....
Other	....	....	....	....

File management
It is important that you set up separate folders and/or files for this Photo Story project before you start. You should

use these folders and files to store the photos and images, music and sound files you are going to use in the story. Name your files in a way that helps you to locate and identify your story on your C drive.

Now it is time to begin using Photo Story 3.

Step 1: Open Photo Story
The welcome screen gives you three choices—begin, edit or play a story.

Select 'Begin a New Story'.

Click 'Next', to go on.

Saving your work as you go
Before you can play a story, you must first create a story and save it. You can save a project for your story at any time while working on the story by clicking the 'Save Project button. In the 'Save As' dialog box, type a name for the project. You must save a project for your story to be able to edit it later. Projects created by using Photo Story 3 for Windows must use a .wp3 file name extension. Otherwise, Photo Story will not be able to open the file.

By default, the project for your story is saved in your My Videos folder. You may choose to save your story in a particular file on your C drive. When saving your story, you will be given the option where to save your story.

You can preview a story at any time as you record narration for your pictures. To preview your story, click 'Preview'.

You should always remember to save your project regularly. A good habit to get into is to save before you click on the 'Next' button.

Step 2: Import photos into your file
Click 'Import Pictures'.

Your file browser will open. Find and select the photos you want.

Hold down the Shift key to select multiple photos. It will save lots of time.

Click 'Next' to go on.

Importing slides for Microsoft PowerPoint
Creating slides allows you to add title pages, manipulate and write more, add background or text screens, photo inserts (which are not jpeg files) use Microsoft PowerPoint for preparation of files. When you are ready, choose to

'Save As' a jpeg file. During this saving process, it will ask if you want to convert the one slide or all of your slides. It will save your slides as jpeg files. You can nominate where the slides are saved. Once they have been saved, you follow the same process as 'importing pictures' for inserting the files into your storyboard.

Working with your photos
After you import your pictures, you can arrange them on the Photo Story filmstrip in the order you want them to be displayed. Your pictures appear in the filmstrip at the bottom of the page. If you import more pictures, Photo Story adds them at the end of the filmstrip.

To change the order of the pictures in the filmstrip, click a picture, and then drag it to a new location. Photo Story marks the currently selected picture on the filmstrip with a dark border. If you drag the picture to a location that is already occupied by another picture, Photo Story inserts the picture you are dragging *after* the location, if you are dragging the picture to the right, and *before* the location if you are dragging the picture to the left.

To delete any of the pictures you imported, click the picture, and then click the 'Delete' button or press the 'Delete' key. Photo Story also deletes any narration, and anything else associated with the picture. Music is deleted from the story only if the picture is the anchor image for the music.

Editing your photos
You can use the editing tools to edit, enhance, rotate, and crop your pictures. You can remove black borders from your pictures by automatically cropping them with the 'Remove Black Borders' button.

You can enhance the picture by selecting options to correct the color levels, or red eyes, in the pictures. You can create special effects that change the appearance of your picture, such as watercolour or black and white, or sepia. Just click the 'Add Effect' tab, and then click an effect. When you are done editing your pictures, click 'Save' to save the changes made to your pictures, and then click 'Close' to exit the 'Edit Pictures' dialog box.

Step 3: Add titles to each photo
You can add a title page at the beginning of your story, and you can add titles to each picture in your story or to selected pictures only.

By default, when you add a title to a picture, the picture is static. No motion or panning and zooming effects are applied to pictures with titles. To add panning and zooming effects

to pictures with titles, you must customise the motion for the picture. You can click 'Next' without adding titles to any of your pictures. The title can have a maximum of 1024 characters. The text wraps in the picture preview area.

If you want to manually control which text appears on each line, separate lines by pressing the Enter key.

You can edit your pictures on any page in Photo Story on which the filmstrip appears by right-clicking a picture, pointing to 'Edit', and then clicking the option you want. You can align your text so it sits at the top, middle or bottom of your photo. Other effects include font, point size, centred, left or right-aligned. Just like word files. Click 'Next' to go on.

Step 4: Narrating your pictures

Set up and/or check your microphone and recording volume levels before you get serious about recording the narration. Press the record button and narrate your picture. Press stop to finish. You can replay and listen to your voice narration. If you are unhappy with your attempt, simply re-record. With Photo Story 3 each recorded narration, is 'attached' to a specific picture. You cannot move the narration from one picture to another—the only way is to re-record the narration onto the more appropriate picture.

If you want to put together your story quickly, you can import your pictures, but not record any narration. If you have time, you can choose to record narration for some or all of your pictures. As you record narration, it is recommended that you preview your story so you can check the recording volume. If you exceed five minutes of narration for a picture, the recording stops and a message is displayed prompting you to narrate another picture.

Each picture that has narration, edits, or other options specified will appear dimmed in the filmstrip. A narration symbol is displayed in the lower-left corner of pictures that include narration. An effects symbol is displayed in the lower-right corner of pictures for which you customised the motion. Pictures with narration or customised durations also show the length of time a picture will be displayed when the final story is played. When you have finished the narrations for each photo, click 'Next' to go on.

Adding transitions

Photo Story 3 automatically adds a panning motion to each picture. This also includes a fading in and out between each picture. This is called a transition. You can choose to change the transition on each picture. If you do not want

Photo Story to determine the transition effects automatically for pictures in your story, click 'Customise Motion' to do the following tasks manually:
  • how the photos will appear
  • the move from one photo to the next
  • how long each photo will stay on screen.

Step 5: Add, select or create background music

You can add background music (or files such as sound effects) to play during your story. A different piece of music can play for each picture or for a group of pictures. You can add as many pieces of music to a story as there are pictures in the story.

You can use music from your computer and the Photo Story 3 custom music in your story. To select the music for your story, select a picture. Then select a piece of music to start playing when the picture is displayed in your story. The music you select plays until either the music ends, an 'anchor' image that specifies new music appears, or the story ends. You can replace a piece of music for an anchor image by selecting a different piece of music or by dragging a music file onto the anchor image in the film strip.

When you add background music to your story, a music strip appears above the filmstrip. The music strip displays the name of each piece of music that is added to your video story. The music strip is colour-coded for each piece of music in the story.

Photo Story 3 automatically adjusts the amount of time a piece of music will play in your story when a picture is added to a group of pictures, when a picture is deleted from a group of pictures, if a picture is moved to a different place in the story, if another piece of music is added to the story, or the story ends.

The 'Add background music' page also enables you to display information about a selected piece of music, set the volume for a piece of music, and preview your story.

You have a number of choices for genre, style, mood, instruments, speed (tempo) and volume. You can make music for the whole presentation or different pieces for different photos. Check the volume so the music doesn't drown out your voiceovers.

Step 6: Completing your story

If you want, you can immediately view your story, or create a new one. After you view your story, you may want to go back and change it. One of the great things about Photo Story is
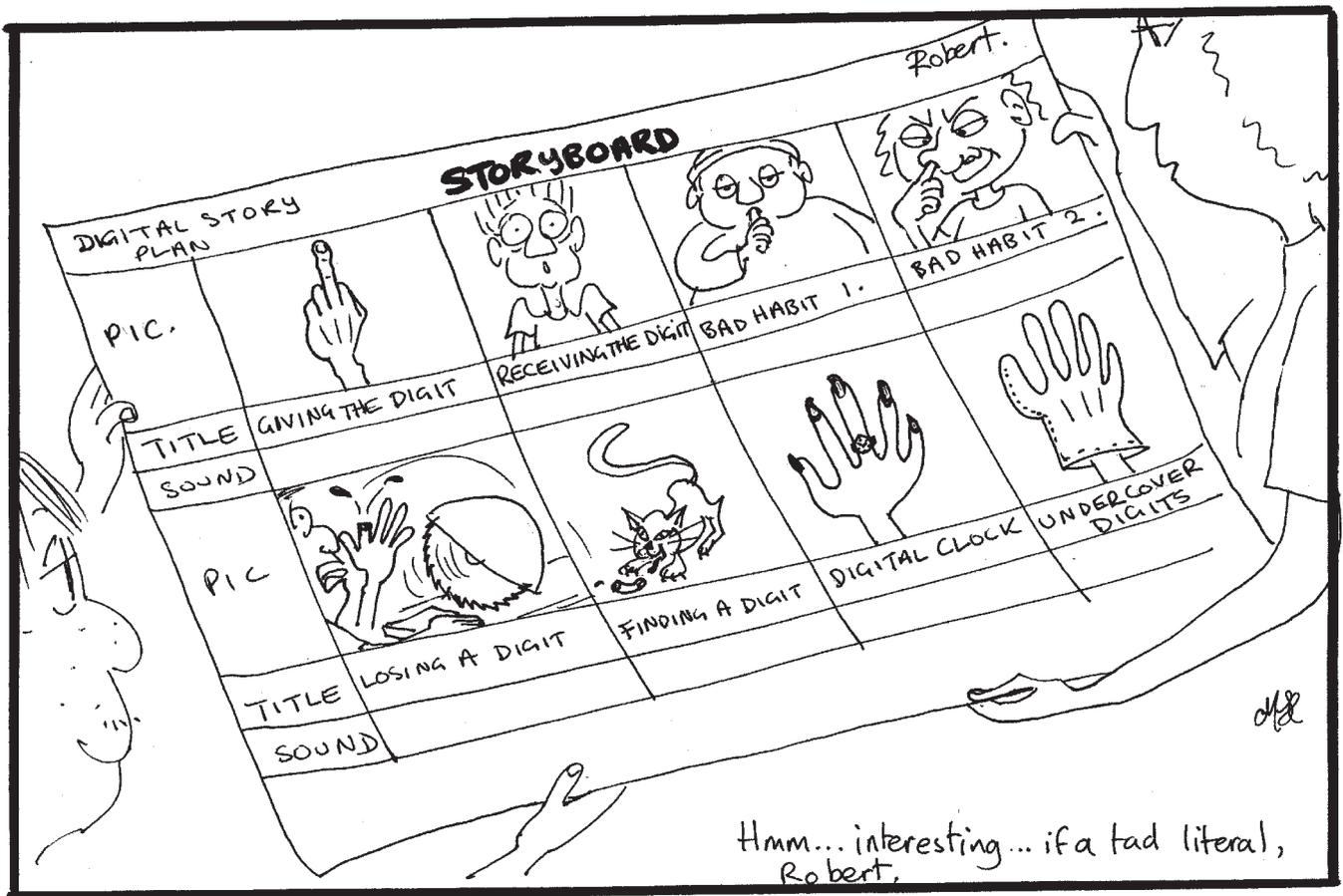
Moira Hanrahan

that it works in sequenced stages, and you can go back and change things you have done by clicking the Back button. It is important to view your final story on the 'Completing Photo Story 3 for Windows' page to ensure that you are satisfied with the results. After you quit Photo Story or begin creating a new story, you will not be able to change this story unless you also save the project file of your story.

To save the project file and be able to edit your story later, you must click the 'Save Project' button.

Step 7: Saving your project

There are a number of ways in which you can save your story. The most common ways are to:

1 Save your story for playback on your computer

Every profile from every activity on your computer is available in the 'Settings' dialog box. If you intend to play your story on your computer, in the 'Settings' dialog box, select the profile that is recommended for your computer. If you select a profile that requires a computer that is more powerful than your computer, a message may be displayed indicating that Photo Story cannot create the story. Try

closing other programs and free up space on your hard disk. If the problem persists, try selecting another profile.

2 Save as a video CD or DVD

If you intend to save your story on your computer, and then create a video CD (VCD) or a DVD, in the 'Settings' dialog box, select the profile that is recommended for your VCD or DVD player. Then import the story into another VCD or DVD authoring program that supports WMV files and burn the story onto a CD or DVD.

3 Save and send as an email

If you intend to save your story on your computer, and then attach it to an email message or copy it to a portable device, we recommend that you choose another activity that is optimised for these tasks in the 'Activities' list instead.

You can also send the story in an email message, save your story for playback on a Pocket PC or Smartphone, or portable media centre.

Open Forum

We welcome your responses to the articles featured in *Fine Print*. See the back cover for contact details.

The General Studies Curriculum Maintenance Manager (CMM) has recommended to ACFE that the Certificates I (Introductory) I, II, and III in General Education for Adults (CGEA) be reaccredited in 2006. They were last accredited in 2002. The CMM will be establishing a CMM CGEA network to gather preliminary advice on the CGEA review. In 2006, the General Studies CMM will undertake consultations and a review of CGEA to then submit a revised version for reaccreditation by the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA).

Review and reaccreditation of the CGEA

In Policy Update of the previous edition of *Fine Print*, the General Studies and Further Education Curriculum Maintenance Management team of Lynne Fitzpatrick and Liz Davidson flagged the process for the consultation and review, and suggested a number of questions for ALBE practitioners and CGEA users to consider.

To focus attention on the CGEA reaccreditation and to 'kick-start' early discussion, *Fine Print* invited Gay Gallagher, a senior accreditation officer with the VQA, Liz Davidson and Lynne Fitzpatrick from the General Studies CMM and a number of CGEA practitioners to share their knowledge of the reaccreditation process, the curriculum review and, importantly, the curriculum.

Gay, what have been the changes for accreditation since 2002 (the last time CGEA was accredited)?

In July 2002, the Australian Quality Training Framework replaced the Australian Recognition Framework in providing, amongst other standards, the standards for state and territory registering/course accrediting bodies—standards relating to course accreditation.

The two standards that have close applicability to course development are Standard 27—establishing the need for courses, and Standard 28—course design criteria.

The VQA then reviewed its accreditation processes with a number of objectives:

1. To streamline the process and make it transparent to others.
2. To develop a five-step process supported by VQA accreditation advisers of research, consultation, course development and management of the accreditation panel to be undertaken by the proponent.
3. Clearly defined stages of sign-off by various stakeholders:
   - VQA approval to proceed, provided on the basis of the intention to accredit.
   - Industry-based steering committee: to sign off on methodology, mapping, AQF level and content. The steering committee members must sign a course contents approval form, and the proponent must obtain letters of support from industry to enable the submission to proceed further.
   - Accreditation advisers: to sign off on the draft submission, and approve it to proceed to the accreditation panel.
   - Accreditation panel: to sign off on the final draft submission and approve it to proceed to the VQA.
   - VQA: to accredit the course submission, subject to a final review that it meets all requirements.

Note: The industry steering committee is usually the final arbitrator on content, and the following steps are concerned with ensuring the submission meets all the rules of accreditation to meet the AQTF standards.

AQTF standards

Standard 27 requires course developers to clearly establish the industry need for a course. The VQA must ensure the courses it accredits:

- are based on a clearly established industry, industry sector, enterprise and/or community need, informed by such processes as consultation with key stakeholders, review of relevant training packages and accredited courses, analysis and evaluation of data collected.
- do not duplicate by titles or coverage, AQF qualifications and outcomes of training packages.

What evidence does the VQA require to satisfy this standard?

- The Intention to Accredit form indicates preliminary mapping against national training packages and state-accredited curriculum, confirmation of stated industry need, and confirms that the proposed steering committee is representative. To be representative, the steering committee:
  – must have an industry majority which includes all major stakeholders, including industry and/or professional associations, relevant unions and individuals with interests in the area
  – must have relevant government/semi-government/ community organisations

- may include representation from other providers, but is not dominated by providers
- may include past students
- should include the CMM
- should include one person with established curriculum expertise

(The project officer is not regarded as a member of the steering committee but attends all meetings to receive advice)

- The final course submission clearly documents the research undertaken in needs analysis. This may consist of a skills/knowledge profile, and is arrived at by various consultative mechanisms—survey, focus group, and interviews. The skills/knowledge profile is then used as the basis for undertaking a detailed mapping exercise.
- Signed course contents forms and letters of support from industry.

Standard 28—Course design criteria

Standard 28 has stated requirements in regard to:

- Use of nationally-endorsed units of competency where appropriate, or new units written that are based on the current training package development handbook, in consultation with, and validated by, appropriate industry, enterprise, community and/or professional groups. In special circumstances the VQA will approve the development of new curriculum as modules, rather than as units of competency.
- Clear details on the rules of the course—assessment, AQF levels, access and pathways, flexible learning, articulation and credit transfer, customisation and contextualisation, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes that will be used after the course is accredited.

What evidence does the VQA require to satisfy this standard?

- The proponent must use the current VQA template for Parts A and B, and for Part C (units or modules).
- Part A provides general information including how to obtain access to the course, copyright, and class-ification.
- Part B clearly specifies the rules for delivery and assessment of the course, supported by steering committee minutes, course contents forms and letters of industry support.
- Part C includes both new and imported units of competency, with clear documentation of how the units reflect the skills/knowledge profile.

In looking at the current version of the CGEA what amendments will have to be made?

These courses represent a reaccreditation project. The courses will need to be redeveloped using the current VQA template and following the processes outlined above. If it is desired to develop the course as modules rather than units of competency, permission should be sought from the VQA when the Intention to Accredit is submitted.

How long does the actual accreditation process take and what does it involve?

The time proponents take to get a course accredited varies subject to the size of the project, how well it is resourced, and of course is also subject to delays that all projects experience. Often there are delays in waiting for responses at various stages of development. State-accredited curriculum is generally funded in the expectation that they will be completed within a year. For more information on VQA processes, visit the VQA website at *http://www.vqa.vic.gov.au/vqa* and follow the links to Ac-creditation.

More from Liz and Lynne at the CMM

Accreditation of the current CGEA expires on 31 December 2006. The CMM for General Studies and Further Education will manage the reaccreditation processes during 2006.

Gay Gallagher has provided a useful summary of the administrative processes that relate to course reaccreditation.

As Gay has indicated, reaccreditation will depend on the proposed course meeting Standard 27—that there is a need for the course into the future, and that outcomes in sections of the CGEA or the CGEA as a whole are not duplicated by training package outcomes. It needs to be demonstrated that the proposed course will achieve real outcomes for learners. This means looking at outcomes from the present course, and looking at local and international research into outcomes from literacy programs. We will also need to look at other local developments such as the inclusion of employability skills, essential skills and multi-literacies into training spec-ifications, and what this means for the General Curriculum Options and the CGEA.

The proposed course will also have to meet Standard 28, which covers the format of the course. This means that the format of the CGEA will be quite different from its present form. The reaccredited CGEA will most probably be written in unit format. A template of this format can be viewed at the VQA website.

As Gay has indicated, consultation with all possible stakeholder groups, including teachers of the curriculum and the relevant professional association, is an important part of the development process. By the time this edition of *Fine Print* is published, forums will have been held to explain the VQA reaccreditation processes and demonstrate an online discussion program where practitioners can register to be involved in consultations, and where the CMM will collect feedback.

The project will start in early 2006. The first stage will be research and consultation and the establishment of a steering committee of representatives of all stakeholder groups to guide the reaccreditation. Normally re-accreditation and accreditation is completed by November of the same year.

Further to the CGEA reaccreditation process, the CMM would like to meet with current and former students of the CGEA and follow up on research into local and international literacy programs. If you know of any research which you think we need to know about in relation to the reaccreditation of the CGEA, please contact:

- Elizabeth.davidson@vu.edu.au
- Lynne.Fitzpatrick@vu.edu.au
  Tel: (03) 9919 8327 or 9919 8375

The CGEA: some responses

CGEA practitioners and curriculum writers were invited to respond to a series of questions about the curriculum. Respondents are listed at the end of this article.

What have been the strengths of the current version of the CGEA?

JL: The main strength is the way the certificates promote all the vital principles of adult learning and literacy, including the exploration of texts in their social context and critical literacy.

JH: That it is a general education curriculum designed to help adults develop skills relevant to Australian society, and there is the potential to import a range of units as electives to meet the diverse needs of a broad range of people.

RB: A wonderful resource and curriculum. It has a wealth of ideas. It is a great guide to encourage teachers and learners in understanding the value of using and understanding the genre forms. The GCO module is a wonderful fluid module allowing all types of learners to achieve something in the way they choose. The levels are excellent and clearly show the growth and development made by the students. It is a very flexible document—once you start deleting bits from it you delete some of the total package, especially in the reading/writing and oracy areas.

MS: It's easy to find a connection with the student and encourage them to write at their level on a range of topics in a variety of styles. The maths is easy to make hands-on and real, and students achieve at rates that encourage them.

NMIT: Adaptable to needs if students to achieve learning outcomes. Students can work at their own pace—they can complete sooner, if appropriate. However, the student groups indicate that a slower pace is the norm.

ML: I have found the CGEA curriculum document well structured and clear.

What have been the weaknesses of the current version?

JL: Timing problems are still evident in smaller settings, where contact hours can't match recommended module completion times in one year.

RB: Many say that the curriculum is not suitable for ESL learners. I have found that it is fine, *but*

- the learners take longer
- it needs more modification
- more pre-teaching is required.

The assessment tasks and teaching have to be modified for ESL learners. The introductory level is often the slowest to shift learners from—perhaps include specific examples of assessment tasks. Perhaps an example of a sample complying with the level and learning outcome would encourage teachers to see exactly what is required by students to achieve that learning outcome.

NMIT: Reading and writing. Currently all criteria need to be met in one task, whereas oracy and numeracy can meet individual criteria separately. Time is an issue, especially for part-time study. Complexity of tasks means that all prep work/tasks/teaching is difficult to do full-time, let alone part-time. NMIT have addressed this in part by enrolling students for 12 months. Reading tasks currently require that the students always have to compare texts.

What needs to be changed?

JL: The GCO to incorporate more generic skills more clearly.

JH: The CGEA has been in existence since 1992, and although many aspects of the curriculum have changed, the underpinning concepts have not been seriously examined since then to see if they are still relevant for 2006 and beyond. For example, are the social purposes of literacy on which the reading and writing and oral communication streams of the CGEA are based still relevant?

RB: I personally don't think there needs to be too may changes. Some of the assessment examples could be changed and possibly include ITC examples.

MS: Training for new trainers, who have difficulty understanding the philosophies of the CGEA.

NMIT: Numerical information should not be optional at certificate levels Intro, Cert. 1 and Cert. 2—requirement should be numerical information and four or five others, rather than any five or six criteria. Numbers should be more explicit in Cert 1 (Intro); for example, counting, whole number. Numerical information: assessing in other numeracy outcomes should be highlighted.

What needs to be retained?
JL: The levels aligned to AQTF as well as the four streams need to be retained.

JH: The flexibility to meet the broad and changing needs of the learners.

MS: Requirements for experienced trainers who are highly literate.

Is the course structure flexible enough to meet the needs of different learners?
JL: Yes, in that modules from other certificates can be imported to complement the CGEA, but in practice it's difficult to research what's available and to gain the expertise to deliver additional modules well.

JH: Teachers need to answer this.

MS: Absolutely.

JA: I would like to see more flexibility around the amount of nominal hours for the core modules. At Levels 1 and 2 less time again spent on OC and more for R&W. Most students at these levels have high OC skills and some of the OC learning outcomes are a bit of an insult. Maybe move OC into an elective or GCO area at Level 2 particularly. The R&W modules are good on genre, and I like this, but I don't think the time allowed is enough for deep exploration into language mechanics, grammar, building noun groups, word exercises for spelling, etc. Because of absenteeism and the low number of hours adults can devote to attending class, there's a need to repeat and go slowly with learning. I find I'm having to rush to get through assessment tasks and learning outcomes, but at the same time we need to be mindful of the setup of most ACE centres. We can assume (?) most ACE students will have about 200 SCH per year, five hours X 40 weeks. 100-hour modules fit neatly into the year, and given that funding bodies look at module completion rates over the year it's important we complete modules within the year. If the course was given more nominal hours, or if R&W were broken up into two modules of 100 hours each, this could address the funding body requirements.

Is the course content and/or levels meeting the needs of all potential learners?
JL: The problem of entry-level learners and the very slow, incremental gains they make in literacy is still evident. Level 1 (Intro) still demands texts with one or two short sentences, when beginning learners are still working at the level of letters, sounds and single words. Other certificates catering for their needs are not widely used and not on the scope (Scope of Registration) of many providers. In many settings mixed groups, including ESL learners, are blended and the oral communication modules are not really designed to meet their language.

MS: Yes it is.

NMIT: The jump from one level to the next is so big. Maybe adjustments of levels needed to represent the time needed to get to the next level. Maybe it could mirror NRS more. The students need something to say what level they are at, rather than pushing beyond abilities. People are not passing due to the huge gaps between levels. Maybe a model, such as the ESL Frameworks could be looked at. Maybe a 'provisional pass' at numeracy Level 2, for students who have achieved Level 2 R & W—where students are recognised for the learning they have achieved, but are not able to achieve all learning outcomes (maybe five out of the seven).

ML: While the certificates do for the most part meet the needs of these particular students, it is not possible to expect normal progress through the modules. Course content or structure changes, however, would not necessarily help here.

JA: More content guidance for GCO electives would help. The broad topics in ESL Frameworks look interesting.

Is there another way to group CGEA core and electives modules?
JH: As long as we keep in mind that it is a general education curriculum.

NMIT: No changes required, these are flexible as they stand.

Should ICT skills be included? If so, how?
JL: Already embedded in most modules, for example, R&W students use word processing to redraft texts and internet research for wider reading material. In Oral Comm,

scope to use ICT packages like PowerPoint to present talks. Digital photography and Photoshop-style products are being used for GCO outcomes.

JH: They can be through electives. However, ICT could be better integrated into the Reading and Writing and Numeracy and Maths units.

RB: Perhaps as another optional method—but not compulsory. It could be an alternative method of teaching or presenting tasks.

MS: We do this by having students using computers to read (internet) and write up their assessment tasks.

NMIT: Yes, ICT should be imbedded in R&W modules and adequate resources would be required. Includes other technology 'use technology to task'.

JA: I think ICT skills should be part of core modules, not necessarily at ICT certificate levels. Students have the choice to do that in other classes. Some basic skills should be taught and teachers need to be guided as to what these basic skills would include.

What impact (if any) will reaccreditation have on the resources that you use in adult literacy/general education teaching?

JL: Not much, really. Lots of resources are generated on the ground with particular groups of learners anyway. Material in written and spoken texts, including works of fiction/self-expression will still be used if they relate to learners' interests, even if modules are changed.

JH: Will depend on the extent of the changes made.

ML: The impact that reaccreditation will have on resources I use will depend on how extensive (if) changes are. My expectation is that such impact will not be far reaching for me.

JA: If content was a bit more prescriptive, there would need to be resources to go with these. I think having resources for at least a portion of core modules would demand more rigorous teaching and eliminate some of the arbitrariness around what is taught and what is acceptable at Level 1, Level 2, etc. This arbitrariness is evident in moderation sessions. We can often not work out what is Level 1, what is Level 2, particularly in the design of assessment tasks. Most teachers create their own resources so reaccreditation won't change this. But I really do think having some set texts sprinkled throughout the

modules, perhaps optional at first, would help guide teachers in applying the CGEA.

In what ways would you want to receive information (PD and updates, etc.) on the 2006 reaccredited version of the CGEA?

JL: Like last time, regional or larger-scale consultative forums with written surveys and follow-up reports, together with discussion papers in *Fine Print*.

RB: Perhaps through the language and literacy networks. CD-ROM versions could be helpful.

NMIT: Depends on changes to the curriculum. Whatever the PD is, it should focus on changes: maybe some kind of comparative chart could be put online.

ML: I would like to receive reaccreditation information by email, hard copy, or via PD sessions.

JA: An initial series of introductory sessions across the state to make accessing them easy. Some updated guidelines on moderation and level samples. PD like moderation that we have to go to, where there's less focus on looking at assessment and more on looking at what the modules are asking us to do. If it's made compulsory like moderation, then all teachers would go, not just those with a bit of integrity and desire to always improve.

What curriculum support would best support your work?

MS: After four years, I don't know! I always enjoy any PD!

NMIT: Funded support to adapt resources and effect necessary changes.

Thanks to Open Forum contributors Gay Gallagher, VQA, Lynne Fitzpatrick, CMM and Liz Davidson, CMM.

The respondents:
- JL: Jane Lucas, curriculum writer and teacher, Carlton.
- JH: Jan Hagston, curriculum developer, Swinburne.
- RB: Ros Butcher, curriculum writer and teacher, Donvale.
- MS: Maree Slater, teacher, Kyabram.
- NMIT teaching team: Helen Keane, Denise Reynolds, Stephani Jones, Kay Websdale, Penny Halliday, Jan Marett, Judy Sloane, Judy Taylor, Sharon Donuhue.
- ML: Maureen Logan, teacher, Mallee campus TAFE, Ouyen.
- JA: Jacinta Agostinelli, teacher and VALBEC representative, Glenroy.

Foreign Correspondence

Treasure in exile

Teaching English, running guitar classes, minding children… and she only dropped in for a cup of tea! Not really, but reality in India has a different spin, as Margi Gibb found as a teacher with Tibetan refugee students.

Earlier this year I had the incredible good fortune to travel to India and live and work in Dharmasala, an old British hill station high in the Himachal Pradesh which is now the home to the Dali Lama, the Tibetan Government-in-exile and many thousands of Tibetan refugees.

Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet:

> Close to one hundred thousand Tibetans were able to leave before the Chinese closed the borders, but many who started the trip disappeared in the Himalayan wilderness and were never heard from again. For those left behind, life has been cruel and harsh. Nuns, monks, and lamas, as well as laypeople, have been tortured and murdered. Amnesty International has estimated that as many as 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed by the Chinese Army, and many Tibetans still remain in prison camps northeast of Tibet. Of the countless centuries-old monasteries that once adorned the Himalayan plateau only two dozen remain, which the Chinese have left standing mainly for show[1].

In the comfort of my lounge room in Melbourne I dreamed of living in the Himalayas in a quaint and simple room immersed in deep sense of spirituality, peace and beauty. As far as the accommodation was concerned, I was in for a bit of a rude awakening. I had to find a room that I could stay in for a couple of months and located one in a hotel called The Hunted Hill, which I thought would generate the peace and tranquillity I had imagined, only to find the place I had moved to would have been better name The Haunted House. It came complete with an Indian landlord who fancied himself irresistible both to himself and everyone around him, and who had a fondness for the drink, firing his gun, beating his staff and chasing western women.

On top of that, my room was not exactly the aesthetic sanctuary I had imagined. It was painted bright pink with a little alcove for a wardrobe covered with green carpet and faded floral pink polyester curtains which were hung inside out. The bathroom was blue, with an incredible view of the surrounding Himalayas, and the kitchen was the size of half my wardrobe at home, with only a sink and nothing else. The only difference between sleeping on the mattress and the floor was the sheet, and my room seemed to be the preferred location for a large number of slugs and members of the arachnid family.

After two weeks the situation became unliveable and I forfeited my month's rent to move further up the hill to a hotel called Mountain View. This time I had a sweet little room (a lighter shade of pink) that came complete with a monkey who lived on the roof and occasionally on my balcony. The main drawback this time was the water in the bathroom. For some strange reason it had been built so that the water from the shower ran the opposite direction to the drain and created a lake every time I showered. However by now I was getting accustomed to my new lifestyle and had settled into a weekly routine.

Each day around 9am my fellow teacher (a young woman from Montreal) would meet me in front of my hotel in McLeod Ganj and we would begin the 20–30 minute walk down the hill to the Tibetan Handicraft centre in lower Dharmasala. This was part of a local cooperative where the traditional Tibetan practice of carpet weaving was being upheld. She taught the more advanced students in one room, I took the beginners class in another.

The walk down the valley was always exhilarating and beautiful, with eagles soaring high above. It was the monsoon, so usually it was raining and with the humidity being so high each morning I would arrived drenched in perspiration and rather dishevelled. I taught English to a group of around 12 women, the majority of whom were carpet weavers. One woman worked in an office for the Tibetan Government-in-exile and another was a tailor who sewed the covers for sacred Tibetan books. A previous volunteer from England had been teaching the women for five months and I was to continue on were he had left off.

The women were always happy to see us. The class meant a lot to them, and if for some reason we couldn't make it we knew they would be disappointed. Likewise we would be disappointed if we couldn't go.

To teach a language as complicated as English in both written and spoken form was a real challenge, particularly when I had no course syllabus or specific teaching aids and nothing

but some chalk and a piece of blackboard to work on. The chalk dust always managed to cover me and all my belongings by the end of each the lesson, and by mid morning I looked liked I had been working in the outdoors for several days.

The other big challenge in this situation was me. Although I had teaching skills and a Masters in Education (Experiential Learning and Development), I had not taught English before. The book I had to work from was left by the previous teacher and seemed to me to be highly inappropriate to these Tibetan women. It was an American publication and made references to people, places and things that were not a part of their lives, their culture or their general knowledge.

The women were willing, bright and enthusiastic and had a real reverence and respect for learning and were absolutely wonderful to teach. A lot of them where illiterate in their own language and spoke very little English. As for my Tibetan? I didn't have much! To find the common ground I used a lot of non-verbal communication and drawings where possible to try and to explain things. This worked well and brought a lot of humor into the lessons which made the difficult times more rewarding for us all. Each morning when we got to the handicraft centre we would step into such a special space. Often the women chanted as they worked and the sense of community, acceptance and support that they had with and for each other was remarkable, teaching in at atmosphere of such warmth and good humour made the task at hand seem much less daunting.

I decided to begin my teaching with a reference to something that was relevant to them, their culture and their daily life. So I asked the question, 'how do you make a mommo?' This is the Tibetan equivalent of the Chinese Dim Sum. So began our journey together for the next couple of months.

I found that each lesson grew out of the previous one. For example in identifying the vegetables that were used in the mommos, pronunciation difficulties became apparent so I would design the next lesson around certain words and vowel sounds. The women often felt far more comfortable writing English than speaking it, so encouraging short dialogues once the meaning and pronunciation of words had been grasped also became a regular activity.

After class each day we were taken to a different woman's home for sweet masala chai and whatever Tibetan-baked goodie they had to offer—sweet bread, doughnuts, etc. After this we would climb up to the road and try to find another two people to share a taxi with to go back up the hill. Due to the taxi route I had to get out and walk the final quarter of a mile UP, UP, UP the hill, to meet Gedan the monk from a monastery in South India, whom I was tutoring in English while he was in Dharmasala for teachings with the Dalai

Lama. We started at 'tewelff o`cluck' and went for an hour. After I lunch and the usual odd jobs, I went to the Tibetan Handicraft centre in McLeod Ganj to look after the weavers' children. It would be 5.30pm before my working day was finished and by then I was feeling utterly gorgeous—smelly, dirty, tired and considering shaving my hair off.

Two weeks into my routine I found a room at the Tibetan Children's Education Centre where I set up a music program, teaching guitar and singing. Teaching music is my most regular occupation in Australia, and before I left Australia I gave a concert to raise money to take with me so that I could purchase instruments. The music program proved to be a great success. The students were young men (except for one woman) who were refugees. Many of them had made the journey to India over the Himalayas on foot from Tibet.

I had 13 regular students and was able to purchase 11 guitars. Everyone was so keen to learn. Music lessons were held in between English conversation classes and classes on Tibetan culture. At the beginning and end of each lesson there was always a storm of monks and lay-people bustling into the room.

Eventually my workload became too much to maintain, I handed the role of looking after the children over to another volunteer. I now found myself teaching English in the morning and music three days week as well as running the local open stage night at Café Karna Nirvana every Monday evening. For my own enjoyment I also took art lessons with a Thangka artist three times a week.

To finish off my trip I had arranged to travel to Ladduk for a ten-day holiday. After I had left Dharmasala I realised that one of the greatest experiences of my life was not over. Often people would ask 'when are you coming back?' And I thought, what do you mean? But now I realise what they meant and I can't wait to return. The Eagles song 'Hotel California' seems to have been part of the music culture there for many years and I had to play it regularly with my students. And there's one line in the song that now keeps running through my mind: 'You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave'.

Margi Gibb is a community artist and musician. She currently works at the Kew Neighbourhood House's Oasis program, facilitates an art program for Kooris and Torres Straight Islanders and runs mandala workshops for diverse communities. Margi has just completed her Masters in Education in Experiential Learning and Development. See Margi's mandala work at *www.mandalaprimitivepop.com*

Endnote
1 Lama Surya Das 1997 *Awakening the Buddha Within*, Batman Books p.32.

Beside the Whiteboard

Elizabeth Connell works in the Faculty of Further Education at NMIT, and was recently part of a preparatory program for people planning to be interpreters, translators and bilingual community workers. Julie Palmer from *Fine Print* spoke with Elizabeth about her career in teaching.

What made you decide on teaching as a career?

I went to Monash University during the Vietnam War period. Campus life was permeated with anti-war activism, including the big moratoriums. I found university exciting, both intellectually and socially. I never wanted to leave.

Most Arts students I knew were on studentships: the state government paid for your degree, Dip Ed, and a generous weekly allowance, then you got posted—usually to the country, for three years … and no protest! I pitied those people. I was on a Commonwealth scholarship which paid a small allowance free of obligation, and I did not want to teach. I had little idea what I wanted to do, and no real knowledge of different vocational pathways.

A very circumscribed suburban life predominated, and many fled overseas. The Premier, Henry Bolte, could say contemptuously 'teachers sit on the lowest rung of society'. Students could get teaching jobs without completing a degree. Teacher training colleges existed alongside university. There was no ESL training, or even classes, back then.

The moment of truth arrived—life after university. Fate stepped in with a new studentship: the state government, desperate for teachers, was offering a one-year Dip Ed studentship paying a first year teaching salary, with a bond of only one year teaching. I decided to take it, save up and go overseas. Knowing that most exit students got sent to the country, I insisted that my widowed mother needed me, and I was personally rung up and lectured 'I hope we can trust you, young lady, to look after your mother if we give you a Melbourne posting!'

What were those first teaching experiences like?

I opted for a technical school—a young woman humanities teacher amongst a crowd of 'tradies'. As a first year out teacher I was given the worst classes, Friday afternoon in the portable in the muddy paddock with 40 rioting boys, including intellectually disabled, behaviour problems and kids who spoke no English. I felt exhausted and crushed, like D.H. Lawrence's Ursula in *The Rainbow*, which I often thought of.

I longed for a structured curriculum to help me teach, but those were times of freedom and imagination and we were left to create our own programs. I remember the Roneo wax stencil, which we lined up to use, and the class sets of books that someone else had often borrowed.

After two years I left for 'overseas'. On return, I got into the new field of ESL teaching, mainly because I wanted to return to Italy, and I felt that it was less disruptive to resign from an ESL class than from humanities (as you can see, my motives were less than altruistic). I had no training and struggled to fathom by myself how to teach someone to learn English as a new language. I was not a language teacher (many ESL teachers had taught French). I remember 'discovering' phonics and word groups and trying to do it that way, with a few readers.

At that point I didn't know the difference between literacy and ESL. Learning Italian in much the same way as my ESL students had to learn English—in the culture—helped me understand the process. At my second ESL school we were timetabled into the bike sheds to teach until the portable arrived with the sets of 'Functional English', an uninspiring series of books which at least followed linguistic principles. Knowing nothing of the theory, I found them extremely boring, and anyway my classes tended to be withdrawal groups of slow or literacy learners from NESB background.

Young teachers today are better trained, get more support and professional development and have great technology at their disposal.

What have been your best teaching experiences?

After a break of some years overseas and child rearing, I was once again at the crossroads. I had started my M.Ed mainly because it offered an opportunity to follow one of my true passions—psychology: therapeutic theories, particularly Jungian and 'transpersonal' theorists. Although I had said 'I'm never going to teach again' I was offered the opportunity of working in the Migrant Women's Learning Centre, a newly funded part of NMIT (then Collingwood College of TAFE).

I spent ten wonderful years there. I was ready to respond in a human sense to teaching, as a woman and a mother, to other women students and within a team. For the first time I loved teaching. I learned a lot from other teachers and we had the freedom to develop appropriate curriculum for

women of all sorts. Various projects forced me to analyse my own theory and methodology. New curriculum documents such as the CGEA goaded me into analysis, as I realised that genre theory reflected diverse aspects of language learning.

Recently I found a video tape of a wonderful event we had ten years ago, in which African women created mini-villages and demonstrated coffee and henna ceremonies, Asian women played lutes and acted out Vietnamese wedding ceremonies and I was reminded of other project-oriented activities we were able to organise, such as a Women's Speak Outs relating to the Beijing conference, multilingual health days when some women had their first pap smear—in the coordinator's office! The driving classes, when women studied how to drive and were taken to a driving school to practice; the law classes where they learned about wills, family law and so forth; and the personal progress as many learnt to read and write for the first time, or advanced students gained access to further study and jobs. We devised projects which got students out of the classroom and into work and community, and timetables which met their needs.

Certain educators were mentors for me. Lella Carridi, who formed the MWLC from a feminist learning model and managed to get it incorporated into TAFE; Miriam Faine, who was newly back from the UK and introduced us to many ideas and practices; Dominica Nelson who used a project approach and her many contacts to mentor students; Jill Sanguinetti who was devoted to deepening practice and introduced action research as a tool to examine teaching practice, as well as many other great teachers who have remained firm friends.

In order to gain an ongoing position at NMIT I had to finally do my ESL qualifications, so I did a post-graduate diploma in TESOL and ALBE. I was reluctant, but it cleaned up my ESL methodology and I will never forget the arduous but very revelatory project which made me analyse every aspect of an individual's language learning.

Unfortunately, the Migrant Women's Learning Centre was eventually merged with the rest of the faculty. I was persuaded to teach in a youth program, the Young Adult Migrant Education Course (YAMEC).

Teaching refugee youth was difficult, but I learned to love it. I stayed on the program for six years. Once again, the secret was having a good team to work with, and the recognition by our faculty that running programs for refugee youth involved more than ESL classes, because students had so many other life needs as well as a special need for vocational education. Once again, activity and project-oriented learning provided relevant methodologies for these young people, who had missed out on basic

education and learning experiences, including the disciplines of attending, punctuality and organisation.

Community-oriented projects could often be accessed, such as Mercy Women's Hospital offering a health program, Kids Help Line peer skills training, Foundation House Kaleidoscope program, SYN FM RMIT radio project——where students created and delivered weeks of their own radio content—and a committed work placement program. Lots of excursions around Melbourne and out of town promoted mental health, self esteem and social interaction. A three-year action research project, Changing Cultures, funded by Vic Health, tracked and validated our practice.

During that time, my computer skills improved dramatically and I can partly thank my colleague Terry O'Reilly and some good PD, including Learnscope, for that. I count using a computer as one of the most creative aspects of teaching today. It gives the opportunity to self-publish, compared to the chalk and talk and roneoed sheets of my first teaching experiences.

Most recently I've been involved in a new program which is oriented towards addressing the needs of the community to get more interpreters and translators in emerging languages, especially African ones. This has been a wonderful experience, dealing with students who are educated and experienced in their own cultures, and developing a program which helps them to access pathways to interpreting, translating, and community work where they can use their language and cultural knowledge. It's great that NMIT has had the initiative to develop new programs oriented to such needs.

What advice do you have for new teachers?
I think teachers should take any opportunity they can, to deepen their knowledge and remain stimulated. ESL courses intrinsically relate to community and life outside the classroom. You can't develop quality programs and responses by standing at the photocopier photocopying chapters from grammar books. In my opinion you have to develop materials and activities relating to students' needs by organising activities and excursions and creating the language experience around that. But I guess that may not be possible in tightly packaged programs.

Although we believe in student-centred learning, we can't deny that the teacher can be a very important factor in facilitating learning, as studies show. As the teacher, you have to make class experiences exciting and make students want to come to class! But of course they have to feel they are learning something worthwhile too. Using video, film, websites and newspaper is stimulating. Keep to the theme and recycle the language. Create or rewrite texts to suit

levels. You can find anything through Google. Images and visuals are important too. Developing curriculum is exciting and creative. Food usually plays a big part in my classes—it has such a natural pleasure associated with it. Food means we care.

Young teachers today face a different world to the one I faced, better and worse. Some conditions have deteriorated and sessional teaching conditions may not suit everyone, on the other hand no one today would ask you to teach in the bike sheds. I hope that TAFE funding is maintained, as the people who most need education may not be able to afford it if fees increase dramatically, or some certificates and diplomas become subject to HECS. We have to be vigilant about the profession for our own and our students' sakes.

What have been your own influences?

I have not been consciously influenced by any educational theorist. As much as anything, my psychology studies have influenced me, as I imagine the way personality, childhood influences, cultural background and so forth are shaping the learner. Piaget sometimes comes to mind with ideas of cognitive development, which I think relate to accumulated complexity of language learning. I prefer a thematic approach, with inbuilt out-of-classroom activities. To me, that creates significance and context.

My own interests in language, culture and history influence me, just as others have their own special bents. I believe in the Jungian (Myers Briggs type) temperament

profiling which says that everyone is different, everyone has differing gifts, teaching and learning styles.

I heard recently that one lives two lives—the personal life and the life of one's times—and undeniably, social conditions have a big effect on our practice. But I think any assumptions of the times should be challenged. Other teachers are a constant influence, and pragmatically, what works with the students.

What lies ahead for you, and looking back, what has teaching meant to you?

At present I'm on long service leave, but when I return to work I hope it will be for more years yet. I have become an elder and want to develop my wisdom! Teaching itself has developed me as a person. Buddhist principles enjoin right work or activity, and I'm glad I have had a vocation which offers the opportunity to improve and enhance life. Years ago I thought of becoming a counsellor, but I have had the opportunity of being involved in well-constructed learning programs which are in themselves therapeutic to students. Being able to work with language, culture, social, vocational and personal development is a life in itself, and also a shared life with students. ESL teaching offers lots of possibilities, even in retirement. Actually I wouldn't mind going to the Northern Territory for a while!

Thank you, Elizabeth for sharing your personal reflections on your 'long and winding' career path. Your honesty offers a valuable insight into ESL teaching. Best wishes for future travels.

Some things you should remember:
- If you choose not to name your story, Photo Story automatically names your stories incrementally (for example, PhotoStory1.wmv, PhotoStory2.wmv, and so on).
- If your story contains a lot of pictures and Photo Story prerecorded music, it may take several minutes to build (and save) your story. When Photo Story saves the story to the location you specify, it also automatically adds a link to your story in your library in Windows Media Player.
- The audio quality is set by default, depending on the profile selected. Higher-quality video is accompanied by higher-quality audio.
- The better the video quality, the larger the size of the Photo Story file. Larger Photo Story files require more system resources to save, play, and share.

Step 8: View your story

After you create a story, on the 'Completing Photo Story 3 for Windows' page, click 'View your story'. Start Photo

Story, click 'Play a story', click the story you want to play, and then click 'Play'. You can also open the story by using any program that plays Windows Media Video files. In Windows Media Player 10, click 'Library', expand 'Auto Playlists', click 'Photo Story 3 Playlist', and then double-click the story you want to play.

In Windows Media Player 10, click 'Library', expand 'All Video', expand 'Genre', click 'Photo Story', and then double-click the story you want to play.

Remember, if people try to play your video stories on computers that do not have Windows Media Player 10 installed, they'll be prompted to download it from the Microsoft website.

Go on give it a try. Good luck!

Debbie Soccio is a flexible learning project officer at the School of Further Education Arts and Employment Services at the Footscray campus of Victoria University.

Adult Learners' Week awards

Victorian celebrations for the 10th anniversary of Adult Learners' Week have recognised the work of a number of teachers, tutors and learners. Congratulations to each of the category finalists and winners.

The testimonials for each of the winners and a selection of photographs from the event will be placed on the ACFE Board website, *www.acfe.vic.gov.au*

The winners and finalists in each category

Innovation in ACE

Winner
Head Start program, Foster Community House, Gippsland Region.

Runners Up
Men's Shed youth mentoring program, Yarram Community Learning Centre, Gippsland Region.

Youth education program, Southern Grampians Adult Community Education, Barwon South Western Region.

Outstanding ACE teacher/tutor

Winner
Lynette Tung, Southern Grampians Adult Community Education, Barwon South Western Region.

Runners Up
Sue Hall, Education Centre Gippsland, Gippsland Region.

Margaret Simonds, On Track Wimmera, Central Highlands Wimmera Region.

Outstanding ACE learner

Winner:
Debbie Callister, Ngwala Willumbong, Central Western Metropolitan Region.

Runners Up
Shane Buzza, Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Central Western Metropolitan Region.

Elizabeth Delaney, South West SEAL, Barwon South Western Region.

Outstanding Koorie achievement

Winner
Debbie Callister, Ngwala Willumbong, Central Western Metropolitan Region.

Runners Up:
Licence Program, Mildura Aboriginal Corporation, Loddon Campaspe Mallee Region.

Trudy Hunt, Mildura Aboriginal Corporation, Loddon Campaspe Mallee Region.

Outstanding ACE organisation

Winner:
Bairnsdale Adult Community Education, Gippsland Region.

Runners Up:
Lalor Living and Learning Centre, Northern Metropolitan Region.

Education Centre Gippsland, Gippsland Region.

Congratulations to the winners, runners up and other nominees for the 2005 Awards.