

Transitions: exploring teaching and learning strategies for the gig economy – session summary

By Karen Manwaring and Rhonda Pelletier, May 2018

‘Transitions: exploring teaching and learning strategies for the gig economy’ intended to look at students’ and teachers’ needs. After some further reading and discussion, we decided it would be better to explore the question: ‘With shifting priorities and changing demands, how do educators keep pace?’.

When we teach language, literacy and numeracy we bring with us our experience as users and learners of LLN. We felt that, inevitably, that is what educators would do with the LLN demands of industry 4.0.

This paper provides the prompts that gave rise to the participants’ responses which have been provided verbatim. This is not the first time teachers have discussed Literacy 4.0 or Industry 4.0 and, of course, it won’t be the last. However, at some time in the future talking about it will drop the 4.0 as new nominalisations are created to help us talk about living in the ‘new work order’. Hopefully, this will remain as a record of some first attempts and a chance to validate our inevitable use of hindsight to understand where we were and how far we have come.

We titled the first part of the session - **Key messages teachers got from the keynote**

The objective was to get some quick reflective responses on the morning’s keynote and discussions. The following are from the stickie labels collected from the tables. No changes have been made to the wording although some spelling has been corrected.

NO IDEA

Am I exploiting those working in the gig economy? (e.g. uber, Deliveroo). Will I be able to maintain FT work in the future as ‘gig’ become more popular?

Need to understand what communication skills and literacies are involved in ‘gig’ work.
Need to understand how best to teach (prepare student for these kinds of work.

The next generation especially but also my generation, do not have the security (or the constraints) of traditional employment conditions. That changes the society I live in.

Need to understand before I can support teachers in their application of it.

Short term

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME – More and more focus on employment outcomes and accountability to Job Actives and Centrelink

Competition, hesitance to knowledge sharing in order to retain an edge ->>>fighting for a job

Keeping up-to-date with relevant research around the present and future world of work

- Being able to keep up with new ideas and practices to influence the changing environment

Must do – a learning opportunity

Recognising and appreciating different definitions of literacy

Being able to, responding to the ever-changing env't of the workplace

Interesting ideas and thing to try

I will be able to stay in my current Work Ed teaching role as this sector is moving with the gig economy. My learners are moving a bit faster.

Difficulty accessing staff who are already employed at a number of places >> shortages of consistent staff.

Gig Economy – sharing of – skills, expertise, training, experiences

Part of life – using the internet as a tool

An interesting challenge

(re the gig economy) If we must teach how to learn, are we having to teach NEW learning-to-learn skills or are they the same skills in a different format

and/or

... to what EXTENT are they the same skills? To what extent are they very new skills? e.g. competition vs. collaboration

It's not the technology we're teaching – it's the navigation of it.

Success in this new environment will require more understanding of SELF as a learner (in context) ie. different hats for different jobs.

The gig worker still must collaborate. So, collaborate AND compete. Worker needs to draw a line between what they WILL do to compete and what they WON'T. ie. Values

How do teachers reconceptualise their work to teach well in the time allotted to them?

Self-awareness – as person and learner.

Will systems (e.g. moodle; reporting & assessment) recognise the social literacy learners are doing?

Reflection on experiences with digital technologies as key part of student learning – what's familiar? What's new?

The next activity was titled **Working in a fulfilment warehouse** and presented an excerpt from the January episode of Catalyst called, The Secret of Making Better Decisions, ABC, January 2018

This can be found at: <http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/4792087.htm> The excerpt ran for approximately six minutes from 22.53 min to 27.21 min.

In this activity, participants were given a page of words and phrases to circle. The objective was to give a vocabulary for the impact of watching employees' work being guided by artificial intelligence, requiring no interaction from them or with work colleagues. Most of the words were drawn from the commentary in the episode. A quick review around the room showed a tendency towards words such as, 'optimisation', 'everything is optimised including the people', 'tracking', and 'living algorithm'.

The discussion in the room reflected on the rather sterile nature of the work and the youthfulness of the workers.

The final activity focussed on what teachers felt they would need to do to prepare to work and teach in such an economy.

Teachers taking on gig economy job skills OR Career management for teachers in a gig economy

Each table had two prompts – a short paragraph and a focus topic with questions.

‘EAL/literacy/Learn Local teachers are already part of the gig economy. Our employment is dependent on changing government funding and on our ability to ‘pitch’ our skills and experience to potential employers. We may need to think of ourselves as teacher consultants rather than ongoing employees.’ (or just short-term contract employees)

Table topics

Technology

- What are your current technology and IT skills?
- What new skills do you need to learn to support LLN teaching in the gig economy?

Instructional design

- How does the design of your courses/lessons need to change to best teach for LLN in the gig economy?
- Can you retain the learner-centred philosophy most of us aim to focus on?

Taking control of your career

- How might your teaching career be affected by the gig economy?
- What skills do you need to take control of your career in this new work environment?

To assist discussion and thinking, a scaffolding template and a unit of work focus wheel (Vale, Scarino and McKay, 1991) were provided as tools to begin planning to teach a unit of work or to do self-directed learning for a teaching career in a gig economy. The objective was to begin breaking down the larger topic into significant segments that would enable finer planning for research or design/delivery.

In contrast to the workers in the fulfilment warehouse, teachers have some agency in how they will work. However, this can only be gained and maintained by thoughtful engagement with the emerging aspects of the gig economy in all its guises.

In truth, there may never be an Uber for teachers – no one is going to call us to ‘... just pop round to RTO X and give them a quick lesson on verb tenses’. That is not to say that the truncated method of delivery that has developed in response to restricted funding, resistance to students repeating levels and need for people to gain employment as soon as they can (whether or not they have sufficient vocational language skills) may not yet drive a fragmented delivery method where all students complete a certificated skill level in an apprenticeship fashion.

In conclusion, the session was much too short for the amount there was to explore and discuss. This was always going to be the way and although the original session design was cut down, it could have been cut further. We hope that the session has prompted some thought towards how people can

manage their careers to match the emerging employment methods in the gig economy the better to teach students how to learn and work in it.

Feedback from the session follows and we hope this helps you decide how best to explore the topic yourself. A Further Reading list follows that.

We encourage you to stay in touch with the research done by Leslie Farrell and Chris Corbel by visiting the University of Melbourne project page:

https://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/workplace-literacy-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution-the-literacy-4.0-project

Feedback from participants

We have provided a selection from the feedback. We believe it could be a guide for you if you decide to run a workshop on this in your workplace. Participants were asked to give one thing that was good, one for improving and one thing for 'the next' session on the gig economy. Those titles have been retained.

One good thing:

Exploring different aspects of our changing industry and workplaces and how as teachers or those working with learners can adapt.

Confirmed what I already knew and more. Great, interactive session.

Yes – I have been wondering what the government are thinking about the target groups/cohorts as what is currently occurring is nonsensical.

The effects of the gig economy and how they affect us!

Understanding of where I am within the gig economy and where I need to try and take my students

Interesting example from Catalyst.

That there is a lot of positivity in this area.

I got knowledge about the gig economy.

Gig confusing – process of dismantling it is good learning.

Rich, explorative, in-depth discussion about what the gig economy means for LLN teachers and students.

One improvement:

Less paper, fewer handouts perhaps? So great overall!!

Tried to do too much in one hour.

Examples of skills/learning needed for range of activities in gig economy.

My learning re gig economy is very basic. So it's difficult to know a starting point.

Simply the gap analysis.

More focus on what skills are needed to be 'teacher consultants'.

More info about how to go about getting reading for a 'gig economy'.

More time.

What you would wish for in another session:

Personal example for a possible gig economy job.

How to include pre-literate, emerging literacy learners in the 'gig economy train'.

Strategies to use in classroom.

More discussion on the vision of the future of 'teacher consultants'.

Examples, case studies, of effective teaching/training strategies for engagement.

More time. More interaction with table members. Chat 😊

What will come after the gig economy?

More time.

Resources!

Drilling down into the different conceptualities of the gig economy and its implications.

topic in your workplace.

Further Reading

These links and titles are offered as possible resources to help you start exploring various aspects of working in a gig economy. No doubt there are many more.

On being a sole trader

- **Australian Institute of Management** – this link takes you to the AIM short course guide - http://courses.aim.com.au/aim-short-course.html?utm_source=google&utm_medium=paidsearch&utm_campaign=ShortCourses&unit=shortcourse&cid=aimpsg&gclid=Cj0KCQjw_ZrXBRDXARIsAA8KauSa4jUbdCjbBgmkLiTc_pXVE9hzkJJEeRIeIs6bWiUkl-c_WMnsZJ8waAoa9EALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds (Accessed May 14th 2018)
- **Business Victoria** – the first dot point says, 'Assess whether running a business is for you'
 - <http://www.business.vic.gov.au/setting-up-a-business/is-running-a-business-for-you/start-a-business> (Accessed May 14th 2018)
- **ATO** - <https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Starting-your-own-business/> (Accessed May 14th 2018)
- **Open University** - <https://www.open.edu.au/online-courses/subjects?keyword=gig%20economy> (Accessed May 14th 2018)

Stories of gig-style work and issues (a non-academic sampling)

Interview

- **ABC – Big Ideas** – April 30th 2018;
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/fourth-industrial-revolution/9667912> (Accessed May 14th 2018)

‘So what exactly are we getting ready for, and where could it take us?’

Bots, Blockchain and Big Data recorded at the Women of the World Festival. 7 April 2018’

Magazines

<https://www.fastcompany.com/40553329/at-this-revolutionary-school-some-teachers-have-to-go-on-unemployment>

<https://www.wired.com/tag/gig-economy/>

<http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/tough-gig-making-the-gig-economy-work-for-everyone>