Making Connections

A SELECTION OF WRITINGS 1983 – 2009

Delia Bradshaw
ADULT EDUCATOR, WRITER AND ADVOCATE

Delia Bradshaw loves Melbourne,
the city where she has spent most of her life.

Delia's commitment to adult education
has resulted in many professional publications.
Making Connections is the first collection
of her writings as an adult educator.

Delia's 2003 memoir,
Becoming Fine,
is her account
of a mother-daughter relationship,
from the perspective of the adult daughter.

Her 2013 biography,
With Love, Delia,
is a series of letters Delia wrote to
her-long dead Irish Grandmother.

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book is available from the
National Library of Australia

Contents

Prologue

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Foreword

Adult education has been a long-time, enduring presence in my life. My participation has taken me in many different directions and along many different pathways, sometimes twisting one way and then another. This journey has fashioned me in profound and significant ways. The paths I have taken, the people I have met, the books I have read and the conversations I have shared, these have all shaped me intellectually, politically, socially and, perhaps most important of all, ethically.

I came to adult education over 40 years ago when I joined a women's study group at my local adult learning centre. I have been involved ever since. From being an adult student, I moved into teaching, then community development, research, educational management, further study and writing. I may be best known in Victoria as the author of **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities**, an influential publication (I'm told) on adult education theory and practice.

This collection, **Making Connections**, tracks the evolution of my thinking over many years from 1983 to 2009. Some themes recur often while others come in as my understandings widen and deepen. This collection also tracks the main thread that runs through all my work: a passionate belief in the power of adult education. For me, educational settings are powerful sites, with the potential for initiating and augmenting personal and social transformations of lifelong significance. Making connections, intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically and ethically, is at the heart of what I believe and do as an adult educator. To this end, my work is ethical work, dedicated to creating a world that is more just, compassionate, healthy, harmonious and hopeful.

Over the years, as well as being a writer, other roles have included being a teacher, mentor, researcher, editor, curriculum advisor, panel chair, guest speaker and workshop presenter. I have worked in a wide range of contexts, including ACE neighbourhood learning centres, TAFE institutes, ACFE regional councils, community agencies, government bodies, professional organisations and university education faculties.

My original selection was about twice the size of this one. I deleted earlier choices, mostly, to minimise repetition. That said, though sometimes tempted to do so, I have not altered the

pieces I finally chose in any way at all, wanting to retain the spirit and words of the time at which they were written. Thus, they stand, unchanged, uncorrected, uncensored, as they were originally presented or published.

Roles and voices

Making Connections reproduces some of the voices that have characterised me as an educator over many decades. I choose the term "voices" because I think that different contexts and different roles encourage us to "speak" in different ways, from the performative aspects of public speaking to the formal requirements of academic writing to the technical protocols of publicly funded projects. The voices most prominent here are of me as a teacher, a writer, a researcher and a public speaker.

Let me say a little more about each of these four roles and the variety of voices.

As a teacher

I love teaching. I love the design and the drama. I love the intellectual, social and ethical creativity required. I love that it calls us to be our best selves. The samples in this collection, chosen from hundreds of possibilities, show me at work.

Questions that never go away are: Where do I start? Am I going too fast or too slow? Am I listening with my heart as well as my head? What is the balance between abstract and concrete, solo and group activities, reading, writing, listening and speaking?

In this collection, my voice as teacher tends to be informal, peer-to-peer.

As a writer

For me, writing is a way to understand, to dig deeper, to question and explore. The pieces included here, spanning close to thirty years of writing in the public domain, show my habit of needing to unearth the underlying principles informing practices. I cannot help myself continuously asking "Why?" before thinking about "How".

I am grateful to all those who have invited me to publish my writing. They have provided the many opportunities that have enabled me to extend my own thinking about the role and significance of education in our lives and in our society.

In this collection, my voice as writer is multi-toned, moving from conversational to cogently argued, from being a reporter to being an advocate.

As a researcher

Research satisfies my passion for paying homage to adult education, its values and practices.

I love finding, showcasing and validating diverse examples of "good practice". I was privileged to be funded to undertake such work. I was always acutely aware of the responsibility entrusted to me to encapsulate and publicise splendid educational work that often goes unseen, unheard and unheeded.

In this collection, my voice as researcher mostly follows academic conventions and tends to be more the measured tone of a detached (though always admiring) observer.

As a public speaker

I always feel deeply moved when invited to speak. It is an honour to be an advocate for our work as educators and I try really hard to do it justice. Sometimes, I highlight the virtues and ideals guiding our work; at other times, I tell stories; often, I integrate visual cues as a way of evoking the many-faceted philosophical and methodological relationships involved.

When I am preparing my speech, I am mindful of the role public speaking played in my own schooling, how I was encouraged to speak up and speak out.

In this collection, my voice as public speaker promotes metaphors and storytelling in conjunction with rational argument as ways to affirm our community.

Influences

Preparing this selection has prompted to think about the range of influences that have shaped me both as a learner and an educator. In this personal and professional story, you will see the particular contributions made by my home life, schooling, university, community work, feminism, multiculturalism and companions at each stage, many of them social justice advocates, that constitute my adult education journey

Structure and sequence of collection

After a number of attempts at different structures, I decided that a (mostly) chronological sequence works best. This way, the reader can see the evolution of my thinking first-hand. Occasionally, where there is a cluster around one theme or site, I have included a topical heading alongside the year(s).

Looking back

One consequence of assembling my writing in one place is that it, inevitably, prompted me to look back at the course of my work from now, the year 2022. I love remembering and re-meeting the many Delias represented here, hearing my/her voice evolve over the years. At times, I feel embarrassed at my omissions, my oversights, my naivete. At other times, I smile

with affection at my passion and optimism. Repetitions of ideas and examples are clearly evident. I have chosen to retain them as they show a continuity of thinking and are often worth saying twice.

There is one glaring omission. Today, I rate climate and ecological justice to be as significant as social justice, knowing they are inextricably linked.

In this selection, I have not included excerpts from journals I have kept for many years. They chart my joys, my regrets, my insights and my resolutions. However, what I learnt from my journal reflections was usually integrated into the next article or speech or lesson plan that followed those ruminations, so their presence lives on even if not explicitly stated or decipherable.

What have I learnt from this project?

Re-reading this corpus affirms the centrality of evaluation in my thinking and practice. When I think "evaluation", I focus on the word "value" that sits at the heart of this word. In surveying this twenty-six years, I note my habit of regular reflection on why I am doing what I am doing. I see I am continuously identifying what I value, continuously scrutinising the values I embody in my day-to-day educational work, regularly paying attention to how I am doing as an educator – who and what are included and favoured and who and what are excluded, and why.

Apart from tracing my own evolution as a reflective educator, I see the longevity of values that have informed my thinking and practice from the beginning – democratic participation, social justice, individual and collective flourishing and truth-telling.

As well, I see my growing awareness of threats to humanistic, socially responsible education. I see myself fearing the threat and increasing influence of neo-liberal forces that give primacy to a sort of "training" that fragments and atomises learning into separate chunks, that is dominated by economic imperatives and that inevitably narrows focus and human possibilities. I see myself trying to rally adult educators to stay true to our broader, deeper ideals for both individuals and our society as a whole.

Does any of this matter today?

A constant refrain in my head as I was revisiting these pieces is: Does any of this matter today? Who cares what I did then and why? What does Delia 2022 want to say to contemporary readers?

I love reading what educators write about their work. I have always sought their accounts from different times and places. I find it inspiring and nourishing as their stories and

educational practices expand my mind, my heart and my horizons. This collection tells something of my life as an educator. It is partly a set of resource materials, of ideas and activities, but also a sort of professional autobiography. It is only one story, among many that could be told, of three invigorating decades of adult education in Victoria either side of the turn of the century.

To share my current view of these thoughts from the past, each piece is prefaced, in italics, with **July 2022**, where I speak from the present day. I give some historical context for the piece and then say why I include it and how I see it now.

My hope is that adult educators in Victoria and beyond are enlivened by this historical snapshot, from 1983 to 2009. I hope they are invigorated by our rich, passionately enacted and deeply ethical past. I hope I evoke powerfully enough the values, vision, energy, thoughtfulness and integrity of that time, a time when democracy mattered and was widely practised. I hope that this selection is read not simply as a historical documentary but also as ready reference for today, offering possible signposts and pathways for the future.

I am not in touch with contemporary adult education policies and practices but believe there is always a place for remembering and heeding our past. If there is a sense adult education has been diminished and impoverished, perhaps this testimony may sow new seeds.

July 2022

Who Am I?

In the late 1990s, I participated in a writing group with women friends, the aim of which was to explore our cultural selves. We met for several years.
Who Am I? *is a snapshot of myself written at that time.*

As well as writing, we crafted a quilt together trying to represent our identities in fabric, shape and colour.

I place this piece, and two other reflective pieces,
Australia Day *and* **Surrogate Mothers**, *as a doorway to this collection. They provide a shorthand introduction to how I identify myself and what matters to me. The influences and values I highlight in these three pieces inform everything I write.*

As a trio, they go some way towards answering the question: "Who Am I"?
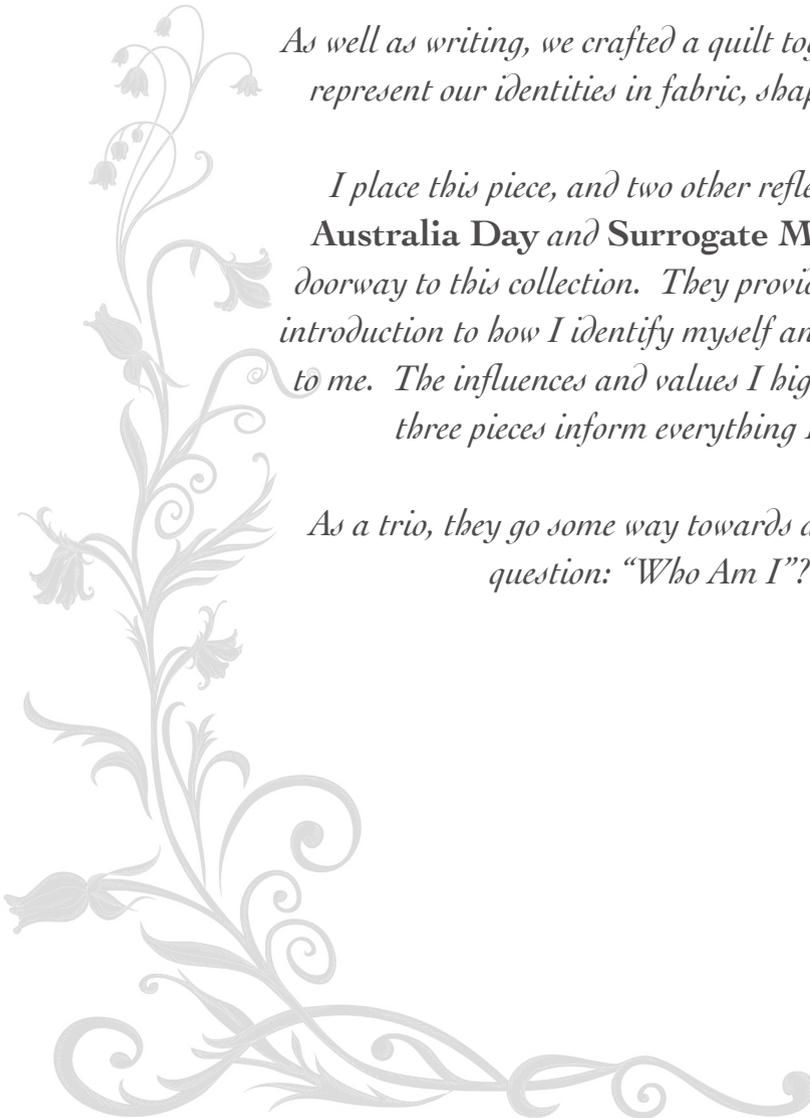
Who Am I? (1999)
Cultural Writing Group, March, 1999

❧

NAME: Delia Mary Teresa Bradshaw (née Will)

Comments

Delia was the name of my paternal grandmother. She was born Delia Cecilia Bannon in Galway, Ireland, and emigrated to Australia in 1884 as a young woman.

Mary was the name of my maternal grandmother. She always discouraged talk about the country of origin of her Knox forebears, wanting to leave "all that" far behind. Nobody knew or cared what part of England (or was it Northern Ireland? Or Scotland?) they came from or when.

Teresa is the name I took for confirmation at the age of ten. At that time, I had Teresa of Lisieux in mind; today, I'm more inclined towards Teresa of Avila. But then, these days, I'd probably choose a different name altogether.

Bradshaw is a welcome relief from my original name of Will which always prompted, "Well, where there's a will, there's a way", or equally irritating proverbs. Bradshaw, meaning "broad wood", is an old border country name evoking trees and groves and a love of place that straddles different worlds.

Reflections

Naming is a powerful act, exerting a huge influence on identity formation. How we are named and how we name ourselves, the names we prefer and the nicknames we detest, all contribute to our own and others' sense of who we are and who we want to be. As a child and adolescent , I was called "Del". In early adulthood, I favoured and introduced myself as "Delia", disliking the truncated "Del". Now, easier with myself and relaxed about honouring different times in my life, I'm happy with either. At this stage, I am more drawn to the meanings embedded in the names. I'm especially preoccupied with my Irish grandmother Delia's story, taking great sustenance and pleasure from identifying with her cultural roots and uncovering what we share in common.

KEY LIFE INFLUENCES

- ✺ Being the first (much feted) daughter after three sons
- ✺ Attending Kilbreda College, a Catholic girls secondary school run by Brigidine nuns
- ✺ Coming under the spell of my Swiss-born French teacher in Year 11
- ✺ Revelling in my first boyfriend at the age of 17 and losing him at 19
- ✺ Discovering, at Melbourne University in the mid-60's, that writers, poets and intellectuals are alive today, and don't only exist in books
- ✺ Making friends with, and visiting the homes of, women from a range of European backgrounds, elated by the sights, tastes and sounds of other cultures
- ✺ Joining a university women's group, the first of dozens to come
- ✺ Working as a secondary school teacher, throughout my 20's, in a variety of places – in rural south-east Gippsland, in a working-class suburb in Melbourne's north-west, in a London boys' school, in an English borstal, in the "hippie" hills on the outskirts of Melbourne – each of which called me in a different way to examine ALL my beliefs
- ✺ Living overseas for two years, in my mid-20's, in Europe, the Middle East and South-East Asia
- ✺ Learning about lesbianism from my first friend who "came out"
- ✺ Working on a migrant women's project for 3 years, a magic passport giving me entry to dozens of largely invisible ethno-specific women's groups all over Melbourne.

Comments

This is but a tiny sampling, almost chosen at random, that stops in my early 30's. It is suggestive and certainly not comprehensive.

Reflections

What do I make of this small sample of life highlights gathered together in this way? I realise that I love being the age I am, fifty-three. I love being able to look back on a stretch of history, to discern patterns, connections and origins. In this collection of early life experiences, I see the seeds of my feminism, my socialism, my multiculturalism. Whilst I cannot explain why I was drawn, as if magnetically, to particular people and places and situations, I can see how these encounters have influenced my life since.

I see the significance of certain values and habits I learnt at school. It was made very clear to us that we embarked on a quest for learning not primarily for ourselves but for the good of the wider society. We were encouraged to approach everything we did through the framework of "look, judge, act". I've only recently realised that I still follow this methodology for social justice today: "What is the nature of the situation? What are the ethical issues? What is to be done?" Action, doing something about a "problem", has long been an imperative.

BEST LOVED BOOKS

- **Wuthering Heights**
- **Gaining Ground**
- **The Harem Within**
- **A Map of the New Country**
- **Eva Luna**
- **The Dinner Party**
- **Australian Women Artists**
- **Journal of a Solitude**
- **The Cancer Journals**
- **Letter to a Child Never Born**
- **Women's Ways of Knowing**
- **Snake Cradle and Snake Dreaming**

Comments

Again, I've not compiled this list in a rigorously studious way nor does it cover my life span to date. I jotted down whatever came to mind on the day of writing. I know there are dozens more and that a different day would bring a different list.

Reflections

What does this list of books tell me? Almost exclusively, I read books by women, for women and about women. I love stories about spiritual journeys, those narratives that trace the sources and significance of values and beliefs. I can never read too many autobiographies, those attempts to make meaning of a life. The life stories that captivate me most are those about artists, philosophers and others struggling to express richer ways of seeing and understanding and living.

HEROES/IDOLS/SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

- Isadora Duncan
- Joan Baez
- Tonie Fajdiga (my French teacher)
- Saint Brigid
- Rosa Luxemburg
- Virginia Woolf
- Emily Bronte
- Isabelle Eberhardt
- Hildegard of Bingen
- Roberta Sykes
- Robyn Archer
- Grace Cossington Smith

- Mary Robinson
- Sally Potter
- Judy Chicago
- Clarice Beckett
- Sweet Honey in the Rock

Comments

As with Key Influences and Best Loved Books, this is a spontaneous, not a meticulously organised, compilation. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of women who have inspired, that is, breathed life into me.

Reflections

What can you tell me from this collection?

ASPIRATIONS

- To excite adult educators about the powerful personal and social possibilities of their work
- To write well, with passion, clarity and cogency, about the relationship between adult education and social well-being
- To participate in projects that are on the pioneering margins
- To be a thoughtful and energetic contributor to the communities (including families, friendship circles, workplace groups, internationalist and local neighbourhood networks) to which I belong
- To compose and bring to life rituals that draw on all the arts to commemorate key life moments
- To laugh and dance more.

Comments

This is a shift from the past to the future, from receiving to giving.

Reflections

What, of all I've read and thought and done, now really matters in my life? This involves making choices, often hard ones, about what is both desirable and possible. It invites the marriage of values and actions; it requires reconciling values and constraints. What I decide will not only reveal basic truths about "who I am" but will also profoundly determine "who I will be". It will also contribute to what sort of society we will be. Every micro decision I make has macro consequences; every action we take (or don't take) is weaving, however minimally, the socio-cultural texture of our future.

ENDNOTE

What if I'd written this: A year ago? Five years ago? Thirty-five years ago?

Comments

Something I did write five years ago is another way of contemplating this conundrum of identity, what I now call this "multiplicity of selves". In a discussion about how to deal with a difficult relationship, a friend had suggested that I engage in an internal dialogue about the nature of the difficulties. I decided to do this in my journal. To my surprise, when I sat down to write, two selves appeared, one calling herself Miss Prim, the other The Fairy Selves, two very articulate characters who spoke from different parts within me. Their dialogue with each other revealed the plurality of voices and allegiances within me, presumably within all of us.

A month later, sensing there must be more selves keen to express themselves, I sent an invitation to my inner world inviting all interested selves to afternoon tea. I knew that it wouldn't be till I opened the door that I'd know who would come. To my amazement and joy, they came in, one by one. Here they are:

- Metaphor Mary
- Daydream Delia
- Claire the Clear
- Brigid, the Icon-lover
- May, the Journal Self
- Tapestry, the seeker after patterns of Beauty and Meaning
- Sprite, the Spirit of Ideals, Values and Ethics.

During the course of their conversation, it became clear that another self, the one that pre-judges and forecloses prematurely, seemed to be absent. Sprite, my voice of conscience, pointed out that Primadonna was indeed there, prompting me to see that there was something of the shadow in all of the selves present.

Reflections

At any moment, we are a fusion of many selves, many voices, many roles, an ever-changing blend of who we've been, who we are and who we could become. The combinations and permutations are infinite. Which do we want to favour and which discourage? Are some now unnecessary, to be thanked and farewelled? Are some needing encouragement and an energy boost?

Australia Day (1999)

I wrote this second introductory piece, an exploration of cultural identity, in the cultural writing group mentioned earlier.

I place it here as it articulates where I stand, literally and metaphorically, when it comes to how I understand "being Australian". It infuses all I do and think.

Australia Day (1999)

Cultural Writing Group, January 26, 1999

❧

That word "Australia", what does it mean to me?

When I hear this word, in my mind I see a map the size of a wall chart. My eyes are always drawn to the blue waters fanning out from the shapely coastal outline deeply etched in black. There seems to be more water than land. This mental map, the original probably once hanging on the walls of my primary school, depicts Australia as a huge yellow vastness, almost a wasteland. There's little variation or contour, the exceptions being the different sized dots, mostly around the margins, designating the major cities. On this map, the yellow of the continent is matched by the yellow of a smiling sun that beams down from the top right hand corner, floating free with a friendly grin. Its cheerfulness is in marked contrast to the featureless, almost grim, Australian landmass.

Maybe my feelings about being "Australian" have been significantly shaped by this map that I carry permanently in my head. They're sunny, warm feelings, but with no outstanding features, with no clear, strong emotions or sharply defined images. Of course, I can conjure up beautiful places I've visited in Australia and breath-taking documentaries I've seen. I also know places like Port Fairy that I'd choose every time – for their beauty and their magic – as my ideal spot for physical and spiritual recuperation.

But, on the whole, I feel "Australia" to be very distant, almost a stranger, to me. I feel as if I'm living in some way detached from her, insensible to her age-old spirit and rhythms, something I feel it takes generations to fathom. I'm even unsure whether to address this country of my birth in the feminine or not: "her" spirit seems to imply that I know her better than I do. Yet "its" spirit is too impersonal and "his" spirit is inconceivable.

Why these hesitations? Is it because, as a second-generation immigrant, as a non-indigenous person, I've simply not been here long enough? Are there also possibly other reasons as well?

As a child, I had little first-hand contact with this land, with Australian life and landscapes beyond a suburban backyard. Occasionally we went on family holidays – to Safety Beach or to a guesthouse in the hills behind Melbourne – but these excursions tended to replicate the habits and patterns of suburban home life. Even on these occasions, there was little

wandering beyond the front lawn. My most influential explorations took place in my head, my few physical encounters with the body of this land being restricted to swimming between the flags.

The realm of the imagination, the world of books, always took precedence in my youth. But this was rarely set in an Australian context. My literary adventures, my haunting daydreams, revolved around the Swiss Alps, French castles or the English seaside, never the Snowy Mountains, Kakadu or the Whitsundays. In many ways, though I grew up in Australia, I inherited a European, particularly an English, sensibility. My aesthetics were rooted in European images and metaphors, in European myths and legends, in European geography and history, in the European seasons of the year. In that world of the late 50's, there was no disputing that Wordsworth's poem "Daffodils" was the epitome of artistic perfection. From where I stood as a young girl, Australia was essentially England in a different location. The same customs, the same cultural references and the same assumptions as life in England, only in a different part of the atlas. My body was in Australia but my head was far away.

None of this seemed incongruous, much less imperious at the time - except, perhaps, eating steaming Christmas plum pudding in 100 degree summer heat whilst singing carols about sleighs and snow. When I think about it now, the implication at that time was that Australia was a huge nothingness. Luckily, England and English culture had come along to fill this emptiness. It never even came up as an issue that we might need or want to know about Aboriginal history or indigenous heroes or the names of native fruits and flowers or that Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring simply didn't make sense in most parts of Australia. I was well into my thirties before I realised that deserts could be beautiful. Until then, beauty could only be soft and green.

Love for places other than Australia is not surprising, and certainly not undesirable. Non-indigenous Australians have strong allegiances elsewhere, bringing their stories and memories and cultural icons as they disembark from boat or plane. But what fascinates me is what happens when these cultural perspectives find themselves mingling with Australian society in an Australian landscape.

What *are* the consequences of this fusion? Is there an infinite number of combinations and permutations? Are some responses more likely than others? Why do some cultural groups welcome new influences, creating exciting hybrids? Why do some reject all newness, narrowing and tightening what they already have? How long does it take to feel as if we come from the land rather than feeling as if we've been superimposed on top of it? Is it possible yet – or is it premature – to talk of an Australian sensibility, of Australian culture? Is it still possible, if it ever were possible, to speak of Greek culture or Jewish culture or American culture or Slavic culture as if they are homogenous, unchanging entities? Are such terms even the best way to be

describing ourselves culturally and ethnically? If not, what are better ways?

It's not that I repudiate being called Australian. For me, it's just not helpful when it comes to cultural matters. And it's not that I wished I lived somewhere else. There's so much I love about Australia – the fresh, "clean and green" food; the relative peace and safety; the variety of landscapes; the vigorous multicultural society; the cheeky sense of humour; the healthy scepticism, especially about authority.

I especially love living in seaside St Kilda, in inner-city Melbourne, with its love of colour and eccentricity as well as its open-ness about poverty and pain and prostitution of all sorts. It's as close as I've ever come to feeling I belong somewhere, that I'm am part of a community with history and a distinctive ethos. This connection is not as intense as I imagine indigenous people feel about their country, those places permeated with family associations and tribal stories and cultural significance. But it's a strong, affectionate bond nonetheless.

But in what way does this make me an Australian? I am, officially, a citizen of Australia. I am entitled to write Nationality: Australian. But nationality is a legal, politically constructed definition; culture, I think, has to do with sociological and spiritual currents.

As I recall it, the cultural world I inhabited as a child was relatively simple and straightforward, if somewhat oddly out of place. But much has changed since then, both inside me and outside me. Australian culture is much more complex and rich and elusive, with many faces and endless variations. I want to be able to say "I am Australian" and be saying something meaningful. Something I read in **The Age** newspaper this morning suggests a number of fruitful possibilities. In an article on "Just how far has Australian food come?", a Sydney writer had this to say about contemporary Australian cuisine:

> Our character has been shaped by an Anglo-Saxon heritage, an ancient history, a geographical affinity with Asia, an emotional and metaphysical affinity with the Mediterranean, and a deep-seated distrust of anything formal or laboured.

I think it is a wonderful description and applies to much more than food. I'm happy to be this sort of Australian. It allows me so much scope, so much room to move. It encourages me to see influences in my past that I might have overlooked or devalued and to imagine a future where these, and other influences, fuse together to make a society known for its ease with difference.

July 2022

Surrogate Mothers:
older, wiser, stronger

*This third introductory piece was written in another
women's writing group. Five of us met every six weeks
for many years from the mid 1980s to early 1990s.
We called our final collection, **Feminists at Forty.***

*I later wove some of this piece, a favourite of mine,
into a speech for a neighbourhood house dinner called
Women, Education and Transformation.*

*I have included it in my prelude to this collection
to highlight two key strands in my life as an adult
educator – the power of women and
the power of groups.*
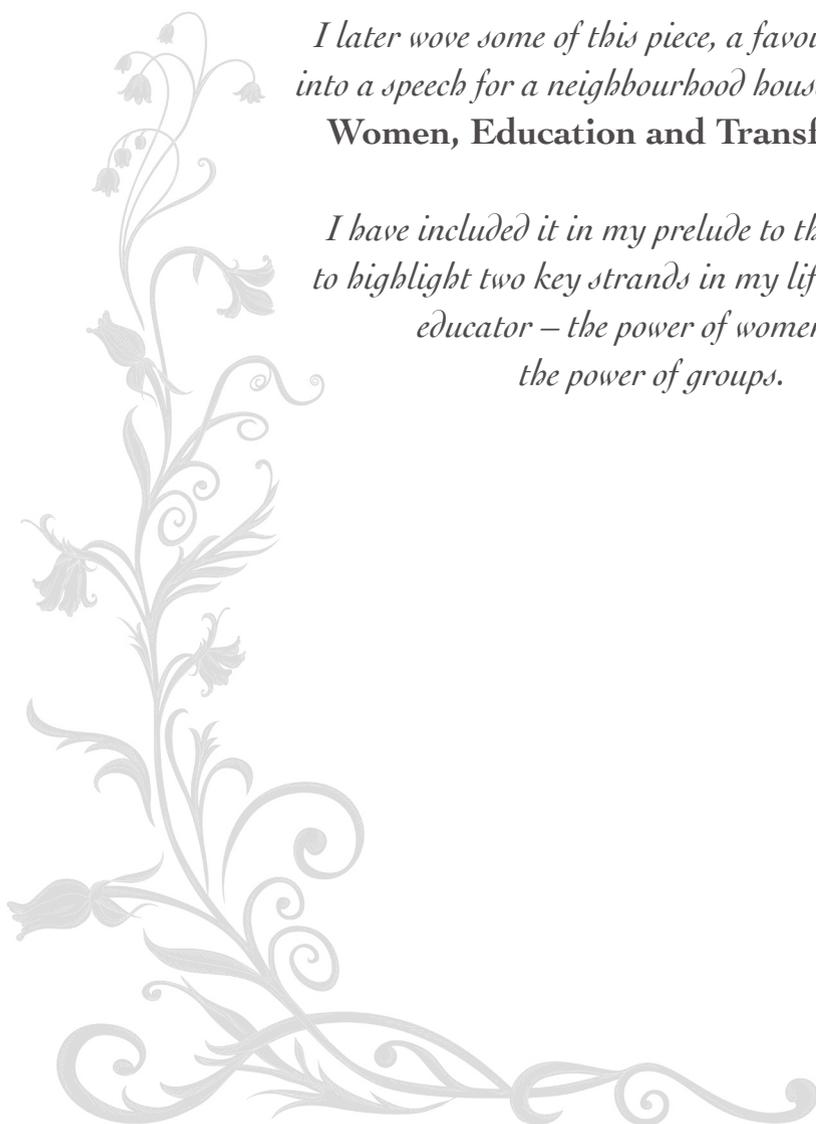
Surrogate Mothers: older, wiser, stronger (1993/2001)

Originally, chapter in **Feminists at Forty** *(1993) (unpublished manuscript)*
Later, part of speech, **Women, Education and Transformation** *(2001)*
Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House Fundraising Dinner
Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE Restaurant, Preston
August 3, 2001

I've needed the strength of women's groups at many times in my life. Whether I've been treading new ground or whether the old ground's been cracking up, they have always been there, in different ways and in different forms, at the right time.

It is 1965. I'm in my second year at Melbourne University. A weekly ritual that has become an essential part of my life over the past year, and that will continue for another three years, is the highlight of my week. Every Friday afternoon six women friends meet for what began last year as a theology discussion group. It is auspiced by a Catholic students' society that has fostered intellectual cells for years. We have been told that our group is unique, and therefore very special, because it is the first all-women's group in the history of this society.

I cannot remember exactly why it took this form. Maybe, because we'd all been to girls' secondary schools, we considered all-girls to be the norm and didn't even think of asking boys. Maybe, when we formed ourselves in the early days of first year University, we didn't know any boys and simply didn't consider asking male strangers. Not that being strangers had stopped us from heading off together on this utterly unpredictable journey. Maybe we thought boys and religion didn't mix. Whatever the reasons, before long, the group had taken on such a strong life of its own that expanded membership was simply never an issue.

We were known by some others in the society as "The Group", a tongue-in-cheek reference to Mary McCarthy's recently published controversial novel. Novices in life that we were, nothing could have been further from the truth. We met each Friday afternoon and generally discussed texts that we'd agreed upon the week before. Biblical texts, theology texts, literary

texts, philosophy texts. Our normally three-hour-long discussions, far more than anything else at University, shaped my identity and my need for a mission in life. The formal educational sites, lecture halls and tutorial rooms, paled in comparison. My Friday afternoons mattered even more than the passionate Caf sessions that had me glued to my seat for hours on end. It was in that first women's group that I made my life-long pledge to "The Search for Truth", these days a somewhat-out-of-date precept, but one that is still the primary motivation for much of what I do.

At first our group was quite formal. We structured our discussions around abstract and theoretical issues, deferring to pre-set activities and questions. As time went by, we relaxed. Often a personal issue that had come up for one of us during the prior week replaced the pre-set topic. While this was nominally a spirituality group, all six of us were all dealing with big life issues – boyfriends, expanding horizons, opposing value systems, differences with parents, new definitions of friendship and life purposes – all the normal preoccupations of young adults suddenly thrust into an enticing new socio-cultural environment.

I had led a very sheltered life before coming to University, and I was both agog at, and overawed by, the colourful array of ideas, characters and lifestyles I was encountering every single day. I had so many questions buzzing inside my head and so few places to take them. We didn't leave our fascination with this big new world at the door when we bounced in for our weekly get-together. This blending of grave with trite, of personal with impersonal, was not an ideological choice: it's just what we did. I wonder if the men in their groups separated their intellectual selves from their personal selves. I suspect, from what others have told me since, that their discussions aspired to be intellectually lofty. They frowned on everyday personal concerns. Not for them, "the personal is political".

So, mixed in with passionate discussions about grace and redemption and Teilhard de Chardin were equally passionate and agonising debates about conscience and purity and loyalty and personal morals and the body/mind/soul conundrum. Not to mention clothes and food and balls and University folklore. Although we never used the word "feminism", and I doubt if any of us had any idea what it meant, I look on that group as the prototype for all the women's groups I later joined and loved. Groups I joined precisely because they were all-women's groups.

It is now 1977, and I have been living in a brand-new mudbrick house on the bushy, far-flung outskirts of Melbourne for the past sixteen months. My first child was born thirteen months ago. It is fourteen months since I stopped teaching in the local community school. The teachers there are my only source of friends in this still-unfamiliar part of the world. My old friends are scattered around the globe and my former community school colleagues are all intensely preoccupied with teacher matters. When they visit, I feel like a curiosity piece. They

can't imagine what I do all day, and I have trouble describing to childless adults how full and exhausting the days are. Sensing our pool of common experience is evaporating, I notice their visits getting further apart. My movement into the "otherworld", the realm of motherhood, is turning out to be a far greater culture shock than anything I experienced in recent travels through the alien villages of outback Yugoslavia and rural Turkey.

Although I visit my mother, an hour's drive away, and my sister, a two hours' drive away, about once a month, I am feeling very cut off from the world. As I lose myself more and more in long hikes with the pusher over rough and hilly tracks, as I turn more to gardening, hunting for native orchids and pressing wildflowers, I know I'm growing quite timid and apologetic with people. My baby boy and I have our own language, which is thrilling to us but quite incomprehensible to anyone else. Fearing I might stutter and stumble in public, I try to avoid having to do the shopping. Me, who just over a year ago, had been elected unopposed as staff representative on the School Council!

I see now that something inside of me must have been worried, if not alarmed, at my predicament. Some part of me must have been keeping its eye open for a way out of this shrinking life.

About a year into this new stage of life, an item in the local community newsletter arrested my attention. I'd been in the habit of putting the newsletter aside but these questions urged me to read on: *Women, are you missing something? Looking for something? Do you want to meet other women in your community?*. The art classes at the learning centre didn't appeal: too many half-finished weavings, prints and jumpers in the backroom testified to my love-hate relationship with the arts. I didn't bother to read the Higher School Certificate section appealing to women who wanted to prepare for tertiary study.

Another course, however, did catch my eye, "Women in Australian History and Literature". I am the product of a schooling that prized novelists, poets and dramatists from England; also, because I'd chosen to study languages, I'd been excluded from history lessons in Year Nine. This tiny notice propelled me into thinking: "The time has come to make amends. Not only history, but Australian history at that. And all centred on women!". Who would have guessed the ripple effects of such a simple notice and such a simple intention?

Arriving for the first session about a month later, my mind was fixated on two things. How would my young son and I handle our first test of separation, and how I would manage the forthcoming class? My thoughts dashed from "Is Finn OK in Bill's office?" to "Will I fit in with this group?" to "Will everyone here know more than I do and have read more than I have?" An hour later, with not a mention of a syllabus or a reading list, I knew I'd crossed a significant border. In this new land, we all spoke the same language. In this land, all the

women had children and they spoke openly about the mixed blessings of motherhood. In this land, it went without question that there is any number of histories and that it all depends on who is telling the story. And in this land, women's stories counted enormously.

It was taken for granted that our History class would begin with our own stories.

For the next two and a half years, we continued to meet weekly. We told and recorded our stories; we heard and read and researched other women's stories. As there was only one publication that we knew at the time that was dedicated to the story of women in Australian history, **The Real Matilda**, we had to dig and delve for ourselves. We re-visited and re-viewed sources that had been mined only for the conqueror's side of the story. Hand-in-hand with our historical, artistic and sociological discoveries went the discoveries we were making about ourselves and about each other.

A lesbian mother dared to speak out about her sexuality for the first time; a long-suffering wife found the courage to leave her violent husband; an older woman embraced a new sense of identity as a community worker after the humiliation of being deserted at the age of sixty-four. For the first time since Finn's birth, I wasn't designated as "she who left work to have a baby", a prompt for endless "baby-talk" small talk. In fact, it was nearly a year before these women met my young son. Thanks to these women, I re-claimed old bits of myself that I'd forgotten and discovered marvellous new bits as well.

It's not that we avoided motherhood: it simply didn't dominate. As my world embraced Katherine Susannah Prichard and Barbara Baynton and Vida Goldstein, as I read the letters of early women convicts and other documents connected with women's suffrage and women's labour, motherhood came into sharper perspective. Motherhood was no longer an individual experience; it was being situated in a wider context, a context of womanhood and social conditioning and feminism and liberation. I learnt first-hand about consciousness-raising. It was this group that brought me back in touch with the world, a much bigger world than I'd ever known, and I came back older, wiser, stronger and, happily, tougher.

This time, it is 1981. The semi-rural lifestyle of outer Melbourne has given way to classic middle suburbia. The neat double-fronted brick villas, made to a standard pattern, with only a slight variation in an archway here or a window frame there, all date from just after World War Two, as do their occupants. We are the first "young family" to move into the street since the early fifties when our neighbours were all newly-weds. While we were welcomed with homemade lemonade and rainbow cake, our native bush garden is seen as a little too radical for the street. It isn't long before I am feeling as out of place here as the gum trees and grevilleas we've transplanted from our last home.

Believing other women might be feeling as isolated and culturally adrift as I was, I agreed,

soon after arriving, to an interview with the local suburban newspaper. I thought it might be a good way to gauge interest in setting up a women's group. I had no clear picture as to what this group might do. I had acted purely on instinct. I was shocked to find that my (heavily-edited) conversation with the journalist had turned into a front-page story for the next issue. I was equally shocked to see how I had been depicted – a grey figure, sitting hunched in the shadows, with the ghostly shape of a child in the distance. I can't remember the stark headline but it conjured up overtones of imprisonment and deprivation. I had been feeling cut off from the community, but this badly?

My phone rang non-stop for the next three weeks. The article had obviously tapped huge reserves of female pain and powerlessness. Fifty women came to a meeting I arranged, including a fresh young social worker who had been trying, so far without success, to set up a women's activity group for some time. It is not surprising she had found this hard going for, on any score, this suburb was no hotbed of progressivism. News for women in the local paper revolved around bowls, church events and craft demonstrations. Hence my surprise at having been made front-page news when normal newspaper fare implied women ought to be content with their pleasant lot. Hence, also, my surprise at the response my story generated. While determined to do something about this grave mismatch between public expectations and private reality, I didn't underestimate the size of the task. I remember saying to a friend at the time: "If I can set up and maintain a women's consciousness-raising group in this suburb, I can do it anywhere".

It took almost a year but what a group we made.

On the surface, you'd wonder what we had in common. Ages ranged from twenty-five to eighty, though most were in their mid-fifties. I was thirty-four. One middle-aged woman was in permanent paid employment. The only young woman in the group, recovering from an emotional breakdown, was very keen to find work. An older woman, living in an intolerable domestic situation with a drunken husband whom she supported, was extending her part-time para-medical practice. Some of the women had grandchildren. One had chosen to remain single all her life. Two of us had completed secondary schooling, though most would have loved to. All of the women in the group had been members of the paid workforce, mostly in clerical jobs, in their teens or early twenties, but the bulk of their time in the last thirty years had been spent as dedicated wives, mothers, neighbours and voluntary committee members. They'd worked in schools, charities and a wide range of community organisations. If you had seen this group in the church meeting room in which we initially met, you could have mistaken it for the local ladies' guild. In fact, only one of the group was a churchgoer; the rest of us had long ago withdrawn from church attendance. If you had overheard us, however, you'd have known at once that we were no ladies' auxiliary.

The topics and activities we covered in our weekly meetings ranged far and wide – my continuing obsession with women in Australian history, including a mini-drama we scripted; a regular time spot for discussing the most recent edition of ABC Radio's **Coming Out Show,** (a program focussing on women which one of us always taped); increasing prominence to issues faced by persecuted women, immigrant women and women victimised by violence. Our discussions were always anchored in our own lives. I remember, at one meeting, arranging emergency shelter for one of the older women in our group. Fortunately, I knew how to access the local refuge because I worked as a volunteer there. That day was the first time this woman had ever talked of her twenty-five years of torture at the hands of her live-in son.

During our three years together, we also read many books and newspaper articles and welcomed many guest speakers. We all made major changes in our lives. Wanting to work more intensively with immigrant women, I returned to full-time employment and, not long after, moved away. While these changes forced me to leave the group, I have never severed emotional connections with that extraordinary group of very ordinary women. I can never hear the term "suburban housewife" without wanting to tell these women's stories.

For my last example, it is late 1991. I am sitting in the attic of the kiosk at the end of the St Kilda pier, for me, an almost sacred spot. Over the years, thanks to times spent here in the company of my journal, much anguish has been dissolved and many inspiring ideas born. I have come here today because I am determined to make some New Year Resolutions I want to keep and this spot has always been a patient midwife. I feel there is something profoundly askew in my life, as if I've lost my inner core, as if my reservoir of spirituality has dried up. I am reluctant to use the word "spirituality" these days – it tends to be riddled with connotations of self-indulgent escapism or a-political romanticism or patriarchal deception – but I can't think of a better word.

It is not that I am looking for a religious group with a pre-packaged set of beliefs and practices, even though I do sometimes envy those who have found something to believe in that comes with meaningful rituals and rhythms in tow. For some, that's football; for others, it's yoga. Nor am I looking for a guru, someone with all the answers. I've long accepted the fact that I could never belong to a congregation or sect or faction. But I am looking for the chance to meet regularly with kindred women spirits. I'm eager to discuss matters of morality, to articulate dreams and to pursue that "Search for Truth", begun so long ago, in an atmosphere of trust and experimentation. Through regular collective mindfulness, I want to return Wisdom (or Sophia by her ancient name) to centre-stage in my life. I feel the need for another women's group coming on.

Now mid-1993, we have been meeting as a group every six weeks for the past eighteen months. We call ourselves "We Who Cannot Be Named" in recognition of our inability to find

a simple name for who we are and why we come together. We have reached the stage where we leave the evening's activities to chance: we might read poetry or relate dreams or analyse symbols or study images. We always share stories. While it is still early days, as with all the women's groups I've been in, a lot of things are going on at the same time. There's a constant interplay between the focus of the night's meeting and the surfacing of those parts of our lives touched by that activity. Life-long, heavy secrets are unburdened; tried and true remedies are offered; new journeys are charted. The circle of life-affirming friendship grows ever more powerful. Making connections between our group life and the rest of our complicated, messy lives is top priority. We are determined to be the strong, wise women we talk about.

All of the above groups, and many others, have been mothers to me. To onlookers, they may not be prominent features in the landscape of my life in which work and other public commitments are far more obvious. For me, however, they are vital currents, underground streams, providing a constant source of life-giving nourishment across the years. It is groups like these ones – along with all the study circles and project committees and working parties – that have made me a feminist. It was all these women who defined and refined "feminism" for me.

Feminism is a word and ethos I associate with wisdom, justice, creativity, activism, compassion and companionship. A word that sings and glows and stirs. It grieves me profoundly when I hear women who call themselves feminists betraying the values these women's groups embodied and lived so powerfully. It leads to nightmares such as the one I had last week. I had witnessed a female senior member of staff bully a woman much her junior. And almost worse, I later heard she'd gone at once to boast and joke about this intimidation to a group of admiring male colleagues. When any woman tells me, "I am a feminist", I wait to see the fruits of her labour before I call her one too.

I regret that my mother's life has not been enriched by feminism. Not that she would want to be called a feminist. Everything in her life has taught her to turn to God the Father for strength and wisdom.

July 2022

"Since coming here..."

I agreed to be project officer for the "Recreational Opportunities Project for Migrant Women" project without really knowing what I'd be doing or why. I have done this many times in my life, trusting in the people who invited me that they see something I don't, yet.

I loved this project. It was both exhilarating and enlightening to meet so many women from so many different life backgrounds who were mostly out of sight and out of mind for English-speaking Australians.

In this project, I learnt the importance of sharing in writing what I'd seen and heard and learnt. This habit has served me well in subsequent educational contexts. I always see so much more when I write. It allows me to stand back, reflect and distil. I cherish the insights and patterns I often miss in the busy-ness of practice. It is especially pleasing when there is a publication and audience, as is the case here, beyond the original project group and funding body.

"Since coming here…" (1984)
Migration Action, *Ecumenical Migration Centre Journal*

❧

The names of projects can be quite misleading, even deceptive. Consider, for example, the research action project called "Recreational Opportunities for Migrant Women" (ROMW). What images spring into your mind? What immediate feelings are aroused in you? What reactions, associations and judgments do you find yourself making? Most people, in my experience, react quite negatively, even with hostility, on hearing of the project for the first time. Is this due to the association they have with the word "recreation"? I wonder how many instantly thought of sport. Frequently heard comments are: "Migrant women don't want/ need/have time for recreation", "Recreation! That's a middle-class, Anglo-Australian concept. What's it got to do with working migrant women?" or "How disgusting that such a project be funded when migrant women need other opportunities so much more!"

It is my intention, in this article, to illustrate how one definition and understanding of "Recreational Opportunities for Migrant Women" highlights the finding that migrant women do have "recreational needs" and desire "recreational opportunities". As well, that definition reveals that "recreational opportunities for migrant women" do have relevance and significance far beyond what's conjured up by most conventional interpretations of the word "recreation".

From the very beginning, in order to avoid and overcome the constricting limitations imposed by any orthodox definition of the concept of "recreation" (such as active, sporty, youthful, athletic, outdoor, predominantly male and competition-focussed), the "Recreational Opportunities for Migrant Women" (ROMW) Project gave its own more liberating definition. This definition is: "opportunities for migrant women to re-create themselves and their lives". (An interesting aside, eighteen months into the project, is the extent to which this broader, more positive view of "recreation" has been accepted and adopted beyond the ROMW Project itself). This re-definition enabled the ROMW Project to give its full attention to what migrant women decide is re-creating, transforming and regenerating **for them**. It promised a limitless scope, shaped totally by the women's own perceptions, needs and aspirations, rather than by an externally fixed and imposed framework. So, in a commitment to hear and act upon the women's perceptions, needs and aspirations, where did I, the Project Co-ordinator, begin?

The simple objectives outlined in the original ROMW submission that was successfully funded made beginning easy. These were:

(a) to locate migrant women's groups and

(b) to develop an on-going relationship with six quite distinctly different groups, offering appropriate resources and support where desired, with the aim of understanding and documenting the variety of histories, styles, purposes and dynamics that exist in these groups.

In **Spring Flowers**, a report detailing the first year's work of the ROMW project, there is a full and detailed account of this process, its findings and outcomes. I shall not repeat that here but, rather, concentrate on how, through the process, a rich alternative understanding of "recreation" emerged and evolved. This happened very slowly and was the fruit of hours and hours of listening.

For the first six months or so, that was my primary task: to visit migrant women's groups and to listen to the women speak about what the group meant to them, how and why it had begun, how it had evolved over time and where it was now heading. As I listened, a picture slowly formed of how, and how much, these groups were re-creating migrant women's lives. However, before I elaborate on this, I'd like to offer a little more concrete information on the groups themselves.

Since the ROMW Project began in March, last year (1982), I have contacted or know of at least one hundred and fifty migrant women's groups in Melbourne. Most of these are ethno-specific, that is, the women who come share a common mother language other than English (be that Greek, Italian, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese or one of the languages spoken in Yugoslavia). This language is the principal language spoken in the group. This freedom to speak in the most familiar and comfortable language promotes an obvious sense of feeling at ease, secure, unhampered and uninhibited. Each time I visit a group I am struck by the exuberance and vitality of all the women. But, more of this later.

The groups, which attract women of all ages and backgrounds, meet in many different places: the community room at the local school; a community health centre; an infant welfare centre; a neighbourhood house; the library; the church hall; an ethnic organization. They also meet for many different purposes: to acquire new information and skills; to learn English; to maintain and/or develop crafts; to form a playgroup; as a worker's compensation or work-injury support group; to strengthen old friendships or make new friends.

Most of the groups combine, quite consciously, a mixture of purposes. This is evidenced in a common pattern that has evolved in many of the groups, that of a four-weekly cycle unfolding something like this:

(a) one week, a guest speaker (for example, on health, education, government services or departments, welfare housing)

(b) the next week, a practical activity (maybe learning or practising a new skill, for example, a handcraft or yoga or cooking or sewing or assertiveness)

(c) the week after, a film or video in the mother tongue, followed by a discussion and

(d) the fourth week, an excursion to a place of interest, or most popular of all, a picnic.

(The reason for the popularity of picnics, I sense, is its re-creation of something cherished and familiar from the women's country of origin, something which I'll come back to a little further on).

This pattern, offering such a diversity of topics, interests and activities, allows boundless combinations and possibilities. The result is that the group, at one and the same time, is recognizing and responding to a wide range of women's needs, weaving, social, recreational, educational, spiritual, psychological and physical strands into one rich fabric. Even groups that appear to have one specific purpose or a unilateral focus (say, learning English) accommodate and enable (often, it seems, quite unconsciously) some or all of the abovementioned functional strands as well. It is indeed the rare exception that the women will arrive for a particular structured activity (say, an English lesson) and leave promptly afterwards. The norm is for the women to arrive well beforehand and to stay long after the "formalities" are over. It is in these unstructured moments that the often invisible, but profoundly significant multi-functional threads that characterize the women's groups are woven: news is swapped; reward and joys are shared; questions are asked and answered; suggestions are offered; contacts and networks are exchanged; arrangements and strategies are planned; assistance is volunteered. The overt purpose of the group or the reason why the women initially gathered together, for example, to learn to drive or to socialize with women from a common cultural background, may vary; the rich fabric of the groups, that many-stranded texture, is common to all.

This, then, brings me back to how I see these groups re-creating migrant women's lives. This, naturally, raises the question of how "re-creating" is understood and measured. From what the women have told me, and from what I've observed, some of the factors that indicate a sense of renewal, of personal growth and transformation, include: greater self-confidence; taking more initiative; increased participation, be that in family matters or in the community at large; taking more responsibility in family decisions; improved health; decreasing use of drugs; greater and easier use of English; willingness to take risks and to try something new.

In **Spring Flowers** there is considerable oral evidence that all the women coming to these groups have experienced at least one (usually more) of these positive changes. Comments such as: "I'd suffered insomnia for years, as well as numerous recurrent aches and pains before coming here. Now the pains have gone and I sleep at nights" or "I now do the shopping and go to the doctor's on my own" or "Without this group, I wouldn't have gone for my driving test" or "I used to be on twenty-eight tablets a day and now I don't take any" or "Since coming here, I have started communicating, even singing and dancing again" or "I'm now too busy to watch

T.V. during the day: I've real friends instead of make-believe ones" are echoed time and time again. And, as to be expected, they all mentioned release from the spectre of isolation. When asked about the price of migration, most women ranked "being isolated from others" as one of the highest costs. This isolation may take the form of not being able to communicate with those in their immediate vicinity, be that at home or in the workplace, or may mean being physically distanced from loved ones whether those loved ones are still in the country of origin, migrants somewhere else, or living on the other side of Melbourne. They talk of this "being isolated" as a slow-torture death sentence, the consequences of which (deep depression, hypertension, severe ill-health, personal disintegration, family and marital discord) are life-destroying.

For all of the women with whom I spoke, finding a women's group is a lifeline: it means not only a reprieve from the sentence of isolation and a halting of the cancerous dis-ease engendered by isolation, but is a major turning point, the beginning of a move towards personal renewal and wholesomeness. It is also a move towards regaining and restoring something that was lost, though rarely named or recognized, in the disturbance caused by migration. It is, in fact, a re-creation of a women's culture which, in the country of origin, though essentially invisible and unacknowledged, had been a major source of strength, nourishment and fulfilment. These groups provide a welcome rendezvous with something familiar and cherished, the loss of which has been a source of painful suffering. It re-connects them to a vibrant women's culture. If migration is akin to dying – and I am constantly reminded of one expression, "the living dead", a term one Greek woman told me relatives in her homeland use to describe those who've migrated here – then finding a women's group that recreates the spirit, the relationships, of a women's culture left behind is akin to re-birth.

What, then, are the characteristics of this women's culture? How do the groups replicate this? My answers are the fruits of listening to the hundreds of women I've met in migrant women's groups over the past eighteen months.

When talking of life before migration the women constantly stress the communal way of life that then informed every aspect of their lives. This collective, co-operative life-style, in which daily tasks and activities were regularly and effortlessly shared with a number of other local women, is sorely missed. This collective "being together" was not something artificially contrived (as the groups here must be), or something located in a particular physical spot (a café or the town hall) but something that evolved naturally out of the rhythm of women living near each other who pool their resources, energies and talents in the daily round of Life in all its seasons. The focus of the activities ranged over a wide spectrum. It might be farming or shopping, preparing or preserving food, caring for children or nursing the sick or elderly, making tools and utensils or getting ready for a festivity, or assisting a woman and her family before and after childbirth.

As with the migrant women's groups in Melbourne I have researched, interwoven with these observable and easily identifiable activities, is a wide range of other less obvious, more intangible processes: networking, information-sharing, problem-solving, self- and other-affirming, planning, experimenting, competence- and confidence- building. These processes are the source of individual self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-worth. Once that super-sensitive, finely tuned web of relationships is shattered, which migration does so ruthlessly, and women are scattered and separated from each other, one of the major sources of their well-being – this intricate women's culture – vanishes. The result is that each individual women's spirit loses its principal source of nourishment.

They told me that a man's form of interaction can be replicated more readily as it tends to occur in a specific, physically locatable (and hence relocatable) place, for instance, in cafes and sporting clubs. Not only can men's culture be replicated more easily, but, as well, it is socially and culturally acceptable for men to pursue their social needs and to go out to such places.

Women's interaction, as I've described, is of a different nature and quality, centring on relationships that emerge out of happenings naturally occurring in the daily cycle. This interaction isn't associated with a specified place – the women generally, have no such place – but, rather, is subtly interwoven into all shared activities. The activities are certainly visible and acknowledged for their worth; the women's culture is usually not.

When women migrate, they are expected to continue to perform these same tasks as well as the new ones, such as dehumanizing work in the paid workforce, imposed by migration. However, they now perform the "life tasks" in isolation, cut off by language, by life-style, by the highly privatised design of our cities and the rigours of the "double shift". This isolation means they are cut off from the nourishment that previously accompanied the shared doing of these tasks. Because the "women's culture" dimension goes largely unseen and unvalued, there is little acknowledgement and concern for what women, in migrating, lose and the debilitating pain of that loss. The creation of migrant women's groups is a long-overdue response to that long-neglected need.

However, the mere existence of the groups does not mean they are accessible and available to all women. Migration, and coming to terms with living in an unfamiliar environment, jeopardize many migrant women's participation in these groups. Making a special point of going out to meet with other women, most of whom are (at the outset) strangers feels, at least initially, artificial, contrived and alien to the women themselves. It also raises questions and fears for her family who feel threatened by this previously unknown and unprecedented phenomenon. However, provided the women have the opportunity to sample the group personally, I notice that these attitudes change over time. As the women discover what there is to regain, the group becomes more and more vital in their lives. For the family, and other

non-participants, it comes to be seen and accepted as a pleasant but fairly uneventful weekly outing to do with craft, children or learning English which, because they are socially and culturally acceptable pursuits for women, are tolerated.

At this point, I wish to analyse in a little more depth what I believe the women experience in the groups – and how that revitalises them and their lives.

For me, the most evocative way is to describe a typical visit to one of the groups and share what I perceive and experience there. The group I have in mind is about fifteen women, aged from forty to eighty. They meet once a week, and have been doing so for nearly three years. Many women, for a variety of reasons (illness, moving residence, gaining paid employment, caring for someone sick or injured at home, hospitalization), have come and gone in that time, but always there has been a core of a dozen or so. Most came, and still come, because they had been referred by a professional, be that a social worker, a psychiatrist, a physiotherapist or a General Practitioner. Because many had been diagnosed as suffering from severe psychological and physical stress, most commonly profound depression with its concomitant physical manifestations, they had been sent to the group for "therapy". The day I visited, I was told a few newcomers had just joined the group, and they certainly looked distinctly tentative and withdrawn, the victims of prolonged alienation. However, despite the labels others had given these women, my dominant impression of the occasion was of their spontaneous joy and exuberance.

The whole time I was there I felt transported to another time and place, far removed from the bare bleak room in the midst of a hectic, depersonalizing, compartmentalized and compartmentalizing city. I felt I'd wandered into a small, human-sized village (it could have been in Europe or Asia or the Middle East) where the women were simply going about their daily business – making and sharing food, swapping patterns and recipes, comforting children, jotting down names and references, unobtrusively moving in and out and about. What struck me was how much the women had made the room their very own space. That characterless room pulsed with the beauty of human vitality. There was no doubt that their presence transformed it and each other. What was the essence of this presence? What was the source of the vitality and the exuberance? Most of them, I know, came from and would soon be returning to often miserable, diminishing, crushing life situations. What was so special about this group meeting that invigorated them so? From my conversations and observations, I came to the conclusions listed below.

In this group, and the dozens of others like it, in this milieu, the women feel they are accepted unconditionally. They can **be** totally themselves. This freedom takes a number of forms:
- ❧ They can speak in their own language (so often they feel guilty or scorned or shunned for this)

- They can express their emotions and their affections freely because they know they won't be abused for this (so often this is condemned or ridiculed or exploited or misinterpreted)
- They can experiment safely, trying new ideas or behaviours because they feel so safe (in other circumstances they are fearful of the penalties for deviating from the norm, the expected role)
- They can laugh and cry and others understand why (they don't have to deny or explain or repress)
- They can relax totally, both physically and psychologically. In so many situations, they have to guard how they sit and move and speak, thus feeling tense and "on edge". Their body language says so much. In the group, their movements are flowing, spontaneous and uninhibited
- They can initiate and take charge (they don't have to ask permission or be accountable to a "higher authority")
- They can express and experience their own strength and strengths. They aren't forced to scale down their identities and their contributions. Elsewhere, in order to boost someone else's ego, or to keep the peace, or for fear of reprisals, they often present themselves as weaker or more inadequate or less capable than they are.

This unconditional acceptance results in affirmation of who they are and exactly as they are. I believe this is only possible because it is an all-women's group. In this space, each woman grows to believe she really is worthy of affection, friendship and warmth, and hence, grows to like herself, developing an ever-strengthening sense of self, of self-esteem and self-worth. From this flows a wellspring of energy and self-confidence which allow her to share more and more of herself, her insights, her competence, her skills, her knowledge and her talents. This sharing, in turn, enriches the whole group, who learn not only from what each woman says and does, but from her example and the liveliness of her spirit. The group becomes a means for women to remember and re-own their own selves and their own talents, and then to go on to nurture and develop them further. This is seen and felt in the concentrated, intense learning that occurs, in the energetic free-flow of information, experiences, hints, anecdotes, cautionary tales, gifts and traditional wisdom, not to mention the informal "teaching" of a diverse array of crafts and skills. It seemed to me that day, as it does every time I visit a group, that these women were truly and fully re-creating themselves and their lives.

For further information on any aspect of the "Recreational Opportunities for Migrant Women" Project, please feel free to contact:
Delia Bradshaw
Project Co-Ordinator
"Recreational Opportunities For Migrant Women" Project.

July 2022

A Letter on Feminism

Feminism is at the core of my identity. I'm often asked what it means to me. I have a deep need to name what matters. This was one attempt at a definition prompted by a discussion, in the mid 1980s, when I was a member of the Feminist Learning Network.

It still speaks for me.

A Letter on Feminism (1986)

🌿

27/2/86
Dear Helen,

Your letter arrived yesterday. Thank you for sharing your searchings. Its arrival prompted me to make some jottings.   Please feel free to share them with our friends in the Feminist Learning Network if you feel that's desirable or useful. I'm sure, like you, I'll keep adding and reshaping for a lifetime… or more.

For me, **feminism** is:
- realising that I've only been told half the story, half the Truth, which means I've been told the Untruth…
- wondering what of what I've been told can be trusted anymore…
- the anger and feelings of being cheated that accompany this dawning…
- revisiting all my learnings and understandings with the fervent desire to re-discover and re-instate women where previously they have been absent, silent, invisible, misrepresented, ridiculed, scorned and/or belittled…
- discovering and enjoying the totally new sense of self, of my own history and of human history that flows from this re-visiting…
- rejoicing in how much I love women, and being with women, how beautiful, thoughtful, creative, wise and multi-talented I find them…
- pledging to support, empower and pay tribute to women wherever, whenever, however I can…
- using/creating a new language that includes, names and acknowledges women…
- the liberating joy of escaping the constricting enclosures of so-called Knowledge as defined by elitist/patriarchal academics…
- tapping the age-old folklore and wisdom that has been passed on by women, orally, communally, often underground, mostly unseen/unheard/unvalued, and which is always alive when women are together…
- the joyous reunion of heart, head and hand…
- the blissful relief in no longer having to separate heart, head and hand, in no longer having to rudely subdue the heart and hand to the head…

- a language that plays, roves, dances and explores, a language that is an open door rather than a position reached, is a passport to a journey of continuous, fluid, lifelong learning rather than a tool for inculcating fixed, pre-determined instruction…
- the reconciling within me of ambivalent feelings and distorted perceptions I'd inherited about Human Nature and Mother Nature being competitive enemies, and the subsequent emergence of the belief that the fundamental life spirit is a maker of beauty, a healer of wounds and a lover of harmony…
- the birth of a vision in which I see people affirming Mother Nature as the source of all vitality.

I leave you with this. I feel so inspired (as in "filled with spirit") by the paths along which I have been taken.

With love,

Delia.

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

CAE's Adult Literacy And Basic Education
Framework and Program

Delia Bradshaw
Adult Basic Education and Literacy Co-ordinator
Access Department
CAE

November, 1990

July 2022

The Land of Words

*I was delighted by this invitation out of the blue.
I was doubtful I was qualified. I'm glad I accepted.
I learnt the importance of reviewing past experiences
through new lenses.*

*Later work in Gippsland and Western Victoria many
years later reinforced the observations and conclusions
I shared here in 1990.*

The Land of Words: Women's Country (1990)

NETWORK, *Rural Women's Network Newsletter*

I have read quite a number of articles and books about women and literacy, about the value of women only classes, about the significance of women centred curriculum and about the importance of women focussed learning materials.

All of these accounts make the same point: because there is a distinctive women's culture, the quality of women's learning is dependent upon the extent to which learning opportunities foster language, topics and a milieu that spring from the very heart of that culture. It is a culture that embraces cooperation and connectedness and compassion.

However, when asked to write this article, I didn't want to give a second hand account of women and literacy by reporting on others' work and findings. Not only did I want to give a first-hand account but I also wanted to say something that might strike a chord with rural women.

Acutely conscious of my lack of contact with the country, I found myself in something of a dilemma. Was there anything at all I could possibly say to justify being included in a newsletter for rural women?

And then I remembered three stories that gave me heart.

The first story takes place nearly twenty five years ago.

The Education Department had decided that my first year of teaching was to be spent in South Gippsland. My fondest memories of that time are of the girls in my Form Two English class, lively and self-confident youngsters who taught me far more than I taught them. No matter what language activity I suggested, they leapt at it with glee, creating worlds of words far beyond my most exaggerated imaginings.

They wrote poems, modern fairy stories, song lyrics, plays, serious essays and a group novel. They couldn't hear and read and say and write enough: they were such powerful communicators.

It didn't occur to me then to seek for the source of their linguistic riches, nor to wonder why the boys were so tongue tied and inarticulate in comparison. I simply revelled in their abundance and my good fortune.

The second story is set in the Otway Ranges in south western rural Victoria a few years later.

It's about a group of farming women who met every month for a book discussion group.

One of my in-laws was group secretary, so I'd often see her packing or unpacking books or overhear her organizing the details of the next meeting.

I'd never realized before what a lifeline such groups are for country women. The group meant that the women were sure of at least one night a month out, one night when, as well as keeping abreast of ideas in the wider world, they could talk women's talk.

I don't know about other country groups but this one had always been an all-women's group. Coming together with the other women, sharing personal news and histories with soul-mates, was important for "keeping the old brain cells ticking over".

Certainly, they took the book discussions seriously but this part of the meeting never proceeded until they had put into words the ebb and flow of the past month, using language to make sense of shifting thoughts and feelings.

Not only did talking, listening, reading and thinking save many an individual woman from going crazy, but they also shaped a community from what might otherwise have been a collection of separate, isolated farms barely in touch with each other.

The community newsletter was born there.

The third story is from a much more recent time when I visited a group of adult literacy tutors in a town on the Murray River.

Once again it's the women I remember. In fact, no men were tutors in that town at that time.

Some of the women had travelled many hours to be at the workshop. They wanted to come, they said, because, knowing how much books meant to them, they couldn't bear the thought of anyone being unable to read and write. They couldn't imagine how anyone could survive, especially in the country, without the freedom to roam and range that books bestowed.

Mind you, they said that their husbands hardly read at all, except articles or pamphlets to do with agricultural matters.

It was reading, working with their adult students and meeting with the other tutors that fortified them in the struggle to make ends meet, in the struggle to find some meaning in the daily grind.

These are familiar stories, I know. I'm sure the pattern is much the same in many other parts of the world.

I tell them simply to restate and reinforce a few home truths, to remind us of what we women all share in common:

- women love communicating
- women have a gift for reading between the lines
- women are good with words.

This newsletter is testimony to the power of rural women's words.

Maybe the time has come for an even fuller story of rural women and literacy in Victoria, of how women and the word and the land intertwine.

1985 – 1993: Working at the Council of Adult Education (CAE)

*By the late 1980s, I was working at the CAE where
I was manager of Adult Literacy and Basic Education
programs, later renamed Return to Study.
The next five pieces written by me, and offering different
viewpoints, come from that time.*

*I am a great believer in articulating purposes and
values, that is, the spirit that guides our work.
In the first four pieces, I speak as a "manager".
In the fifth, I speak as "a teacher".*

Piece 1: Reading the World in Action

This declaration presents, verbally and visually, the goals of the program. It was originally written as a succinct manifesto for all who worked there, each tutor being given a personal copy.

Piece 2: Seasoning for Quality

This account details a lengthy process of program self-evaluation, taking the form of a research action project including tutors, administrative staff and students. I was invited to document our process for a national publication illustrating good practice in adult literacy and basic education.

I am a keen fan of evaluation, focussing on the word "value" embedded there as a way of identifying what is valuable and what could be better.

Piece 3: Making Connections

This booklet was written as a guide book for our adult education community, both at CAE and beyond.

It is a medley of philosophical aspirations, inspiring quotes (in italics), comprehensive plans, program demographics, statistics and bureauspeak. It was a deliberate attempt to resist conforming to one voice or genre. That said, the shift in voice can be confusing at times.

Each worker in the ALBE program at CAE was given a copy; this guide was often a focus in professional development activities.

Piece 4: For the Common Good

This article is a further attempt, a few years later, to articulate the vision of our work for a wider audience. It was commissioned by a national professional development publication for adult and workplace literacy teachers.

I believe strongly in developing a shared vision lived in daily practices. This piece details different phases of an in-house professional development process, to quote myself, "constructing a collective adult basic education ethos grounded in a vision informed by principles of social justice".

Piece 5: From Fill-ins to Foundations: Changing Views of Literacy

I love this piece.

This sustained pedagogical meditation was originally written as an essay for an "Adult Literacy Teaching" course held at Western Metropolitan College of TAFE, Footscray.

At the time, I was manager of CAE's Adult Literacy and Basic Education program where I always taught a class. So, this time I am speaking as a teacher, for myself. I relished the opportunity to undertake some disciplined thinking to unearth the foundations (the values and priorities) in my teaching practices, to look from different angles and speak in different voices.

Several voices can be heard here – the journal writer (in italics), the academic commentator and the curriculum designer. Each differs in tone and purpose, the diversity of genres allowing me to examine my work from multiple perspectives. Taken together, they capture a moment in time, a multi-faceted portrait blending theory and practice, spirit and praxis.

A few years later, when encouraged to do so, I agreed to have it published in a statewide curriculum support document.

Once again, it is evident I am drawn to identifying competing discourses, evaluating the virtues and limitations of each.

Reading the World in Action (1988/1990)

Originally written at the Council of Adult Education, Melbourne
October 1988
Later incorporated into **Seasoning for Quality** *in 1990 in*
Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Education: No. 7,
DEETYA Publication

The Adult Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL) program at CAE is committed to providing opportunities, encouragement and desired successful outcomes for adults who have been deprived the opportunities to develop an adequate personal and social basic education. Its programs are designed to meet the needs of people who have experienced particular barriers to achieving basic education goals. The programs are specifically designed to enable students to cross educational barriers to employment, further studies, vocational training and retraining, and increased participation with broader concerns of citizenship or community affairs.

The ABEL program, therefore, has as its primary work a commitment to assisting students to think creatively and critically about their place in society by coming to understand the political, social, economic and cultural environments in which they live. To achieve this, it is committed to giving students access to knowledge necessary for living and working in contemporary society, as well as skills and abilities to apply that knowledge and to acquire further knowledge. Naturally that new knowledge, and those new skills and abilities, will take into account and connect with students' prior knowledge, skills and abilities.

We came up with a visual representation of how the two educational goals, *knowledge* and *skills and abilities*, interweave.
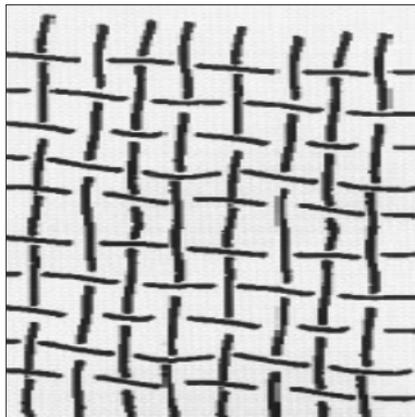
Knowledge

- Learning how to interpret and respond critically to language and other media
- Learning about sophisticated political and social processes
- Learning about the implications of technological developments
- Learning to develop a global view of the world
- Learning how to enhance personal health, well-being and self-esteem
- Learning how to make a living
- Learning how to create a compassionate, humane and just world
- Learning how the past is linked to, and shapes, the present and future
- Learning how to demystify knowledge
- Learning how to evaluate their own achievements.

Skills and Abilities

- Acquiring basic communication and conceptual skills
- Seeing and displaying the connections between reading, writing, listening speaking, computing and conceptualizing
- Reading, writing and calculating for a variety of purposes
- Taking control over their own learning contents and processes
- Showing increased initiative and independence
- Attempting more, experimenting and taking risks
- Being familiar with the role of technological tools
- Knowing how to plan life and educational goals, and how to measure success
- Knowing where to go for help and information
- Learning how to learn and how to unlearn.

To ensure these two basic educational goals are achieved, the ABEL program places great emphasis on cultivating **a learning environment** for students which:

- Centres on individuals' strengths, needs and expectations
- Fosters equality and co-operation and discourages competitiveness
- Values, reinforces and extends the culture and experience of learners
- Strengthens multiculturalism, opposing dehumanising "isms" such as sexism, racism, classism and ageism
- Ensures students experience success regularly and feel safe about taking risks.

The ABEL program believes that it is a combination of these educational goals and this learning environment which provides the essential education needed for adults to better manage their lives and make a more constructive contribution to their community. In other words, it is "reading the world as well as the word" in action.

Prepared by Delia Bradshaw, Council of Adult Education, October 1988, as a preliminary step for a comprehensive process of program self-evaluation.

Seasoning for Quality (1990)

Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Education: No. 7,

DEETYA Publication

It is over a year now since a comprehensive process of self-evaluation was set in motion within the Adult Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL) program at the Council of Adult Education, Melbourne. A process was chosen that centred on recording the shared perceptions, reflections and judgments of the students, tutors and administrative support staff in the program, in the belief that naming this collective experience is the ideal springboard for action.

In the first phase, between November '88 and February '89 there was a high degree of concentrated activity.

The first phase

We began by running a series of small meetings called "Sharing Success", in which successful classroom experiences were shared and discussed. Each meeting involved three to five tutors and lasted around two hours.

During these workshops, tutors explained the strategies they used to evaluate the success of an activity, class or course. The tutors showed particular strength in the use of informal methods. They have developed a high degree of skill in using students' comments and observed student behaviour to judge success. Tutors use concrete evidence and feelings as well as more formal methods as a guide.

One signal of success was how tutors felt about what happened. Descriptions like "satisfied" and "gut feeling" were used to describe their reactions.

Other evidenced was obtained through tutors' awareness of student behaviour. Reported behaviours included:
- students' comments on what they do in sessions, for example – "It was good fun", "… too hard"
- students recognising their own progress with statements like – "I have learnt…", "I have a lot more confidence now"
- students asking for more
- students reaching specific goals, for example – "I've passed…test" or "I've been promoted" or "I can read this"

- students doing voluntary study at home
- students showing that they have thought about or applied what they have learned in the sessions – for example, they bring something the following week, apply learning in their own lives, use information to build or take the next step
- parents or friends of students recognising progress.

Observed behaviours included:
- students' body language indicating their involvement or enjoyment and confidence, for example, smiling, intent expressions, assertive stance
- students' improved skills, attitudes, enthusiasm, confidence and competence
- students' behaviour as members of a group, for example, people interacting, sharing, persevering
- students' attendance – they keep coming, come early, hang about, drop out and return
- students' written or oral productions.

Some tutors described more formal methods of evaluation such as asking students for written feedback at the end of a session or series of sessions. Another was using a journal to record reflections and students' comments. The importance of remembering that each student has individual goals was expressed. It was also mentioned that it is easier to evaluate success if students have precise goals which are reviewed regularly.

Our next major steps in the first phase of our self-evaluation process were:
- running a larger workshop called "Evaluating Success" with over a dozen tutors in which the content and style of the next stages of the evaluation process were shaped
- trialling and revising the two-part student survey, one to be completed by tutors and the other to be completed by students in class
- conducting the student survey in class
- holding one-to-one end-of-year meetings between the ABEL Co-ordinator and each tutor, in which lessons learnt from 1988 and plans for 1989 were discussed
- holding a meeting of ABEL administrative support staff to evaluate their roles
- producing a report called **Evaluating Success** which described the outcomes, findings, implications and questions arising out of the self-evaluation process that occurred in late 1988. This report highlighted "Recommendations for Change" for 1989 and beyond.

The second phase

The next phase, from March 1989, is still ongoing.

This has involved translating into action the recommendations (in italics below) from the **Evaluating Success** report produced in the first phase. Our progress to date (November 1989) can be found following each recommendation.

Policy (Recommendation 1)

That the CAE Adult Basic Education and Literacy program develop clear policies on:
- *student target groups*
- *student placement in class*
- *length of stay in program.*

A statement on student target groups and placement in class has been prepared as the result of lengthy consultations and a process of drafting and re-drafting. The question of "length of stay in program" will be our next concern.

Student support (Recommendation 2)

That the range of alternatives for employment and further studies be made more available to students via:
- *class activities*
- *liaison with Student Counsellor and Information and Advice Service*
- *information on student outcomes of previous years.*

That a study be undertaken to document a sample of student outcomes in the last two years.

That some coordinated part-time study options for Adult Basic Education and Literacy students be trialled.

Tutor meetings on "Career Planning as a Classroom Activity" have been held.

A collection of oral histories called **Hear us! Our Lives, Our Learning** is being prepared. In this, students describe the significance to them of the ABEL program. This collection will be the basis for a curriculum workshop to produce classroom materials.

A more integrated, coordinated 12-hour program will be offered to literacy students in 1990.

Tutor support (Recommendation 3)

That professional development be provided for tutors through:
- *negotiating curriculum goals, activities and homework*
- *developing on-going evaluation methods*
- *extending the repertoire of methods suited to mixed groups*
- *implementing Integration policy*
- *clarifying their role as educational counsellor.*

That the sessional nature of tutor employment be reviewed, and the implications of fractional employment be investigated.

Meetings have been held on all these curriculum topics, with special emphasis given to the matter of implementing integration A special meeting was called to discuss the issues and questions surrounding the concepts of "sessional" and "permanent" fractional employment. A series of meetings on language development will be held in 1990 as a special initiative for ILY, International Literacy Year.

Tutors have, for the first time, provided written course descriptions which have been collected together into a 50-page program guide called **Our ABEL Work.**

The termly in-house professional journal, **Abel Cable**, and the ABEL coordinator's monthly bulletin, **Becoming Attuned**, both gave high priority to linking wider social issues and events to classroom activities. Three public displays of students' work around the topical issues of International Women's Day, World Conservation Day and International Literacy Year were organised.

The popular "Sharing Success" meetings, with tutors in small groups discussing their successes, are now held twice yearly.

Curriculum and resources (Recommendation 4)

That the Adult Basic Education and Literacy program develop curriculum on current social issues (e.g. conservation) that is suitable for the full range of Adult Basic Education and Literacy students.

That the Adult Basic Education and Literacy program trial more diversity in the lengths, times and topics of courses covered.

ABEL tutors are participating in a state-wide curriculum development project producing ABEL material for small groups. New classes have been introduced (e.g. Earth Studies for Literacy Students) as have new class lengths and times (e.g. 4th-term English and Maths for Further Studies classes as a complement to the year-long courses; a series of weekend workshops on Maths Gaps).

The CAE and Prahran TAFE College are jointly managing a project that is investigating the possibility of developing a structured course for adults who wish to undertake a fully accredited full-time Adult Basic Education program.

Further research (Recommendation 5)

That student data administrative systems be reviewed re:
- *information gathered: what, how and when*
- *storage and retrieval systems.*

That a series of in-depth student case studies be undertaken that provides a comprehensive picture of the Adult Basic Education and Literacy program in terms of:

- *expectation and goals, both stated and unstated*
- *perceptions of learning*
- *achievements*
- *frustrations*
- *assessment of pathways on leaving the CAE Adult Basic Education and Literacy program – to be used as a basis of evaluating its effectiveness.*

Students enrolment forms are being re-organised and student records computerised. The preliminary oral history project described under "Student Support" above is the precursor to a fuller study on student pathways.

Making Connections (1990)

Raison d'etre, Principles and Issues for

CAE's Adult Literacy And Basic Education Framework and Program

CAE Publication

If democracy isn't to concede decisions on such issues as nuclear disarmament or the greenhouse effect to the experts and the politicians, we need citizens who have critical reading skills.
Literacy: Let's Get On With The Job, ACAL

In the latter half of this century, when economic, technological, political and social change prompt crisis in our personal existence, thinking critically is a matter of sheer survival.
Developing Critical Thinkers, Stephen. D. Brookfield, Joint Pubs, US/UK, 1987, 1989

▲RAISON D'ETRE OF OUR WORK

The primary responsibility of CAE's Adult Literacy and Basic Education program is to create and sustain a learning environment in which the development of creative, critical and connected thinking is at the core of developing literacy.

Critical thinking is important because, without the capacity to think and act critically
- *we would never move beyond those assumptions we assimilated uncritically in childhood*
- *we would believe totally in the authority figures we encountered in our early lives*
- *we would make no attempt to change social structures (sexist, racist, classist, militarist) or to press for collective social action.*

The task of the teacher of adults is to help learners to realize that the bodies of knowledge, accepted truths, commonly held values, and customary behaviours comprising their worlds are contextually and culturally constructed….As teachers, we are charged with not always accepting definitions of felt needs as our operating criteria. We are also charged with the imperative of assisting adults to contemplate alternatives, to come to see the world as malleable, to be critically reflective, and to perceive themselves as pro-active beings.
Developing Critical Thinkers, Stephen. D. Brookfield, Joint Pubs, US/UK, 1987, 1989

▲EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES
THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

The ever-evolving curriculum is grounded in the belief of the fundamental importance of students learning to:
- interpret and respond critically to language and other media
- see and display the connections between reading, writing, listening, speaking,

computing and conceptualizing
- read, write, think and compute for a variety of purposes
- understand more about the learning process
- participate in planning and evaluating their own learning contexts and processes
- demystify the alienating aspects of knowledge
- develop a global view of the world
- participate in creating a more compassionate, humane and just world
- analyse political and social processes
- develop a critique of the role and implications of scientific and technological tools and developments
- see how the past is linked to, and shapes, the present and future
- plan educational goals, and to define and measure educational success
- practise increased involvement, initiative and independence, including the key factor of taking risks
- in other words, TO BECOME CREATIVE, CRITICAL THINKERS, in the process of deepening, diversifying, strengthening and integrating their literacy repertoire.

One of the most disturbing results of this survey was that it revealed that approximately 70 per cent of the sample were unable to get at the ideas behind what they were reading. Effective participation in a democracy depends on the ability of the population to think critically, to understand the issues they are being asked to vote about. We must not assume that critical reading and thinking skills must be reserved for ……… advanced classes.

p. 49 **No Single Measure**, Rosie Wickert, DEET, 1989

Adult education is purposive action, its purpose being to prepare individuals to act upon their environment, to transform it and make life more humane for themselves and for others. Like all purposive action, it is a calculus of ideology (ends) and technology (means).

World Trends And Issues In Adult Education, H.D.Bhola, UNESCO, 1989

▲OBJECTIVES THAT WILL GUIDE OUR WORK INTO 1991

At this historical point in time, the most important focus for the ABEL program is to:

- work, in conjunction with other providers, towards a <u>co-operatively designed regional plan</u> based on identifying and inter-connecting the unique characteristics and resources of each individual program concerned, the aim being to more effectively meet the diverse educational, personal, social and vocational aspirations of ABEL students in the Central Metropolitan Region and beyond (Objective One)
- build on CAE's comprehensive multi-disciplinary curriculum framework by providing an <u>integrated program</u> that allows more intensive and extensive study opportunities (Objective Two)
- give special priority to adults with basic education goals related to further study and/or

employment (Objective Three)

- ✌ make sure all ABEL staff, particularly tutors, are familiar with key ABEL policy and curriculum developments in recognition of their key role in realizing the program's educational ethos and outcomes for students (Objective Four)
- ✌ diversify monitoring processes to ensure that the program achieves both CAE and government objectives and priorities whilst simultaneously incorporating the finest educational thinking and practice (Objective Five).

▲STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO MEET OUR OBJECTIVES

The main steps to take in achieving our objectives are:

1. To prepare a document on our plans for 1991 that will be informed and shaped as a result of consultations with relevant (central and regional) DFE, ALBE and CAE workers (Objective One)
2. To design a timetable that incorporates the following new elements:
   - ✌ daytime Basic Education and Literacy classes that assume a minimum of 4 hours student contact, with scope for the widest range of possible subject clusters
   - ✌ daytime Literacy classes that integrate literacy and numeracy, also assuming a minimum of 4 hours student contact
   - ✌ night classes that are designed to focus primarily on employment and study goals (Objectives Two and Three)
3. To inform relevant agencies (e.g. VALBEC, Commonwealth Employment Service) of our 1991 program role and priorities (Objective One)
4. To circulate Plain English publicity that outlines clearly the student population for whom the program is most beneficial i.e. daytime students who are prepared to commit a minimum of 4 hours attendance and night students with definite employment and study goals (Objective Three)
5. To streamline our student referral system so that students know which of the diverse ABEL program alternatives in Melbourne (or beyond) best suits their purposes (Objective One)
6. To provide an enrolment and student counselling system that ensures appropriate placement and articulation (Objectives One, Two and Three)
7. To maintain detailed up-to-date student data via a custom-designed databases, application forms, class rolls, tutor reports, individual student record cards and student portfolios (Objective Five)
8. To continue to diversify tutor support, especially via meetings, with an emphasis on circulating the latest news on ABEL policy developments, and in particular, curriculum matters (Objective Four)

9. To organize ABEL administrative staff team meetings at least once a term to plan and

monitor program activities and initiatives (Objectives Four and Five)

10. To continue to expand our repertoire of evaluation practices involving administrative staff, tutors, students and independent observers to ensure that conscious, on-going evaluation permeates all our practice (Objective Five)

11. To continue to strengthen our alliances with DFE, VALBEC, regional and other ALBE workers by regular participation in networking, planning meetings and other joint activities (Objective One)

12. To implement innovative projects that keep us on the pioneering edge of ALBE educational developments (Objective Five).

From the perspective of the agencies providing literacy programs, an implication that emerged before the research began is that program aims need to be more clearly enunciated – and expectations and outcomes offer two important vehicles for expressing program aims.
p. 72 **Outcomes Of Adult Literacy Programs,** Brennan, Clark, Dymock, DEET, 1989

▲PERFORMANCE INDICATORS THAT WILL DEMONSTRATE OUR SUCCESS

Demonstrable signs of a high-quality educational program will be:

1. Student awareness of their own learning processes and progress
2. Students' achievement of stated goals, and the defining and setting of new ones
3. Students moving on, for example, to employment and/or further study
4. Student participation in classroom, community and other activities
5. Concrete examples of increased intellectual and social competence as exemplified in students' portfolios
6. Documented programs and class goals and outcomes as recorded in tutors' workbooks and departmental records
7. Program modifications and initiatives arising out of accurately kept and maintained student data and records
8. Tutor interest in a variety of regular, relevant, thoughtful tutor support activities
9. Tutor contribution to the ever-evolving shape of the ABEL program
10. CAE ABEL staff participation in local, regional, statewide and national ALBE activities
11. Significant project innovations that chart new territory or throw fresh light on familiar ground.

Effective responses to the challenges facing the field will require effective leadership from a variety of sources. Educational leadership is an elusive quality which may manifest itself in many ways, but it is people who must provide this essential leadership.

This project has revealed that educational leaders on whom workers can model themselves and their practice

are needed to:

- *help workers develop their skills and ideas;*
- *challenge assumptions and point to new possibilities;*
- *work with staff as action researchers;*
- *stimulate new ideas, remind workers of old ones and show workers the current ones;*
- *help workers to effectively document and evaluate their programs;*
- *read what workers have written and offer expansive and clarifying feedback;*
- *pass on articles and references;*
- *train workers to be more effective tutors, teachers and teacher-researchers;*
- *help workers make the connection between theory and practice;*
- *encourage workers to "have-a-go" and give moral and practical support;*
- *bolster their networks and explain what is going on elsewhere;*
- *act as advocates for workers when necessary;*
- *develop strategic policy and plans and brief workers on government (and non-government) policies and priorities; and*
- *coordinate what workers do with other government departments and non-government agencies.*

pp. 141-142 **Adult Literacy And Basic Education Into The 1990's**, VOL.2, Victorian Ministry of Education, (DFE), 1989

▲1991 ABEL PROGRAM: SOME CONSIDERATIONS
A BRIEF PREAMBLE

The **basic question** informing this whole document must be: "Given the $125,000 allocated to this program, what is the most ethically and educationally responsible way of spending it? In other words, which (ABEL) student aspirations can CAE best meet?"

The answer that emerged grew out of a rigorous consideration of the following factors:
- government policies and legislation
- CAE's current (and potential) ABEL student population
- educational issues and program options
- industrial concerns
- regional co-operation
- CAE's distinctive features
- budget constraints.

It is important to elaborate a little on each.

Government policies

With government funding comes the responsibility to show how taxpayers' money has been spent, the responsibility to show that the funds have been well and effectively spent, and the

responsibility to show that government policies and priorities have been honoured.

The Victorian Government in 1988-89 launched a major adult literacy and basic education initiative based on principles to do with both social justice and economic development. It, like many other Australian reports before and since (Wickert; Hartley; Dymock), documented how inadequate literacy skills hamper large numbers of adults from full participation in the community, narrow their chances of pursuing further studies and limit their scope in gaining employment or moving beyond the areas of so-called "unskilled" or "semi-skilled" occupations.

Victorian and Australian government policies (**Victorian Social Justice Strategy**, **Victoria – the next Decade**, **Industry Training in Australia: the Need for Change**) stress the need for substantially higher rates of participation in education and training at all levels if the aims of award restructuring and economic revitalization are to be achieved, and if all Victorians and Australians are to share in the benefits of this.

Meeting tomorrow's needs

The issue facing all adult basic education programs is the acquisition by students of skills and knowledge sufficient to meet the demands of this complex society. It is a society of continuous change. A focus on the teaching of literacy, as it is traditionally understood, will be inadequate to meet the demands of this society. Even though an individual class may be concerned with immediate requirements of students, the adult basic education program as a whole should also attempt to satisfy the demands of society as a whole by providing pathways which lead to further opportunities in education and employment.
p. 98 **Adult Literacy And Basic Education Into The 1990's**, VOL.2, Victorian Ministry of Education, (DFE), 1989

CAE'S current (and potential) ABEL student population

The ABEL program combines both the Adult Literacy and the Adult Basic Education programs. The Literacy program is designed for adult students at the earliest stages of reading, writing and mathematics. The Basic Education program is designed for adult students at a pre-VCE stage in language, mathematics and general knowledge.

The ABEL program numbers approximately 1000 enrolments per year, providing classes for students from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a wide variety of aspirations. The spectrum of aspirations ranges from those wanting "something to do" and "somewhere to go" through to those wanting to "go back to school" or "catch up", to those with very focussed study or employment goals. Some come for two hours a week, a sizeable number for four or six hours a week, a tiny minority for more.

A Thumbnail sketch of the 1990 Adult Basic Education
student population

Total Number	465 students			Percentage
Gender	314 women and 151 men			
Age	52 students	15—25 years	(27F/25M)	11.18%
	184 students	25—40 years	(102F/82M)	39.56%
	104 students	40—55 years	(83F/21M)	22.36%
	88 students	55+	(69F/19M)	18.92%
	37 students	unknown	(20F/17M)	7.9%
Time	330 students in 21 daytime classes			
	135 students in 9 evening classes			
Subject Choice	50% of the daytime population is enrolled in 2 or more classes			

A Thumbnail sketch of the 1990 Adult Literacy
student population

Total Number	124 students			Percentage
Gender	55 women and 69 men			
Age	35 students	15—25 years	(13F/22M)	28.22%
	54 students	25—40 years	(26F/28M)	43.54%
	26 students	40—55 years	(10F/16M)	20.96%
	4 students	55+	(3F/1M)	3.2%
	5 students	unknown	(4F/1M)	4.03%
Time	73 students in the daytime classes (note 10-hour part-time literacy students)			
	57 students in 7 evening classes			
Subject Choice	50% of the daytime population is enrolled in 2 or more classes			

To date, for good historical reasons, CAE has tried to be "all things to all people", promising to meet personal and social needs as well as educational and vocational ones. Given the range of ALBE alternatives (each with its own distinctive ethos) that now exists, the time is ripe for providers to work co-operatively, to minimize duplication, to stop spreading themselves thinly, to consolidate their strengths, to recognise each other's specialties, and to complement each

other's work by referring students to the program that best meets their unique mix of needs and aspirations.

It is apparent that students enrol in adult basic education classes for a wide range of reasons. To match the needs of students and the expectations of government, no single mechanism or program type is ever likely to be suitable. Nor, on the other hand, can any one type of program cater for all the needs of the adults seeking tuition. The Division of Further Education is committed to offering a diverse range of programs but in a context where this can be shown clearly to open up pathways to further study and employment for students and to provide them with new learning experiences.

pp. *73-74* **Adult Literacy And Basic Education Into The 1990's**, VOL.2, Victorian Ministry of Education, (DFE), 1989

The more each ALBE program can articulate and publicize what "it's best at doing", the more actual and potential ALBE students will benefit. Let us consider what CAE is "good at doing", what is its most fitting contribution to the regional tapestry.

Because CAE has a large, multi-disciplinary ABEL program and because there are accessible pathways from literacy to VCE within the same institution, it is especially attractive to the increasing number of students seeking more intensive ("more time") and extensive ("more subjects") study opportunities. Because small providers cannot offer the choices and diversity, CAE is well placed to make a feature of its distinctive virtues.

As well, thanks again to its size, CAE can offer specialized ABEL subjects (English for Employment, English for Further Studies) and is in a strong position to respond to the other noticeable trend, i.e. students (either self- or employer- referred) looking for general basic education that is the necessary foundation for all employment activities and /or vocational training.

It seems appropriate and timely then for CAE to give special priority to students with further study and employment goals, and to refer students who place more emphasis on personal and social goals to ALBE programs which are organized around these priorities.

This is not to say that students have to state their goals in terms of very specific intentions (e.g. heading for a particular course of study or requesting occupation-specific classes) but it does mean, if they are to benefit most from the ABEL program, that they see themselves primarily as students returning to study, with educational goals and progress as their top priority.

Most programs try to attract adults from a wide variety of cultural and educational backgrounds. Where this succeeds, it has the virtue of introducing into a given program a rich mix of adult experience. However, there may be a problem in energy and resources being dissipated by trying to satisfy too many needs in the one setting.

Recommendation

It is recommended that providers clearly describe for whom a course is suited and likely student outcomes.

This type of specialisation will make it important for regions to develop a structured referral system among providers. If one program is not suitable, then a student should be helped to make contact with another appropriate program.

Regional programs must show evidence of a variety of provision.

pp. 89-90 **Adult Literacy And Basic Education Into The 1990's**, VOL.2, Victorian Ministry of Education, (DFE), 1989

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The educational limitations of a once-a-week two-hour class have long been acknowledged. Most educators would say that a minimum of 6-12 hours a week is necessary for considerable progress in language and conceptual development. This leaves the question, then: how justifiable/economical/wasteful/productive is a program (designed for students at the point of committing themselves to a program of learning) that is based on a 2-hour-a week model?

With this in mind, as well as the goals mentioned above, movement will be made towards encouraging and giving preference to students ready, willing and able to study for a minimum of 4 hours a week, the ultimate aim being to offer more and more opportunities for intensive study. A long overdue innovation will be the introduction of some 4-hour integrated literacy/numeracy classes. The determining factor in placing students will be their intentions, not their prior learning achievements, history or experiences. The focus will be on students being able to express their aims, not on how long they might take to achieve them. Priority will not be given to those who are on a "fast track." Students who see their class more as "something I can do for two hours on a Tuesday", or who need a program with far broader objectives or who prefer a less structured environment, are better referred to programs that cater specifically and/or predominantly for these purposes.

The emphasis, as always will be on providing a broad basic education in which the development of critical thinking informs and shapes every aspect of the curriculum.

It is clear that much of the learning in which adults engage requires considerable effort on the part of learners, not just in receiving new ideas, but in assimilating them, adjusting their behaviour in the light of them and taking action of many different kinds. <u>Of great importance</u> is the ways in which learners <u>process</u> the experiences they have: the ways in which they reflect on them. …..reflection does not necessarily occur without prompting it.

Appreciating Adult Learnings: From The Learners' Perspective, ed D. Baud and V. Griffin, Great Britain, 1987

INDUSTRIAL ISSUES

Whilst acknowledging the versatility and flexibility of the sessional mode of tutor employment, it severely hampers the development of a robust community united by clear goals and a shared value system. On the one hand, tutors who teach two hours a week can become very marginalized, and, on the other, it's undesirable that tutors undertake "sessional conditions" for substantial teaching loads.

Yet a solution must be found if the ABEL program is to continue to keep abreast of policy and curriculum developments, if tutors are expected, as they are, to be active contributors to a lively educational endeavour, and not be a fragmented group of isolated and/or individualistic entrepreneurs.

The obvious preference is for the fractional employment model à la VCE tutors, but, cognizant of the obstacles in the way, a short-term proposal is, for much the same rationale as for students, to employ as many tutors as possible who are willing and able to teach 4-6 hours per week.

The broad definition of literacy proposed by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) gives some indication of the relationship between these new competencies and literacy. For ASTD, literacy encompasses the following groups of skills:

- *foundation – knowing how to learn*
- *competence – reading, writing, and computation*
- *adaptability – creative thinking and problem solving*
- *personal management – self-esteem, goal setting*
- *motivation, and personal and career development*
- *group effectiveness – interpersonal skills, negotiation, and teamwork*
- *influence – organisational effectiveness and leadership.*

Literacy, then, is one of the cornerstones of the award restructuring process. As such it is an industrial issue.
Skill Formation And Literacy: Agenda For 1990s, Alan Matheson, ACTU, October, 1990.

REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

Little else needs to be added here, except to re-stress the futility and wastefulness of providers competing and overlapping and to re-iterate the benefits, both educational and political, of regional co-operation. Hopefully, the day is not far off when Central Metropolitan Region will see an array of regional ALBE initiatives, forming a comprehensive and multi-purpose whole, to which the CAE, TAFE Colleges and Community-Based Providers all contribute equally.

Among the costs of adult literacy, are:
- *restricted ability to participate in a democratic system*

- *restricted ability to participate in the local community*
- *restricted ability to use abilities and talents*
- *greater reliance on others to do everyday tasks*
- *greater risk of exploitation*
- *greater likelihood of costly errors and accidents*
- *less access to health prevention material*
- *restricted ability to exercise individual rights*
- *restricted ability to help children develop their literacy skills*
- *increased likelihood of turning to crime*
- *increased likelihood of being a social welfare recipient*
- *restricted ability to undertake further education*
- *increased costs when documents are completed incorrectly*
- *decreased initial and later employability.*

The Social Costs Of Inadequate Literacy Skills, Robyn Hartley, DEET, 1989

CAE'S DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The broad curriculum, the pathways, the experienced and top-quality tutors have already been mentioned. The convenient location and the range of student and tutor support services are well documented elsewhere. Probably the most distinctive features in recent years have been the ABEL educational framework, **Reading The World in Action**, and the intensive staff and project development made possible through special project funding. It is now time to make CAE even more distinctive by sharpening the course program a little more. The options that presented themselves for 1991 were:

Leave as is

- individual 2 hour classes
- students can make some "clusters"
- reasonable stepping stones through the program
- part/time literacy
- maybe some new subjects (e.g. Health Issues)

Move towards integrating program

- students to choose "clusters" (e.g. English/Science or Maths)
- students able to join an integrated literacy/numeracy class
- fewer students, but with more hours
- fewer tutors, but with more hours

Incorporate vocationally-oriented Workforce Basic Education strands

- maintain present mix, but emphasize workforce links more

Offer three streams

Educational
      1. Personal/Social
      2. Further study
      3. Employment-related

Move towards collaborative regional initiatives

- consolidate CAE's particular strengths that make it attractive to students who have hopes of finding intensive and extensive study opportunities

Convert day courses to part-time (minimum ten hours) courses, with some more intensive evening options

- part-time literacy maintained
- Adult Basic Education Certificate (or equivalent) introduced
- 3-hour (or 2 x 2 hour) evening classes

For all the reasons mentioned above, for both educational and industrial concerns, a combination of introducing the second option (a short-term goal) and planning for the fifth option (a long term goal) were chosen as most beneficial at this stage for ABEL students within CAE's catchment area.

If a program is underpinned with a clear understanding of its broadening potential, the program content will consciously include experiences that have their links to other basic and further education programs and to other contexts in with skills and knowledge can be used.
pp. *75-76* **Adult Literacy And Basic Education Into The 1990's**, VOL.2, Victorian Ministry of Education, (DFE), 1989.

BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

The other restraining factor, of course, is budget constraints. CAE has certainly maintained its commitment to literacy and basic education but there is no possibility of expansion: indeed, at the time of writing, the ABEL program will be 2 classes less in 1991. This means we have no choice but to work within the present "givens" of sessional employment, limited room space and "status quo" equipment and resources. The challenge is to attract additional resources. Whilst there is increased public and political awareness of the significance of ALBE work, the economic climate is not so favourable.

In a country such as Australia, the changing nature of literacy, and its increasing level of sophistication, can be illustrated with three brief illustrations. Reading the newspaper is frequently noted in definitions of literacy. How more sophisticated does the reader in the 1980s have to be to read the "economically-based" articles in the press compared with those of the 1960s? Recent research has shown how apprentices require a higher level of "graphical" literacy to understand the complex diagrams associated with the current

language of the trades (Sofo, 1985: Edwards and Gould, 1988). Finally, there are calls for adults to learn to use computers so that they do not become computer "illiterates". Those who approach the literacy issue must recognise that its meaning is undergoing constant changes.
pp. 2-3 **Outcomes Of Adult Literacy Programs**, Brennan, Clark, Dymock, DEET, 1989

▲1991 ABEL PROGRAM: KEY FEATURES

Daytime Classes

- Continuation of intensive literacy will continue (min. 12 hours)
- Integration of literacy/numeracy (min. 4 hours)
- Reduction of number of separate 2-hour literacy and numeracy classes
- Formation of Basic Education clusters (min. 4 hours) to be chosen from English, Maths, Australian History, Psychology Australian Studies, Environmental Studies, Writing, Spelling, Science etc, as a move towards preparing the ground for ALBE accredited courses

Adults are unable to make use of their skills without a substantial background knowledge of the world in which they live. Having the opportunity to acquire this knowledge should be integral to the curriculum. All adult literacy programs should provide such opportunities.
No Single Measure, Rosie Wickert, DEET, 1989.

Attention should also be focussed on the relationship between numeracy and literacy. We need to know how the numeracy problems that adults experience are linked to difficulties with reading and writing.
p. 49 **No Single Measure**, Rosie Wickert, DEET, 1989

The definition of adult literacy adopted by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy incorporates numeracy. The quantitative dimension of literacy closely approaches what may think of as adult numeracy. It is clear from the results that when people have poor literacy skills, they have even worse numeracy skills. The need to upgrade numeracy skills in the context of literacy must be taken into account of in all decisions to raise the levels of adult literacy in Australia.
No Single Measure, Rosie Wickert, DEET, 1989

Evening Classes:

- Literacy for Work   (2 hours)
- Numeracy for Work   (2 hours)
- English for Employment   (2 hours)
- English for Further Studies (2 hours)
- Spelling and Work   (2 hours)
- Maths for Work and Study   (2 hours)
- Preparing for year 11 Maths (2 hours)

More and more, workers' jobs require them to demonstrate initiative, be creative, work as teams,

communicate across functional boundaries, have multiple skills, solve problems, exercises responsibly and be flexible and adaptable. This requires the possession of enterprise skills, not least those to do with learning how to learn, relearn, upgrade or change their skills and knowledge as their jobs and the processes involved in them change (Ball, C, 1989:3)
"Competence And Workplace Basic Education", Geoff Scott, University of Technology, **CAPALPA Bulletin**, Sept, 1990

NB: 3 hour classes were seriously considered but rejected for the following reasons. It would have caused timetabling difficulties for daytime classes (which need to fit inside the "school day") and been an unattractive prospect at night, given most students still have considerable distances to travel after class and would be setting off after 9pm. It was also felt that evening students, all of whom have come from daytime employment, could not be expected to take on a 4 hour (2 x 2hrs) commitment when that meant attending two evenings.

A simpler and easier solution to finding more class time, is to examine the question: how necessary/justifiable or, to put it another way, how unnecessary/disruptive is the mid-class break? There is a strong case for eliminating the break altogether, and to achieve the benefits of the breaks by incorporating regular changes in classroom activities.

▲FINALE

As the CAE ABEL program is a dynamic one, in tune with the times, constantly changing shape and forms in rhythm with wider social movements, the 1991 program should be seen as another stepping stone in the never-ending quest to offer an adult basic education program dedicated to expressing justice in practice.

We live in a society that has a lot of very real problems. Social problems, economic problems, technical problems. A society that neglects these problems, or leaves them to the responsibility of the few, is neither democratic nor just. When these things are left to be worked out by the few, most of the problems will remain. Because part of the problem is that only a few are powerful, their interests tend to get served when they are in key positions. The school needs to demonstrate how a rational and just society works, and it needs to develop a critical awareness about irrational and unjust processes in society as a whole. Those aren't just social values – they are educational ones, concerned with helping students to see and understand the world and their place in it. And their capacity to influence the way things are.
Towards The Socially Critical School, S. Kemmis P. Cole D. Suggett, VISE, 1983

Delia Bradshaw
Co-ordinator, Adult Literacy and Basic Education Program, 23/11/90.

For the Common Good (1993)

Book 6: **Professional Development: for the Common Good**
In **Voices of Experience: A Professional Development Package,**
DEETYA Publication

Delia Bradshaw is currently Manager of the Return to Study department at the Council of Adult Education, Melbourne. Before that, she was co-ordinator of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education program there for five years. Her main interests concentrate around issues connected with how education contributes to creating and maintaining a just society. She is keen to participate in a process whereby Adult Basic Education draws upon and draws together principles, insights and good practices embodied in multiculturalism, feminism and socialism. Above all, she believes the most significant and urgent task facing adult basic education workers is that of initiating students into the "powerful discourses" of our time.

For me, above all else, professional development is about Vision. It's about owning our vision, sharpening our vision, questioning our vision and re-focusing our vision.

Whether we are conscious of it or not, as ALBE workers, we all have a picture of where we're heading, a picture of what's good about being there and a picture of the best ways of getting there. Again, whether we're aware of it or not, I believe it is our vision that is possibly the most shaping influence that determines what we do as ALBE workers, and how we do it. If asked, people often can't articulate their vision, that fundamental determinant.

As co-ordinator of a large Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) program at the Council of Adult Education (CAE), involving over thirty teaching staff and about four hundred and fifty students, I have always seen my primary responsibility to be the creation and sustenance of a strong education community with a shared collective ethos. At the heart of that ethos is a shared vision. Because a shared vision only evolves over time, requiring much discussion and debate, I have always given priority to the exchange and examination of information, ideas and ideologies as the essential bedrock for constructing a collective vision.

Given the sessional and part-time nature of employment of tutors at CAE, a situation that inhibits fulsome community life, I have had to be very inventive to achieve a sense of collective vision and purpose. Before elaborating on this, however, let me give a thumbnail sketch of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education program at CAE.

The Adult Literacy and Basic Education program at the CAE is a large inner-city program with an enrolment, at any one time, of about four hundred and fifty students. Some of these students attend for two hours a week but the majority attend for four, ten or twenty hours a

week. Classes are held in the morning, afternoon and evening throughout the week, with an average of six classes running at any one time. Classes range in scope and focus from classes and courses for adults at the very earliest stages of reading and writing through to classes and courses for adults preparing for the Victorian Certificate of Education, in Victoria the step before tertiary study.

The Adult Literacy and Basic Education program at CAE prides itself on offering a broad comprehensive general education program. To supplement literacy/numeracy classes and English and Maths classes, students over the years have been able to choose from Psychology, Environmental Studies, Sociology, Australian Studies, Women's Studies, Cooking, Australian History, Computers and Current Affairs. As well, to meet students' specialist needs, purpose-specific classes such as English for Further Studies and Writing and Spelling for Work are also available.

With students now spending more time in the program, usually a sign that they are giving a high priority to study in their lives and that their intentions are quite serious, a welcome trend has emerged: they are becoming more articulate and outspoken about what they want from coming back to study. These stated aspirations are, of course, a major shaping influence on the program and have been one of the main reasons why the program is constantly changing and has changed markedly over the past five years.

Five years ago, students could only choose from a smorgasbord of 2-hour classes, having to make a piecemeal collection if they wanted to undertake more intensive study. Today, students have a greater range of choice in course purpose and course intensity (from two to twenty hours per week); they also receive certificates stating what they have learnt and achieved in that time. This latter trend will continue to grow and strengthen as the **Victorian Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Accreditation Framework**, incorporating the Certificate in Adult General Education, is formally implemented.

As social forces re-shape student expectations, as adult literacy and basic education programs diversify and broaden and deepen, as all involved – students, teachers, co-ordinators, employers, funding bodies, committees of management – want to take a more active part in determining what could and should be happening in the learning situation, the issue of professional development takes on particular significance and urgency. As co-ordinator of a program that employs four full-time program staff, twenty-five sessional teachers and half a dozen part-time contract teachers, the burning question for me is:

> What professional support and professional development contribute to the construction of a collective adult basic education ethos that is grounded in a vision informed by principles of social justice?

In my own role as program co-ordinator over the past five years, that big overarching question has manifested itself in a number of closely allied questions:

- How do I ensure that everyone feels they belong to an active integrated educational community in which they can draw on the wisdom of all their colleagues most of whom they don't see or meet within the normal rhythms of fractional and sessional employment?
- How do I ensure that they know about, and can participate in, the vital local and broader educational debates of our times?
- How do I ensure that all the ALBE teachers who work in CAE's program keep abreast of curriculum developments, especially at this time of rapid widespread social change as well as rapidly occurring government policy changes?
- How do I enable all the educational workers involved to articulate their view of what informs their day-to-day educational work?
- How do I develop a process for articulating the program's vision that is ethically justifiable, is meaningful to all concerned and can be realised and critiqued in practice?
- How do I ensure that the ALBE teachers at CAE know about existing resources that can enhance their adult basic education work, and equally importantly, that they can develop their own classroom materials, including adapting others, when there is such a shortage of ready-made texts suitable for adults?
- How do I ensure that we develop ways of recording and evaluating our work to ensure that the outcomes are in accord with the program's educational goals and values?
- How do I encourage and strengthen our powers to critique all aspects of our educational work?

Before going into detail about the particular professional development activities I have designed over the years in response to these questions, I need to comment on some pertinent, industrial issues.

Sessional teachers, as the name implies, are only paid for the class contact (be that two-hour, three-hour or whatever) they have with each group. There is an unwritten agreement that the fee also includes planning and evaluation time. Seeking attendance outside class time at professional development activities is to ask them to volunteer their time, talents and services. I believe firmly that sessional teachers ought to be paid for attendance at professional development meetings and workshops that are essential if they are to maintain a high-quality educational environment. For this reason, I pay sessional teachers to attend activities designed to enable their ever-expanding, ever-more-demanding educational responsibilities. (As an aside, I believe this principle should also hold for other out-of-class educational responsibilities, such as detailed record keeping and report writing, now expected of sessional teachers.) The issue, then, of professional development cannot be separated from that of program funding.

Now back to in-house professional development at CAE.

Realising that one way or one method does not meet the needs of all the educational workers involved over the years, I have developed and relied on nine main activities to achieve my aim of creating a cohesive, energetic, conceptually sophisticated educational community. They are:

- � preparation of a mission statement
- organisation of monthly teachers' meetings
- distribution of a monthly program bulletin
- distribution of a professional in-house journal each term
- provision of an information file and folder for each teacher
- design of a proforma for recording class plans and reviews based on a comparison of program goals and educational outcomes
- publication of occasional papers
- paid attendances at conferences
- "hanging around the village well".

MISSION STATEMENT

The ALBE program's first full mission statement produced in November, 1990, was **Making Connections**. A copy can be found earlier in this publication. It was the child of an earlier program document, an interim program statement of ideals called **Reading the World in Action** which, in turn, was the child of our first attempt called **A Coat of Many Colours**. Each of these documents grew to be more inclusive, multi-dimensional and intellectually coherent with each more highly-evolved version. Each was the result of a continuous process of self-evaluation within the program. It is hoped that a new, updated version will be produced this year. The purpose of these documents was to explicitly name the raison d'etre, principles and values that guide our work in the belief that the naming of values and judgments provides the ideal springboard for action and reflection and revised action.

TEACHER'S MEETINGS

These are usually two or three hours long, about once a month. They vary according to the needs of the time and season. Sometimes these meetings are specialised, for example the action research series of meetings called "Maths in Focus" involving the eight adult basic maths tutors in the program, concentrated on assessing, planning and evaluating mixed ability/mixed aspiration maths classes.

More often tutors from all subject areas are encouraged to attend, the topics being of general curriculum interest. Meetings are often planned and led by one or more of the tutors. Over the years, the topics have included:

- language development: six sessions
- "success stories": in-depth exchanges in small groups
- integration policy and practice for students with disabilities at CAE

- working with bilingual students
- disruptive students: what is needed?
- ALBE workers: language educators or social workers?
- accreditation: issues and developments.

As well as the other meetings, I make sure that every December we have an end-of-year party to which everyone brings readings, food, personal anecdotes and reflections to share. I am a great believer in making and perpetuating cultural rituals that evolve from a shared vision, from shared values and practices.

These regular teachers' meetings are the lifeblood of professional development in our program. Peers come face-to-face, a rare and treasured feat. They debate, ask questions and make connections, in ways almost impossible in this otherwise physically disparate group which is forced to be so reliant on print. For those unable to be present, minutes are always taken and distributed to every member of staff.

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31 July 1992
Adult Basic Education and Literacy Program
MEETING REMINDER

There will be a Tutors' meeting on:
Friday August 14
From 12.30 – 2.30pm
In Room 508

Agenda (not real names)
Risk-taking in ABE classes – Alice
Report from full-time course – May and Lorna
Certification Research Project – Sandy and Lorraine
New Assessment Kit – Norma
New Resources – librarian
Agreement about Saturday date for Delia's ABE information day
See you there!

MONTHLY BULLETIN

The newsletter, entitled **Becoming Attuned: Delia's Bulletin to ALBE Teachers**, comes out about once a month. It includes news relevant to our work such as staff changes, regional projects and recent resources added to our large bank of class sets and reference collection.

CAE teachers are fortunate to have a number of resource collections at their disposal – about sixty class sets, the vast ALBE Resource Collection attached to the main library and the book shelves in my office. As well as referring to these, I always add appendices consisting of evocative new additions or provocative newspaper articles, poems, policy statements or publicity brochures. I have a particular bias towards theoretical texts (e.g. James Gee's **Ideology in Discourse**) that place our work in a broad social, intellectual and international framework.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL

The in-house journal, known as **Abel Cable**, comes out four times a year. It is a larger publication than **Becoming Attuned**, often being over forty pages in length. It is primarily a workbook, a source of examples of other tutors' work, featuring ideas and activities with direct classroom application. Tutors are often employed to prepare this very popular publication.

INFORMATION FOLDERS

Every teacher in the program has her (occasionally his) own information folder. Kept in a filing cabinet in the office, these act as letter boxes for the unending stream of memos, notices and advertisements that daily cross my desk. Everything of immediate interest or importance to tutors that can't wait for the monthly bulletin – items such as workshops, job vacancies, meeting agendas, large articles, newly-arrived ALBE resource lists that need to be ordered promptly – is copied and placed in each of the thirty-plus files. Teachers assure me, (when I express concern at the volume), that they don't regard it as junk mail: rather more like a weekly Christmas windfall! Larger documents of moment (e.g. State curriculum frameworks, assessment kits) are also posted there.

CLASS PLANS AND REVIEWS

Each semester tutors are required to present a class plan and a class review for each class they take. Each semester I re-design the proforma for recording the class plan (compiled about three weeks into the semester) and the class review (written at the end of each semester). Tutors are paid to produce these out of respect for the time, analysis and reflection involved. Tutors constantly tell me that, though a demanding task, they always find this act of public documentation extends their thinking on all aspects of classroom work – aims, rationale, resources, activities, assessment and evidence of success.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

These are usually composed on an ad-hoc basis by one of, or a group of, my educational colleagues on topics needing special attention. Over the years the following publications have been produced:

- **Hear Us, Hear Our Lives: ALBE students' stories**
- a collection of poems written by ALBE tutors

- **Our ALBE Work** – a forty-page booklet with page-length descriptions of each class in our program
- **Where to Next?** – information and classroom ideas around the theme of students "moving on"
- a tutor kit on integration issues
- **Do You Remember When…?** – a compendium of reminiscences of ALBE tutors who have worked at CAE for some time, comparing "then" and "now"
- rationale for policy decisions made in tutor meetings
- **Reading the World in Action** – an educational ideal for our collective work
- policy papers on program matters, e.g. student placement, requests for involvement in research projects.

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Teachers are encouraged to offer, as well as attend, workshops at local and national gatherings. Team-teaching and joint presentations are especially favoured. Assistance is always offered to those who do make presentations.

THE VILLAGE WELL

What probably ties all this together is the oft-overlooked, but vital, activities of "hanging around the village well" – at the filing cabinet or at the sink or in the tutors' room or at their locker or in the foyer – when they, the tutors, are (briefly) passing through. It's at these times that I pick up the latest news, hear that individual story, notice a smile or a frown. It's then I feel the heartbeat of our work and can tell whether everything is working well or not. It's then I find out what tutors really need to know in the 1990's. Often, I find, it's to do with feeling part of The Big Picture. This takes me back to my opening statement that professional development is essentially about identifying and interrogating our vision.

I will now return to where I began.

For me, as the person ultimately responsible for the professional development of the staff in the ALBE program at CAE, I give priority to identifying and interrogating what picture of a "good society" lies embedded in the policies and practices of our program. This means making explicit the values, often tacit, that the program advocates about how "the goods" – be they status, wealth, health, power, control or whatever – in that society are to be distributed. It means a declaration about the role of educators, specifically ALBE workers, that foregrounds not only discussion and debate about "What can I do on Monday?" but also discussion and debate about "What society am I constructing by what I do on Monday?".

As an ALBE worker committed to social justice, I believe it is my role as co-ordinator to ensure, via professional development, that the answer to the second question means what we do, every day of the week, must contribute towards the construction of a just society.

As language educators, we are in a particularly privileged position, working as we do every day with words, ideas and discourses – those powerful determinants of "who's in" and "who's out", of who has power and who does not. For this reason, I believe we are ethically bound to be mindful of the consequences of our work, to know if the vision that guides us is contributing to justice or injustice, to domination or freedom, to the acceptance of falsehood or to the search for truth. I see my role as preparing the ALBE workers at CAE to be ready, at any time, to answer the question: "What's the vision that informs your work?" in favour of the common good of all.

From Fill-ins to Foundations: Changing Views of Literacy (1992/5)

Essay for Adult Literacy Teaching course (1992)

Later published in **Writing Our Practice** *(1995), ACFE Publication*

Abstract

In this paper, Delia Bradshaw reflects on the experience of taking over teaching an Adult Basic Education class halfway through the year. The obvious gap between her own approach to teaching and the work the class has done with its previous teacher becomes the focus for Bradshaw's examination of classroom politics. Who is to determine what students shall be offered in a given course? Bradshaw's view is that the Adult Basic Education teacher's role extends to that of a "guide and initiator into linguistic and conceptual domains most likely never known or initiated without intervention by the teacher".

Her paper provides a survey of the various approaches to the teaching of adult literacy culminating with the critical social literacy perspective. It then moves on to discuss various sessions in which her new students moved into the realms of debate, uncertainty and controversy which are central to this teaching approach.

JOURNAL JOTTINGS
July 29th

Tomorrow is my first class with the two hours a week Basic English group I'm taking in second semester. I think I'm going to be a bit of a shock for the class because I'm so unlike Barb (not her real name), their first semester teacher.

When I came to meet the class on the second last week of first semester, I found them all working on separate tasks, physically quite separate from each other, mostly completing grammar and vocabulary exercises from a book called **Activate Your English** *(Bartley & Kemeny, 1975).*

A textbook

Yesterday, in preparation for getting to know the class better, I took a closer look at this book, hoping it would act as a shortcut to finding out what they'd been doing in class all year. This eighty-seven page textbook, published in Perth in 1975, is organised into three parts. The first part deals with "Better Words for Everyday", the second is called "Words for Describing People" and the third specialises in "Technical Terms".

As the "Contents" page gives no page numbers, I had considerable trouble navigating the book. It took me

ages to work out its basic structure and pattern. It consists, I now know, of hundreds of "graded" exercises, organised into Basic and Advanced. Each set of exercises is made up of ten questions, with space provided adjacent to each question where the answer is to be written.

The "How To Use" Section at the front instructs students to:
   1. Take the selected exercise.
   2. Enter your answer into the space provided in pencil.
   3. Complete all ten questions of the exercise.
   4. Check answers from the back pages.
I can't resist reproducing, word for word, some of Exercise No. 1, the first of fifty-eight exercises in Part One.

Part 1. — General Terms
VOCABULARY FOR EVERYDAY USE
1. OBJECTS AND THINGS — (NOUNS)
(a) BASIC
Exercise No. 1
Write down in the space provided the word or phrase which has most nearly the same meaning as the first word:

1. EQUIVALENT.
   (a) opposite to
   (b) superior to
   (c) equal to
   (d) inferior to
   ....

2. FALLACY. An error in
   (a) speech
   (b) expression
   (c) pronunciation
   (d) reasoning
   ....

3. REVERIE.
   (a) a thought
   (b) a daydream
   (c) deep sleep
   (d) state of mental anguish
   ....

4. SYNOPSIS.
   (a) a summary
   (b) a narrative
   (c) a description
   (d) a poem
   ....

5. APPAREL.
   (a) cloths
   (b) clothes
   (c) an error in speech
   (d) a fruit
   ....

I know I'm going on at some length about this book but it's the best way I know to evoke the ethos of the class I'm about to inherit. Discovering what the book espouses provided me with an instant and picturesque account of what had been occupying the time and minds of the students in this Basic English class for most of the year to date, symbolising powerfully and effectively for me what counts as English for them.

Conceptions of language

While reading the book, I remembered how Barb's "handover" letter to me had stressed how much they love these sorts of activities. In fact, as proof to substantiate this, she had included samples of the students' end of semester class reviews that she had designed, distributed and collected especially for my benefit. The following comments (or ones like them) occurred again and again: "I really enjoyed the spelling and grammar", "I would like to do more grammar exercises", "I need to do more spelling", and "We still have a long way to go on spelling, punctuation, tenses, parts of speech, and what words should and shouldn't go together". Suddenly Barb's advice to me that "It's important to be very diplomatic with them" takes on something of a sinister ring. Is she cautioning me against rocking the boat, telling me not to disturb the status quo, urging me not to deviate from the safety of workbooks and drill practice?

The challenge of change

I realise this is no simple matter. To challenge, to change, won't be easy for student or teacher. I am mindful of Rockhill's work quoted in Lankshear's article "Issues in Adult Education" which reminds us that:

> To disagree, or speak with authority, is difficult for women and can be very painful . . . A key aspect of our sexual inscription as women is the care of others, including responsibility for the nurturing, flattering, nonthreatening support of their egos . . . and intellectuality implies authority, the possibility of disagreeing . . . This can be quite terrifying for women, as to disagree, to challenge, runs counter to our desire to be nice, to take care of others, to make things run smoothly (Lankshear, 1992).

I understand why Barb might have stayed with the familiar and safe. I feel the appeal of doing the same. However, understanding why Barb might have done and said what she did, as well as knowing first hand myself the internal pressure to please, there's still no way I can continue this established pattern of isolated students working their way through self-correcting language exercise books.

Language in context

It's not that I don't see vocabulary enrichment and extension as important elements in language development, indeed they are vital, but I believe this occurs best when achieved in the context of intellectual and conceptual development, in the context of exploring, analysing and critiquing ideas. For me, English classes, and therefore Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, are primarily and deliberately about introducing students to, and connecting students with, the widest range of thinking that constitutes and shapes (or has shaped) contemporary society. What matters is learning how texts are constructed, how to deconstruct them, and how to construct and reconstruct them for the purposes of engaging more fully in all domains of private and public life. It is, ultimately, knowing the significance of personal and political stance, knowing what constitutes stance, and knowingly choosing between stances.

Imagining the self in writing

The most precise and eloquent description I've read of what I think ABE work is about comes from a piece "How to describe an ABEC domain" written by Rob McCormack:

> Learning to read and write involves being able to imaginatively position oneself in a new and more powerful way. This new discursive position entails subtle but crucial shifts in your relationship to yourself, your cultural heritage, your institutional relationships, your attitude to social policy formation.

I wish I could remember the source of this quote because I'd like to reread the full text. I remember when I first read these words some time ago I was so struck by them that I jotted them down in a notebook I was carrying. My subsequent search to locate where they appeared in public has been to no avail. (Book editor: Delia wrote this essay in 1992; an article has since been published by McCormack, 1993.)

It's only now, as I sit about to plan tomorrow's first class, that I realise how fundamentally different what I do is from what Barb is recommending I should do, that I see so clearly that what I value, present and encourage are of quite another order. Putting aside the question of the explanation for her counsel, whether it's a reflection of Barb's manifesto as a teacher or whether it's a reflection of the students' limited experience of alternative models of English teaching and what goes for "proper" English classes, I simply cannot use **Activate Your English** as a blueprint for my work. I see my mission as connecting students to a wider world—a world of other peoples, other cultures, other ideas—not as a custodian of status-quo-defined correctness.

Who decides?

This state of affairs—my knowingly taking a route divergent from that being comfortably travelled so far—brings me at once face to face with the essence of what I consider to be some of the most important and complex issues in our work as ABE teachers:

- *What do ABE teachers think students should be learning?*
- *What do we judge to be "a good English class"?*
- *How helpful, confusing or noncommittal are the names (English, Literacy, Basic Reading and Writing) we give our classes?*
- *Should more attention be given to being more precise in our naming?*
- *What is our notion of student progress?*
- *On what value system is it based?*
- *What images, pictures, visions of this do we carry in our head?*
- *Are our unconsciously delivered messages and cues more powerful than our consciously delivered ones?*
- *How much consensus is there on any, much less all, of these? And what about the students' stated needs?*
- *Who ultimately decides on classroom purpose and content?*
- *Who ultimately decides what counts for success?*

Different points of view

Barb opted for one thing, the students opt for something similar; and I am planning to do something quite different. How much more problematic and complicated this question of classroom politics all becomes when I look to all the theorists, policy-makers and researchers who comment loud and long in defence of a whole

variety of points of view. When I think of the hundreds of articles I've read over the years advancing now functional literacy, now cultural literacy, now literacy for personal growth, now social literacy, now critical literacy, each defining literacy according to their socio-political vision.

Before settling down to finalise plans for my first class, I must answer two questions for myself: "How do I justify my choices, my educational ideology? What right do I have to this power?" It seems timely, if not imperative, to revisit some of the articles I've read in recent times that have honed my stance, to declare openly which positions excite and inspire me, which ones arouse a hearty "Yes, that's right", and which leave me grimacing or shaking my head, mumbling "Oh no, that's quite wrong".

I think I'll change linguistic field, mode and tenor for this more formal reflection.

A more formal reflection

What should our students learn?

The topic under scrutiny is the process and rationale whereby decisions are made about which pedagogy should inform ABE classes. When students present themselves for class, they most commonly state that they want spelling, grammar and punctuation. On the other hand, most contemporary teachers determine that what students need is to know key terms and concepts, to be familiar with commonly recurring themes and debates, to be able to articulate a position on issues of concern, especially issues of public concern.

Whose view?

The issue here is to investigate the matter of whose view should prevail, of who should decide class purpose, class content and class activities, and to evaluate the consequences of the view that prevails. Whilst acknowledging there is no simple theorem for solving the problem of classroom politics, nevertheless, I argue for a position that gives primary and ultimate authority to the teacher for determining pedagogical matters.

As a way of analysing this subject, in the body of this paper, various definitions of literacy will be sketched, with attention being drawn both to the stance implicit in each definition and to the classroom activities likely to ensue. Consideration will then be given to how these models influence both students' and teachers' expectations and experiences of an English class. In the conclusion, it will be contended that to settle for a literacy that prizes surface language drills and exercises is an impoverished and mistaken notion of ABE work.

Perceived needs or changing perceptions

I will argue the following: it is the ABE teacher's responsibility to amplify and redefine students' "common-sense" understanding of literacy and language development, to expand it beyond a notion of there being a predefined, fixed correct usage to a view that sees language

learning as an extension and deepening of their own intellectual realm whilst simultaneously developing a capacity for critiquing all other realms. This conclusion will propose that ABE teachers see their role as going beyond that of merely satisfying students' stated needs to that of a guide and an initiator into linguistic and conceptual domains most likely never known or chosen without intervention by the teacher.

As a prelude to the matter of definitions of literacy, it must be stated explicitly from the outset that, as Knoblauch says in his opening to the chapter "Literacy and the Politics of Education":

> Literacy is one of those mischievous concepts, like virtuousness or craftsmanship, that appear to denote capacities but that actually convey value judgements (Knoblauch, 1990).

A decision about which literacy and whose version of literacy is, at root, a decision between contesting values, political definitions and visions. Literacy is not a neutral denoting of skills: it is always literacy for something such as for professional competence in a technological world, for civic responsibility and the preservation of heritage, for personal growth and self-fulfilment, for social and political change.

<h2 style="text-align:center">FUNCTIONALIST LITERACY</h2>

The most familiar literacy argument comes from "the functionalist perspective", still copiously represented in books on most ABE shelves such as **Activate Your English** and **Skills of English 1, 2 & 3**. This view, sometimes called effective literacy in government policy papers, sees the ultimate aim of literacy as training people in the minimal reading and writing skills needed, especially those related to technology and the economy, for usefulness in modern society. In English classes, this means lots of attention to accurately filling in forms and proformas, correctly decoding public notices and getting the "right" answers.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Functional for what?</h3>

This conduit model implies that language is value-neutral. What it does not declare, evidenced by its exclusively narrow and mechanistic concentration on skills that fit people to be pragmatically competent at given tasks in predetermined roles, is that the effect of this is to safeguard the socioeconomic status quo. It omits, even outlaws, questioning, interrogating, analysing alternatives. For this literacy, it is important to know how to use a detonator but it is not important to ask: "should we be mining here?" Becoming literate is about accumulating pre-packaged, fragmented bits of language that will, it is believed, make for smoother social lubrication and greater efficiency, without changing the established social order.

This view refuses to acknowledge the values and views of society embedded in it. It fails to take account of the inextricable link between language and social activity, and how intimately they co-exist and define and reinforce each other, the irrefutable findings of decades of research in applied linguistics. It is, therefore, on both rational and epistemological grounds, unacceptable and inoperable.

Cultural literacy

Another common literacy argument is that of "cultural literacy" in which language is no mere tool but rather a repository of timeless and stable cultural values to be affirmed and preserved, and above all, to be protected from the ever-present possibility of cultural decay that threatens on all sides. In English classes, this means familiarisation with favoured cultural texts, norms and practices. This view is most commonly found in debates about the true identity of English teaching that takes place in professional journals such as **English in Australia**, the journal of the Australian Association of Teachers of English, or **Idiom**, the journal of the Victorian Association of Teachers of English or in electronic and print media in discussions about the VCE, the Victorian Certificate of Education for students in their final years of secondary schooling.

Whose culture?

Like the functionalist position, it too is an essentially conservative position, committed to maintaining and promoting the world as it is, opposing any change in the current distribution of privilege and power. It prizes one view of culture and insists this view be the dominant (or only) view, all others, by implication, being inferior. Lankshear in his article "Issues in Adult Literacy" quotes Giroux's description of this as:

> … a unitary Western tradition based on the virtues of hard work, industry, respect for the family and institutional authority, and an unquestioning respect for the nation... dressed up in the lingo of the Great Books (Lankshear, 1992).

It has also been described by Kalantzis in her article "Just How Clever? Restructuring, Literacy and Multiculturalism", when referring to Ellsworth's work, as the dominant discourse of

> … universal, white, male, European, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, thin rationality (Kalantzis, 1992).

Given the multicultural nature of the Australian population and of our classrooms, this educational recipe for homogeneity is an unacceptable model on moral and theoretical grounds. To pursue cultural literacy as interpreted above is to participate in the attempt to devalue, marginalise and undermine those cultures deemed "non-standard" in the name of developing in students an appreciation of texts as aesthetic, apolitical artefacts that are above, beyond and untainted by political forces such as class, ethnicity or gender, a falsehood linguists and literary critics have long shown to be untrue.

Literacy for personal growth

The "literacy for personal growth" argument sees language as a means of expressing and exploring personal power, as promoting the progress of society through the progress of the individual learner. In English classes primacy of place is given to expressive writing, personal histories and texts devoted to self-discovery and self-validation, with texts outside the realm of personal self-reflection being relegated to second-class status.

This view is eloquently described by Audrey Grant in the plenary address she delivered to the 8th National Conference of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy in 1984. In that speech, she said:

> The life stories of literacy students in our case study research often suggest . . . stories of fear . . . But there are also stories of change, sometimes minor, sometimes in a major key. Stories where the ability of the telling and the listening move towards wholeness as people, working together in different kinds of learning partnerships, achieve the kind of growth and change that is at the heart of the literacy process (Grant, 1987).

Self and social context

Whilst this view advocates liberation for individuals, it refrains from investigating any fundamental restructuring of institutions or power blocs. By implying the self is a discrete, self-regulating, separate world unto itself, it fails to take seriously enough the socially constructed and socially constructing nature of language.

This model favours the world of the self with its preferred forms of reading, writing and discussion around issues of identity. The consequences are that students tend to be relegated to one domain of social life, deprived of access to, and engagement with, the multitude of other texts produced in other such key social domains as industry, unionism, bureaucracy, government, educational institutions and other public agencies. This model, in the long run, can be a disempowering one.

"GENRE" LITERACY

In recognition of the limitations of personal literacy, a more recent literacy argument, here called "genre" literacy for want of knowledge of a more commonly accepted term, "genre" gives primacy of place to the ability to analyse and produce those texts that reside in the sites of power and privilege. Classroom activities focus on identifying, for the purposes of reproducing, the distinctive purposes, structures, linguistic features and generic characteristics of texts found in the public realm, texts largely concerned with instructing, informing, explaining and arguing. An up-to-date state-of-the-art articulation of this position and its social theory of language is **Workplace Texts in the Language Classroom** by Helen Joyce (1992), a publication that "provides guidance in the teaching of workplace genres within the language classroom".

The limits of linguistics

Notwithstanding the long-overdue contribution made to literacy practice by the provision of such detailed, textured and technical knowledge of linguistic devices, the territory covered by this model reminds us of other largely uncharted territories waiting to be explored and mapped. Two such areas are, firstly, a way of dealing with hybridisation, that is, with those texts that intertwine an amalgam of genres rather than a "pure" form and, secondly, the matter of a taxonomy for content description, that is, the need for a more comprehensive framework

that provides rich descriptions of the content or discourse of, and in, texts as distinct from a primary focus on grammatical and linguistic textual features.

Such a taxonomy would acknowledge, name and characterise the presence and significance of socially powerful value-laden ideologies in texts. It would point to how they are embedded in common terms and concepts, in recurrent social themes and preoccupations and debates. McCormack's work, "Framing the field: adult literacies and the future", is the only statement I know that urges a movement beyond text reproduction of generic textual forms as the overarching teaching objective to a pedagogy where initiation into meaning is equated with the development of ethical, intellectual, political and social understandings as well as linguistic ones. [1]

Critical literacy

The final literacy to mention is "critical literacy", a term claimed and propagated by people from diverse points of view, including various combinations and permutations of the last two literacy models mentioned above. The essence of this view is the development of critical consciousness about social conditions, about power/knowledge relationships, about the political dimensions of literacy practices, texts and classroom discourse. The purpose of literacy, according to this point of view, is to analyse social practices so as to contest sites of injustice or oppression, whether in the classroom or the wider society. Classroom activities encourage students to see how every text is the product of a particular set of cultural assumptions, beliefs and values: classroom activities focus on urging students to give resistant readings that challenge the ideology of the text.

Well-known advocates are Freire and Kozol overseas, and Luke in Australia, with each of these proposing a unique configuration and emphasis of his own. Luke's final paragraph in his article "Critical Research on Textbooks and Literacy" is a full-bodied statement of the sorts of issues concerning those advocating this position:

> Some teachers, researchers and publishers would claim that the battle over textbook 'content' has been waged, and won, and finished – that following the progressive educational innovations of the last two decades, today's textbooks present more balanced, "culture fair" versions of culture, science, gender, indigenous peoples and so forth. In some sites, this might be the case. But the research . . . indicates that the matter is hardly settled . . . What does remain to be explored in far more detail is how the language and discourses of . . . schoolbooks are ideological practices (not contents), products of particular economic and political processes which together with classroom talk and evaluation construct what counts as literacy and informs the literate person (Luke, 1991).

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1 Since writing this, I have discovered and been thrilled by James Gee's **Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology and Discourses** a book that develops an inter-disciplinary approach to studying the ways in which language is inextricably bound up with ideology, with an explanation of why language cannot be analysed or understood apart from ideology.

The critical literacy perspective draws on, and synthesises, aspects of all the other perspectives described by emphasising that literacy is a multi-dimensional and multi-purpose concept and by insisting that being multi-literate necessitates and demands being socially and linguistically critical. It incorporates attention to self and attention to society into a sharply focused conceptualisation of the importance of having a language for talking about language: it foregrounds the importance of knowing in very specific ways how to take and make powerful language.

Experience and pre-conceptions of literacy

It seems a truism to say that all students and all teachers are heirs of, have been influenced by, and are the products of, one or more of the five literacy perspectives described above. Notions of what counts for literacy (or English) are largely derived from earlier experiences of schooling, whether recent or in childhood. Given that each of the five literacy perspectives came into prominence and held sway at different historical moments over the last sixty years, with the last two being relatively recent, and remembering that some classes contain students up to the age of seventy-five, it is not surprising that most ABE students, have been shaped by, and associate themselves with, one of the first three perspectives or some combination thereof. Whilst many teachers share this same history and heritage, they also know about the last two, more recently emerged, literacy perspectives.

Whose literacy?

The issue of whose notion prevails, of which literacies or combination of literacies should inform ABE work, only becomes problematic when these are in contest and choices need to be made. There is no denying that the resolution of this is a quintessentially political matter, a question of who has or who claims power and how that claim is justified. And this is, as in all things political, fundamentally a matter of ethics, a matter of a plan of action or "shoulds" defended by a set of principles or "goods".

The issue raised at the beginning of this essay regarding who determines what goes on in class then comes down to two questions: Is any one of the literacies described in this paper inherently "better" or more justifiable than the others? Does one emerge as inherently preferable when it comes to fundamental issues such as the roles (and power) it allocates, its definition of the educational task to be done and the personal and social consequences it engenders?

Teaching and ethics

Given the ethical issues embedded in any answer to these questions, it is essential to declare the ethical framework which is the reference point for the stance taken in this paper. The three ethical principles against which I judge all human endeavour are:

1. Firstly, its contribution to social justice, that is, the degree to which wealth and power are shared

2. Secondly, its contribution towards the creation and sustenance of a healthy world, that is, the degree to which people can live a peaceful, fulfilling and ecologically mindful life
3. Thirdly, its contribution to the storehouse of truth, that is, the degree to which it throws light on life and the human condition.

Thus, for me, the only defensible literacy position for me is a sixth one, the critical social literacy perspective.

CRITICAL SOCIAL LITERACY

This blended definition of literacy is founded on the premise that being literate automatically incorporates critiquing in the name of truth and justice. At the same time, it sees literacy as a collective enterprise in which the teacher, with specialist knowledge of the intricate interplay between language and social life, is morally and intellectually bound to challenge students' "givens", to ensure that students not only leave wiser than when they arrived but with an extensive and reliable repertoire of linguistic, and hence personal, social and political, resources as well. The task of the teacher necessitates redefining and surpassing limited notions of literacy that have shaped and defined students' expectations.

Taking the lead

In short, the Literacy or English teacher as ABE teacher situated within the critical social literacy perspective must, for both moral and theoretical reasons, not only take the lead in deciding class purpose, content and activities, but must do so in the name of the construction of a more just society. Critiquing of discourses must take precedence over correctness of language.

It is this literacy perspective, the critical social literacy perspective, which provides the theoretical framework for the document formerly known as the **Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework**, more popularly known as the "blue" and "pink" volumes or "The Four Literacies". This theoretical framework can now be found in the "Reading and Writing" section of the "Background Works" in the **Certificates of General Education for Adults** under the heading: "Curriculum Model". More detailed references to these documents are made in the Class Activities section in Appendices 1-4 of this article.

JOURNAL (CONTINUED)

September 18th

We had our eighth class yesterday. I feel we are making great headway, with only one query about "When are we going to do parts of speech?" I have just read the pieces of writing that people handed in on the subject of Aboriginal life. I feel almost speechless in admiration for what they have produced. They have demonstrated command not only of genre but of the age-old debates that never go away.

Texts we have studied

For two weeks we have studied and imitated a range of texts in class on Aboriginal life:

- a poem, "The Dispossessed" by Oodgeroo Noonucal (Kath Walker)
- an out-of-date "Facts and Figures" sheet on Housing, Health, Employment, Prisons and Education — a superb opportunity to model interrogating a text, in this case an official-looking and official-sounding document riddled with nonsensical graphics and misleading charts and statistics
- the opening chapter of **From Massacres to Mining** by Janine Roberts
- an extract on black resistance to the white invasion called "The Australian War of Conquest"
- an Equal Opportunity Board pamphlet called "You don't have to put up with discrimination"
- a video on the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody.

Last week, I asked each member of the class to compose a piece of report writing for homework.

Re-roling the "I"

When I gave them their homework task, I instructed them to omit any reference to the "I"—to exclude any mention of "me" or "my"—and to write as if they were a historian, an anthropologist, an archaeologist or a theologian. We'd practised report writing earlier on. When discussing casualty wards and accidents, we'd composed together on the blackboard a Health and Safety report of a work injury of one of the students. Others had extended this by writing a police report, an ambulance driver's report or an insurance clerk's report for homework. As well, accounts of the coming of whites had been written from both a black and a white perspective.

We'd also discussed what historians, archaeologists . . . do, and how the only way to start writing for this task is to take on that role. We'd talked about how this involves attitudes and values as well as words. With her customary insight, another student, Pina, had commented on how you need to feel self-confident to do that and that she was thinking only the other day about how and why the way she speaks is changing. She said she's embarrassed to think how halting and stuttery and hesitant she had been until recently, what "dumb" things she had said and how difficult it is to overcome the urge to lecture her friends on (what she now sees as) their slack thinking.

Signs of the sacred

Whilst most of the group seem to be embracing with relish our adventure into the realms of debate, uncertainty and controversy, I fear I might have lost Adrian today. The poem called "Memo to J.C." asserts that if Jesus Christ came back today he'd be hard pressed to find a true Christian community, though he'd probably be impressed by how close some Aboriginal communities come to the Christian ideal. Adrian seemed offended not only by this (to him) heretical proposition but also by the colloquial, not-obviously-reverential tone of the poem.

Maybe if I'd left more time for the poem or, when I saw that time was running short, if I had decided to postpone it till next week, there would not have been the build-up of pressure that haste generates. How to know when it's going to be "all too much" for any particular student? It's always risky, this business,

knowing when and how to introduce counter perspectives, judging the timing so as not to alienate, even lose, any individual.

New language, new discourse, new world view
I keep thinking of Bizzell's article on "What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?" in which she reminds us that "basic writers, upon entering the academic community, are being asked to learn a new dialect and new discourse conventions, but the acquisition of such learning is acquisition of a whole new world view" (Bizzell, 1986). These are questions I would love to study in some depth. What world views do ABE students bring with them? What new world views are demanded of them? What do they have to give up, at what price and for what gain, in order to learn (much less embrace) the new world view?

I wish I knew a foolproof way of prejudging which students, when faced with unsettling, disturbing or discomforting knowledge, will hang in there, despite the risks, and which will flee. There's usually one or two in a class who do leave. Maybe their religious views are threatened; maybe they feel it's improper to discuss sex, religion and politics in public; maybe the equation, English = Correct Spelling and Grammar is too deeply ingrained; maybe they feel safe and can cope with a static book, but not with questing, questioning adults.

REFLECTIONS
Taking a stance
I think this is a particularly complicated matter in the context of a two-hour class where students are somewhat on the fringe of "returning to study", where they are indefinite about where it all fits into their lives and where they are still deciding possibilities and priorities. In retrospect, I think I should have started the semester with a discussion of the term "English", with an exchange of understandings represented in the class and with a declaration of my stance.

Perceptions of correctness
Thinking of timing and pacing, I think I might have been a bit too dismissive of Eileen's question about "parts of speech". She is, after all, a near-perfect example of the anxieties created about correctness by the functional literacy school. I always tend to underestimate, in my passionate campaigning for an education grounded in idea-making, how much cultural and emotional weight are still ascribed to factors such as minor difficulties with spelling, decoding and sentence structure, how much people still feel stigmatised and a failure because they can't parse a sentence with speed, accuracy and alacrity. This is exacerbated even more when your "better educated" children are telling you, as they are sixty-five year old Eileen, that she should be learning the rules of correctness in class. From the sound of them, I think they'd highly disapprove of our discussing sexism, racism, colonialism, and all the other "isms".

Following our excursion into Aboriginal Studies, I think it's time to revisit the topic "Australia is the best country on earth" next week. We will build up the argumentative writing we do at the end of class each week when I insist that each person write one sentence on the topic of the day, stating their own point of view and giving one reason why.

What students learn from us

I am firmly committed to this weekly ritual as a way of students' practising taking a stance, but always Foucault's words from his article "The Means of Correct Training" are lurking in the shadows: "The procedures of examination were accompanied at the same time by a system of intense registration and of documentary accumulation. A "power of writing" was constituted as an essential part of discipline." (Foucault, 1984)

I defend my practice of routinely urging students to declare a position in writing each week by appealing to social justice, but I sometimes wonder how many of my students see me as some sort of missionary, however entertaining and benign, who orchestrates a good performance most weeks. This prickly thought is why I nearly called this document: "Drill Time, Adult Basic Education or The Delia Show?" Can we ever know the full story of what students learn from us? Probably not, but I've no doubt that the view of literacy we hold as embodied in the literacy practices that we encourage and model are fundamental factors in determining the breadth, depth and power of that learning.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: PATTERN OF WEEKLY CLASS ACTIVITIES

Revision of the previous week	
Introduction to The Four Literacies Self-Expression, Practical Purposes, Knowledge and Public Debate	❧ Reading and Discussion ❧ Writing
Discussion of past and forthcoming homework	❧ Speed Copying ❧ Research ❧ Writing
End of class lesson summary and evaluation	❧ Date ❧ Texts ❧ Activities ❧ What I learnt

Each week of the eighteen-week semester followed a similar pattern or rhythm, as seen in Appendices 2, 3 and 4 in the pages following.

ACTIVITY	RESOURCES	RELATIONSHIP TO VICTORIAN ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERACY & NUMERACY ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK
Discussion about: ୬ Weekly pattern ୬ Folders ୬ Organisation/Filing of work ୬ Organisation of time	Sample folders	
Brainstorming **Spain**		Writing for Self-Expression & Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–4.
Composition of 5-line statements about: **S . . .** **P . . .** **A . . .** **I . . .** **N . . .**		
Reading & Discussion of: "Happy 500th Anniversary?" ୬ To make connections between the Olympics, Spain, Columbus and the Americas to provide an entree into colonialism in preparation for Aboriginal Studies ୬ (More details of this activity are provided in the postscript at the end of this outline.)	**The World Times,** Vol. 1, No 2. Dictionary Globe Atlas Maps	
Discussion of Homework: ୬ Speed copy **TWT** article ୬ Mark Barcelona, North America, Central America and South America on a world map ୬ Write a piece entitled "Gold" (This piece of free writing will provide an introduction into "The Four Literacies" next week.)		Reading for Knowledge & Reading for Public Debate, Levels 2–4. Reading & Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–4. All Writing Domains.
Class Summary & Evaluation: ୬ Date ୬ Texts and Precis of activities ୬ What I've learnt		

ACTIVITY	RESOURCES	RELATIONSHIP TO THE FRAMEWORK
Revision of previous week: ❧ "Letters to the Editor" on the Australian flag	**Herald Sun** & **Age**	Reading for Knowledge & Reading for Public Debate, Levels 2–4.
Writing: ❧ Complete the following sentence in three different ways: "Australia is the best country on earth because…"		Writing for Public Debate, Levels 2–4.
❧ Discussion: "Best" from whose point of view?		
Reading & Discussion: ❧ "The Dispossessed"	Oodgeroo Noonucal's (Kath Walker's) poem	Reading for Self-Expression & Reading for Public Debate, Levels 2–4.
Completion of Table: 1. Before White Colonials 2. What White Colonials Brought 3. Results for First Australians		Reading & Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2–4.
Reading and Discussion: ❧ "The Australian War of Conquest"	A historical article from **Walk in My Shoes: A Social Justice Resource Book**	Reading for Knowledge & Reading for Public Debate, Levels (Modules) 2–4
Comparing the poem & the historical account: ❧ Contents ❧ Purpose ❧ Text structure ❧ Language features		
Discussion of Homework: ❧ Speed copy the history article ❧ Find a book on Aboriginal life before the white invasion ❧ Compose two historical pieces from different points of view, one to be called "The Discovery of Australia", the other "The White Invasion"		Writing for Knowledge, Levels 2-4.
Class Summary and Evaluation:		

Happy 500th Anniversary?
1992 is a special year for Spain. Last month World Expo opened in the city of Sevilla and has attracted tens of thousands of tourists and business people from all over the world. In July, the Olympic Games will be held in Barcelona and this will draw more attention to the country.

1992 is also an important year for Spain because it is the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. At the moment there are dozens of new books being written about the event and three big multi-million dollar films being made about the explorer.

However, many people in the Americas feel less than excited about these celebrations. It is easy to tell this history of 'discovery' from a European point of view. The native people of the Americas see this history differently.

First of all, Columbus was no harmless explorer. He mainly went to the Americas in search of gold and had no problem with the idea of slavery. Columbus even forced the Taino Indians of Hispaniola to bring him an ounce of gold every three months. Those people who did not had their hands chopped off!

From 1492 until now the rich nations have drained the continent of its natural wealth, destroyed much of the environment, and left native people in the Americas among the poorest in the world.

Text as multi-generic and multi-discursive

The text above, "Happy 500th Anniversary?", is an article from **The World Times vol. 1, no. 2**, a newspaper produced especially for ALBE students on world issues. This article presents a native American perspective of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. Like so many texts, it is both multi-generic and multi-discursive. I considered it suitable for both Reading for Knowledge and Reading for Public Debate as it weaves background "factual" information and strongly worded arguments (the Subject Matter/Language/Structure strands), moving from the "voice" of the "objective" reporter to the "voice" of a passionate pro-native American advocate (the Tone strand).

Levels of text difficulty or levels of reading skill

Given the range of literacy abilities in the class, the reading activities I planned and encouraged spanned those described as desirable outcomes in Levels 2, 3 and 4. I am a firm believer that texts cannot be labelled as Text Level "Such-and-Such": it is what is expected of students, what is done with texts, that accounts for the levels.

Classroom reading and discussion activities focused mainly on increasingly sophisticated ways of identifying the main idea, recognising the basic text structure, recalling and connecting with own prior knowledge on the subjects mentioned, distinguishing between "information" and "opinion", describing and judging the writer's standpoint and expressing and defending own standpoint (the Comprehension and Critique strands).

Key questions for organising reading and discussion activities, and the later writing activities, included:

- ❧ Why is there a question mark in the headline?
- ❧ Why is "discovery" in inverted commas?
- ❧ What does the term "native people" mean?
- ❧ Why is 1992 special for Spain?
- ❧ How might native Americans see Columbus's arrival?
- ❧ How does this differ from the European point of view?
- ❧ How was the environment affected?
- ❧ How could the writer's claims be checked?
- ❧ How do the first two paragraphs differ from the last three?
- ❧ What is the writer's stance, and how can you tell?
- ❧ What language devices are used to achieve this effect?
- ❧ Can you think of similarities between Columbus's arrival and Cook's?

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July 2022

Signs of the Times

This is the text of, first, a one-hour keynote address and, later, a journal article.

It is a watershed piece for me. Before it, I saw myself as a committed adult educator. After it, I was seen as an advocate, a spokesperson, for our community. Many invitations to speak and write followed. People today still remind me of its power and timeliness.

Re-reading it now, I am proud of how well I crafted this piece, especially as I accepted the role at late notice as Rob McCormack was unable to speak due to ill-health. It brings together so many of the concerns on adult educators' minds at the time. I think that's why I could confidently begin with "we".

I did not use PowerPoint then but knew I needed some complementary visual companions. The simple OHT slides proved to be perfect markers along the way, providing breathing spaces between points.

This cry from the heart still stirs me. In retrospect, I see it as a credo or manifesto, staking a claim for our ideals and ethos.

In many ways, it was a watershed piece for our field as well. As time went on, humanistic educational ideals were trumped by neo-liberal agendas encapsulated in the triumph of competency-based training in all its limitations.

Signs of the Times (1993)

Keynote Address, VALBEC State Conference Melbourne
July 17, 1993
Later published in **Fine Print**, *VALBEC Journal*
Dedication: *Rob McCormack: analytical skills, originality, courage*
Acknowledgment: *Roland Maxwell for his succinct OHT graphics*

❧

We are living in hard times, perplexing times. The old "givens" are no longer there. Nothing is simple anymore. Funding sources come and go and the eligibility criteria change from one closing date to the next. Relationships between governments, industry and educators continue to take new forms and unexpected twists. Time with colleagues is getting harder to find. Former colleagues sometimes feel like rivals. The role of ACFE and the regions with respect to local providers is being fundamentally reshaped. Employment prospects for ALBE workers are precarious. Responsibility for ALBE curriculum, for professional development and for policy formation has been largely decentralized, some even say privatized. A whole new vocabulary, largely derived from economics, is in vogue. The academy has been taken over by the marketplace. As Rob McCormack describes it, "the boundary separating educational institutions and the rest of social life is increasingly permeable". Workloads and headaches are on the increase.

Looking to make our way through this maze, this flux, it seems the old signposts have lost their power: they have either decayed or are illegible or point us to a place that no longer exists. And so many new signposts, usually confusing, often conflicting, accost us on all sides. Sometimes it feels like they are screaming at us, stretching out to strangle us. "Competitive tendering." "Performance criteria." "Accountability." "Productivity." "Statistical quality control." "Free market forces." "Hard data." Roland's graphics capture their mixed messages so well. They constitute a throng growing ever louder and more strident… But do I detect contesting voices in there?

Today, in this time we have together, I'd like to concentrate on the subject of reading these signs, these signs that are pushing to redefine, redirect and (dare I say it) restructure our work. Where do these signs occur? How did they get there? What do they mean for us, as ALBE workers, and for our students? Where are they taking us? Do we want to go there? Are some more important than others? Are some dangerous, and to be resisted? Do we need to construct, or reconstruct, alternatives?

Another way of saying this is to ask: how good are we, people committed to adult literacy and adult basic education, how good are we at reading? Reading our students, reading official documents, reading the political environment, reading ourselves and each other, reading the signs of the times.

It is possible to think of every human activity as a text or a sign to be read. How good are we then at reading not only the print-based texts we cherish so much but, as well, all the non-print-based texts? Those texts, though often invisible or taken-for-granted, that are nonetheless powerful social forces? How good are we at reading the images and graphs and videoclips and videogames? As Michael Breen says:

> Whether we like it or not, for most young people their sources of information and creative engagement are not printed books. An investigation of the demands and capabilities of being literate in television, video creation, computerized tasks and other computer-based technology has become an urgent matter.

And, going a step further, how good are we at reading the un-spelt-out shifts in ideology, principles and priorities, both in the public and private domains? How good are we at reading the changing face of contemporary society, at reading what is happening internationally, nationally, locally, in the workplace, in the community, in the bureaucracy, at home? How good are we at knowing what this all means for our ALBE work?

As we all know so well, the reading process is a very complex one, involving a multiplicity of dynamic factors. How the text has been constructed. Why the text has been constructed. Who constructed it. Who, as reader, is deconstructing it. What has not been said. Take what I am doing now as an example. What am I at this moment? What sort of text am I? What stories am I including or excluding? What has constructed me this way? What are the consequences of this? And how good are you at reading this text "me"?

Of course, the answers to those questions are not simple. Thanks to post-structuralism and to post-modernism, we know that there is no such thing as a fixed identity. We are all made up of multiple subjectivities, and like texts, we can take up different selves and be different selves in different sites. Each of us can be read in many different ways. So, who is this speaking to you now?

I am not an academic with in-depth knowledge of a field, however much I wish I was. Nor am I a government representative, with set lines to speak and defend. Nor, sadly, am I a widely-read all-rounder. Who, then, are my selves? Which of my selves is speaking most forcibly in this context? The CAE employee? The Return to Study co-ordinator? The VALBEC member? The ALBE teacher and worker? The educational missionary? The campaigner for critical democracy and social justice? The feminist, and advocate of

multiculturalism? The tired mid-year multi-role ALBE project worker? The nervous novice lecturer? Certainly, bits of all of these, and other persona and roles and stances I'm probably not even conscious of.

And how did I come to be this multiplicity of stances and positions? The books I've read, the conversations I've had, the ideologies I've been immersed in, the heroes I've admired, the images I've absorbed, the responsibilities I have assumed, the experiences I haven't had. This means, inevitably, that whilst I've had access to certain stories, there's lots of stories I don't know.

We are certainly familiar with the notion that oppressed or disadvantaged groups have limited access to the key stories, to powerful language practices, but this applies to us too. Given what we can read is so closely connected to what we know, and that there's so much I don't know, I am keenly aware how limited my ability is to read others' stories, especially those most unlike my own, how impossible it is for me to be able to tell everybody else's stories. So, as I talk today, I am acutely conscious that what I am saying is determined by how I am positioned socially and that you, as listeners and readers, because of how and where you are positioned, will undoubtedly spot better than I can what is missing, whose story is not here.

Which brings me to asking: <u>who</u> are you? Whatever I say will be reshaped by you, by the stories, the texts, to which <u>you</u>'ve had access, by your prior knowledge, by the selves or personal or stances that define you here today. Are you a mixture of any of the following selves? An ALBE practitioner? A bureaucrat? An institutional representative? A departmental manager or program co-ordinator? A workplace tutor? A private provider? A volunteer? A newcomer to the field? A Paolo Freire devotee? A Frank Smith fan? A critical literacy convert? A competency-based training supporter? A competency-based training opponent? A scholar? A loather of lectures, particularly at 9.30 on a Saturday morning? Whatever the mixture, each of you will read something different from what this text embodied in me is saying to you today. You will also notice something different that's absent.

And so, coming back to the changing signs of our times, how do we read them? Who are we when we are reading them? Let's look a little closer at these barometers of the changing climate. What do they say, where do they occur and how did they get to be where they are?

The signs I'm referring to are those that point to forces intent upon making fundamental changes to the understandings we have had to date of our ALBE work. The following language is typically and regularly associated with, and embedded in, utterances extolling "urgently needed" educational changes. They'll be familiar to you. You'll have seen and heard them all before. They're almost everyday parlance, and in some places, they are what stand for common-sense.

Let me first of all read out my list of what I consider to be the most attention-demanding signs. As I read the list, don't try to remember each item. I'll pause to consider each sign separately in a moment, but first here's my list of the ten "To-Watch-Out-For" signs:

<div align="center">

"Skill formation"

"Observable, measurable outcomes."

"Stand-alone, self-access packages."

"Competency-based training."

"Practical, "how-to" trainers' manuals."

"The most cost-effective bid."

"The cheapest student contact hour."

"Sessionally contracted, highly mobile staff."

"Reduced program co-ordination overheads."

"Minimal bureaucratic interference."

</div>

These signs occur in funding guidelines and funding agreements, in conference brochures and conference papers, in official speeches, in government policy documents, in committee and project meetings, in minutes of such meetings, and are discussed in staff meetings and staffroom conversations, in newspapers and in current affairs programs on television and on radio.

These signs, these snappy slogans, come via and, with the authority of, a government spokesperson, an economic specialist, a powerful businessman, a senior educational manager or an anonymously-presented solemn-sounding government statement. They pop up consistently in discussions on labour market reform, on workplace reform, on economic reform, on industrial reform, on award restructuring, on the national training agenda. They are all different ways of saying "we need to become a more competitive Australia". To quote Martin Ferguson, President of the ACTU, in a 1991 article entitled "Literacy and Industry":

> Through improving workers' literacy and numeracy skills, we are talking about greater Productivity, Quality, Efficiency and Equity.

All written with capital letters and in that order.

As Rosie Wickert comments on this:

> Here is a shift from the traditional construction of the literate adult as someone able to read and write schooled literacy to the vision of a literate workplace with workers in possession of a set of competencies harnessed to the efficiency and effectiveness of industry in times of rapid change.

These signs, the catch-phrases I listed above, point to a view of education as the servant of economics, the handmaiden to economic success. As Chris Bigum and Bill Green say in their article entitled "Technologizing Literacy":

> There can be little doubt that the dominant ethos informing the "Green Paper" is that

of economic rationalism. Particular emphasis is placed on the relationship between adult literacy and micro-economic reform, and "illiteracy" is associated directly with unemployment…..English literacy skills", they go on, "are central to workforce training and skill formation and fundamental to the industry restructuring processes which will produce a more dynamic and internationally competitive Australian economy.

This view of education says:
<blockquote>
Learning is just like any other product.
The market will determine what will sell.
Let's see how cheaply we can produce it,
how smartly we can package it
and how profitable it can be.
Success will be measured by the size of the bottom line.
</blockquote>

It is a view that says governments should not intervene. That's usually condemned as interference. Market forces should decide. It's a view that says there's no need for government to be charged with the responsibility for maintaining a comprehensive overview of who has access to education, of who is included and who is excluded, of what is taught or not taught, of what is learnt, of who is doing the teaching and who is not. It's a view that says issues of social justice and enquiring education are old-fashioned, expensive and freedom-denying. It's a view that says that economics is the primary discipline, the ultimate reference point for judging all human activity. "Functionalism" is both its flag and password.

This view has emerged over the last few years, not so much with a fanfare as by gradual insinuation. It has left no key social or political site untouched. It's a matter of looking for clues here and there to piece together the overall plan and consequent implications. Let's go back and have a closer look at each of the signposts I mentioned before, signposts that I believe are clues we need to heed. Let's see what they mean for us as ALBE workers.

(DISPLAY "SKILL FORMATION" OHT.)

Skill Formation: This term is usually found in passages bemoaning the inferior quality of the Australian workforce. It is usually presented as a panacea to our industrial and economic ills. "Skill the people, and all will be well." However, there is often a problem with the way the word "skill" is used: so often the impression is given that a skill is a discrete action, easily located and described, and hence easily grafted on to any surface. Much like putting up a new towel rack. Maybe it is not coincidence that "skill formation" sounds so much like "drill formation".

Much has been written about the demands placed on, and the new skills required of, all of us by the changing nature of social life and, in particular, changes in the workplace. To quote Rob McCormack:

> Whereas within a Fordist regime, a worker can quickly be shown what to do, and simply repeat those actions interminably, within a post-Fordist regime, workers increasingly need to know and understand what they are doing and why, not just how.

As we know so well, the skills that are the core of our work, language skills, cannot be talked about as bits to be added on. We know from daily experience the complexities involved in acquiring linguistic, conceptual and intellectual skills, the foundations necessary for acquiring just about all other skills. Literacy skills, as James Gee says so eloquently, are not "just about language, and surely not just grammar, but the saying-writing-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations". Acquiring literacy, he maintains, is about the acquisition of discourses, of "ways of being", of "forms of life". Learning to read and write means learning to read ideas, values, ideologies and feelings. Learning to read and write means learning to take on the particular role, persona or stance required by any given text, social practice or social situation. Not something easily broken into neat fragments, to be slickly packaged and drilled. Not something formed in a hurry.

Certainly, we are dedicated to our students becoming more skilled, more skilful, but let's not read the word "skill" lightly. As Barry McGaw from ACER says:

> Some of the most important competencies may be the most difficult to define in ways that make the task of assessing them feasible. This

he cautions,

> … may lead to greater emphasis on those competencies that can be most easy defined.

Let's remember, when there's talk of skill formation and productivity, to be wary of any model that is based on the need for simplistic precision, above all else, and where anything not easily defined is omitted because nothing must be left to chance. "Skill" and "Productivity" can be read in any number of ways. Let's keep our readings far-ranging and multidimensional and complex as does the model of reading and writing that informs the blue and pink volumes popularly known as "the Victorian Frameworks".

(DISPLAY "OBSERVABLE, MEASURABLE OUTCOMES" OHT.)

Observable, measurable outcomes: These are given pride of place in the competency movement. They are seen to be the antidote to the poisons of poor teaching and unsatisfactory schooling, a sure-safe way of making certain people learn what really matters. It's simply, so the story goes, a matter of deciding what skill is required, of watching this in action and of noting down its features as economically as possible to simplify assessment procedures later on.

I don't think anyone here would question the value of being clear and explicit about desirable outcomes. We have always been committed to ensuring that our students can demonstrate

what they've learnt, though perhaps we've often found it difficult to be explicit about our well-based intuitions. I therefore welcome the move in our field towards a richer, more detailed description of what's involved in recognizing someone's progress in reading and writing. It is why I felt privileged to be able to speak on behalf of the field in composing the **Draft Competence Statements for Adult Reading and Writing**, statements that were an attempt to be quite explicit about valued outcomes. They did not restrict themselves, however, to only what you can see or measure easily.

As you will know, those competence statements are constructed in complex sentences, and deliberately so, to show and emphasize the inter-connectedness and inter-dependence of the multiplicity of linguistic and conceptual strands symptomatic of the literacy process. The tightly woven multi-textured strands and circles and patterns and pictures are intended to represent an indivisible and complicated reality, something impossible to express properly in unconnected, dot-point "outcomes" fragments. Yes, those statements describe "outcomes", but they resist the pressure to settle for unambiguous one-liners.

The main point I wish to make is that the observations, the descriptions and the measurements of outcomes are totally circumscribed by the person doing the observing, describing or measuring. In other words, they are totally at the mercy of how good the person is at reading the signs. However apparently simple any task or process or skill, the judgments made about what's involved are totally dependent on the interpretation made by the person doing the judging. This means that the determination of "observable measurable outcomes" is no simple, uncontentious matter. Interpretations, or readings, are made at several key points: at the point of writing the specific outcomes or assessment criteria, at the point of reading the written criteria and, again, at the point of judging the performance of the interpretation of the written criteria. As a field, just entering this new realm, it is timely we be mindful of the new and awesome responsibilities thrust on us as writers, readers, interpreters and judges of "outcomes". The quality and reputation of our work, not to mention the consequences for our students, are intimately yoked to how well we "read" the outcomes.

And what do we do about acknowledging the mental, invisible process of thinking that can never be directly observed, but only inferred. Whose judgment about desirable outcomes counts then? And how can brief, stripped-bare dot point descriptors of outcomes carry all this? Surely it's only years of practice, the built up knowledge and judgment required to competently "read between the lines", that provides the sophisticated reading of the indicators, a reading that confidently assures that something worthwhile really has been learnt. I find Hermine Scheeres' quote in the latest **ARIS Bulletin** a good note on which to end this section:

> Performance criteria in any element of competence only look at outcomes. The knowledge and understanding needed to achieve outcomes may not be assessable by observing outcomes only.

The validity of the **Certificates of General Education for Adults** will be determined by how good we are at "reading between the lines" in these eagerly-awaited documents.

After "skills", then "outcomes", there's the "materials". I'd like to focus on one form of materials that we are being urged to embrace enthusiastically.

<div align="center">(DISPLAY "STAND-ALONE, SELF-ACCESS PACKAGES" OHT.)</div>

Stand-alone, self-access packages: These are materials designed for independent learning, designed to give learners, we are told, mastery over their own learning. In some circles, they are seen, to quote Bigum and Green again, "as something of a saviour economically and pedagogically". They are commonly justified on the grounds that they give students the freedom to decide where, when and how much they want to learn. Undoubtedly they do, but which self can access these and what does that self need before he or she can even use them? At the very least he or she needs quite high-level language abilities, study skills and motivation, all pre-requisites that bar a significant proportion of our students. So only certain "hes" and "shes" can access "self-access".

As well, as they are designed to be "stand-alone", they imply no outside reference point is needed. I can't help asking whether there are knowledge and skills that simply can't be learned in this closed-circuit way. And the questions keep coming.

> Are there any significant needs or wants these packages can't meet, however self-contained they claim to be?
> What about the well-documented benefits of group learning?
> What about the place of negotiation, discussion, questioning, debating, challenging?
> What about the notion that there's never "one simple, right answer"?
> What about ambiguity, that mixed blessing that confuses and thus acts as a safeguard against over-simplification?

Of course, these questions assume a primacy of place for teachers as people who prize and foreground clarification, interrogation and investigation. These questions position teachers as people who are committed to asking questions and making connections, to ensuring that fragments are seen as part of greater wholes. Completely stand-alone, self-access packages definitely don't perceive teachers thus: for them, teachers are superfluous, expensive and risky. To quote from Bigum and Green's article once again:

> … what happens (with many commercially produced curriculum packages) is a mechanistic reduction of literacy into a hierarchy of constituent skills. In order to become "skilled", students must suspend their own particular worldview, background knowledge and existing linguistic competence… sacrificing technique to the directives of technology" (and the packages)… Students are "deskilled" and "reskilled" by technology" (and the packages), as previously acquired knowledge and competence are replaced by externally defined, transmitted, and tested skills.

I'd like to conclude this section by quoting at length from Jozefa Sobski's paper on "Vocational Education for Women". Whilst her comments refer to self-paced learning, as distinct from packages, what she has to say so crisply applies equally to them:

> One of the reasons we are going through industry re-structuring is to get rid of the Taylorist model in workplaces, yet we are adopting a Taylorist model into the education system. That's a classic irony. Some of the environments witnessed horrify me because they are not learning environments. They are not environments where human interaction and intellectual discourse is promoted….The worst example of the opportunity to interact with each other being denied is in self-paced learning where students are left to their own devices. "You've got the panel beaten out. Right. You've got it within a margin of this many percentage points. Fine. You're through." Whether you understand where the panel belongs, how the car is constructed, and what the sum total of the parts mean, whether you've had any discussion about what you felt while you were struggling with this panel, and whether there are other or better ways to beat out this panel, is another issue.

I am not saying there's no place for packages, workbooks and technology, quite the reverse. Look at our overheads to-day. But they are tools, adjuncts, useful supplements, and not the long-hoped-for-One-Off Perfect Solution to all educational problems. However glossy, they are certainly not the equivalent of, nor an adequate replacement for, a questing, questioning teacher. And so, to the next item on my list.

(DISPLAY "COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING" OHT.)

Competency-based training (CBT): This is the methodology often associated with forming and measuring skills, a much-promoted way for realizing the training goals desired. Again, despite the claims made by proponents of CBT and CBL that the specification of outcomes will result in a more rigorous system, as is now clear, it all depends how and by whom these terms are perceived, read and interpreted. For some, this term CBT means strictly sequentially arranged, modularized units, preferably "stand-alone self-access packages". For others, it means not really changing anything but simply repackaging and re-labelling what has always been done in such a way that they conform to the "rules of the game". Others, like Merilyn Childs, see CBT:

> … evolving a broader, more integrated and holistic definition, recognizing that training courses must develop the whole person ….able to use skills, abilities, knowledge and attitude effectively in their work environment and the community.

Leaving aside the not inconsiderable issues to do with education as distinct from training, what do competency-based approaches have to say to us? As I've already said, no-one here doubts we want our students and ourselves to be ever more competent. Other virtues as well: able to analyse, to question, to innovate, to synthesize and to take a stand, but competent

certainly. Maybe all these are already embodied in our definition of competence which, to come full circle, brings us back to a point we've reached many times before today: the power of the reading process. The signs are there: what matters most is how we read them. It is up to us, then, what we make of "competencies". Are we compliant readers, assuming there's only one handed-down meaning, or are we resistant, innovative readers, questioning the set lines, articulating neglected meanings, re-writing the script?

As Hermine Scheeres reminds us:

> The problems associated with the CBT approach are numerous. It seems to rest on the assumption that there is no necessary relationship between the variety of elements nor between the performance criteria. Each element and each performance criteria for each element is a discrete entity capable of being measured independently. The sum of all these parts and their associated performance criteria are meant to add up to a competent trainer or plumber or teacher.

The best teachers, or in the vein of this presentation so far, the most sophisticated readers, will see through and into and around and beyond the words on the page, will automatically fill out and give substance to the most minimally abbreviated one-liners presenting as elements or performance criteria. My concern is not with those long immersed in the field. It is with, and for, those people without depth of knowledge in our field who have nothing at their disposal but a list of skimpy, skeletal, disconnected fragments. How do these barely sketched out signs assist them in navigating the ALBE field? How do they know the diversity of curriculum routes available? And so, to the next item on my list.

<div style="text-align:center">

(Display "Practical, "how-to" training manuals" OHT.)

</div>

Practical, "how to" training manuals: Sometimes I get the feeling that the dream of some people with power in industry and in the bureaucracy is to streamline the messy business of education, including the educating of the educators, as follows:

a. Name your skills.
b. Pinpoint your outcomes.
c. Product your self-accessing, self-assessing, computer-managed packages.
d. As a poor second best, and only if you really must, deliver the CBT module.
e. And always, always, follow the step-by-step instructions in the training manual to the letter.

You might say, of course, that this is a gross parody, but parody or not, it's no laughing matter. The question of what teachers need in the way of resource materials is a very serious and significant one. Some would say that a checklist of classroom procedures and aids is all that's required – a plan, a list of the equipment needed, proformas of the records to be kept. Some would even go so far as to say that these curriculum documents should definitely be both a-theoretical and a-political. In other words, goes this view, teachers aren't interested

in abstract theory, in the intellectual debates going on amongst scholars, researchers and academics, debates to do with knowledge and social patterns and dominant ideologies. They are only interested, continues this view, in a pre-packaged and pre-formatted answer to "What do I do tomorrow?" And after all, this view goes on, in these straightened political times, isn't it safer not to mention politics and to concentrate on "How", not "Why" or "Why Not?".

Having participated in dozens of ALBE professional development workshops over the past year, I dispute fervently the contention that teachers aren't interested in theory. More than ever, I believe, as ALBE workers, that we are hungry, if not desperate for, contact with the bigger picture, for news of broad social developments, for overarching ways of talking about and locating our work intellectually, for ways of unearthing the theoretical positions too often buried or denied in curriculum documents. For, just as nothing is a-political, so nothing is a-theoretical. As James Gee puts it so succinctly, "Literacy is a socially contested term". Whatever choice we make, he says:

> … incorporates a tacit or overt ideological theory about the distribution of goods, and has important social and moral consequence. It is of concern that some literacy publications, some training manuals, don't declare their theoretical basis. Those texts that don't, or those that content that theory is irrelevant, above all need to be interrogated, need to have their silence, their cover position, put into words. I've come to be very, very wary about the instruction: "Keep it practical. Leave out the theory. Avoid any political overtones." It favours one particular political position while pretending not to.

Which brings me to the matter of money.

(Display "The most cost-effective bid" OHT.)

The most cost-effective bid: This sign is all about economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It hides a multitude of pitfalls, a sign that, for me, spells "Caution". When I see it, words that immediately flash up on my mental screen are "the cheapest student contact hour", "sessionally contracted, highly mobile staff" and "reduced program co-ordination overheads", words all too familiar to everyone here. It is the public face of pressures to conceive of our work in purely monetary terms, to convert our work into an essentially cost-cutting, money-saving, fund-raising exercise.

Nobody doubts the gravity of economic circumstances at present. Our students daily remind us how many people are living precariously close to the edge, engaged in a day-to-day struggle to keep a foothold. Nor does anyone I know disagree with the notion that we should spend public funds prudently and be prepared to account for and justify all expenditure. But to think the solution to our social and economic plight is to prune away educational program planning and co-ordination costs, to favour sessional teaching employment over permanent

employment, to privilege quantity over quality, is to ignore the disastrous educational consequences that inevitably ensue. Consequences that cluster around this currently much-heralded notion of "quality".

If funds are not available to enable co-ordinators and teachers to interview, place and provide out-of-class support to students; if funds are not available for ALBE workers to attend professional development; if funds are not available to plan and evaluate our practice in the detailed way that ensures good practice; if everything comes down to "How cheaply can we place a teacher in front of a class with a maximum number of students for "x" number of student contact hours?", how can we maintain, much less monitor, the quality of what we are doing? How, indeed, do we find time for anything but writing submissions and compiling data for the mandatory reports for a growing number of stakeholders? How do we contribute to the making and sustenance of a healthy ALBE community, in the long run the most powerful source and guarantee of quality assurance and quality control? How do we resist the growing tendency towards fragmentation, the forces at work to set us apart as isolated units in competition with each other? How do we remain mutually supportive colleagues for whom co-operation is a long-standing healthy habit? All these questions bring me to the role of the bureaucracy.

(DISPLAY "MINIMAL BUREAUCRATIC INTERFERENCE" OHT.)

Minimal bureaucratic interference: Let me say at once that I am no bureaucracy-basher. I believe passionately in the need for a well-resourced, suitably staffed, centralized government unit. I believe it is both proper and vital for such a unit to carry the responsibility for maintaining a comprehensive overview, for ensuring equity and for providing policy leadership and extensive program support. I don't see such a role, that of serving the public, as "interference". That is the word used by opponents of a powerful public service when they paint government intervention as inevitably stifling and restricting, hence the emphasis on the need for "minimal".

Whilst I don't believe it should be "minimal", and certainly support intervention in the name of social justice and the common good, I believe it is the work of the bureaucracy to actively resist pressures that threaten to make ALBE good practice "an endangered species". Require accountability, certainly. Expect reports on outcomes, certainly. But, as well, be mindful of the responsibility for providing the conditions whereby the good practice that ensures the good quality that generates the good outcomes can continue. Conditions that are genuinely practitioner-friendly. We must be vigilant so that the word "bureaucracy" does not come to mean a one-way street with only one right way and one right of way.

So, having come this far, having engaged with some of the key signs of our times, having

thought about how they are variously read depending on where you're looking from, I now ask, are there any signs missing? Are there others we'd like to see in there in the public domain? I certainly think so, and I'd like to finish by proposing we construct four new signs for widespread distribution. You can see them on the coloured pages on your seats around this hall.

"Reading and Reflection"
"Robust Literacies"
"Collective Action"
"Courage"

Perhaps, looking at these, it's more a matter of re-construction. Id' like to conclude with a few words about each.

Reading and Reflection

I began by saying we are living in hard times, in perplexing times. I also believe we are living in quite exhilarating times. Amidst the doom and gloom, perhaps born of it, are clear signs of promise, signs sometimes obscured by the ten signs discussed above, but signs that we ignore at our peril. What I have in mind is the exciting work of those contemporary thinkers who offer us new horizons, new visions, new readings. I am thinking of people like Rob McCormack here in Victoria, of Mary Kalantzis and Rosie Wickert in N.S.W, of Allan Luke and Pam Gilbert in Queensland, of Nancy Jackson in Canada, of James Gee in America, of Gunther Kress in England. And the procession could go on and on.

And let's not overlook our own peers. In a forthcoming publication of case studies of Victorian ALBE practice, sixteen ALBE practitioners describe how they interpret and have been implementing "The Frameworks", as they are popularly known. This work demonstrates powerfully how many

innovative thinkers, what fine theoretical activists, we have in our midst. Perhaps, more than ever, our beloved **Fine Print** has a responsibility to publicize life-saving signs of vigorous, rigorous thinking such as these, so we can read and reflect regularly.
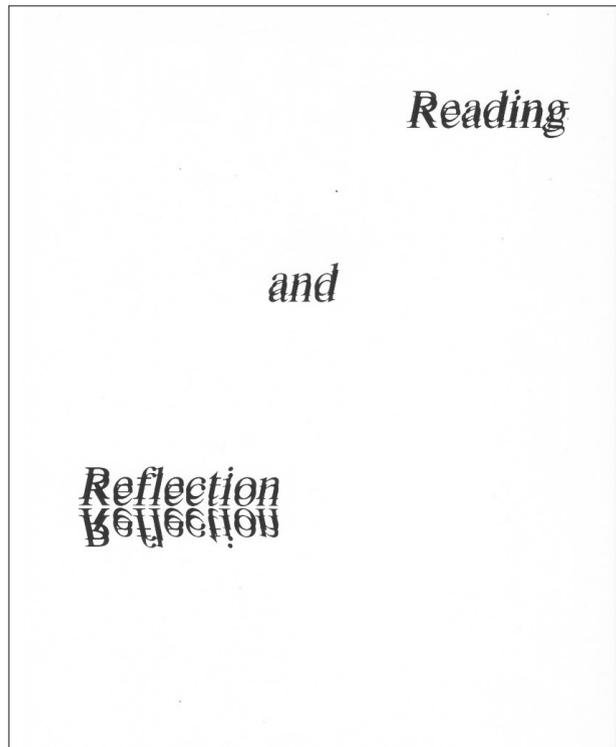
Robust Literacies

At the same time, we need to be constantly mindful of what is happening to that cornerstone of our work, the word "literacy", of how it is being constantly written and re-written, read and re-read. It's non-sensical to think I can add anything new to such a complex and colourful debate, but I am utterly certain that it's vital we articulate what "literacy" means to us, both as individual ALBE workers and as an ALBE field, and that we show clearly that we practise what we preach. If we prize critical literacy, we must model it.

At the Victorian Association of Teachers of English conference three weeks ago, at a workshop panel session, I heard three different answers to the question: "What does it mean to be literate in the 1990's?"

The first woman answered "being in the know", knowing the sorts of things people in power in your society know, having good networks with those who can put you in the know. The next panellist, a man, added "being brave enough to disagree with what's in print", to be able to question and reject teacherly expectations. The third panellist, a woman, summarized her own position as "being able to read and write the texts of our culture", having access to and able to use multiple literacies, being able to do a multitude of tasks to effect, including reading all the non-print texts in which we are constantly, if unconsciously, immersed.

These are certainly good starting points. I'd want to broaden this, to incorporate a few more. Ideas such as Mary Kalantzis' privileging of "critique, engagement and synthesis", or to paraphrase her, "learning to generalize, to interpret, to analyse, to critique and to apply knowledge; developing the intellectual processes we use to make meaning out of the otherwise random list that is life". As well, there is Gunther Kress' argument for:

> …intellectual, cultural and social, as well as economic, expansion… a multicultural arena in which participation focuses on a multiplicity of ways of seeing the world, of ways of being in the world… substituting the politics of the quick-fix with the politics of cultural change.
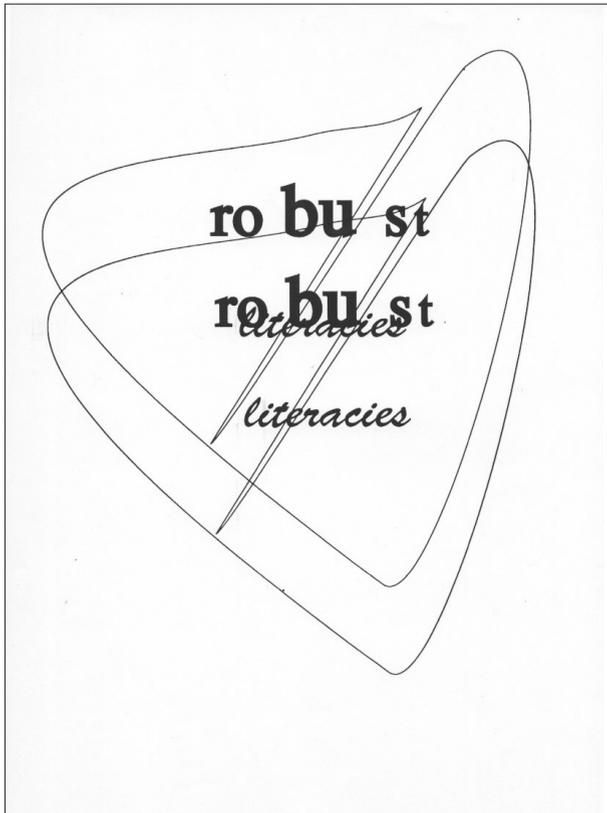
And, of course, Rob McCormack's pioneering conceptualization of the four literacies in which he sees:

> ... education as an occasion equally for cognitive understanding, ethical reflection, skills training and political engagement.

We *have* made enormous progress in our understandings and practices of literacies in the six years I have worked in the ALBE field. Gone are the days, thankfully, when lack of literacy was associated with sickness, with being crippled and in need of a miracle. Gone too, I hope, are the days when literacy workers saw themselves primarily as therapists, there to listen to problems and to grow self-esteem. Gone too, I believe, are notions of "natural language learning" that naturalize and universalize the discourses of the dominant group. Implicit models of teaching are being replaced by more explicit teaching approaches in the belief that literacy is explicitly about "enabling adults", as Rosie Wickert says, "to confront and re-write the identities that have been constructed for them". And this construction of identities applies as much to us as it does to our students. How are we being constructed and constructing ourselves? Which brings me to my third sign.

Collective Action

The chances for getting together with ALBE colleagues is getting harder and harder. The pressure to put on more classes, the lack of time and money for professional development, the need to write submission after submission, the fragmentation of employment modes. I've heard it said that this disintegration is not accidental: that it's a carefully planned strategy to keep educators apart. We must resist this at all costs.

If we are to maintain a robust interpretation of literacy and to practice robust literacies, if we are to remain robust ourselves, then getting together often is vital. An absolute necessity, not a luxury. It's not a matter of getting together to make sure we come up with the same stories or meanings: quite the reverse. It's a matter of debating, discussing and contesting simplistic, unambiguous

meanings, of encouraging a multitude of stories and meanings. Just like the very best classroom culture we can imagine. We have to do everything in our power to fortify our field and everything in our power to resist the pressures at work to disconnect, separate, isolate and disempower us. No opportunity to gather together ought to be missed. The use of this "ought" brings me into the realm of values, and hence to my last word, my last sign.

Courage

The word courage comes from the French word "coeur", heart. For me, being courageous means "taking heart:. I think we all need to be very courageous today. We need to know where our loyalties lie: with our students? with our employers? with the funding bodies? with our immediate colleagues? with the wider field? We need also to be crystal clear what our priorities will be when these loyalties conflict and compete, as they certainly do at present and will, even more so, in the foreseeable future. We need to be dedicated to continuously constructing ourselves as a robust and rigorous ALBE field, actively resisting attempts to silence and censor and diminish us. We need to insist on multiple readings and multiple approaches. We need to speak up and speak out. We need to become the critical listeners, speakers, writers, readers and thinkers we encourage our students to be. We need, such as at this conference, to be constantly reading and re-reading and writing and re-writing the signs of the times together.

But which self is speaking now? Given my own sense of priorities, I'd like to give the last word to me as the ALBE practitioner.

With all the ebb and flow, with all the anxieties abroad, with all the signs competing for our attention, let us never ever underestimate the power of the classroom, the power we share with our students to read and re-script the world.

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(Postscript: This piece was written as a keynote conference address and, soon after, published in **Fine Print**. No references were included at the time. Recent research has not been able to trace precise details for some of the sources.)

What's Your View?

This was one session in an all-day seminar.

I love metaphors and incorporate them as often as possible in my speaking and writing.

This piece illustrates once again my compulsive need to ask questions about why we do the work we do.

What's Your View? (1994)

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Just as there are many ways of seeing the world, so too are there many ways of drawing or describing the world. Given how we view the world largely determines how we depict the world, whether we are considering technology and science, sometimes called "techno-science" culture, or whether we are considering any other field of study, we have a responsibility to be mindful of the worldview, the point of view, that is shaping our picture of the way things are. These understandings are especially important for us as ALBE workers, for not only will they profoundly influence what texts we choose but also influence decisions about what to do with them and from what perspective. This point becomes most obvious when we look at and analyse the construction of atlases. I shall now scrutinise three different atlases to demonstrate literally and metaphorically the contention I am making.

The first atlas for consideration, the **Philips' Modern Commonwealth Atlas**, portrays the world as principally a PHYSICAL/MATERIAL entity. It concentrates primarily on factors such as geographical features, climate, vegetation and population. It allows the reader to know the temperature in July and January for pretty well anywhere on earth. Because it favours physical aspects, it could be said to be an essentially mono-dimensional view of the world.

The second atlas, on the other hand, the **Peters Atlas of the World: The Earth in True Proportion for the First Time**, provides 246 Thematic World Maps, not only on physical subjects but on SOCIAL themes as well. Certainly, climate and vegetation are included, but there are also global maps representing socio-economic matters such as languages, scripts, education (even the pupil-teacher ratio), communications, health, energy, industrial products, urbanisation, social order, unemployment, child labour, the status of women and relative military strength. This is clearly a more multidimensional view of the world. The social, the economic, the material and the physical are seen as inseparable, in fact, and are displayed as inextricably interconnected with each other.

The third atlas, **The GAIA Atlas of Planet Management: for today's caretakers of tomorrow's world**, opens with a dedication:

To the poor of this world, denied their share of the world's rich resources.

It goes on to expand this overtly political stance with the following declaration:

> This is no ordinary atlas. It maps and analyses a living planet at a critical point in its history, as one species, our own, threatens to disrupt and exhaust its life support systems.

This far-sighted, wide-ranging book is organised under seven sections deemed intrinsic to understanding and preserving life on earth – Land, Ocean, Elements, Evolution, Humankind, Civilisation, Management – with each section surveyed from three perspectives: "potential resources", "the crisis" and "management alternatives". The world is seen as multifaceted. This wholistic, multi-disciplinary perspective is portrayed via detailed commentaries that are accompanied by a wide range of culturally-inclusive drawings, diagrams, graphs, maps and photos. This multicultural, multidiscursive view of the world openly reveals its values: it not only presents its political position unequivocally but implies that a neutral, a-political, value-free portrayal of the world is both impossible and ethically irresponsible.

For us as ALBE workers, contemplating the place of "techno-scientific culture" in our educational practice, the parallels are striking. No matter what the particular focus, be it geography or biology or physics or chemistry or electronics or any other techno-scientific subject, key educational questions facing us are:

> Do we provide simple, one-dimensional, (PHYSICALLY SITUATED) texts? or
> More complex, multidimensional (SOCIALLY SITUATED) texts? or
> Problematising (inevitably complicated, messy) "multi" texts that engage us in issues of power (POLITICALLY SITUATED) as well as physical and social ones?

Just like the atlases above, what we choose to present, what we choose to include and to exclude as techno-science and the texts we choose to embody and justify this choice, will depend on our view of the world. A monodimensional view will result in monodimensional texts, with the danger of monodimensional activities and attitudes. A multidimensional view promises multidimensional texts, approaches and stances. Because our ways of seeing the world do mostly determine how we choose what technology and science to teach, in what way and from what perspective, it is imperative that we recognise the values and consequences embedded in our educational choices and practices.

One way of identifying our favoured view of the world is to study how our curriculum answers the following questions:

> Who gets in the picture? Who doesn't?
> What gets in the picture? What doesn't?
> Who draws the boundaries?
> Whose story gets told? Whose doesn't? Are counter-stories heard?
> Who says what's "natural"?

In recent years, as the atlases mentioned demonstrate, the subject of geography has expanded and diversified its notion of itself and hence its view of the world. In answering the above questions, "geography" now consciously works towards inclusion rather than exclusion, towards "multi" rather than "mono", towards seeing the physical and material in their social and political contexts, towards making implicit value judgments explicit.

Its transformation can be a source of great encouragement for all seeking to incorporate science and technology into ALBE practice.

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Multiple Images, Common Threads

I was employed for several months as a project officer for the "Good Practice Curriculum Project". It was a researcher's dream job, identifying, visiting and documenting exemplary adult education programs in community-based settings around Victoria. **Multiple Images, Common Threads** *is the 150-page publication that tells the story of this project.*

Great care was taken to be true to each educational site, both in the design of the book as a whole and in the design of the case study format. From the beginning, illuminating graphics were considered vital. The Karla Koori Co-op was employed to draw the cover image/mandala. The beauty and power of the cover move me every time I glimpse it again.

In following pages, I have included some excerpts from this document but I fear they may not do justice to the scope and complexity of the overall findings. As the cover illustrates, this account was written with each individual example seen as an integral part of the whole.

With that qualification, the four excerpts I have selected are the **Cover***, the* **Contents** *page, the* **Introduction***, to give historical context and philosophical justification, and a* **Case Study** *("Introduction to Child Care") to give a taste of the "good practice" in abundance and to show how the documentation looks in print.*

With the case study, you see a symbolic image (children at play), a key word ("Expansiveness"), a quotation, an introductory narrative and a detailed course profile organised around many headings.

Each case study follows the same pattern. Reading these excerpts outside the context of the full work, it may take a while to absorb the complexity of the design format (and its rationale) but I was keen to not oversimplify or underestimate the rich texture of each site.
Multiple points of view seemed obligatory.

Today, cherishing the work and workers celebrated here, I see this project as another example of the adult education community responding generously to local communities while struggling to attend to national directives threatening to minimise and undervalue their priorities and work.

Multiple Images, Common Threads (1995)

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CONTENTS

multiple images, common threads

case studies of good practice in adult community education

Delia Bradshaw

An Introduction – Reflections on Representations

Multiple Images, Common Threads is a collection of ten short stories, real life stories, about adult education in the community in Victoria in the mid 1990s. These stories offer everything short stories usually do – local colour, plenty of drama and a host of fascinating characters. They are not the only stories to be told about education but they are ten very good ones.

DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

At first glance, it may be their diversity and difference which is most striking about these stories. They are set in different geographical locations around Victoria – in the countryside, in inner-city Melbourne, on the outskirts of Melbourne, on the seashore and in regional towns. The drama comes through each story's unique and innovative response to the special adult education and training needs of its local community. They span course areas as varied as horticulture, furniture restoration, small business development for women, child care, advocacy, cultural heritage, women's issues, tourism and sport psychology.

The characters in these stories, for whom each course has been tailor-made to meet the needs of a particular population of adult learners, portray a wide range of Victorian adult educators and learners in action in the community. The collection can be thought of as a gallery featuring ten singular group portraits. Each portrait represents a unique mix of socio-economic, cultural, educational and occupational backgrounds, with ages ranging from 15 to 75. There are women-only groups and mixed gender groups. There are groups specifically for those with no employment history and groups for those retraining. While each has a clear subject focus, the group participants are as diverse as Victoria itself.

COMMONALITIES

So, although on the surface these stories or portraits may appear very different, a closer look reveals that they share a great deal – common histories, common values, common issues, common visions, common dilemmas and common resolutions. It is no exaggeration to say that whilst they look different, and each one is novel and distinctive, that they all share common preoccupations of the most fundamental importance. As the end of the twentieth century approaches, they implicitly ask us, just what exactly and precisely is the nature, the role and the future of adult education in the community (ACE) sector? In other words, each story invites us to respond to two key questions. What is the special and essential contribution the ACE sector can make? How, in a time of scarcity and tough accounting, is ACE to be most aptly justified – educationally, philosophically, ethically and politically?

These stories contain answers to these two burning questions. They make a powerful case for maintaining and strengthening adult education in the community sector now as well as offering solutions to current and future pressing adult education and training problems. These stories answer the two questions above by implicitly saying: "Here is an effective

and exemplary education and training model for the future". It is therefore of widespread significance to make their implicit answers explicit. It is the purpose of this introduction to do just that.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Before proceeding to elaborate on these tantalising questions and answers, some background information on the project which produced these stories provides a context for the analysis that comes later in this introduction.

The Good Practice Curriculum Project, funded by the Victorian Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) to be managed by the Adult Basic Education Resource and Information Service (ARIS), began in late 1994. A project reference group and part-time project officer (me) were appointed shortly after. The project objectives, as stated in the ACFEB project brief were to:
- collect and write up examples of good practice curricula used in the adult and community education sector in community-based providers;
- assist and encourage people in the adult and community education sector to share their curriculum;
- provide resources to the Adult, Community and Further Education Board for appropriate dissemination.

To achieve this third objective, it was specified that there be 10 examples covering a range of adult education programs.

From the outset, the project team understood that the project had to be specific about what it meant by "good practice". The first task of the project officer was to write a paper on this subject. The paper, **Criteria for Good Practice Adult Education Curriculum,** sketched clusters and patterns of good practice rather than drawing up an absolutist, decontextualized checklist. The paper was not written to provide an easy-to-use mechanistic tool for selecting or eliminating courses to be included in the final publication. Rather, it was an efficient way of summarising the latest thinking, both in Australia and overseas, on the matter of good practice in adult and community education. As a consequence, it also provided a sound touchstone for locating the courses that would be recommended by the reference committee.

How the ten adult education courses presented in this publication were chosen needs explanation.

SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES

At the first reference committee meeting, it was agreed that it was extremely important that there be a wide range of adult and community education courses represented in the project. In response, the project officer devised a matrix to guarantee that no significant and representative aspects would be overlooked. This matrix included variables such as learner populations, course types, program modes and accreditation status.

A little later on, to refine the selection process further, a set of organising principles was developed to capture more subtle aspects of the educational range and scope in adult and community education. It covered such matters as course frequency and intensity, formality of documentation, types of accountability, the life stage of the learners in the group, the purpose of the course, and the breadth and depth of subject matter. This second lot of variables was integrated into the first matrix, thus making it a much more comprehensive map of the field.

Each reference committee member was then asked to nominate several examples of adult education courses in the community they believed embodied good practice. Once the project officer had completed initial research on these nominations, in order to gather supporting evidence for the designated good practice suggestions, all the recommendations were plotted on the enlarged matrix to see if the broad spread of adult and community education activity was fairly well covered. Because this mapping exercise simply and dramatically revealed where there were clusters and where there were gaps, it facilitated the creation of an interim list of eligible case studies based on these two requirements of good practice and representativeness. Further committee discussion added two extra criteria for assisting the choice process. Research on these two matters, described in the next paragraph, lead to the choice of the final ten.

First, the course had to have been evaluated. That is, it had to be a "tried and true" course that had been run a number of times: it could not be in the planning or just emerging stage. Second, preference was to be given to courses not published or publicised elsewhere in the public domain. For example, ACFEB has funded two projects to document Competency-Based Training (CBT) courses in the adult and community education sector. They are the **Development of Existing Courses According to CBT Guidelines for Accreditation Project** (managed by the Colac Adult Education Group) and the **Curriculum Writing: Documentation of curriculum in competency-based terms for further education courses conducted in community based providers Project** (managed by Western Region Council of ACFE). The project committee preferred to refer readers of this project to the above two complementary curriculum projects rather than replicate by covering the same ground.

DOCUMENTATION AND FORMAT OF CASE STUDIES

Once all the eligibility criteria had been finalised, the sifting process began. Sifting through the recommended courses for variety, for maturity and for quality, plus the affirmative action strategy favouring courses not widely known, produced the ten stories contained in this collection, **Multiple Images, Common Threads**.

Some very fine emerging curriculum initiatives could not, regrettably, be included because they fell outside the eligibility criteria. Courses such as "Leadership Training for Rural

Women" at Tallangatta Community Education Centre, the open learning style "Introducing Native Vegetation into Farm Management" at Kerang Learning Centre, the "Archie's Creek Youth Enterprise Centre" auspiced by the Wonthaggi Community Development and Learning Centre and the "Lean Cuisine" at Upper Yarra are all promising curriculum initiatives. Together they add more weight to one of the key findings of this project, that the adult and community education sector is developing courses of sophistication of the highest standards. As well, they testify eloquently to another key finding of this project, that new models of adult education and training are evolving. They are of direct relevance and value to everyone who is concerned about the quality of education and training models both today and in the future. More will be said about the characteristics of these innovative models later in this introduction.

Once the ten courses had been chosen, the project officer visited the sites and practitioners involved. Meetings took up to a day, depending on distance, travel and other circumstances. As it was a high priority that the case studies reflect the voice and ethos of each practitioner, each adult educator was asked whether she or he wanted to write their own accounts or whether they wanted the project officer to do this on their behalf. All chose the latter option, knowing they would see and comment on the first draft account of their particular course.

A word needs to be said at this point about the way the ten case studies are represented (both visually and verbally) in this collection.

The beautiful **Multiple Images, Common Threads** cover, designed by the Karla Koori Co-op, depicts each of the ten case studies in visual form. They constitute a mandala that illustrates the inter-connectedness of their ACE aims and ethos. Each single visual representation is later featured on **the cover page** of the relevant case study.

Each of the ten cover pages also features an identifying **keyword** and **quotation**.

The keyword is displayed at the top of the cover page. The ten keywords featured – expansiveness, innovation, synthesis, co-education, responsiveness, explicitness, integration, autonomy, accessibility and belonging – are concepts that are present to a greater or lesser degree in each course in this collection. Singling them out by assigning one to each case study serves to spotlight a particular curriculum strength in that course, highlighting the distinctive way in which the good practice ideas are expressed or embodied in that story. The keyword chosen for each course is thus a way of applauding a particular strength or virtue of that course as well as building a bridge between the more implicit values of the story and the more explicit values articulated in the good practice criteria.

The quotation, at the bottom of the cover page for each case study, are the actual words taken

from conversations between the project worker and the people concerned. They are placed in a prominent position to give the voice of the adult educator or adult learner pride of place.

The comprehensive written documentation on the following pages is written in **two parts**.

Each case study opens with **a real life story**, a piece of narrative prose, designed to give something of the feeling and the flavour of the course. It is followed by **a course profile**, a ready-reference guide containing data of a more abbreviated, procedural type. The headings for the comprehensive course profiles are EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS (Philosophy, Aims, Length, Mode, Pre-requisites, Content and Methodology, Competencies/Expected Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria, Methods and Tasks, Reporting, Certification, Accreditation, CBT/CBL compatibility, Pathways and Evaluation), GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA, (Why, What and How), STUDENT PROFILE (with 11 sub-headings) and ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES (with 12 sub-headings).

Most of the terminology used in the Course Profile headings is quite self-explanatory but a few of the terms will benefit from clarification.

The expression "CBT/CBL Compatibility" in the course profile refers to the extent to which the course has been documented according to a systemic formula for describing curriculum such as the nationally agreed Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC) Template for course documentation, in other words, how much it is expressed in formulaic Competency-Based Training (CBT) or Competency-Based Learning (CBL) terms.

The course profile conveys factual information succinctly and economically whereas the story evokes some of the passion and colour of the social context. Of course, each story in the collection is not the "whole story", but it does try to draw attention to what is especially noteworthy about that course. Unlike the standardised course profile, the stories vary considerably in context and focus. Their form is shaped by the people most directly responsible for the success of the course as well as by the culture, the history and setting of the course, and not by a pre-determined interview schedule or recording format.

It almost goes without saying that both accounts, the story account and the profile account, provide views from quite different perspectives and so contribute quite different understandings. Either, on its own, would have been insufficient. Together, they go a long way towards doing justice to the complexity of adult education work.

An example of one of the case studies, "Introduction to Child Care", can be found at the end of this introduction. It displays all the visual and written elements – the symbolic image, the keyword, the quotation, the story and profile – mentioned so far (pp. 11-20, **MICT**).

CRITERIA OF GOOD PRACTICE

The "Good Practice Criteria" included in each of the course profiles are a distillation, in short-hand form, of the good practice curriculum patterns referred to in the **Criteria for Good Practice Adult Education Curriculum** paper mentioned earlier in this introduction. They provide a map and a common vocabulary for locating and talking about each of the stories. All the case studies in this collection meet each of the "good practice criteria" to a greater or lesser degree. The ticks next to these criteria, assigned after the stories had been written up, serve, as indicators on maps do, to point out features that are <u>especially</u> evident or prominent in that particular area of education.

TEXTURE OF THE STORIES

In trying to define the good practice curriculum factors common to all these stories about adult education, the most significant observation to be made by an outsider may not be apparent to the people close to the action. The courses are intricately textured. There is no quick and easy way of describing this intricacy.

They are **multi-purpose** in their aims – simultaneously embracing vocational, personal, intellectual, social, civic and cultural aims. They are **multi-discursive** and **multi-disciplinary** in approach and content – harmoniously integrating discourses associated with business, industry, the national training reform agenda, social justice, community development, the media, citizenship and personal growth; smoothly blending subject matter from a range of different disciplines such as economics, politics, literature, psychology, cultural studies, fine arts, sociology, information technology, mathematics and the sciences, including the health sciences. They are **multi-dimensional** or **multi-valent** in their understandings of discourses and disciplines – seamlessly interweaving saying, writing, doing, being, valuing and believing. They are multi-faceted in their methodology – giving equal attention and status to activities that contribute to skills development, language development, conceptual development, aesthetic development and ethical development; judiciously balancing student self-direction, group co-operativeness and teacher/tutor leadership and facilitation. They are **multi-form** in their outcomes – resulting in demonstrable achievements in skills, attitudes, behaviours and knowledge that are directly applicable to employment, further study, civic participation and family life.

SOME INFERENCES

Faced with this plenitude, such intricately textured adult education, what conclusions are to be drawn? One inference that springs to mind is that a significant adult education curriculum hybrid is evolving, a powerful new mix of ingredients that simultaneously fulfils personal, social, vocational, intellectual, civic and cultural aspirations. Here is curriculum that results in many-sided outcomes, without one perspective or agenda or focus dominating at the exclusion of all others. Even the simplest or most basic educational activity becomes an initiation into a

complex and sophisticated world of ideas and cultures and practices. It is tempting to say that this is true "multi-skilling", truly value for money, truly "value-added" education.

Whilst these courses pride themselves on their breadth, it is important to stress their depth as well. These are not superficial courses for dilettantes, trying to be all things to all people. They are subject-rich and subject-deep. In different contexts, different weight is assigned to different purposes and their related desired outcomes. In each individual situation, different emphases and combinations of civic, intellectual, social, personal, vocational and cultural perspectives emerge as different contextual priorities and different foci are given precedence. Sometimes the vocational takes prominence, sometimes the intellectual. And so forth. What is remarkable, however, is that traces of each of the six perspectives, purposes and outcomes are always present, if not always in equal measure.

This model has much to offer the whole education and training field as major changes sweep through most aspects of national and personal life, and the dangers, deficiencies and costs of narrow and rigid education and training approaches are more widely understood. The time is ripe for this powerful education and training model to emerge as sound and effective alternatives are being advocated and sought in a number of sectors of education. This move towards a more "integrated" curriculum is abundantly clear in many recent publications, and it is worth referring to some of these.

BROADER CONTEXT OF ADULT EDUCATION

A good starting point for this brief review of recent discussions on what makes for good practice in adult education and training is the **Adult Community Education Working Party Lifelong Learning Reference** paper, circulated for discussion in February, 1995. Its "Issues Paper", **Advice on Lifelong Learning Skills and Attitudes,** sets the scene by stating that:

> … there is increasing pressure internationally to provide individuals and economies with the capacity and confidence to thrive in the face of rapid change by actively developing lifelong learning policies and practices (p.4).

The Working Party defined the scope of its reference as:

> … to identify and describe those characteristics, structures and processes of education and training which encourage people to participate in and enable them to benefit from formal and informal learning throughout their lives (p.8).

Two of the seven questions it formulated to focus discussion were:

1. What characterises lifelong learning skills and attitudes?
2. What are the characteristics of adult community education that foster lifelong learning? (p. 2. Reference).

These Working Party questions are another way of posing the same questions at the heart of this project's investigations. The ten case studies and analysis in this collection are living

answers to the questions of national significance quoted above. The more abstract description of the attributes and activities of the ten case studies in this collection, their predisposition to be "multi" in so many ways, is an initial attempt to identify those learning skills, attitudes and outcomes that are indicators of good practice because they are of lifelong value.

Before proceeding to specify what else this project might contribute to the Working Party's discussion, it is worth noting, as other reference points for this project's findings, how other contemporary researchers and practitioners are exploring these questions around what makes for effective adult education, education that continues to be meaningful long after a particular course has officially finished.

The Candy report, **Developing Lifelong Learners through Undergraduate Education**, a National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) Commissioned report, a precursor to the **Working Party Reference** mentioned above, prefaces its profile of the effective lifelong learner by stressing the widespread relevance of its findings well beyond formal tertiary education. It says:

> Graduates have much the same learning needs as others in society at large…..part of this study has been an attempt to adduce some sort of profile to the qualities and attributes that are possessed by effective lifelong learners…to identify those aspects of learning competence applicable to all different sorts and contexts of postgraduate learning. On the basis of our study, including the submissions, the interviews, the readings, and our analysis of course documentation, we would suggest that the lifelong learner would exhibit the following qualities or characteristics to some degree:
> - An inquiring mind – a love of learning; a sense of curiosity; a critical spirit; comprehension-monitoring and self-evaluation;
> - Helicopter Vision – a sense of the interconnectedness of fields; an awareness of how knowledge is created in at least one field of study, and an understanding of the methodological and substantive limitations of that field; breadth of vision;
> - Information literacy – knowledge of major current resources available in at least one field of study; ability to frame researchable questions in at least one field of study; ability to locate, evaluate, manage and use information in a range of contexts; ability to retrieve information using a range of media; ability to decode information in a variety of forms: written, statistical, graphs, charts, diagrams and tables; critical evaluation of information;
> - A sense of personal agency – a positive concept of oneself as capable and autonomous; self-organisational skills (time management, goal-setting, etc);
> - A repertoire of learning skills – knowledge of one's own strengths, weaknesses and preferred learning style; range of strategies for learning in whatever context one finds oneself; an understanding of the differences between surface and deep level learning. (pp. 43-44).

The American adult educator Ira Shor, at the very beginning of his book **Empowering Education**, poses the following overarching questions, questions obviously very closely related to those raised by the other studies so far mentioned in this introduction:

> What kind of educational system do we have? What kind do we need? How do we get from one to the other? Can education develop students as critical thinkers, skilled workers and active citizens? Can it promote democracy and serve all students equally? (p. 11).

Again, these are alternative ways of covering the research domain covered by this project. What does Shor conclude are indications of good practice?

Shor contextualises his answers to his own questions by saying:

> In the conservative climate and hard times of the 1980's and early 1990's, students learned to see themselves as individual careerists, not as social beings and world citizens whose future depended on co-operation, peace, ecology and equality (p. 73).

He makes it quite clear that he believes it is the goal of adult education:

> … to relate personal growth to public life, by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry and critical curiosity (p. 15).

Like Philip Candy and colleagues, Shor is a strong advocate for students/learners developing a critical spirit. He describes his agenda of values for this empowering pedagogy as:

> Participatory; Affective; Problem-Posing; Situated; Multicultural; Dialogic; Desocialising (questioning social behaviours and experiences); Democratic; Researching; Interdisciplinary; and Activist (p. 17).

ISSUES OF COMPETENCY

Clare Burton, in the article "Equity and Competency Standards", part of a larger paper called **Equity Principles in Competency Standards Development and Implementation,** puts her mind to the question of how to make competencies, in this case employment-related competencies, as comprehensive and holistic as possible. It is another version of the good practice quest, another attempt to determine what assures quality in education and training and what educational factors make the difference between short-term, limited, narrowly focused effectiveness and long-term, transferable, broadly focused effectiveness. She cautions against focusing too narrowly when defining the concept of "competency" because:

> … how the term is understood affects how competency standards are developed and it affects assessment arrangements and methods (p. 24).

Burton's argument goes like this:

> If you believe competency assessment can be objective, then you are going to follow a well-known dictum, 'if you can't measure it, leave it out'. You are going to be focusing on clearly definable and tangible outputs, rather than on broader outcomes, and you are

going to pick out of a performance the skills and knowledge requirements which can be observed in use. In the process you end up with an invalid set of standards, because you have ignored aspects of the results of performance that are critical, particularly from a quality point of view, and from a longer-term effectiveness point of view. What this view of competency – this view that you concentrate on the observable and measurable, leads to is

❧ a focus on discrete tasks
❧ the exclusion of "hard to measure" competencies
❧ a focus on definable, tangible outputs. (p. 27).

Burton's paper warns that the so-called "soft" competencies, the higher level and harder-to-assess competencies, are ignored at our peril. More and more it seems, it is these very competencies that are the ones that distinguish good practice. They are the ones mentioned by the Candy report, the ones mentioned by Shor and the ones identified as the key to deciphering the secret of success in each of the case studies in this collection.

CORE VALUES OF LEARNING

In a "Conclusion" to Janine Rizzetti's **More than Just Words: Good Practice in Literacy Provision in the Koorie Vocational Context**, a recent TAFE publication, Anne Bambrook also has an answer to questions about what adult education curriculum practices ensure the best educational outcomes. She says:

The 'secret' ingredient in Koorie learning situations rests with the quality of the relationships upon which the program is based…It may sound trite, and perhaps even heretical in a training milieu dominated by key performance indicators, activity measure, outputs and outcomes, to speak of those 'soft' words like humour, understanding, compassion and sincerity. This is not the language of the 90's and particularly not the language of the training reform agenda. And yet the values and human face of the training system are what Koories search for first in their learning experience. What flows with seeming ease from these core values are the content, the skills, the competencies and learning outcomes of a particular subject, module or course. But the core values come first… Good practice in Koorie programs is not solely about professional educational practice. It is about acquiring fundamental understandings (pp. 84-85).

This project, and the other studies cited, agree that Bambrook's analysis and her conclusions hold true for all adult education learners and settings and that, along with all the other forces identified as vital to the eco-system of "good practice", the influence of certain human qualities must never be underestimated or forgotten.

ADULT EDUCATION AS ECO-SYSTEM

It is fitting, given its complexity and diversity and inter-connectedness, to talk about adult

education in the community as an eco-system. Musing on this apt metaphor will provide an ideal way to bring attention back to the multiple images and common threads that make up the stories in this book, an ideal way to spot and focus on what really accounts for the sense of wellbeing radiating from these courses.

An eco-system is an environment in which all the elements, all the currents, all the influences interact in a dynamic and interdependent way. It is where diversity thrives, in fact, where diversity is essential for abundant life. This collection, and each story within it, are energetic micro-ecosystems, in which quite different forces, some might even say opposites, co-exist dynamically, harmoniously and co-operatively. In each of these educational sites, theory and practice, talking and doing, general education and vocational education, the emotional and the rational, analysis and action, work and leisure, economic development and social development, hobby courses and work readiness are not seen as contesting, irreconcilable binaries. Quite the opposite. So-called polarities are not in competition but are supportively woven one into the other. They are sites where polarities, binaries and opposites are reconciled. Like any healthy eco-system, they are sites where this diversity of forms, forces and activities need to be present and active, if life is to be sustained at its fullest.

In agriculture, it is conceded that monoculture is achieved at a very high cost to other life forms. In society, it is also recognised that monoculture, the domination of one life view and one life form over another, can only be achieved by relentless destruction. These adult education courses can be thought of as multiculturalism in its finest form, as flourishing socio-cultural eco-systems where learning dissolves boundaries and is not fenced in by the either/or choices of monoculture.

Trying to re-create these highly complex forms of life, either in writing or in educational practice, is no easy task. Different representations embody and point to different viewing positions and different values positions. This publication of true life curriculum stories deliberately features a variety of representations, thus providing a wide range of viewing positions for observing the emergence of new meanings in adult education. In the article **No Time for Nostalgia**, Gunther Kress argues that:

> A curriculum is a design for the future. It predicts and shapes the future of a society and its citizens (p. 12).

The designs and patterns embodied in **Multiple Images, Common Threads** suggest that much of Victoria's future is shaping up well.

A full bibliography can be found on pp. 142-144 at the end of **Multiple Images, Common Threads.**

INTRODUCTION
## TO
CHILDCARE

Wingate Avenue Community Centre
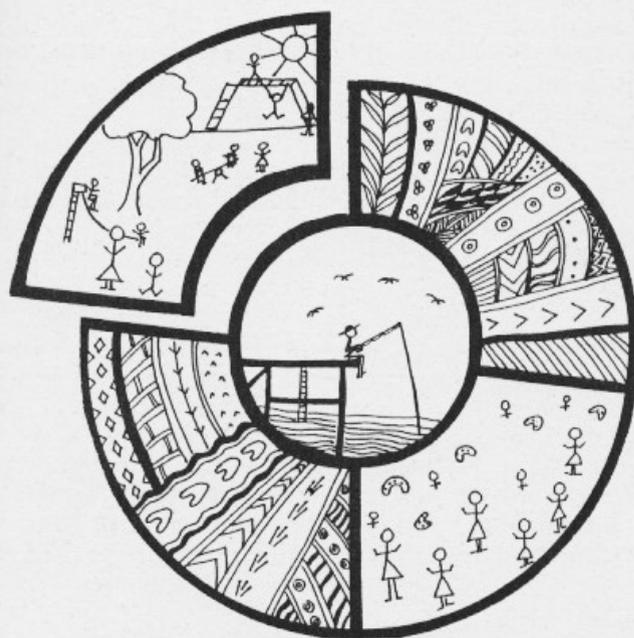
"In order to have a life, you've got to have choices.
The more knowledge, the more choices, the greater the mileage."

"The more knowledge .... the greater the mileage"

EXPANSIVENESS is a word that springs immediately to mind when thinking of this Child Care course run in the midst of a public housing estate in the inner-city Melbourne suburb of Ascot Vale. It began 3 years ago as an 18-hour course, then spreading over 8 weeks and averaging 2 hours a week with a one day work placement. Since then, it has evolved into a course of over 150 hours, now spreading over 17 weeks and averaging 9 hours of classes per week with a two week work experience placement.
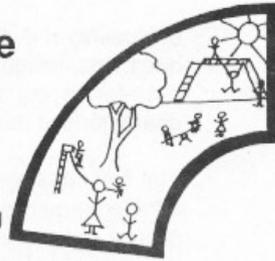
But it is not only the size of the course that has expanded. So have the scope and depth and complexity of its content and outcomes, as is clearly evident in the detailed curriculum documents prepared by the participating tutors.

The course came about in direct response to an immediate need in the Centre to provide a readily accessible, locally situated, childcare course for the staff in the Wingate Avenue Community Centre (WACC) Occasional Childcare Centre. Given the wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds represented by the women participants in the course, from the very beginning the group's multiculturalism has been seen as an educational asset providing unlimited learning opportunities.

This cultural diversity, and the broad range of knowledges and practices it embodies, has always been seen as a notable feature of the course. Certainly never a problem. And given the significance of developing English language skills as a course objective, it was decided that this aim would be best realised by incorporating, not denying, the womens' cultures. Storytelling was chosen as the most promising way to achieve this, and it has proven to be so.

The storytelling sessions, featuring lots of reading and talking, are placed early in the course to give the women students an immediate experience of speaking up and taking charge. Sometimes, women mime the stories that others are telling or reading. Sometimes, different groups of women are given the same illustration from a children's book, and asked to act out their own interpretations of that same picture. At other times, women perform stories, both in English and in their mother tongue, from their own childhoods. In the tradition of the best adult education principles and practices, this simple structure allows for an endless variety of purposes and achievements, resulting in women becoming stronger psychologically, culturally, linguistically, conceptually, artistically and vocationally. Not only is their cultural identity being affirmed, but they experience first-hand the value and power of storytelling for a diverse range of life and work situations.

This approach means that by the end of session six, only a third of the way through the course, they have expanded not only their repertoire of childcare skills but also their sense of self, their sense both of who they are and of who they might be. These early sessions provide a firm foundation for the Music, Movement, Art and Craft activities that follow, all of which embody and reinforce the same expectations and outcomes as the storytelling sessions.

Given the extent of the learning that is occurring, times for reflection and review are built into the course at regular intervals. This encourages the habit of automatically

Childcare

evaluating attitudes, activities and services. It provides the opportunity to put questions, insights and understandings into words. It ensures an inextricable link between theory and practice, between action and reflection. Such rigour characterises the course from the very first day.

The first session in the course immerses the participants at once into the roles and thinking required of childcare workers. Firstly, the women are asked to draw, in groups of four, what they think a childcare centre looks like. Later, they are asked to design a menu and, finally, a week's program. Each group of four, the composition of which changes from task to task, presents and explains its proposal to the rest of the class. By the end of this 3-hour session, everyone has met everyone else, has worked with everyone else, has played a number of different roles, has made a presentation, and has well and truly begun her apprenticeship as a childcare worker. Later in the course, these same first-day proposals are re-visited, serving as a very effective measure of the womens' expanded knowledge and skills.

Vocational education and training of such a high standard is not something always associated with neighbourhood houses. In fact, trying to convince larger institutions that neighbourhood houses should be taken seriously as vocational and educational training centres takes a lot of the co-ordinator's time as she tries to gain access to the funds, the resources and the agencies traditionally associated with TAFE Colleges and universities. Yet, she sees it as imperative that she continues to make these links.

As of writing in April 1995, this course has not been accredited. The co-ordinator certainly sees course accreditation as an important future step, but not at any price. She is presently considering the various accreditation alternatives, looking for one that honours the course processes that have developed for a host of good reasons, looking for one that does not disable the course by dictating inappropriate criteria and formats, looking for one that does not curb its fluidity and expansiveness.

It was when discussing this matter that the co-ordinator exclaimed with some passion: "In order to have life, you've got to have choices. The more knowledge, the more choices, the greater the mileage." This could almost be the unwritten motto of this course. It has certainly opened up new horizons for its many women students, taking them further afield, both literally and metaphorically, than they've ever been since coming to Melbourne, enabling them to move into new communities, new courses and new jobs.

The special features of this Child Care course are well encapsulated in the concept of EXPANSIVENESS. This adult education course admirably demonstrates this aspect of Good Practice Curriculum in action because it:
*   reaches wide in its commitment to include a wide range of cultural activities, styles and approaches
*   embraces and attends to the wide range of expectations, emotions and experiences participants bring to class
*   stretches each subject area to its fullest potential by incorporating language and literacy, cultural and vocational objectives into the whole curriculum and thereby achieving multi-faceted outcomes.

Educational Characteristics

Philosophy

The co-ordinator believes very strongly in learning English in context: hence her careful choice of both staff and activities that consciously incorporate English language development into every aspect of the curriculum. She gives storytelling a pivotal role in the curriculum not only because it strengthens English language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as personal skills such as self-confidence, but also because it strengthens multiculturalism. Quite specifically, it encourages and enables the sharing and recording of stories from many different cultures.

Aims

To acquaint participants with:

- a full range of the skills and issues involved in the provision of childcare services
- the possibility of childcare as a profession or as an area of further study
- the opportunity to gain paid employment with the WACC Occasional Care Program, or somewhere similar

To provide a wide range of social and vocational contexts for developing participants' English language skills

To provide opportunities, via storytelling, music, movement, art and craft , for individuals to develop greater confidence and self-esteem

To enable participants to develop practical ways of preparing and presenting art/craft, music/movement and storytelling activities to children.

Development stage

As of April 1995, the course has run 5 times.

Length

17 weeks x 9 hours per week (over 3 days), plus 2 weeks' work experience placement.

Mode

Face-to-face: ✓
1:1:
Group: ✓
Distance:
Self-access:

Prerequisites

Survival English and an agreement to 80% attendance.

Content and Methodology

The 17-week course has 3 x 3 hour sessions per week, consisting of formal presentations, workshop sessions and field trips. Literacy support and multicultural perspectives are integrated into the curriculum throughout the duration of the course. Students' life experiences are drawn out and built on in all aspects of the curriculum.

Childcare

The topics covered are:

Week 1: Course Outline; Storytelling 1; Designing a Safe Childcare Environment

Week 2: Storytelling 2; Guidelines and Regulations

Week 3: Excursions to observe Footscray TAFE and to visit Reverse Garbage; Storytelling 3; Daily Care and routines

Week 4: First Aid; Storytelling 4; Challenging Behaviour

Week 5: Art & Craft 1 (Introduction; Playdough); Storytelling 5; Ages & Stages

Week 6: Art & Craft 2 (Painting and Drawing); Storytelling 6; Multicultural Issues

Week 7: Art & Craft 3 (Sand, Water, Clay); Special Needs; Preschool Music 1 (Songs)

Week 8: Art & Craft 4 (Collage and Recycling); Resources for Childcare Workers; Preschool Music 2 (Percussion)

Week 9: Evaluation/Follow-up; Preschool Music 3 (Movement, Games, Folk Dancing and Music from Many Countries)

Week 10: Art & Craft 5 (Junk Toys and Recycling); Excursion to Prahran TAFE Multicultural Resource Centre; Preschool Music 4 (Planning A Music Session)

Week 11: Art & Craft 6 (Summary; Books and Resources); Preparation for Work Experience; Preschool Music 5 (Putting It All Together)

Weeks 12/13: Work Experience Placements

Week 14: Excursion to observe Lady Gowrie Childcare Centre; Review of Placements; Developing Multicultural Perspectives

Week 15: Creating Nurturing Environments 1; Review of Environment, Nutrition and Other Services; Follow-up of Students' Needs or Interests

Week 16: Creating Nurturing Environments 2; Job Search Skills, Further Education Options; Writing a CV

Week 17: Program Planning for Childcare; Evaluation of Course; Presentation of Certificates

Week 18: Assisted Access to Word Processing Facilities for Job Applications.

The Storytelling component, something unique to this course, develops students' English literacy abilities at the same time as modelling ways of introducing young children to stories and books. This includes using and practising simple storytelling crafts such as eye contact, repetition, movement and sound, varied vocal delivery and pacing, thus introducing participants first hand to an understanding of the importance of the non-verbal aspects of storytelling. In the process, whilst allowing students to practise previously unfamiliar behaviour such as addressing a group or acting out situations in a meaningful and safe context, it boosts their literacy abilities such as scanning, reading aloud, researching and finding a personal connection to a piece of literature.

In a similar way, the Art/Craft activities provide a variety of hands-on experiences to explore, experiment and be creative. Likewise, the Music and Movement activities, by providing first-hand experience in singing, folk dancing, movement, games, puppetry and playing musical instruments, widen each participant's repertoire of physical, psychological, social, cultural and vocational abilities.

Competencies/Expected Learning Outcomes

To demonstrate competence in:

- knowing the appropriate legal guidelines and regulations for childcare services

- providing a safe and nurturing childcare environment
- planning and organising a range of multicultural activities (eg storytelling, music, art and craft) for preschool children in childcare
- submitting job applications for childcare positions.

Assessment Criteria, Methods and Tasks

Students are assessed according to the specified expected learning outcomes and must successfully complete the following tasks:

- a test on the appropriate legal Guidelines and Regulations related to childcare services
- the preparation and presentation of an activities program
- the production of a well-presented job application, consisting of both a CV and a covering letter
- consistent contribution to the regular Course Review sessions
- satisfactory performance in the WACC playroom or other Workplace Placement.

Reporting and Certification

A WACC Certificate, detailing the topics covered and work experience undertaken, is presented to all who satisfactorily complete the course. This certificate, providing documentary evidence of what has been learnt for future study and employment purposes, is regularly used as a reference.

Accreditation status

Whilst this course is not presently accredited with a registered body, accreditation with a suitable agency is a high-priority goal of the course planners. The course co-ordinator is currently surveying and assessing the most suitable alternatives.

CBT/CBL compatibility

Whilst the course is not currently written according to a formal CBT/CBL format, it is hoped that this will soon be achieved, time and resources permitting.

Pathways

The course provides a pathway to further study such as childcare-related TAFE courses and maternal and healthcare courses, to employment (especially in the WACC Occasional Childcare Centre) and/or to English classes.

Evaluation

The evaluation form distributed to students at the end of each course has evolved over time. The current sheet invites students:

- to circle 3 words which BEST describe their feelings about the course from a large selection of given words. Words such as "satisfied", "angry" and "delighted" are randomly scattered over nearly half a page.
- then, to give a brief reason for choosing each word.

The means of documenting student outcomes as concrete evaluation of what has been achieved also continues to evolve. Sometimes stories told in class are published as a booklet for distribution both within the class and to childcare workers in other settings; at other times, the stories, accompanied by photos and drawings, are displayed in full colour on the Centre noticeboard.

Childcare

Good Practice Criteria

Why
Individual fulfilment: ✓
Material sufficiency: ✓
Cultural belongingness: ✓
Social justice: ✓
National wealth:✓
Global awareness: ✓

What
Wisdom, not just information: ✓
Bodies of knowledge, not just facts: ✓
Crafts, not just skills: ✓
Sensitivity, not just behavioural acts: ✓
Values, not just attitudes: ✓
Rigorous thinking, not just flexibility: ✓

Social contextualizing: ✓
Inclusiveness-perspectives, content, practitioners: ✓
Demystification: ✓
Community development: ✓
Multi-discursiveness: ✓
Innovation in response to socio-economic changes: ✓

How
Fosters empowerment/co-existence/enablement: ✓
In whose interests?: ✓
Self-direction & autonomy and co-operation & community: ✓
Student involvement-decision-making & on-going evaluation: ✓
Compatibility between the publicity and the learning: ✓
Sufficient, fair, valid, reliable assessments: ✓
Recognition of prior learning: ✓

Student Profile

Reasons for enrolling
- To acquire basic child care knowledge and skills for family, study and vocational purposes
- To improve parenting skills
- To become acquainted, in a familiar and friendly local setting, with the possibility of childcare as an area of further study
- To prepare for employment as childcare workers at WACC, or similar childcare providers, where formally accredited qualifications are not required.

Reasons for enrolling now
An urgent need to find employment or qualify for study.

Age/Life stage

16-60, from recent school leavers to grandparents.

Gender

100% women to date, but men are accepted.

Ethnicity and Cultural background

A very wide range of cultural backgrounds, including European, Asian, Middle Eastern and African.

Language

A wide range of language abilities, with varying competence in speaking, reading and writing English. All have ASLPR 2 in oracy.

Educational background

A wide range of educational backgrounds, from minimal or no formal schooling to post-secondary qualifications.

Occupation

All are currently unemployed with little or no paid work experience in Australia.

Income

All are in the lower income range, and mostly concession card holders.

Residence

All live in the inner city regions of Melbourne.

Vocational issues

Most are attending this course hoping to gain employment.

Administration and Resources

Provider

Wingate Avenue Community Centre (WACC)

Address

13a Wingate Ave, Ascot Vale. 3032

Fax

(03) 9376 2676

Contact

Jeanette Goedemoed, WACC and Course Co-ordinator

Policy factors

The WACC Occasional Child Care Staff Policy states that its workers must agree to complete this course.

Childcare

Funding sources

Over the years, funds have come from a variety of sources, including Commonwealth Adult Literacy Program (CALP), Commonwealth Growth, Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE), Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) and WACC. Finding the time and funds needed for co-ordinating a course of this scope, size and complexity is an on-going challenge that requires considerable ingenuity.

Cost to student

$20 (Concession $10) as Service Fee.

Staffing

1 Course Co-ordinator
Professionals from various childcare agencies
10 sessional tutors, comprising a team of specialist teachers for Storytelling, Art & Craft, Preschool Music and Movement, Multicultural Issues and Child Development.

Equipment and facilities

Toys, craft equipment, computers for producing CVs and for typing up speakers' notes for student reference.

Texts

Tutor-made and ready-made information sheets, brochures, a wide range of children's books, including one class set.

Other resources

Childcare organisations such as VICSEG, Playworks, Multicultural Resource Centre, Essendon Council Centre.

Physical constraints and solutions

The difficulty of finding classroom space three times a week in this very busy Centre generates a need to identify and organise educationally and vocationally justifiable out-of-class activities.

July 2022

Putting on a Performance

This is another example of my writing having several lives, first as a keynote address and later as a journal article.

My love of metaphor (playing with the conference title) comes to the fore here as does my increasing ardour for complementary visual images.

My call to be alert highlights once more the tensions, becoming more pronounced at the time, between humanistic education and mechanistic training.

Putting on a Performance (1996)

Opening Address, ANHLC Annual Conference, **"A Flying Performance"**
Dookie, Victoria
March 27, 1996
Later published in **Open Letter: Australian Journal for
Adult Literacy Research and Practice,** *UTS Publication*

It's never easy putting on a performance. No matter what sort of performance – no matter what the role. It might be chairing a meeting, welcoming newcomers, taking a class, publishing a newsletter, or making a presentation such as this. Whatever the occasion, it's never easy. Let's take a quick look at what's involved.

There are commonly three stages.

First, there's the preparation stage: the behind-the-scenes work. This is the time when concepts are clarified, initial drafts are made and the shape of the final form is determined.

Second, there's the performance itself. This is the time when energies are focused, spirits are high and the work is presented for public scrutiny. These times can be highly-charged moments with the potential for making very powerful connections. In the finest performances, they are moments of unforgettable revelation when the whole world is seen in a completely new light, creating memories and meanings that stay with us forever.

And *third*, there's the review stage: the post-performance evaluations. This is the time when private and public judgements are made, by both performer and audience, as to the worth of it all.

Although I've been speaking for barely two minutes, I have a hunch that many of will have already visualised a situation – or a series of situations – prompted by my words so far. I feel sure that each of you, even at this very early stage, has some sort of performance already playing inside your own head. It may be a performance of your own, or it may be someone else's. This mental re-creation inside your head may be conjuring up pictures with positive associations, creating a cosy warm inner glow, or it may be stirring up negative associations and emotions, a cause of discomfort and dismay. This internal performance may be a source of exhilaration or a source of disgust. Or, what is probably most likely, it may be generating a messy confusion of mixed feelings. In just the very same way as the word "performance" itself does.

It's a very slippery word, this word "performance". In preparation for this presentation, I visited three quite different libraries. In each, I set myself two tasks. The first was to see what titles were listed under the catalogue subject heading "performance". The second was to skim through each of the texts mentioned, paying particular attention to entries for "performance" listed in the index of each publication. I made a point of tracking down each reference.

You can imagine the range of texts and titles and definitions to do with "performance" that I found. To give you a taste, let me read out the names of a few of the books I came across. There was **Appraising Performance for Results** and **Performance Art – From Futurism to the Present** and **Benchmarking Staff Performance** and **Performance – Revealing the Orpheus Within** and **Managing Performance at Work**. The more I read, the more difficult became the task of defining this ever-changing word of many colours, this elusive concept that points first one way and then another, often suddenly changing direction without notice.

"Performance" is a word that can draw forth almost contradictory images at one and the same time. It can evoke memories of the most sublime artistic performances alongside memories of inscrutable graphs and invasive surveillances and acts of cunning and deceit. Performance is a word that encompasses Rudolf Nureyev and Sweet Honey in the Rock and Jacqueline du Pré in the same breath as Performance Drivers, Performance Standards, Performance Equations and Performance Measurement. A very slippery word indeed.

I plan to return to the matter of definitions a little later in this talk. Before doing that, however, I want to consider performance in relations to the day-to-day comings and goings of our working lives. I want to look at some of the ways we, as adult and community workers in the mid 1990s, are expected to, or choose to, put on a performance. What I am about to do, taking the time to identify and name the myriad roles that we are all performing, possibly even unconsciously, will necessarily take some time if I am to do your work justice.

I shall begin this exploration with a description of work roles that I made for a seminar on assessment for adult literacy and language workers in July last year. The seminar in question bore the far-ranging title **Assessment Practices, Recognition of Prior Learning and the National Reporting System in Adult Literacy and Language**. I had been asked to conclude the day-long seminar by summarising the day's proceedings, its key themes and noteworthy outcomes. (A challenging performance, from any point of view). Given the seminar topic, or should I say topics, I thought it apt to encapsulate my comments at the end of the day in the form of a certificate I had prepared for distribution to all present.

The opening words of the certificate that I prepared for that occasion read:
    This is to certify that so-and-so is thoroughly and completely versed in the theoretical and

practical aspects of Assessment Practices, Recognition of Prior Learning and the National Reporting System in Adult Literacy and Language. Indeed, so-and-so can be said to display the aptitudes of magicianship. This was demonstrated, (the preamble continues), at the Adult Literacy Research Network seminar held at the city campus of Victoria University of Technology on 21 July, 1995, when it was witnessed that so-and-so can…

Following this brief prelude, let us concentrate together on the twelve work aptitudes, the "aptitudes of magicianship", the performances if you like, that I listed on that certificate of achievement. I will now read the rest of the certificate.

The holder of this certificate can:
- juggle the fast moving changes in policy and practice with ease, most often with coffee in one hand and a mountain of paper in the other
- tame the terrifying tigers of emergent technologies and bureaucratic politics with grace and courage
- walk theoretical, pedagogical and andragogical tightropes with flair
- turn verbal somersaults on the jargon trapeze, simultaneously tossing acronyms in all directions
- leap through planning, funding and accountability hoops, almost automatically
- dart through the shifting flames of assessment criteria, assessment tasks, record keeping and report writing with speed and dexterity, generally emerging unscarred and with integrity intact
- transform, with a wave of the wand of experience, a lifeless, two-dimensional, black and white curriculum document into a lively, colourful, multi-dimensional classroom, with each educational transformation an original work of art
- create and maintain the illusion that things aren't really so bad, even when all the cards of flexibility have been played
- carry superhuman weights, often bearing educational, political and organisational loads at the same time
- summon the strength and wit to escape those stifling spaces in which restrictive definitions confine and imprison the imagination
- change character and script many times in one day, swapping from educator to submission writer to assessor to fund raiser to comforter to reader and composer of weighty documents to unionist to employee to committee member in quick succession, regularly combining and blending these nine roles, as well as all those not mentioned
- sustain tricky balancing acts, under intense pressure and close scrutiny, on the ever-accelerating merry-go-round of the mid 1990s, maintaining a harmonious equilibrium between the competing demands of proven measurable outcomes, ethical curriculum values, community participation, rigid guidelines and student success.

The idea of magicianship came to me thanks to the imaginative work of a group of literacy workers during the course of a workshop I had conducted a few weeks just before the July seminar. Once I started thinking about our work as adult educators in terms of magicianship and circus life, I found it a powerful metaphor for capturing the complexity and the versatility of the work we do in these heady, image-conscious times. I found that the language of circus performance was perfect for conveying the many-faced nature of the aspects of work that I wanted to highlight.

This catalogue of capacity listed above is by no means a definitive description of the work done by people in the field of adult and community education today. I am sure you could effortlessly double the list. Nor is it a caricature or an exaggeration. Each one of you multi-skilled workers present here today performs each of these highly sophisticated feats every single day of your working lives. And mostly out of the limelight, with few "Bravos" and even fewer "Encores". Despite its omissions, however, this list spotlights some of the wide variety of roles you have to play, suggests the broad spectrum of audiences to whom you must attend, and hints at the adeptness and dexterity required to please all concerned.

In contrast, performance tends to be talked about in quite different terms when it comes to books on management. They often prefer a more mechanistic model. Consider this extract from the book **Appraising Performance for Results** which gives some of the flavour of this approach:

> It is after all, part of managers' responsibilities to monitor the performance of their staff to ensure that situations do not get out of control. An analogy. In successful manufacturing companies, it is accepted that it is more efficient and effective to monitor the quality of components while they are being manufactured. Any indication that components are approaching an unacceptable tolerance level allows adjustments to be made at the appropriate time; this ensures correct quality all the way through the process. If more managers took a lead from this sharp end of business, and applied the same philosophy to the management of their people, they would be ensuring correct performance from all of their staff, all the year round. Surely this would be in the best interest of all the people involved, not least of these being the customer (pp. ix–x).

This extract contains all the key words prized by proponents of a so-called scientific, market-centred approach to work performance – words such as "monitor", "efficient", "components", "adjustments", "the sharp end of business" and "customer". It is an approach that gives primacy of place to maximising financial profits; the bottom line is the fundamental standard by which everything is rated.

Now, I do not intend to set up a simplistic "Goody/Baddy" dichotomy by reading this piece. Many of the texts that do talk about adding value to staff performance appear to have the

good of the staff in mind as well as an increase in company profits. In such situations, being encouraged to openly talk about "a valuable workforce" and "value-added work" can provide a marvellous opportunity for talking about "valued", for analysing the ethos of the place and for debating desirable fundamental principles. A precise and accurate definition of the work to be done, of what makes a good performance, can spotlight areas and aspects of work that have traditionally remained invisible. It can remedy the situation where what has been unacknowledged has also been unvalued. Genuine attempts to bring the subject of "values" into the workplace are certainly to be encouraged. Not that such a full-bodied task is ever easy.

But as I said at the beginning, putting on a performance, whatever it is, whether we are talking about before, during or after the performance, is always hard work. Before going on to spell out some of the effects of constantly putting on performances, the costs connected with performing day in, day out, day after day, let me present three visual representations of performers in action that I have selected to assist in focussing our thinking. I have chosen these particular images because they say things that words alone cannot. The economy of expression to be found in these pictures I am about to circulate expresses so eloquently a condition we all know all too well, the non-stop pressure to be outstanding performers. Here is the first one.

The *first* image is a poster advertising the Performing Arts Museum here in Melbourne.

Its busy-ness and internal tensions portray so well some of the qualities of magicianship I listed earlier when reading from the certificate of achievement I designed. As with any visual text, this poster can be read in many ways. Inevitably, it will mean different things to different viewers.

My first reaction was that it captured well the variety of roles to be found in any collective endeavour, that it celebrated joyously the diversity that is both welcome and necessary in any healthy and harmonious working environment. On closer study, it occurred to me that it could be seen, not only as a depiction of a group of people at work, but also as a depiction of the many personae or roles or parts to be found within any one single person. In other words, I came eventually to see it as a picture of all the various selves within me,
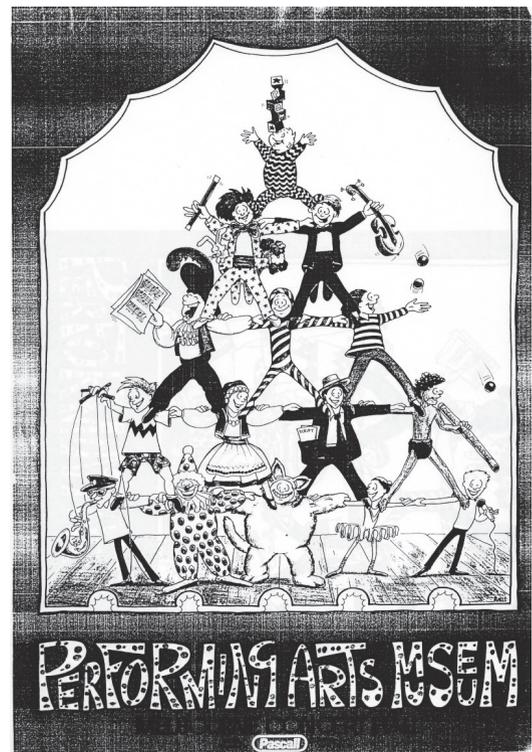
within each of you here, with each self vying for attention, each struggling to hold on, some still smiling even when the balls being juggled are tumbling to the ground.

Whilst I find this second reading quite reassuring, I still feel a little uneasy about taking this image at face value. For me, it becomes a much more compelling visual text if it also read as a critique of the roles society assigns. If it is then read as a poster exposing the dehumanisation of being stereotyped, as a poster illustrating the injustices associated with the uneven loads different individuals must bear, as a poster highlighting the hollowness of keeping up a cheery front no matter what the intolerable pressures, then it is indeed a poster that speaks passionately about the contradictions embedded in public life today, and about the ambiguities and dilemmas created for those wanting to participate in that life.

Let us now consider the *second* image I have chosen.

It is a 1906 poster promoting Houdini, here described as "The World's Handcuffing and Prison Breaker" (p. 49, **100 Years of Magic Posters**). I chose this image for its striking slogan across the bottom that reads "Nothing on earth can hold Houdini a prisoner". I find myself thinking that this could be our motto too. A close study of the picture reveals eight different types of handcuffs. I have no doubt that each of us could name at least eight ways in which we feel our hands are tied, eight examples of feeling trapped and imprisoned and restricted. The dramatic way in which entrapment has been amplified makes this poster a particularly gruesome sight.

Before long, however, our eyes inevitably move to the centre of this graphic arrangement where we are transfixed by a quiet, determined knowing that emanates from Houdini's eyes. He oozes confidence in his own strength, radiating a fervent belief in his own gifts, leaving the onlooker in no doubt about the truth of the slogan at the bottom that "nothing on earth can hold him prisoner". I believe that strength of such intensity is also found within the body of ANHLC. As the title for this conference boasts, you too can discard those shackles and fly.

And this brings me to the *third* image.

This 1911 poster featuring The Great Jansen (p. *72*, 1**00 Years of Magic Posters**) was used to promote his appearances in Australia and the Far East.

In some ways, this picture says it all. The master of ceremonies orchestrating affairs so that his female assistant ends up jumping through hoops. Everybody hypnotised by his flamboyance and dash. The impeccably arranged stage management in which everyone knows their place. And yet, before long, I am once again struck by a deeper message not immediately obvious from a first, fleeting, superficial glance. Once again my eyes are drawn to and want to linger and concentrate on one spot in particular; it is that elevated space occupied by the woman in mid-air at full stretch. I am captivated by her grace and expansiveness. She seems to exist in another dimension. She clearly has her sights set on higher things. Whereas Jansen is static and wooden, she is dynamic and moving, her mission ever onwards, and outwards. Although it is Jansen who is described as America's greatest transformist, she is the one whose act of transformation transforms those within her presence, the others simply fade into the background. Irrespective of the PR hype inflating Jansen's role, despite what the words say, there is no doubt in my mind where the power really lies in this situation.

What, then, are we to learn from these representations? What are some of the questions they prompt? For example, who are we performing for? Are we merely puppets or are we puppeteers? What makes for a **good** performance anyway? And according to whom?

In response to these questions, I will come back to the subject of definitions, the matter of defining this pivotal word "performance".

It is a truism to say that we are living in times of great flux, times of shifting allegiances and fluid meanings. For me, this signifies an urgent need to be clear about what words, and hence what values, matter. For us all, I would argue, there is a pressing need to speak with words of substance. So many once-invigorating words have been abused and devalued. "Performance" is surely at risk of becoming

one of these. Because I believe performance is a word worth conserving, and in its healthiest state, I say it is well and truly time we reclaim this word that offers such promise.

Since time immemorial, performance has been a means of personal transformation, of cultural renewal, of community bonding and of civic reconstruction. I'm sure those involved in the adventurous, pioneering work of the Melbourne-based Australian Performing Group in the 1970s took this multifaceted name quite deliberately. In certain, often overlooked places, this broad and deep notion of performance is still true and in evidence today. Indeed, we need look no further than Footscray, the home of the Women's Circus, that energetic group of political, artistic and cultural performers who work on the principle of "turning negatives into positives". In their hands, to quote from one of their recent publications, "abandoned factories are reclaimed and transformed as a place of play and possibility".

Another example of the regenerative powers of performance are two plays recently devised and performed by Somebody's Daughter Theatre, an ensemble that has grown from the Fairlea Women's Drama Group and is comprised mainly of women who have a history of imprisonment. In the program for one of these plays, **Call my Name**, Natalie speaks about her imprisonment in Jika Jika:

> Today I'm concerned about how I feel about that page in my life, about how easy it was to close the box. You see, the problem with boxes, someone wants to look in them, and the problem with Jika, you learn how to build your boxes to protect yourself. The problem for me, it's taken nearly ten years before I could start to talk about my real feelings and now I never want to close this box; I want to release everything I hid in there and never feel this pain again…for the women who go to Jika they will learn to shut down their emotions, they will learn how to hide their pain and they will learn how to build boxes (p. 5).

Natalie could be talking about how many of us feel about our work today, how we feel boxed in by restrictions and regulations and reports and reel after reel of red tape, and how that is a source of very considerable constriction and pain. But Natalie's words are not the end of the story. In the other of these two plays, **Tell her that I love her,** Cara describes a girlhood dream that sustains her through even the darkest, grimmest times:

> Yes! I was growing wings and they were getting bigger and bigger. And then my wings started flapping and I was flying! Flying! My little heart beating in time with the flapping of my wings taking me higher and higher, my little legs dangling, soaring through the night sky! Flying! My own wings!... I looked. There was someone flying with me. It was like looking at myself – only bigger… We flew and flew. She showed me rivers and trees and they spoke to me. She took me to a special place, a place of fire and sand. Everything was calling my name… 'Never forget who you are, never forget you have a place, never forget how special you are' (p. 27).

Cara could be articulating our dream, a desire to transcend the petty and the brutal, a yearning to find fellow spirits, the sense of urgency about securing a place and affirming an identity. In performances such as these, in work that takes life as its subject, actors and audiences alike are transported to new realms in which barriers are broken down and new directions indicated. Thanks to such performances, all who participate, actor and audience alike, are strengthened and recharged, their inner fires rekindled. At times like this, to "per-form" means literally "to bring into form", to manifest the subtle world of ideas, spirit, creativity and inspiration in the tangible world of form. Performing then becomes a powerful, multi-stranded activity that entwines the threads of informing, reforming and transforming into one strong, stress-resistant braid. I have been aiming for such a multitextured fabric by weaving images and drama and analysis and anecdote together into this creation, this performance.

But, as we all know, not everyone understands "performance" in this multi-dimensional way. Many today, especially those in positions of bureaucratic power, use and practise the word "performance" quite differently. For them, performance means meeting certain standards, standards that must conform to the dictates of a competition-driven economy. Performance then becomes the setting, classifying, enforcing, monitoring, measuring and rating of these standards.

As an aside, I found it instructive to study the graphic forms in which these ideas are embodied. None of the books I consulted contained pictures of human images. All of them, however, were punctuated with an array of flowcharts, graphs and diagrams of conceptual models. Consider the four diagrams from **Appraising Performance for Results** (p. 9) and **Benchmarking Staff Performance** (pp. 16, 31 and 94). The nature of performance represented by these is that of a fixed quantity, part of a chain reaction. It is subservient to the workings of a well-oiled, mathematically demonstrable system.

Let me be quite clear about what I am saying. I am not automatically decrying recent initiatives dedicated to providing a more explicit and substantial description of the work we do, of articulating "performance criteria" if you like. Quite the opposite. As far as I'm concerned, the closer examination of its complexities and subtleties the better. Nobody I know in this field questions the need for quality work, for quality outcomes. Where debates become heated and where differences can arise, I've found, is when it comes to the matter of definitions, when it comes to answering the questions "But what **is** quality? Just exactly what **is** a good performance?".

The answers to these, of necessity, take us into the realm of values and values choices.

You see, the answers we give to questions about quality indicate the sort of society we believe in, the sort of society we want to create and sustain. Out answers are determined by our vision of what makes a good life, a good society. Our answers to these questions, and the consequent

obligation to practise what we preach, is where we show what putting on a performance means to us. It is where "putting on a performance" is most testing. As we fill in forms, conduct interviews, present for interviews, write notices and articles and papers, as we speak at meetings, as we publicise our work, what vision, what preferred social ideal, are we presenting and reinforcing? When we perform, are we playing someone else's game, the rules of which are set by a privileged elite and which can change without notice overnight, or are we transforming dreams and visions of a better world for all into daily acts, each one of which makes a little difference?

It is this slow, step-by-step construction of a just, peaceful and beautiful world for all that, I believe, our work as adult educators and community workers is all about. It is what I believe putting on a performance really means. If we look at the third poster again, the one of the woman in motion, this time from another point of view, we have a model for changing the way we can transform and act in the world.

If we dispense with all the trimmings and the inactive entourage, if we look beyond the glitter of flashy facades and unsubstantiated claims, if we refuse to play the role of victim or plaything, if we thoughtfully chart our own course, especially in the company of like-minded adventurers, then we too can transcend the boundaries imposed on us.

And we shall not be alone for, as we do this, remembering the power of the flying woman in the coloured version whose beckoning

image is now circulating as photocopies around this room, we can be sure that everyone touched by our work will also find their spirits soaring, will also find colour returning to their lives.

In conclusion, I feel bold enough to say that everyone touched by our work will feel impelled to join us in our life-affirming Flying Performances.

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Visual sources: Illustrations

Image One: **Performing Arts Centre Poster,** n.d., Victorian Arts Centre Trust, Melbourne.

Image Two: **Houdini Poster,** 1906, Russell, Morgan & Co. Printers, Cincinnati.

Image Three: **Jansen Poster,** 1911, The American Show Printing Co, Milwaukee.

The ACFE Story & Stories Of Our Tribe

*The 1996 address, "Stories of Our Tribe", is preceded by a page of notes submitted to the **ACFE: Past, Present, Future** conference organisers beforehand. The notes detail plans for both the address and the follow-up workshop, "Community Education: Why Bother?"*

This address illustrates well my love for stories and their power. When well-chosen, they are open-ended, easy to visualise and accessible to a wide range of listeners. I knew that everyone there – teachers, learners and administrators – would "hear" something that spoke to them.

The mid 1990s was a critical time for adult community education. There were many changes abroad - government policy priorities, funding eligibility and the increasing dominance of neo-liberal discourse. It was a time to be clear about identity and purposes, about vision and values, and to know the costs of the "adventure" chosen.

Many ACE organisations, particularly small ones, struggled, even closed, at this time.
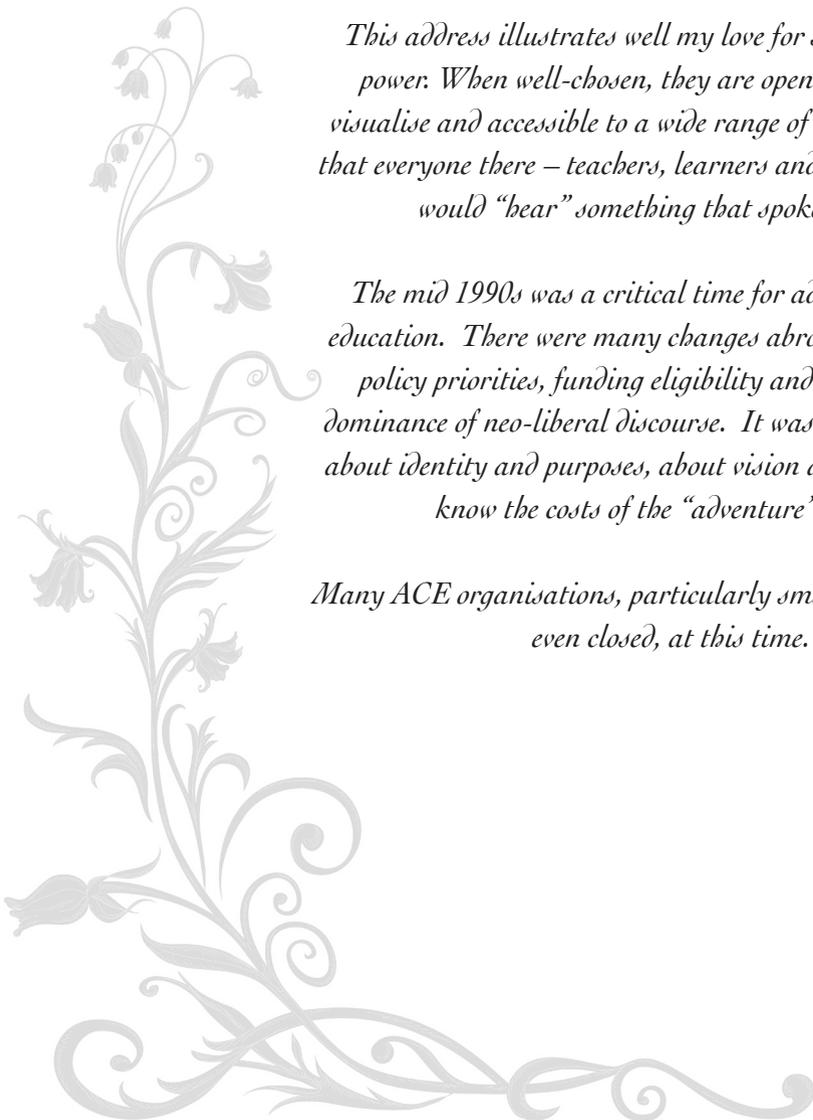
The ACFE Story (1996)

Notes for organisers of Central Western Metropolitan Region of ACFE Conference
Footscray Community Arts Centre
September 13, 1996

❧

The *half-hour opening address*, **Stories of Our Tribe**, a musing out loud, could also be called **Spinning Yarns**.

Knowing the future is shaped by both the present and the past, any thinking about the future of Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) inevitably draws our attention to questions to do with the history, identity and culture of ACFE in this State. Any thinking about the future demands thoughtful answers to questions such as:

- Where have we come from?
- What are significant milestones in our history?
- What are the stories that we treasure?
- Who and where are we now?
- What are the symbols and metaphors that best represent our work?
- What are the values and beliefs that matter most?
- What sustains our adventurousness?
- How do we want our story to continue?

Contemplating these questions, and deciding where we stand, remind us that the future is not one monolithic entity but is a repertoire of possible alternatives. This immediately prompts more questions:

- What are some of these alternative futures?
- Which ones do we want?

As adult educators in 1996 and as authors of these futures, what is the next chapter of the ACFE story to be?

Community Education: Why Bother?

This follow-up *1.25 hour workshop* will provide a space for examining a number of questions at the heart of contemporary ACFE work:

- What, in 1996, does the term community education mean?
- Why even be concerned about it? Who cares?

- What in particular about community education – its ideas and practices – is worth preserving?
- What is dubious or outmoded, superfluous or questionable?
- What characterises community education at its best?
- What is the most urgent work to be done right now to ensure a healthy and vigorous future for community education?

Personal Postscript to invitation to speak:
Delia Bradshaw, 7/6/96

As is obvious from the above scripts, I have a passion for posing questions. I am a fervent believer that this deeply ingrained habit is invaluable in my work as an adult educator. Here are three reasons that come to mind at present:

1. This approach forces me to single out what I really want to know
2. It guarantees that I automatically include some answers and proposals for action
3. It saves me from having to make false and harsh boundaries between theory and practice.

This methodology has served me well in the near 20 years I have been connected with adult education. It means "thinking" and "doing" are not hostile opposites; instead, they are inextricably woven in and out of each other, one continuously and readily strengthening the other.

Stories of Our Tribe (1996)

Opening Address,
Central Western Metropolitan Region of Adult Community
and Further Education Conference
Footscray Community Arts Centre
September 13, 1996

❦

OUTLINE OF THE PLOT

Chapter One: Some Questions
Chapter Two: A Story from the Past
Chapter Three: A Story from the Present
Chapter Four: Three Possible Future Scripts
Chapter Five: Our Values
Chapter Six: Our Visions
Chapter Seven: Our Actions – What to Do? A Happy Ending?

Chapter One: Some Questions

Two characteristics that I now know will accompany me right through life are the habit of questioning and the urge to dream of better things. My childhood seems punctuated with my mother's puzzled queries: "Will you never stop asking questions?" and "When are you ever going to come down from those clouds?".

Today's presentations continue this tradition. There'll be questions to ponder, and some dreaming as well. In imitation of other cultures and in honour of the centrality they give to the power of storytelling, much of what I have to say will be in the form of stories, what I have come to think of as "Stories of Our Tribe".

Let's consider some questions first.

Faced with the conference theme of "ACFE Past, Present, Future", my mind is flooded with questions connected with adult, community and further education, questions to do with its history, its identity, its culture past and present, its future prospects. The questions come tumbling out something like this:

- As a field, where have we come from?
- What do we consider significant milestones in our history?
- What are the stories we treasure?
- Where are we now, **who** are we now?
- What are the values and beliefs that matter most to us?
- How do we want our story to continue?
- What is the next chapter to be called?
- What are some possible futures? futures that **we** desire?
- As readers of the present and contributing authors to the future, what adventure will we choose?

Pretty big questions, aren't they? No wonder my mother looked concerned when she saw me about to embark on another question time. As you can see, I find it impossible to separate past, present and future.

I'd like to investigate these questions by thinking of adult, community and further education as a series of stories. I say a series of stories because there is no ONE ACFE story. There is a host of stories, the content and moral of each varying according to who is telling the story, and when and where and why.

Chapter Two: A Story from the Past

Let's start with those questions I posed to do with our **Past** as adult educators.

For me, a story that eloquently captures the origins and roots of our rich adult education tradition is the following autobiographical narrative. It is an excerpt from **Brian's Wife, Jenny's Mum,** a collection of writing by "ordinary housewives" (I quote from the cover) on returning to study that was published in 1975:

> Our rusty, unlubricated brains began cranking up, stiffly at first, then turning over slowly, smoothly, steadily running in until suddenly one became aware that the din of eager voices had the exciting thunderous sound of an express train cutting through untravelled vistas of experience … Initially the session was something quite separate from the rest of everyday life and domestic routine. After the exhilaration of participation in learning one seemed to have to row back to the mainland of reality at the end of a picnic on an island. Yet gradually the two experiences became integrated and the whole enjoyment spread through every daily task. Sadness and loneliness gradually dissolved … in a burn of enthusiasm that found us doing something about the causes.

What are we to learn about adult learning over twenty years ago from this eloquently told story? That it is passionately pursued, participatory, and more and more connected to every

aspect of living. Indeed, in time, the learning automatically becomes doing, taking action, righting wrongs.

Chapter Three: A Story from the Present

Let's move on to those questions I posed to do with our **Present** as adult educators. The text that most evokes me for the flavour of ACFE today is a bureaucratic narrative, a Position Description advertised earlier this year for Education Coordinator in a neighbourhood house. Let me give you a taste by reading out its "Objectives 1996":

- ❧ To investigate and gain registration for appropriate accredited programs for (such and such) Neighbourhood House with the State Training Board.
- ❧ To investigate possible funding sources for educational programs and to write submissions, tenders and service agreements.
- ❧ To be responsible for co-ordination of general access and pre-vocational and vocational programs.
- ❧ To provide leadership in current educational issues.
- ❧ To comply with the requirements of funding bodies.

The list of day-to-day activities for this two-day a week job was nearly a page long. As a regular referee for positions similar to this one, I can say from first-hand experience that the questions employers are most concerned about, the three qualities that matter most to them are:

1. Could the applicant work with non-stop interruptions?
2. Could the applicant successfully deal with a constant stream of unexpected demands, requests and deadlines?
3. Could the applicant work under CONSTANT PRESSURE?

So, what are we to learn about adult learning in 1996 from this cryptic story told in dot points and short phrases? That it is beholden to a great number of stakeholders with very different interests. That there is little time (if any) for reflection. That there's a huge emphasis on meeting externally designed and audited requirements.

Chapter Four: Three Possible Future Scripts

Let's now consider those questions I posted about our **Future** as adult educators.

For me, the texts or narratives that come to mind are those children's stories that offer a range of alternative conclusions, the ones that allow readers to choose their own preferred ending, their own adventure. What are some of the alternative plots or scripts or visions for the future that we can choose from?

The **first** picture of a possible future for adult education that comes to mind is one of increased competition, of stricter territoriality, of fixed boundaries and of absolute compliance. This story could be something like **The Story of the Three Kingdoms,** a cautionary tale

I found in the children's section of our local library. Let me paraphrase the first part of the book.

It tells of a time long, long ago when there were three kingdoms.

In the first kingdom, that of the forest, the giant and powerful Elephant ruled. All creatures on land feared him and his strength. He boasted that his was the greatest kingdom on earth.

The second kingdom, that of the sea, was ruled by angry Shark. All sea creatures avoided him. He claimed that his kingdom, covering so much of the planet, was the greatest.

Soaring Hawk ruled the third kingdom, that of the air. Birds would hide when he was on the wing. He asserted, as his kingdom covered more space than either of the other two, that his was the greatest.

Elephant, Shark and Hawk often disputed with each other over whose kingdom was the greatest. Each challenged the other two to visit his kingdom – the forest, the sea or the air – but each refused to leave his own domain.

This state of affairs continued, each considering himself the greatest and, hence, ruler of the earth.

This scenario of endlessly disputing dominions is one possible future, something of a horror story really.
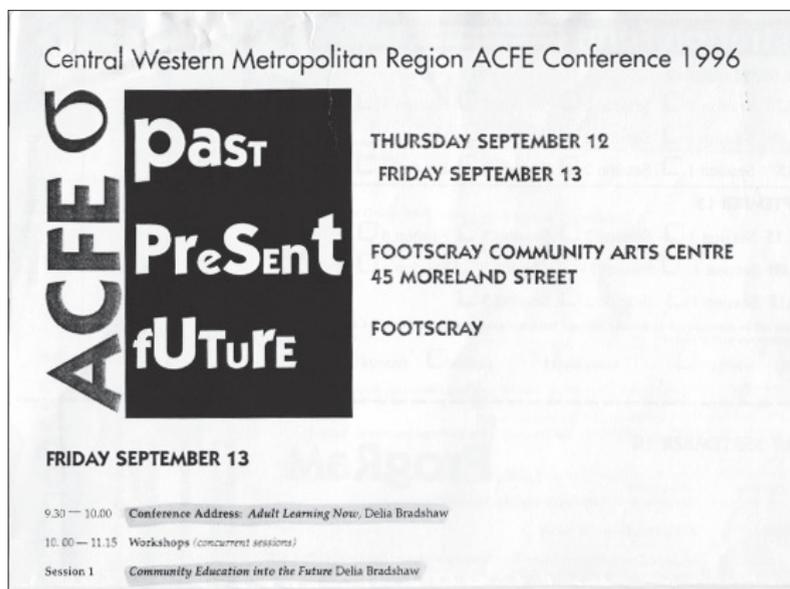
Central Western Metropolitan Region ACFE Conference 1996

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THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 12
FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 13

FOOTSCRAY COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE
45 MORELAND STREET

FOOTSCRAY

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 13

9.30 — 10.00	Conference Address: *Adult Learning Now*, Delia Bradshaw
10.00 — 11.15	Workshops *(concurrent sessions)*
Session 1	*Community Education into the Future* Delia Bradshaw

The **second** narrative or picture of a possible future for ACFE that comes to mind is that of retreating into parochialism, defensiveness, fear and silence. This plot could go something like the tragic tale recounted in Aesop's fable, "The Mice in a Meeting".

> In the kitchen the mice all met in a meeting
> With many a squeak and many a greeting
> To try and decide on something that
> Would save them all from the terrible cat.
> For he was the killer of many a mouse
> Both in the field and in the house.
> Then on his hind legs a sleek fellow stood
> And said that he had a plan that was good.
> So after a speech that ruffled his fuzz,
> He told them at last just what his plan was.
> "There's nothing to it", he said – "by heck,
> We'll just tie a bell around the cat's neck,
> And then we will know where he is in a twinkle
> Whenever we hear the little bell tinkle."
> "Hurray!", squealed the mice, "Hurray! Hurray!
> This is without doubt our greatest day!
> Now at last from the cat we can all get away!"
> So the speech-making mouse felt very clever.
> "No one else would ever, ever
> Have thought of a bell" he said to himself.
> And then an old mouse, perched on a shelf,
> Hopped up on the rim of a cooking pan
> And spoke to the mouse who had offered the plan.
> Saying, "Don't stop now, like a miserable rat,
> But tell us a way to bell the cat.
> Be good enough to go all through it,
> And then tell us who is going to do it!
> Or maybe the one with the loudest cheer
> Will stand up now and volunteer."
> At this all the mice in the kitchen assembled,
> The mice who had cheered, now trembled and trembled,
> And they could have stayed there for all of a week
> Without so much as one little squeak.

That too is another possible future, much like those pessimistic science fiction stories that evoke a future of distress, disintegration and despair.

The **third** picture that comes to mind, a third vision of ourselves as adult educators for the rest of this century and into the new millennium, is one of seeing beyond the mundane and superficial, of being unwilling to stay with the safe and familiar. It is a vision, a manifesto, pointing to new horizons, and written in language that persuasively evokes these new vistas. This could be a story similar to the one told in the children's picture book called **Do You Believe in Magic?**, a multicultural narrative about what is real and true and who says so.

When Sumed came back from holiday, he brought a seashell with him. "It's a magic shell", he said. "I found it on the beach at midnight."

Linda held the shell to her ear. "I can hear the sea", she cried. "No," said Miss Wicks, "it's not the sea you can hear."

"It is," said Leroy, "I can hear it too. It's breaking on the shore and making a crashing sound." Miss Wicks sighed patiently. "I know it sounds like the sea. But it's not." Before she could explain, Sunita took the shell from Leroy and held it to her ear. "Goodness me," she said, "I'm sure I can hear dolphins jumping in and out of the sea." "Don't be silly," laughed Miss Wicks…

Peter, who was mad about dolphins, cried "Let me try. Yes, I can hear dolphins. And I can hear fishermen too. Their oars are splashing in the waves." "Your ears are playing tricks on you," said Miss Wicks…

"But I can hear them too!" yelled Wilma. "There are waves and boats and fish. I can hear birds too: just listen!" Miss Wicks smiled and said, "No one can possibly hear so many sounds in a shell."

Wilma looked a bit cross and handed the shell to Dith Tu. Dith Lu was a quiet and clever boy. His imagination couldn't run away with him. "I can hear the sea," Dith said quietly, "And the fish, the boats and the birds. I can hear the wind in the trees too. There are big trees on the beach. They must be like the ones back home."

"It's true", said Charlene…"I can hear dogs barking too. They must be chasing the waves.' "Nonsense!" Miss Wicks shook her head …

"There must be a little of my granny's village caught in the shell", said Sumed, holding the shell to his ear. "I can hear the grown-ups too. They're working and singing and calling to the children to be careful."

"Look, Class 5, it's a lovely shell," said Miss Wicks, "but there's nothing in it – there can't be." "But there is," chanted the Class, You have a go at listening." "I don't need to

have a go", said Miss Wicks firmly, I know there can be nothing in it." She dropped the shell in the fish tank and took the class out to play.

"Poor Miss," Sumed whispered to Wilma. "She should believe in magic."

I'd like to elaborate a little on this third alterative narrative for the future, a story about the capacity and willingness to see beyond the shell of things. I want to say no more about the two nightmarish alternatives referred to above, except to say that I do take them seriously as possible early warning disaster alerts.

The third much more optimistic story about looking beyond the surface stirs me to think:
- What do we believe in?
- What is our vision of a healthy and vigorous ACFE community?
- Do we take everything at face value?
- Have we forgotten how to read the world imaginatively and metaphorically as well as technically and literally?
- Do we keep our dreams to ourselves, not daring to utter them out loud for fear of condemnation and punishment? What do we value **most** in adult education? What is the most urgent work for us to be doing **right** now?

These are questions about Values, Visions and Actions.

Chapter Five: Our Values

Let me first say something about our beliefs, our **VALUES**, our code of ethics.

Three quotes express this well for me. The first quote is from Eva Cox's **Boyer Lectures** entitled **A Truly Civil Society:**

> I want to contribute to a new century of optimism that will allow us to move co-operatively, and not competitively, towards a more civilised future. If we look at quality of life and life satisfaction indicators, rather than economic indicators, we are in trouble … Co-operation (research shows) pays off socially, bureaucratically, economically.

So, it's values like Co-operation and Robust Social Networks.

The second quote about values comes from Edward Said's 1993 **BBC Reith Lectures:**

> There is no question in my mind that the intellectual belongs on the same side with the weak and the unrepresented . . someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. Not just passively unwilling, but actively willing to say so in public.

This means values like A Critical Perspective, Courage and Speaking Out.

And the third quote is from an article by Marie Louise Uhr, National Convenor, Ordination of Catholic Women earlier this year:

> I decided that continuing to talk of changing structures, doing away with hierarchy, creating a society of equals, was not enough. Rather, as Vaclav Havel learned in occupied Czechoslovakia, it is necessary to work for <u>specific, concrete things</u> …
>
> The new first appears on the periphery. Given the power structures at the centre, the periphery is the only place where true creativity and freedom is possible…

This suggests values like Equality, Creativity, Originality, Specificity and Concreteness. It's about identifying ourselves with other humanitarian movements represented by the people I have quoted, especially movements that strengthen democracy. It's about studying their codes of ethics and principles of practice as inspiration for clarifying and declaring our own.

Chapter Six: Our Visions

Next, let me say something about our **VISIONS**.

For me, these need to incorporate:

- a clear view of the virtues of our own particular adult education culture
- a seeking out and welcoming of new blood, new ideas, young adult educators
- a robust theoretical justification of what we do and why
- a comprehensive analysis and circulation of our intricately textured curriculum practices
- an adult education manifesto, an agenda for good adult education and healthy democracy
- a plan of action for building commitment to the public good
- an appreciation of the role of humane and visionary leadership.

There is already a fine beginning for such a vision in the state **ACFE Plan 1996–1998** where it refers to educational processes that strengthen ACFE's capacity to develop:

> … curious and enquiring <u>learners</u>, critical <u>thinkers</u>, creative <u>innovators</u>, participatory <u>citizens</u>, an intelligent <u>workforce</u>, and skilful, literate <u>communicators</u> in the personal and public domain.

Chapter Seven: Our Actions - What to Do? A Happy Ending?

And last, though certainly not least, let me say something about our ACTIONS.

I know people are feeling demoralised and exhausted and angry, and often not at all like rallying. With this in mind, I find great comfort in the words of the peace activist Joanna Macy when she reassures us that:

> Within us are deep responses to what is happening to our world, responses of fear and sorrow and anger … We cannot experience them without pain, but it is a healthy pain

– like the kind we feel when we walk on a leg that has gone to sleep and the circulation starts to move again. It gives evidence that the tissue is still alive …

The tissue of adult, community and further education is still very much alive. Simply go into any adult education classroom. Not there will you find what the novelist Gabrielle Lord recently lamented as "teachings that break the integrity of the human spirit." In hundreds of sites, at any one time, the reverse, the opposite, is what you'll find.

What's being modelled in our adult education practices is not mere survival but abundance of life; not winning, looking out for number one at any cost, but co-operative, jointly constructed projects; not superficiality but rigour; not harsh, masochistic environments but lively experiments in learning and acting thoughtfully and peacefully and democratically. Paradox and dilemmas and contradictions and polarities are understood as typical features of these troubling, turbulent times; they are knowingly chosen as the very stuff and focus of learning, as the starting point for imaging new times and making new tracks. We need to broadcast this world-class good practice well beyond our classrooms. We need to tell these stories, our stories, loud and long, far and wide.

As Carol Heilbrun in **Writing A Woman's Life** reminds us:
> The ultimate anonymity is to be storyless … power consists to a large extend in deciding what stories will be told … the power structures make certain stories unthinkable … we must turn to one another for stories; share the stories of our lives and hopes and unacceptable fantasies … we must stop reinscribing others' words and rewrite our ideas … we know we are without a text, and must discover one … we must begin to tell the truth, in groups, to one another. We have lost that important collective phenomenon.

The best way of telling our stories is to live them, to model and practise them in everything we do and everywhere we go. In our meetings, in our publications and public discourse, in our submissions, in our interviews, in all of our conversations, be they in the staffroom or in the supermarket or at the footy, in all our policy documents, in our exchanges on the Internet. More than at any time I can remember, we need to practise what we preach, not only as classroom practitioners and adult educators, but also as citizens and in all aspects of our lives. If not, we are in very grave danger of being trampled by the Elephants, devoured by the Sharks and mauled by the Hawks.

You might be interested to hear how that story, **The Story of The Three Kingdoms,** ended. The People in the story overcame their fear of Elephant and Shark and Hawk by telling stories, by sharing observations and experiences and insights, and I can't think of a better way to end this presentation on the **Stories of Our Tribe** than to read the final paragraph of that timely and powerful parable.

"We have overcome the strength of Elephant", they said, "and our fear of Shark and Hawk. We have done this by sitting by the fire and telling stories of what has happened to us, and learning from them. Only we, among the creatures, have the gift of story and the wisdom it brings. We do not need to be masters of the earth. We can share because it is wise to do so."

It is not only wise to do so, but an urgently needed task. Let us not forget, however, as Joel Barber states so bluntly in **Future Edge**: "It is still a great risk in our society to offer new rules for the game". Or, as I would say in the spirit of this narrative, it takes great courage to tell the stories of adult education a-new, to tell the stories of our tribe, our culture, in our own ways. Especially if we are to tell those stories in our own language, in what I call our mother tongue, and not in the words of the colonisers.

Fellow storytellers, isn't it time to spin our own yarns from now on?

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July 2022

Questions of Identity

The two pieces that follow are different attempts to identify myself as an Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) worker. They were published in **Fine Print**, the journal of the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC), both of which were so important in my professional life. The editors of **Fine Print** invited me to write; this spurred me on to do justice to our work. VALBEC, the professional organisation, provided a community of kindred spirits, a receptive and generative ALBE community, who challenged each other to define, broaden and deepen our work.

Ourselves as Texts
I love seeing my struggle in print. If I was writing it today, I would make two or three sentences out of some of the longer ones.

What is a basic education?: Speaking Basically
This second piece covers much of the same ground in the context of expanding Adult Literacy to explicitly include Basic Education.

What I'm examining in both pieces, cherishing the richness and cultural and social potential of our work, still grips me today. I am not in contact with adult educators these days and so cannot tell if such musings speak to them, given the fundamental changes in structures, funding, ideology and language since that time. I wonder if/how much "the casualisation, fragmentation and isolation" I bemoan here has increased. I wonder if possibilities for discussions such as these are possible, or even welcome, today.

Perhaps, I am collecting my writings in the hope they still have a contribution to make.

Ourselves as Texts (1997)

Fine Print, *VALBEC Journal*

For some time now, I've been struggling to find a name, to compose a fitting description, of the work adult literacy teachers do. Sometimes, I'm drawn to the name "cultural agent" but can't help grinning at the various interpretations embedded in the word "agent" that conjure up suggestions of estate agents, espionage agents and show business agents. At other times, I prefer "knowledge worker" or "community builder" or "culture carrier", though the latter sounds as if it might be somewhere half way between "culture vulture" and "virus carrier".

Some of this musing has been prompted by a recent re-reading of "The Marginalised Speak Up: Action-Oriented Women's Research", a presentation Marie Brennan gave at the **Building A Research Culture For ACFE** conference held in Melbourne early in August, 1996. On that day, she urged us all – practitioners, bureaucrats, academics, managers and policy makers – to "learn to read the politics" by developing research literacies, the heart of which she saw as:

> … examining our own politics, issues and values … not just naming them, but making problematic how the values interact with research.

I heard this as "reading my own teaching practices", as a prompt to (yet again) examine how my own personal values and politics interact with my teaching practices. I determined, as a start, to try to be more precise about *my own* definitions, *my own* ideas on the role of the adult literacy teacher.

What follows are my first raw thoughts about what *I think* adult literacy teachers ought to be modelling and developing in our students. I have chosen to phrase it like a credo.

I believe that it is the work of adult literacy teachers to initiate students into the cultural, social and political worlds of meaning-making through practices that:

- reveal education as knowledge construction
- analyse and re-form data and facts, not simply collecting them
- recognise and spell out key past and present concepts, ideas and abstractions
- imagine desirable future alternatives
- broaden ways of viewing and representing the world
- produce as well as interpret multi-modal texts
- identify implicit as well as explicit cultural and political perspectives
- interrogate the values and power relations of both groups and texts
- view difference as promising not problematic

- expand the repertoire of selves, identities, voices and media of representation of everyone participating.

When I say "initiate students into", I don't mean unilateral, one-way instructing. What I have in mind is modelling, enacting, embodying these practices myself, habitually interrogating and transforming myself. This means constantly re-inventing not only my educational practices, but also my own vocational and personal selves. It means practising what I might clumsily call "subjectivity literacy", that is, reading ourselves as citizens, as women, as men, as teachers, as well as reading our class and the texts we scrutinise together.

Something Sue Middleton said in **Educating Feminists: Life Histories and Pedagogy** expresses most cogently what I'm struggling to express:

> A feminist pedagogy requires us as teachers to make visible and explore with our students the aspects of our own life histories that impact on our teaching. We must analyse relationships between our individual biographies, historical events and the broader power relations that have shaped and constrained our possibilities and perspectives as educators (p. 17).

For me, this translates into teaching practice that continuously questions my own politics, my own ethics, my own epistemologies and my own methodologies, always making spaces for a range of conversations both within myself as well as within the classroom. I know I'll find all sorts of contradictions, prejudices, blind spots and divisions and that it will never be a neat, tidy exercise with no loose ends. I find this testing being someone who finds coherence, with all tensions reconciled, so aesthetically pleasing and compelling. It's why one particular line of Marie Brennan's captivated me then, and still does now. "Where there are tensions", she said, "there's space for change."

I'm not saying, however, that nominating and inhabiting these new spaces is easy.

Let me illustrate with a description of a one-hour ALT (Adult Literacy Teaching) workshop I ran recently. It is part of a flexible delivery version of this 81-hour course for which I was the course presenter.

The previous session had ended with the following activity. I had asked course participants one of my favourite questions: "What do you think is the **primary** role of the adult literacy teacher?" As always, people found this hard, partly because they've rarely (sometimes never) been asked this before and, partly, because it **really** is hard. (Just look at the difficulty I'm having.) Nevertheless, everybody did contribute something and:
- about a third favoured personal development aims (self-esteem, confidence, autonomy);
- another third favoured more social goals (empowerment, participation, belonging);
- and the rest favoured "better reading and writing" (for mostly day-to-day survival purposes).

168 / Making Connections

Because people had spoken in generalisations, I asked for examples, especially recent, current ones. They were puzzled by my request as they felt their answers had been self-explanatory and that I must know what they were talking about. I left that day feeling displeased with myself, unhappy with how I'd approached this matter and resolved to try something else the next time we were to meet a week later.

For this second session, I brought in an empty tea bag box, a rectangular "Trade Winds" cardboard package (reproduced on p.171), the **People for Fair Trade** brand. I'd chosen it because it is such a rich text. It contains illustrated instructions on how to make tea; it describes the tea plant, and how it is grown and distributed; it explains the choice and symbolism of its brand name; it puts a strong case for supporting community-owned processes and products, such as this; it uses colour and visual representations sparingly.

After welcoming everyone, I passed the box around the room, asking each person there to study it with a particular purpose in mind. I asked them to think of a class they know and to plan a two-hour session (centred on this box) for that class. I went on to say that each person would role-play the first the three minutes of the two-hour class presentation he or she had planned.

What a range! Some opted for encouraging students to tell personal stories about the rituals associated with making and serving tea; some saw it as an opportunity to discuss advertising; others drew attention to the diversity of genres and linguistic features on the box, using them as models to practise the four literacies (literacy for self-expression; literacy for practical purposes; literacy for knowledge; literacy for public debate); others developed research projects on the history and properties and powers of different teas; others saw it as a chance to expand vocabulary through dictionary work.

When asked what I'd do, I confessed that, being an incorrigible internationalist, I wouldn't be able to resist wanting "the whole story" of the tea trade to be told. From its beginnings in Sri Lanka to its arrival in Australia, I'd want to focus on identifying who gains and who loses and at what cost, moving from the planting to the processing to the packaging to the publicising and, finally, to the purchasing. I said that I'd construct this narrative as a collective class activity, relying on students to contribute what they knew of each stage of this complex process. I'd see my role as enlarging students' knowledge and understanding of each stage and of how that has been represented on the box, asking lots of questions, always referring back to the box as a metaphor for reading between and through and behind the words and the lines.

Some loved this professional development exercise, declaring they'd never thought of literacy work as being so comprehensive, excited by the prospect of this larger vision. Others felt a little dazed - suddenly conscious of the boundaries within which they were working and a little frightened by the previously unknown domains just glimpsed. One person felt "there was no way you'd spend so much time on this". This was in response to my admission that

I could easily and willingly spend a whole term on the ideas, values and linguistic constructions embodied in the box-as-text. She then went on to explain this comment by adding: "My students have too many sheets of language exercises to get through to be giving time over to these sorts of diversions."

So, what do I make of this? What does it reveal about how I see the work of adult literacy teachers, about how I act in a classroom setting? If I study the politics and ethics of that session, does it help me in my desire to answer that recurring question: "**What** do we call the work we do, and what do we call ourselves?" Of all the ideological choices represented by the pedagogical practices different teachers advocated, do I find **one** (or some combination) more powerful than the others, and how do I justify this? How, in these days of casualisation and fragmentation and isolation, when teachers have less and less chance to talk with each other, to share and compare, when the very culture of teaching is at risk of being completely dissolved, how, in these times of individualism in its most extreme and sinister form, how can educational ideas circulate and percolate and resonate? Without contact, there's no conversation, and without conversation, there's no culture.

I started this piece thinking of teaching as a cultural activity, the art of community building, thinking of teachers, as bodies of knowledge, as the cultural agents who investigate and invigorate the cultures of their time. I've now realised that without a lively culture of our own, without a robust teaching culture, we are very poorly placed to undertake this broader cultural work. Without exaggeration, teachers (as I define them) could become an endangered species.

I can hear people saying: "But there's never been a better time for trainers and instructors". Many may agree, pointing to the proliferation of national training policies and agendas. But my question still is: is it a <u>good</u> time for "teachers"? For me, the naming matters. The name "teacher" matters. And the work that teachers do matters.

So, in conclusion, our conversations about teachers and teaching, including reading ourselves and our society as texts, matter very much right now. Perhaps it is the most important professional development of all – how we want to name, and how we want to represent, ourselves. Any suggestions?

References

Educating Feminists: Life Histories and Pedagogy, Sue Middleton, 1993, Teachers College Press, New York & London.

Marie Brennan's speech is summarised in **Speaking Back: Building A Research Culture For ACFE**, Delia Bradshaw & Helen Macrae, 1997, ACFE Board, Melbourne. Quotes come from my notes on the day.

TRADE WINDS UNBLEACHED PAPER TEA BAGS

ABOUT *TRADE WINDS*

Trade Winds creates markets for small scale producers of basic commodities. It promotes sustainable, low impact agriculture, and specialises in sourcing and supplying Australian consumers with first quality organically grown tea and coffee. Its trading surpluses are channelled to support projects that will improve the social and production infrastructure of supplying countries. **Trade Winds** has its origins in the World Development Tea Co-operative formed over 20 years ago to challenge the domination of tea trading cartels by developing new markets for value added tea from Sri Lanka.

Taken from the base of the **Trade Winds** cardboard tea box.

What is a basic education?:
Speaking Basically (1998)
Fine Print, *VALBEC Journal*

I've always preferred the term Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) because this name makes the "basic education" explicit. I don't like to think "basic education" might disappear or be left to chance when talking about literacy. To trace the origins of what "basic education" means to me, I've decided to re-visit four moments in my life as an adult educator, four occasions on which I was struggling to find the words that would adequately describe our aspirations as Adult Literacy and Basic Education workers. This pocket history is a way of showing how my ideas about "basic education" have evolved over the years. This narrative shows how this configuration of theories and practices that I call "basic education" keeps attracting new ideas into its orbit at the same time as it is also redefining or giving new interpretations to older ideas.

November 1990

I was coordinator of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Program at the Council of Adult Education (CAE) with nearly 500 students and over 30 part-time tutors. As a way of developing a collective educational ethos, and supported by my colleagues, I put together a 22-page document called **Making Connections** that spelt out the educational framework for our work. Its opening line, the primary reference point for all our educational endeavours at that time, declared:

> It is the primary responsibility of CAE's Adult Literacy and Basic Education program to create and sustain a learning environment in which the development of creative, critical and connected thinking is at the core of developing literacy.

This declaration was based on the belief that "creative, critical and connected thinking" is the heart and soul of "basic education". It attested that such thinking is vital if we are to move beyond knowledge, understandings and behaviours that were absorbed uncritically in childhood, if we are to move towards considering alternatives. This in-house manifesto advocated that critical thinking infused all subjects in the CAE ALBE program of the time (maths, health for women, Australian studies, psychology, road rules, geography, science, Australian history, cooking and computers) and not just those with English, Literacy, Reading and Writing in their name.

March 1993

I had just finished working on the Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework (ABEAF), the foundation document for the later Certificates in General Education for Adults.

In an article for **Good Practice in Adult Literacy** called "Powerful Discourses", I tried to sketch the possibilities inherent in the ABEAF document for a robust and comprehensive adult basic education curriculum, one that shunned minimalist statements and piecemeal approaches. The article explained how the ABEAF curriculum model was based on the belief that the term "literacy" (the acquisition of multiple discourses) implies meaning making that ensures access to two basic fundamentals: first, to the (often taken for granted) background knowledge (conventionally understood to be the province of basic education) assumed by texts; second, to the values embedded in this knowledge.

As I said in that article:

> For example, reading and writing texts about personal experience and self-validation call forth encounters with concepts such as self, identity, personality, culture and society. It's not long before these lead to contact with (and discussions about) frequently recurring social and intellectual issues such as nature or nurture, dependence and independence, pluralism and conformity, parenting and health. These discussions, in turn, necessitate familiarity with ideas such as "identity crisis" or "human development" or "multiculturalism" and many other "isms". And not only familiarity with concepts, values, issues and ideas, but also ways of identifying how the text constructs a particular view of these concepts, values, issues and ideas. For students learning to spot how texts construct sexism, racism and ethnocentrism, and learning to notice how language embodies a particular persona or stance or point of view, it becomes critical to know whose voice is speaking, representing what culture, what gender, what class, what age, and hence, from what position or perspective.

"Basic education" had extended to being "multi-discursive".

October 1994

I was leading a discussion as part of the Science and Technology Literacy Professional Development Course. The topic for the day was: "What, in the late 20th century, are the characteristics of an educated person?" For me, this constituted defining what we meant by a "basic", a foundation or a rounded, general education. The discussion concluded that four intertwined aspects were of fundamental significance – key concepts or keywords, subject knowledge, cognitive skills and personal attributes.

Examples of *key concepts* proposed were democracy, justice, environment, freedom and Asia; the *subject knowledges* (in some places called "core" curriculum studies) listed included geography, history, economics, civics, media studies and aesthetics; some of the *thinking or cognitive skills* highlighted were conceptualising, problematising and critiquing; and the *personal attributes* specified were connected with being ethical, open and tolerant.

If "basic education" were to engage with the big issues of our times (Peace/Violence; Poverty/

Wealth; Degradation/Conservation; Competition/Co-operation), as all agreed it should, then the fabric of basic education classes and programs had to be multidimensional, multi-discursive and multi-disciplinary.

February 1998

This was the publication date of **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities**, a conceptual framework for further education curriculum that I prepared for the Adult, Community and Further Education Board. Distilling the thoughts and values of adult educators from around the world, I listed eight lifelong learning goals for further education (including adult basic education) practitioners and students. The eight goals are to:

- understand complex systems which interact unpredictably;
- identify and integrate existing and emerging personal, local, national and global perspectives;
- prosper with difference, paradox and multiple sets of realities;
- see and make connections between the past, the present and the future;
- encourage sustainability in relationships and the environment;
- re-invent the self, privately and publicly, civically and occupationally, throughout life;
- extend learning styles and repertoires;
- develop insights through questioning through asking "why?" and "what if?" as well as "what?" and "how?".

A close inspection of these goals revealed four recurring patterns or themes to which I gave the names Multiplicity, Connectedness, Critical Intelligence and Transformation. These four principles, for me indicators of "quality" adult basic education, work together interdependently, whatever the topic, subject or discipline. In practice, learners and teachers assemble alternative perspectives, explanations and possibilities *(Multiplicity)*; then together they make connections between these and beyond these *(Connectedness)*; as well, they ask questions about these *(Critical Intelligence)*; all the while, learners and teachers consolidate their learning by determining and taking thoughtful action that makes a difference personally, locally, nationally and/or globally *(Transformation)*.

So, by early 1998, "basic education" had expanded still more. By then, it had come to mean the fusion of knowledge, understanding, values reflection and critical analysis, all behaviours and skills necessary for making a significant contribution towards the creation of individual and collective futures.

July 1998

Today, looking back on these four moments, what do I see?

Certainly, I see a number of threads running through these attempts to sketch the characteristics of adult basic education. I see how each statement provides a foundation or

"given" for the next. I also see how each successive statement has been prompted by the insufficiencies of the one before, often giving attention to areas only previously hinted at or not explored in enough depth. The main thread I see is a preference for integration over fragmentation, for being able to know and to hold both the detail and the big picture. Let me finish with an example.

Let us imagine that adult basic education students are studying "Melbourne". In my view, they need both a close-up view and a long-distance, wide-angle view. Not only do students need to know what is located where (through brochures, maps and excursions, through both electronic and physical inspections) but equally importantly they need to know how Melbourne is connected (geographically, culturally, politically, economically, technologically and historically) to its immediate surroundings, to the country as a whole and to the bigger world beyond.

At the same time as doing this, learners need to develop the habit of asking questions, asking "why?" and "what if?" as well as "what?" and "how?". For example, when learning about transport in and around Melbourne (which inevitably leads to learning about housing and employment and community identity and potentially everything else), as well as asking "How do most people travel to work?" and "What is the cheapest way to travel around Melbourne?", learners also need to consider "Why are land and housing more expensive in some Melbourne suburbs than in others?" and "What if the price of petrol were doubled and public transport fares reduced in Melbourne?" or "What if information in languages other than English were prohibited?". Prompted by such investigations, learners are encouraged to go on and ask: "What's all this mean to me and my community?   What am I going to do about it?"

Whenever we are thinking about what adult basic education students need to know, we are inevitably led to think about what adult basic education teachers need to know. In these fragmented times, how do we, the adult basic education workers, get to see the bigger picture? How do we make the connections? How often do we ask the question "What if?" What if we named our work differently? What if we dared to speak out loud and long about the dangers (and huge costs) of a minimalist and piecemeal approach to adult basic education? What if ...?

References

Good Practice in Adult Literacy, No 18, March 1993 p. 2.

Making Connections, CAE, Melbourne, November 1990, p. 1.

Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities, ACFE Board, Victoria, December 1997 p. 11.

Beyond the Lesson Plan: Teaching in Adult Education

This was a time of being guest speaker and giving key note addresses in a range of contexts around Victoria. This particular keynote address is another public meditation on the art and act of teaching, on its spirit and power.

A familiar pattern is now evident – quotations, metaphors, stories, visual aids and a homage to teachers – some of them recycled with different emphases.

Beyond the Lesson Plan: Teaching in Adult Education (1999)

Keynote Address, **"Focus on Language and Literacy"** *Conference*
Eastern Metropolitan ACFE Region
August 20, 1999

❧

Good morning. I'd like to begin with a poem, ***Ambidextrous***.

With my hands, I sculpt ...

My left and right
Are opposites:
Yin and yang,
 Moon and sun,
Woman and man,
Creative and logical.
They are two separate forces
connected by wrist, arm and shoulder,
to my reconciling body.

One cold, spring morning
When I was eight,
I noticed
How my right hand carried the burden
Of my heavy schoolbag
While my left swung freely at my side.
I thought, "It isn't fair
That my right hand does all the work."
That hand threaded needles,
Wrote tests,
Washed dishes,
Did cartwheels,
And wiped my bum ...
Yet here was the left hand
Off in her own world:
She picked dandelions,
Wore plastic rings and bracelets,

Waved from car windows,
And, at times, she would put
A paintbrush to paper
And an entire world might emerge
From beneath the bristles.

Her frivolity was hardly fair ...
I didn't realise my left hand toiled as well,
Weaving my history into memories.
I didn't know then
That she was collecting the
Images, smells, sensations
That would someday become art ...
But, years later,
When the left triumphed in the studio,
The victory was empty ...

I need the logic of my right hand
For the precision of mathematics,
The intricacy of structure, blueprints that do not limit:
Rather, they allow.
If, like an architect, you have the basic plan –
A house with bedrooms,
Bathroom, kitchen –
You can move beyond.

You can add on an observation tower,
Stained glass, or a labyrinth.
The left will always have the visions.

This was my metamorphosis:
As a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis,
So I grasp my paintbrush in one hand,
My protractor in the other.
It was you who brought my hands close,
All of you, my teachers.

You took both
Left and right and led me,
Ambidextrous now,
(like a child learning to walk)

to the horizon where these opposing lines
can touch and merge.

Thanks to Bernice McCarthy from **About Learning**.

As teachers, we too need to be ambidextrous. We need plans and we ALSO need visions. We need to be creative and to be logical. It's not a matter of either/or, of one without the other. We need both.

Let's think about the importance of plans. Look at this basic house plan. (Show OHT of house plan). This simple plan does many good things at once:
- It provides a summary of the basic features
- It shows the location of each of the sections
- It shows the proportionate size of each of the sections
- It shows the relationship of the parts to the whole
- It provides a starting point for more detailed thinking.

Lesson plans do all of these things too. Below is my lesson plan for the first class of a six-week course called "You Can Write". I don't intend that you read everything on this sheet but the headings suggest the general idea: introduction, today's topics, equipment, texts, warm-up exercises, discussion questions, group work, individual activities, writing tasks, follow-up, evaluation.

LESSON PLAN: YOU CAN WRITE (1ST CLASS)

- Introductions (5 mins)
- Topics for today and the next 8 weeks (5 mins)
- Equipment/Texts (3 mins)
- Weekly class rhythm or process – a mixture of reading, writing and discussion (5 mins)
- 9 short warm-up exercises (10 mins)
- Group discussion of exercises (5 mins)
- Written reflection: "I've always wanted to write but …" (10 mins)
- Discussion of responses in pairs (10 mins)
- Reflection as group discussion: "Are there internal reasons as well as external ones that stop you from writing?" (10 mins)
- Longer creative writing exercise: "Names" (10 mins)
- Group discussion: "Let's hear your comments on your own writing process, especially on the move from thought to writing?" (5 mins)

BREAK

- *Writing exercises:* dialogue, one as group activity and one solo (15 mins)
- *Group discussion:* "How did these two activities compare?" (5 mins)
- *Follow-up sheet* for work at home (5 mins)
- *Conclusion*: parting reading (5 mins)

This lesson plan features each of the five characteristics listed for the house plan above:

- It provides a summary of the basic features of the class
- It shows the location of each of the sections of the class
- It shows the proportionate size of each of the sections of the class
- It shows the relationship of the parts to the whole
- It provides a starting point for more detailed thinking.

Without question, lesson plans are very important but, it is what they stand for, what they represent, that gives them meaning. I see them as shorthand for the dreams, the hopes and the ideals we carry in our heads and in our hearts.

Consider this image from an Aboriginal story called **When the World Was New** depicting the creative process. It highlights the images inside the creator's head. For me, this arresting image spotlights the centrality of our imaginative powers whenever we are inventing and creating. As teachers, we are creating all the time, working to make the image in our heads a living drama.

Lesson plans are the bare bones of the pictures we carry in our head, those pictures of how we want the class to go. They are a skeletal summary of what we want the class to achieve. They are simple sketches of the much more intricate educational visions we see in our imaginations. Lesson plans are to teaching what the recipe is to the lusciously anticipated meal, what the architect's drawings are to the dream home and what the pattern is to the finished garment imagined in full colour.

Lesson plans give us a hint of a teacher's imagination at work but, by no means, are they the full story about teaching. Let us pause here to look more closely at the relationship between lesson plans and the art of teaching.

When we are making our lesson plans, what is going on? What, as teachers, are we doing? What images and ideas are we drawing on? What, whether we are conscious of it or not, is the conceptual, imaginative and political framework within which we are moving? What vision are we trying to make come true? Of course, answering these questions is no simple matter. There are so many thoughts racing through our head at the same time, so many voices competing for our attention and our allegiance. A bit like being at a busy intersection in peak hour traffic.

(DISPLAY OHT: TEACHER AS SYNTHESISER)

This mindmap is one way I tried to express the teaching act – to graphically represent our attempts to synthesise this confluence of influences – a year or so ago. I don't want you to be able to read what is written here – you have copies of the text on your seats that you can peruse at your leisure – it's more the overall busy-ness that I wish to emphasise, all the possibilities darting in and out of our imaginations.

Curriculum demands (a), those political and bureaucratic ones coming from the region, government departments & the wider field

Community, employment agency & other 'stakeholder' expectations (publications; displays; performances)

Institutional & bureaucratic requirements (records; forms; documentation; meetings)

Interpersonal dynamics

STUDENTS

Teaching research tasks (resources; venues; excursions; guests)

Individual needs, desires & expectations

Personal & educational history

Personal needs, desires, aspirations

Interpersonal dynamics

Personal & educational histories

Personal equilibrium

TEACHER

Self-scrutiny & reflection (within & between classes)

Current discourses and imperatives
*Educational
*Social
*Political
*Economic
*Cultural

Professional development necessities and pleasures (reading, writing, attending, reflecting, alone & with peers)

STUDENTS

Employment status

Personal & group equilibrium

Interpersonal dynamics

Individual needs, desires & expectations

Interpersonal dynamics

STUDENTS

Curriculum demands (b), conceptual and creative ones coming from the range of educational needs and aspirations of students and teachers

Co-ordination responsibilities (meetings with peers & co-ordinator; recording; reporting; informing)

Pedagogical role repertoire (mentor; judge; encourager; advisor; model; questioner; librarian; mediator; advocate)

ALBE allegiances
*Ethos/Culture
*Traditions
*Conventions
*Habits
*Histories
*Key Texts
*Ideals
*Role models

TEACHER AS SYNTHESISER

This busy diagram tries to express all the complexities embodied in the teaching act, all the split-second decisions we need to make in any teaching moment. Curriculum demands. Stakeholder expectations. Institutional and bureaucratic requirements. Current debates. ALBE allegiances. Pedagogical roles. Teaching research and preparation. Professional development necessities. Peer obligations. The **Transforming Lives Transforming Communities** conceptual framework for further education. These are only some of the realities competing for our attention, only some of the imperatives we carry in our heads, only some of the constantly shifting movements that impel us first in one direction and then in another.

I have written much on this subject – always struggling to find a metaphor that does justice to the art of teaching. Here I've coined the phrase "Teacher as Synthesiser". Sometimes I think of the teacher as an orchestra conductor, at other times a choreographer, and in other instances as director of a play. You may know a piece I wrote some years back called "Putting on a Performance" which highlights the similarities between teaching and circus life – all that juggling, balancing and tightrope walking.

Yet, the decisions we make – how to structure our classes; how much revision to do; which concepts or ideas to foreground; what texts to use; whether to favour reading, writing, listening or talking; when to organise solo work, when pair work and when group work; how to vary evaluation exercises – are neither random nor ad hoc acts. Each and every micro-decision is related to our picture of what makes for "good adult education". Each decision can trace its roots back to a philosophical source or, to put it another way, back to our vision of the fundamental purposes of education. It is this vision that pulls the disparate elements of our lesson plan together. It is this vision that holds everything together meaningfully.

As a child, I was taught: "You are the company you keep, so mind the company you keep". I'd like to extend this to: "We become the images we carry in our heads, so let us choose well the educational images, ideals and pictures we carry in our heads".

To put this another way, let us become self-aware authors of our own teaching lives. To me, this means becoming more attuned to the stories about education that we carry within us and which we inevitably bring to class. Stories and images about learning and learners and educational success; stories and memories about teachers and role models and classroom culture; stories and associations about men and women and accents and mannerisms; stories and flashbacks about spelling and handwriting and tidiness. These stories that have shaped us are always influencing us, whether we are conscious of them or not.

Let us, therefore, choose which teaching stories we want to retain, which to strengthen, which we want to modify, and which we might even want to discard. To do this, I believe, means

pondering the question: "Who am I as a teacher?   What am I taking into the class as well as my lesson plan? Who do I want to become?"

Sam Keen in **The Stories We Live By** put it this way:
> We need to re-invent ourselves continually, weaving new themes into our life narrative, remembering our past, revising our future, re-authoring the myths by which we live (quoted in **Restorying Our Lives**).

This, of course, is a never-ending story. How do I want to re-invent myself as a teacher? What new themes do I want to weave into my life as a teacher? What myths about teaching from my past do I want to retain and which ones need a new script or, at least, rescripting?

Let me share some of my own recent thinking and writing on this subject of "Who am I as a teacher?". The following piece of writing was an attempt to evoke the complexities of our highly sophisticated teaching work which, because it is rarely documented, is all too often misjudged as formulaic or routine or mindless.

I began this piece of writing by thinking back on a class I'd recently taught. I chose to write my account in the third person to distance myself a little from the story I was telling.

Here is what I wrote, with students' names changed:
> It is 9.25am on a hot sticky February morning. Nobody could have slept well the night before. The posters are coming loose on the walls of the airless, stuffy classroom. The ALBE teacher hopes the unpleasant weather doesn't deter the anxious students she enrolled last week for the class that is to start today.
>
> She's feeling quite anxious herself. Her contract - at last finalised about ten days ago - is for one semester only. It may be extended till the end of the year but that will depend on securing more funding which depends on achieving satisfactory outcomes which depends on satisfying a wide range of expectations in a very short time. It's a constant struggle trying to please everyone, "the stakeholders" as they are called these days.
>
> Friends of hers who aren't teachers don't appreciate the complexity, the intensity, and the exhaustion, of day-to-day teaching work. They don't understand what it's like to be making split-second decisions ALL the time. What saddens her most is that she may please everyone involved – the students, her employer, the funding body, herself – and still not have a job next semester. If it's like last time, she'll not know if she's to be re-employed until the very last minute and, if so, who knows with what group for what course?
>
> She knows she's not the only one feeling uncertain. Most of the students, due to arrive

any minute now, have not been involved in formal learning since leaving school. For some, that is a few years ago; for others, it's been decades. Many have been prompted to "come back to school" by some unexpected or unwelcome crisis – unemployment, retrenchment, family breakdown, work injury, illness. Others have assumed new responsibilities as parents or employees or partners that require literacy skills beyond what they've needed to date.

They'll all feel nervous, hoping their fears and anxieties aren't showing too much, hoping they are not making a huge mistake. Above all, they'll be hoping that learning to read and write, or learning to read and write better, will make a difference. They'll all have high, some even magical, expectations of this class and of this teacher.

The class is typical of many such classes held in neighbourhood houses, community centres and TAFE colleges around Melbourne. According to the records, fifteen people have enrolled for "Basic Reading and Writing", with others likely to join in the first few weeks of class. Twelve of the students in this group are women – ranging in age from twenty to seventy, most being in their thirties or fifties. As well, there are two young men and an older man about sixty. Everyone coming to this class left school early, many knowing only erratic or interrupted schooling. About half were born in Australia. Others were born elsewhere but went to school in Australia. A few went to school, quite some time ago, in their place of birth, be that Greece or Italy or Croatia or Lebanon or Vietnam or Chile or Somalia.

The teacher knows a little about each student, gleaned from what they wrote and said on enrolment day. They'd stressed their fears; she'd noted their courage. She calls some of them to mind.

Last year, Maria was retrenched from the factory where she'd worked for over forty years. She's been especially lonely since her husband died, and can't read the postcards her grandchildren send her when visiting her homeland. She suffers from back pain if she sits still too long.

Fay's last child started primary school last week. She wants to be able to help with homework when her eldest of four children moves to secondary school next year. As well, her husband's slow recovery makes it less and less likely that he will ever find paid work again, and more and more likely that she will have to find employment in cleaning or child care.

Glenn's memories of the school he hated are still very fresh. He doesn't really want to be here but feels he has no choice. All he's ever wanted to do is to own his own truck

but has been told he'll have to improve his reading and writing if he's going to be able to keep the books.

Jodi's mother, fearful for Jodi's safety, will be bringing her to class this morning and will be waiting outside when class finishes. Jodi has never travelled on public transport alone, and she's very keen to be more independent. She's been promised that this won't be like being at special school.

At 9.29am, the students, having found somewhere to sit, are keen for the teacher to start. It's hard sitting and waiting, not knowing what they're supposed to say or do. They concentrate their gaze on the teacher, the only person they've met before today. She holds the key to their destiny and just might have the magic wand that will transform their lives.

At this moment, she is feeling, like any artist before a performance, particularly a first performance, a turbulence of mixed emotions and racing thoughts. While her love for teaching has not diminished over the years, the standards she sets herself keep rising. Though she spends hours thinking about her classes, always making detailed plans, she is permanently conscious of how much better her teaching could be.

The longer she stays a teacher, the more she appreciates the importance of the finer points of the art of teaching – how to generate a discussion that includes and stretches everyone, how to create and sustain a healthy group life, how to best sequence activities, how to pace herself, when to pause, when to intervene, when not to intervene, when and how to challenge and when to let pass, when and how to begin and end.

She is hesitant to say that she loves her students, but she always does. She always aligns herself with their struggles and their heroism with which she identifies so strongly: she too has to be heroic as she struggles to realise her vision of "the good teacher". She understands very well that this is a critical moment in her life as well as in theirs.

I'll stop my story there. I wrote more at the time but this is enough for now.

As teachers, we have enormous powers AND enormous responsibilities. We can give our students a narrow body of information and skills or we can give them a vision of a better world. Only a few months ago, Tan Le, the 1998 Young Australian of the Year, made a passionate plea on this very matter. As she said then:

> There is another issue of neglect in our society ... Its neglect has profound ramifications for all of us, but most especially for young people.

I have just completed a law degree. One of the reasons I chose law – and many other young people also include this reason for choosing it – was because I believed a law degree would enable me to contribute in a special way, to do what I could to make a better world.

Of course I can do this as a lawyer but nothing in the entire law curriculum addressed this issue in a serious and engaging way. And other tertiary courses are the same. ...

Tan Le goes on:

Young people are not being educated to take their place in society. They are being trained – trained in a narrow body of knowledge and skills that is taught in isolation from larger and vital questions about who we are and what we might become.

There is, in other words, a complete absence of a larger vision ...

Vision carries the connotation of value, meaning and purpose – and of something beyond our reach that is nevertheless worth striving for and aspiring to.

Tan Le's words can be a source of inspiration for all educators. As literacy teachers, we are always striving for "something beyond our reach", for ourselves and for our students. What our students learn will always be far more than the notes we've made in our lesson plans. They learn not only what we value about reading and writing and why we value storytelling and encourage conversations. They also learn what we value about life.

In writing our lesson plans, we foreground the educational landscapes we wish to explore with our students. In writing our lesson plans, we also spotlight the intellectual and ethical domains that matter to us, both as teachers and as human beings. In writing our lesson plans, we are constantly re-visiting the basic questions of teaching: "Is this the way I want our society to be going? Where else could we be going? Where else should we be going?"

Thinking about "Beyond the Lesson Plan", the title I was given for this address, I couldn't help also thinking about other beckoning horizons. As well as "beyond our reach", there's:

- Beyond the pale
- Beyond the black stump
- Beyond all expectations
- Beyond the blue horizon
- Beyond belief
- Beyond 2000
- Beyond the here and now
- Beyond my wildest dreams.

"Beyond the Lesson Plan" is all these, and more. It is the difference between our hastily scribbled lesson notes and the dynamic worlds we create every day in our classrooms. It is the difference between the house plan I showed earlier and this splendid creation. (Show OHP of a splendid, colourful house). This difference is the work of the imagination as it transforms a plan into a work of art. This is the work we do as adult educators, as ambidextrous artists, every day of our teaching lives.

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Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities

*The ACFE publication, **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities**, has been mentioned a few times in the last few pieces. It is now time to say more about this further education curriculum framework and to explain its place in the ACFE community.*

*The first 32-page document was published in 1997. Later, after community consultations, **TLTC** (as it was often called) was expanded into a 56-page second edition in 1999. As the project worker and writer, I was employed by the Adult Community and Further Education Division to research and document both stages. It was a great honour and a huge responsibility to be invited to write this curriculum declaration. I remember thinking long and hard about a fitting title, choosing **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities** from a very long list of alternatives I had compiled. I have never regretted my choice.*

*The article, "Redefining Knowledge, Transforming The Future", outlines the history, rationale and curriculum design of the **TLTC** framework. It names and justifies four key principles – Multiplicity, Connectedness, Critical Intelligence and Transformation – as the guiding principles for educational practices and outcomes.*

The following three speeches riff on "transforming", each considering what transforming lives and communities looks like in different places. I relish the opportunity to praise and applaud teachers; I've always seen them as at the centre of our educational landscape. In all speeches, once again, stories win the day, ably supported by quotes and images. I regret I cannot, for copyright reasons, reproduce some of the paintings I mention. One speech was given at Pakenham, one at Dandenong and one at Benalla.

*It is hard to know the influence of **TLTC**. At the time, every ACE organisation, hundreds of them, was given a copy and so it was widely distributed. I was often thanked by adult further education workers for naming the work of our community so eloquently and for recognising its breadth and depth. Like most educational initiatives, I think, over time, it went on to make its own way through the community, changing shape and name as it moved to different sites in different circumstances.*

*I doubt the publication **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities** would be familiar in ACFE circles today but I hope its spirit lives on. The language of "transformation", a new concept in this context at the time, certainly does.*

Redefining Knowledge, Transforming the Future (1997)

Literacy Now, *DEETYA Publication*

❧

There is a strong relationship between knowledge, curriculum and the world in which we live. Gunther Kress, in **Writing the Future**, expresses it this way:

> A curriculum provides a vision of the future (p.9) ... A curriculum is, always, a design for the future. In the knowledges, practices, values which it puts forward – and in their modes of transmission in pedagogies – it imagines a certain kind of human being with certain kinds of characteristics. (p. viii).

These words, when I first read them, stopped me in my tracks. They still do. I find myself asking: "What sort of vision do we want to project? If, as adult educators, we think of ourselves as knowledge workers, as co-designers of the future, what sort of society, what kind of *human being*, what sort of *knowledge*, what kind of *learning*, do we have in mind?"

Such have been my preoccupations recently, working on a project to develop a conceptual framework for further education curriculum in Victoria. My earliest task involved a broad literature search and review. Let me share some of the international discussions taking place.

I shall begin with a few words from a distinguished adult educator from the Asia-Pacific region, Raja Roy Singh:

> In the process of reflecting on educational goals for a changing society, one must face the questions: what kind of society is likely to be shaped by a particular type of education, and what characteristics of the individual will contribute to a desirable society? (p. 44, **Education for the 21st Century: Asia-Pacific Perspectives**).

A publication from the Multiliteracies team, a team consisting of educators from Australia, England and the United States working together on a far-ranging curriculum project, declares:

> We cannot remake the world through schooling, but we can instantiate a vision through pedagogy that creates in microcosm a transformed set of relationships and possibilities for social futures ... Different conceptions of education and society lead to very specific forms of curriculum and pedagogy, which in turn embody designs for social futures (p. 73, **A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures**).

The report of a Nordic think-tank on future education requirements endorsed by the Nordic Council of Ministers has this to say:

> Isolated items of information do not constitute a corpus of knowledge until these items are sorted and fused to form coherent, inter-related entities ... If there is no limit to the growth of knowledge and applied knowledge, while the population is left without insight and a measure of influence, the result will be an inhuman, technocratic 'spectator' society (p. 16, **The Golden Riches in the Grass: Lifelong Learning for All**).

These are signs of a widespread paradigm shift in thinking about education, from a model based on uniformity to one based on pluralism, from one based on fragmentation to one based on inter-connectedness. The Senate Committee report on adult and community education states this quite explicitly:

> … the Committee continues to affirm the value of **a concept of education and training which is inclusive and which addresses multiple needs** … employees are not just 'hands'. Adult educators have always approached their task holistically, placing learners at the centre of their attention, with an integrated view of their cognitive, technical and personal development. This is the traditional ACE model and, in the Committee's view, all vocational preparation should embody these precepts (p. 5, **Beyond Cinderella: Towards a learning society**, a report of the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee).

With these discussions as a backdrop, I will now say more about the further education curriculum framework project to which I referred earlier. In December 1996, a Curriculum Strategy Formation Forum auspiced by the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board was held in Melbourne. It had been organised in response to state and national reforms to curriculum and accreditation. The forum provided a focus as well as a starting point for discussion about the future role of the ACFE Board in the area of curriculum development. The Board needed to elucidate its own position in relation to these reforms. One of the recommendations of the Forum was the development of a further education curriculum framework.

Curriculum <u>is</u> a design for the future. The recently developed further education curriculum framework believes that further education can make a significant contribution to personal and social transformation. This can be achieved, it affirms, through a dedication to lifelong learning infused with an educational vision that values:

- knowledge and understanding as well as skills;
- the integration of personal, social, cultural, vocational, economic and political perspectives and achievements into all learning;
- community-based decision-making within the local context, including enterprises and workplaces;

- negotiation and reconciliation, in particular, negotiating complexity, difference and paradox.

How do people develop the capacities required if this vision is to be realised?

The Delors report for UNESCO called **Learning: The Treasure Within** names learning *to know*, learning *to do*, learning *to live with others* and learning *to be* as the four pillars of education. These pillars, combined with other findings from the literature search, suggest lifelong learning goals as the capacity to:
- understand complex systems which interact unpredictably;
- identify and integrate existing and emerging personal, local, national and global perspectives;
- prosper with difference, paradox and multiple sets of realities;
- see and make connections between the past, present and future;
- encourage sustainability in relationships and the environment;
- reinvent our multiple selves, privately and publicly, civically and occupationally;
- extend learning styles and repertoires;
- develop insights through questioning, through asking 'why?' and 'what if?' as well as 'what?' and 'how?' (p.11, **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities**).

The realisation of these lifelong learning goals sits at the heart of the proposed Victorian further education curriculum framework. The framework has singled out 4 key principles as a way of organising these goals into an integrated conceptual framework.

The 4 principles are:
> **MULTIPLICITY**
> **CONNECTEDNESS**
> **CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE**
> **TRANSFORMATION.**

MULTIPLICITY is about:
- Multipurpose aims and approaches
- Multiform outcomes
- A multitude of text forms/multiliteracies
- Multiculturalism
- Multimedia
- Complexity, difference and paradox.

CONNECTEDNESS is about:
- Relationships and reconciliation

- Linking past, present and future
- Perceiving causes, consequences, connections and cross-references
- Synthesising perception, experience, cognition, ethics and behaviour
- Integrating knowledge and action.

CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE is about:
- Broad definitions of knowledge and intelligence
- Critical framing and critical analysis
- The see, judge, act and reflect cycle
- Reflectiveness
- Explicitness of values embedded in decisions and actions.

TRANSFORMATION is about:
- Agency
- Participation in a variety of networks
- Community building
- Citizenship: locally, globally and in cyberspace.

We need look no further than our own further education practices in Victoria to see these four principles in practice. It is where I looked for guidance when composing a curriculum design model. My study of recent further education initiatives suggested that the most important aspects of curriculum design are educational practices, learning outcomes, recognition outcomes and pathway outcomes. The relationship between the four principles and these four curriculum aspects is illustrated below.

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

PRINCIPLES
Multiplicity
Connectedness
Critical Intelligence
Transformation

PATHWAY OUTCOMES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOGNITION OUTCOMES
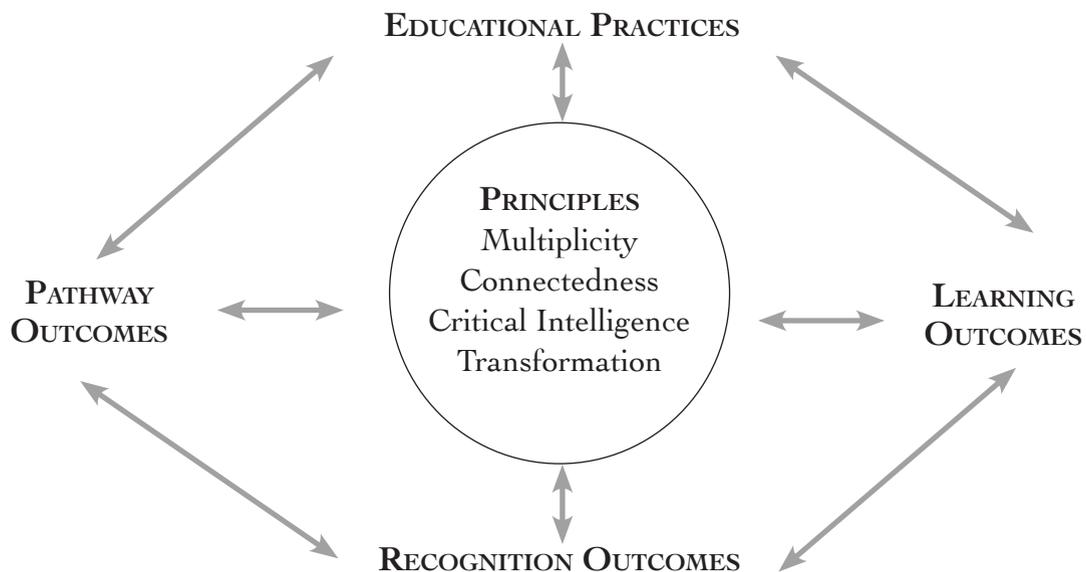
Curriculum Design Model at a Glance

The four curriculum design aspects – educational practices, learning outcomes, recognition outcomes and pathway outcomes – embody, collectively and individually, the four curriculum framework principles of multiplicity, connectedness, critical intelligence and transformation. Seen as a whole, the interdependent co-existence of the four aspects exemplifies diversity *(multiplicity)* and coherence *(connectedness)* with an emphasis on critical analysis *(critical intelligence)* and participation *(transformation)*.

A quick overview of the curriculum design model, as presented below, shows how each individual curriculum aspect also realises a fusion of the four curriculum framework principles. The particular characteristics of each curriculum aspect are described below, with the embedded presence of the four framework principles highlighted in italics.

Educational Practices	Learning Outcomes	Recognition Outcomes	Pathway Outcomes
A *multiplicity* of inclusive, interconnected practices that encourage creativity, *critical analysis* and *agency*, based on *multidimensional* pedagogies, embedded assessment and continuous evaluation.	A plaited subject-specific model that incorporates *multiple connected* outcomes, including language, literacy, numeracy, learning to learn and a greater capacity for *critical analysis, action* and *reflection.*	A *multiplicity* of ways of documenting and validating learning achievements and credit arrangements that most *intelligently connect* learning outcomes and readiness for future *participation*.	A wide-ranging interpretation of pathway planning that embodies *multiple* possibilities for future *action*, *evaluative* choices and coherent *connections*.

A fuller account of each of these four curriculum aspects – characteristics, processes and instances – is described in the further education curriculum framework project publication called **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities** (pp. 16-17). It is hoped that this work will invigorate further education practitioners, acknowledging as it does their potential power as a source of exemplary further education and their role as knowledge workers in contributing to personal and social transformation.

The further education curriculum framework is one of the reforms which the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board is undertaking in the area of curriculum and registration/recognition arrangements for community providers. The two areas are

interlinked. Together they provide the coherence and flexibility which will enable local responses to learning needs.

Delia Bradshaw was project worker for the ACFEB project to develop a conceptual framework for further education curriculum for Victoria. The project took place between June and November, 1997. **Literacy Now** *is funded by the Commonwealth of Australia through DEETYA.*

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People Transforming Communities (2000)

Address, **"Adult Learners' Week" Forum**

Pakenham
September 6, 2000

Sheets of coloured paper, each with a different letter, have been placed on seats

Good morning. Thank you welcoming me into your community. Thank you for giving me the time and opportunity to praise the work of people involved in transforming communities. Thank you for allowing me to meditate out loud on the word "Transformation", a word that is both powerful and popular.

I'd like start my reflections with an equation.

(DISPLAY OHT OF EQUATION.)

MULTIPLICITY + CONNECTEDNESS + INTELLIGENCE + IMAGINATION = TRANSFORMATION.

I know this is quite a mouthful, and probably sounds more like a maths problem than a celebration of community, but I find it an economical way of highlighting the importance of relationships. Let me say a few words about the ideas compressed into this equation before returning to it later in my talk.

For me, perhaps the most common observation about people transforming communities is their lived understanding of the centrality of relationships. They know that every community needs a multiplicity of people, who are all interconnected, who are all acting together with intelligence and imagination. Today, in our brief time together, I want us to get to know some of these people, what they believe, what they do and how they transform our communities. I'd like to introduce each one as a letter of the alphabet. I'll be introducing 10 people in all.

Let's get started with the first letter, the letter I.

Let's meet the IDEALISTS. Idealists are motivated by ideals. They carry within them a picture of a finer world – a more humane world, a more just world – and they have faith in the potential of communities to achieve these ideals. They understand very well that ideals need a focus, and how community gathering places make this possible. The feminist artist Judy

Chicago evokes this activity beautifully as making:

> … a space to house our spirit, (a place) to give form to our dreams …

And, despite setbacks, idealists never lose sight of the vision, never lose sight of their dreams. Maya Angelou, a passionate black American writer, describes it this way:

> There is that in the human breast that, despite nights of terror and fear and pain and grief and disconsolation, somehow morning comes and we get up and continue on.

For all of us, it is the ideals at the core of our work that fire and inspire us, even in our darkest hours.

There are lots of other important people involved in transformation work that also begin with the letter I: Inventors, Innovators and Intellectuals, to name a few. What they all share in common is a clear picture of a preferred future and the belief that we will get there. As they transmute ideals into action, they are all both FUTURISTS and OPTIMISTS.

So, let's now turn our attention to these two letters, the letters F and O.

FUTURISTS know the future is not some far distant, alien place, a place outside our ken. They know that it is what we do and say today that creates tomorrow. That is why they invite us to examine the consequences of today's ideas and behaviours. It is why they encourage us to ask ourselves: What sort of future are we creating by the choices we are making today? Is it a future we want? If not, what future do we prefer and how do we need to change what we are doing now? I love the way Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a French writer of fables, talks about this:

> A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a human contemplates it, bearing within the image of a cathedral.

How much do we, in our daily lives, re-imagine, visualise the potential, of the everyday, the mundane, around us as the basis for a new future? How do we see the rocks around us? As solid foundations for something that will last?

When thinking about the letter F, I could have chosen Friend or Facilitator. Both are equally important in the work of transformation.

When it comes to realising Ideals, as well as Futurists, we need, as I mentioned before, OPTIMISTS.

OPTIMISTS are not blind and naive, mindlessly chanting "She'll be right mate", no matter what the circumstances. Optimists know life is both sunshine and shadow but believe that, ultimately, the life-force, the force for good, will prevail. They know that reforming and transforming need enthusiasm, a sense of joy, a resounding affirmative "Yes!" as distinct from the nihilistic "No!". Aung San Sui Kyi, the Burmese democracy leader, phrases it this way:

> A people who would build a nation (or a community?) in which strong democratic institutions are firmly established as a guarantee against ... terror must first learn to liberate their own minds from apathy and fear.

Optimists work to transform negatives into positives.

The people we are talking about here are AGENTS OF CHANGE, people consciously striving towards the creation of a more ideal world. There are so many wonderful possibilities for our fourth letter, A, Agent of Change being only one. Consider the transformational work of people such as Artists and Architects. They describe this same impulse, an urge to build, to construct alternatives, to re-form. Especially where there is injustice or violence or ugliness of any sort. Knowing and doing are a very powerful combination, and agents of change fuse the two. As Margaret Mead, the pioneer anthropologist, reminds us:

> Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Another way of saying this comes from Gunther Grass, the German anti-fascist novelist:

> The job of a citizen is to keep his (or her) mouth open.

Agents of change keep their mouths open: they are willing to speak up and to speak out. But what is this speaking out, this desire for change, about? Change from what to what? Some might describe it as "making a difference". But what sort of difference? There does seem to be a core of values at the heart of those who work to transform communities – values grounded in peace, beauty, justice, democracy, co-operation, sustainability, compassion and truth. How are these values born and nourished and strengthened?

Contemplating this, I needed to draw on 3 more letters, R and S and T.

R is for READERS. People committed to making our communities healthier and more prosperous tend to be keen readers. They not only read books and journals but also cultural shifts and changes in the socio-political climate. They know how to make meaning of what is happening around us – in the news, in television programming, in politicians' statements, in figures about incomes and unemployment and taxes, in policies related to trade and refugees and government funds, in the attention given to some events and denied others. Anais Nin, the French journal writer, reminds us:

> What we are familiar with we cease to see. The writer shakes up the familiar scene and, as if by magic, we see a new meaning to it.

Readers are sensitive to nuances of meaning. They are good at picking up clues.

In other words, people transforming communities read the between the lines of the powerful discourses of our society. Whether it is advertising, news reports, internet messages or political pronouncements, they read these texts for what they have to say about who matters, and about who doesn't and why. Those active in community transformation read the world

as they read the word. Readers are closely related to other key agents of change that start with R – people such as Reformers and Rainmakers, all those people who turn arid soil into flourishing gardens. R is a very rich letter.

The letters S and T are also associated with agents of transformation. S stands for the Students Of Life and T are the Teachers.

STUDENTS OF LIFE **live** the much-acclaimed motto "Lifelong Learning". They practise what they preach – seeing learning as something that happens everywhere all the time. They know everything in life can be a lesson. They are shining examples of what John Williams, the Australian country singer, urges:

> Don't be afraid of failure: sometimes our best lessons are learnt from mistakes.

Sometimes, those active in transforming communities, consciously, seek out role models for inspiration. In a collection of inspirational messages from Australian celebrities, the entertainer Jackie Love is quoted as saying:

> Pick someone who has what you want and study them, have them as your mentor.

Students of Life can name those they most admire and why. This turns my mind to T.

For many in our communities, TEACHERS are very influential role models. For me, it is teachers who bring about the greatest changes in individual lives. Every hour, every day, in every community house and learning centre in this region, in Victoria, in Australia, Teachers are transforming lives. Sometimes these transformations are quite small, or so it seems, almost imperceptible to the naked eye. But extremely significant nonetheless. It might be a smile, the first joking comment or speaking up for the first time. Other transformations have more obvious far-reaching effects – a new and stronger positive self-image, the choice of a different pathway in life, a sense of achievement that will be the foundation for success in employment, further study and civic life.

In every community organisation represented here, classroom miracles (both large and small) are a daily occurrence. Whether consciously or unconsciously, all teachers know as Maria Montessori, the educational innovator, knew so well:

> Whoever strives for the regeneration of education strives for the regeneration of the human race.

Teachers are regenerators par excellence. Closely related to Teachers is another important T, Travellers, those who are adventurous explorers, who are prepared to navigate uncharted waters.

Let's dwell a little on a key ally of adventurers and explorers, the NAVIGATORS, our third last letter, the letter N.

NAVIGATORS love new frontiers. These words of the bold photographer Diane Arbus could almost be their motto:

> My favourite thing is to go where I've never been.

Navigators usually have some idea (however rough) of where they are heading and of the terrain they'll be crossing. But they also have an open-ness to change, a curiosity about, and a delight in, the unfamiliar and a willingness to embrace unexpected turns and discoveries. In their work, Navigators need the help of some other N companions – Negotiators, Networkers and Narrators. The journey into new places is certainly important but so are the stories about the journey. The big issue, of course, is "Whose story gets told?" Those gifted with the ability to transform communities make sure everyone's story is heard and told. Not just the celebrities and winners and squeaky wheels. Narrators like to go beneath the surface of things, just like gardeners.

And this brings us to the second last letter for today, G.

GARDENERS in our community work in both literal and metaphorical ways, creating gardens in both our public places and in our private inner spaces. Gardeners are those who know how rich or poor the soil is, who know how to make arid ground fertile, who know when to leave be and when to intervene. Gardeners understand that life moves through seasons and cycles, and they know the strength and beauty and limitations of each season and cycle. They work harmoniously with the vital elements, not violently against them. I love the way the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore catches this sensitivity:

> Not hammer strokes but dance of the water sings the pebbles into perfection.

What we are talking about here is humane power, a power for good. Another aspect of transforming good into better is the work of Magicians in our communities.

With Magician and the letter M, we come to the last of our letters.

MAGICIANS are those who influence the course of events by their seemingly inexplicable power to produce surprising, even spectacular, results. Carol Pearson, author of **The Hero Within**, a modern classic of Jungian psychology, throws a fresh light on this idea:

> Magicians act as magnets who attract and galvanise positive energy for change. They can do this by identifying where growth can occur for individuals, institutions or social groups, and then by fostering it. Although they may not be the leader, ... they act as rainmakers. When they are there, growth occurs. Magicians are able to inspire hope in others because they **know** it is possible to have a peaceful, humane, just and caring world.

It is this deep faith, this idealism, this optimism, that motivates and empowers magicians. Magicians never doubt that, if we live by our ideals, so we change and so too, as Carol says "as if by magic", so too does our world. That "as if" is very important. Surprising

results don't come out of thin air. It only looks as if they do. They are, in fact, the end-point of extensive creative thought and careful preparation. Just like the work of all people transforming communities. Including the Multiculturalists, another irresistible M.

By now, you'll be wondering about these letters and why I've chosen these particular ones, why today I've turned the spotlight onto I F O A R S T N G and M. If we look at this string of letters from a different angle, if we change our point of view, if we try a new juxtaposition, we can see meaning in these seemingly random and unconnected letters. If we look for meaningful relationships, we find that dynamic, fertile word TRANSFORMING.

Just as we need all these letters for this word, so do we need all the people starting with these letters if our communities are to grow and flourish. We need Idealists and Futurists and Optimists and Agents of Change and Readers and Students of Life and Teachers and Navigators and Gardeners and Magicians. And it's not as if these are self-contained, separate individuals, each working away on his or her own separate patch. Each needs all of the others if the work of transformation is to be rich and deep, and if it is to endure.

And these people, these aspects of transformation, are not something out there that only other people are doing. These identities are also at work within each one of us here in this hall today. We are all Idealists and Futurists and Optimists and Agents of Change and Readers and Students of Life and Teachers and Navigators and Gardeners and Magicians. We are all people transforming our communities. That is what makes communities strong. It's why I can declare with such fervour in my original equation:

MULTIPLICITY (All of you people here)
    plus CONNECTEDNESS (The relationships you have with each other and the wider world)
    plus INTELLIGENCE (All the knowledge gathered here)
    plus IMAGINATION (All the creativity assembled here)
= TRANSFORMATION.

The People who are Transforming Communities are YOU.

Postscript: A References list has not been provided as this was an oral presentation, never published, and I no longer have my research/presentation notes.

Teachers Transform Lives (2000/2001)

Speech, **"Adult Learners' Week" Dinner for Teachers,**
Greater Dandenong ACE Cluster
September 7, 2000
Later published in **ARIS Resources Bulletin** *(2001),*
Adult Education Resource and Information Service

Teachers <u>do</u> transform lives. The evidence is all around us. Every hour of every day, the work of teachers results in changes big and small, in our neighbourhoods, in every ACFE region, all around this country. And the ripple effect goes on for years. Each of us could tell stories about the transformations we've witnessed, about the way lives have been changed forever, thanks to the talents and tenacity of teachers and tutors we know.

Let me share with you two stories about teachers, stories that speak on behalf of all the stories we could share together.

The first story concerns a young Middle Eastern woman and her teacher.

This young woman, whom I shall call Leila, had been coming to her ESL class at a neighbourhood house for about six months. One day, arriving for class, she noticed a mini-bus parked outside. Her teacher was urging them all to climb aboard: "Today's the day we're off to the Botanical Gardens." None of the fifteen women in the class, all of whom lived within ten kilometres of the city centre, had ever been to the Botanical Gardens. In fact, none of them had even heard of them before last class.

Once there, they could not believe their eyes – the colour, the landscaping, this vast expanse of natural beauty, a world of peace and quiet, a green oasis of such grandeur. The women could hardly believe they were still in the same city, and that these were public gardens, with free access to all. They felt as if they'd been transported on a magic carpet to a magical world far, far away. Leila, in particular, kept asking: "Is this really Melbourne? I thought where I lived was Melbourne."

The next day the teacher arrived early at class, keen to discuss the excursion of the day before. She knew it would be a subject of much conversation and debate for a long time to come. She knew it was a powerful metaphor for the way she saw her teaching – a journey into other worlds, other times, other places, other ways of looking at the world. A metaphor for expansion and expansiveness – geographically, conceptually, emotionally, socially and civically.

The teacher was greeted at the door by an irate husband who expressed strong objection to his wife having been taken away from class without his permission. In fact, the students had been notified in advance and Leila had either forgotten or had chosen not to tell her husband. Leila's husband was most upset. She had accused him, on returning from the Gardens, of tricking her into believing her suburb was the whole of Melbourne. The teacher then spent some time with the husband, explaining the purpose of the excursion, stressing there'd been no secrecy intended, inviting him into class to hear the women's discussion, reassuring him he would be welcome on future excursions. He left, agreeing it would be best if Leila continued with her class.

I find this story deeply moving for many, many reasons. First of all, the reminder about the potential of the simplest acts to transform lives. Leila's world expanded exponentially in a matter of a few hours. With that trip to a place only five kilometres from her home, her whole world changed. Secondly, the power of this story as a metaphor for the work of teaching. Isn't all our teaching about enabling people to discover new worlds and perspectives, to sample life from a different point of view and to see the familiar with new eyes? Thirdly, the wisdom and courage of the teacher in both staying true to her educational ideals and in being culturally respectful. This is truly multiculturalism in practice – finding the common ground in apparently irreconcilable differences, concentrating on the common good.

Recently, that same teacher told me that Leila is a new woman since that memorable day. She walks and talks as a woman of stature. She is enrolling in a Return to Study course next year to get herself ready for University study. And the family visits the Botanical Gardens, often.

The poignancy of this story is that it is not an uncommon one. Whether it's an excursion, a book, a newspaper article, a new way of moving or cooking or communicating, in the hands of adult educators like you and people like you all around Victoria, these simple everyday activities transform lives. Just look at what happens in computer classrooms.

My second story, featuring Nina, illustrates this.

Nina worked for over forty years in a textile factory. Her busy life left no time for English classes. Not until she was retrenched was this possible. Part of the retrenchment agreement included some English classes at the local adult education centre. She loved her classes – meeting other women like her, sharing life stories together, starting to realise how much they'd contributed to Australian society as well as to their own families, learning about themselves and the wider world as well as English. When their teacher suggested a few computer sessions as part of their literacy class, most were reluctant but agreed to try. Nina and her peers thought they were too old and too uneducated to learn.

The teacher, wisely, went very slowly and gently, introducing a little at a time, always leaving plenty of time for the speaking, listening, reading and writing they loved so much. A day they'll always remember is when Nina first received an e-mail from her grandson visiting the ancestral home in Italy. Suddenly, computers were not threatening machines but, like the phone, a way of bringing people together. And Nina's new found sense of strength and freedom did not end there. She decided it was time to write her life story for her family, for posterity, and she wanted it to be beautiful and durable. Nina learnt how word processing and basic formatting could achieve this for her. She took ages choosing just the right fonts.

Nowadays, not only has her status risen in the family – both as author and as someone who can talk about the internet with ease – but also in the wider community. She is now a mentor to a local ethno-specific group wanting to produce a monthly newsletter featuring family histories.

These miracles – for they are of this magnitude in the effect they have on individual lives and the communities to which these individuals belong – these miracles occur on a daily basis. They are the norm, not the exception. Imagine the effect if every person hearing or reading this told two such stories, and I've no doubt you could all tell dozens. Imagine the effect. Anyone listening could never doubt the truth of the assertion: "Teachers transform lives." So, I find myself asking: "Where does this power come from? What is its source? What makes teachers so special?"

I'd like to spend the rest of this article contemplating these three questions. I'll focus on two aspects in particular. First, the multiplicity of identities that co-exist within each teacher. Second, the passion inside teachers that springs from a core set of values or ethical principles.

First of all, the Multiple Identities to be found in teachers. (I much prefer this description to the term 'multi-skilled' that we hear so much about.)

Teachers perform many roles and play many parts. I've long struggled to find a metaphor that does justice to the sophisticated work teachers do. Some of the metaphors I've considered are:
- Teacher as Alchemist
- Teacher as Choreographer
- Teacher as Conductor
- Teacher as Synthesiser
- Teacher as Artist
- Teacher as Tour Guide
- Teacher as Circus Performer.

Nowadays, I realise it was foolish of me to have been looking for one. As if any one metaphor

could hold and express it all. Now, I realise, teachers are all these, and lots more as well. Let me elaborate on a few of these to make my point clearer.

Take Teacher as Circus Performer. The language of circus performance highlights how adept and versatile teachers are. When I look closely at their work, I see:

- Jugglers – teachers juggling the fast-moving changes in policy and practice with equilibrium and ease
- Tightrope walkers – teachers walking educational and political tightropes with poise and precision
- Tamers of savage beasts – teachers taming the terrifying tigers of technologies with grace and courage
- Trapeze artists – teachers turning verbal somersaults on the jargon trapeze with flair and confidence
- Acrobats – teachers leaping through bureaucratic hoops and dashing through the shifting obstacles of paperwork with speed and dexterity.
- And so on... Ever the consummate, agile performer.

Then, there's Teacher as Synthesiser. (My mindmap earlier in this publication, TEACHER AS SYNTHESISER, shows how many things are on a teacher's mind at any one point in time.) Consider all those split-second decisions we need to make in any one teaching moment, synthesising the multitude of realities competing for our attention and harmonising the constantly shifting imperatives that impel us first in one direction and then in another. Imperatives such as:

- Curriculum demands
- The emotional, social, linguistic and political climate of the class
- Employer expectations
- The needs, desires and aspirations of our students
- Institutional requirements
- Our own needs, desires and aspirations as teachers
- Research, preparation and assessment
- Professional development necessities and pleasures
- Peer loyalties
- Not to mention, the **Transforming Lives Transforming Communities** conceptual framework for further education.

And on and on and on, goes the list of demands on our time, our energies and our creativity. So many thoughts racing through our heads at the one time, so many voices competing for our attention and our allegiance, so many possibilities darting in and out of our imaginations. A bit like being at a busy intersection in peak hour traffic. And yet, day in, day out, continuously making (often split-second) judgments, teachers synthesise all these forces into educationally meaningful activities.

As well, there's Teacher as Conductor or Choreographer. The longer I stay a teacher, the more I appreciate the finer points of the art of teaching – how to generate a discussion that includes and stretches everyone, how to create a healthy group life, how to recognise and foster a group rhythm, how to best sequence activities, how to pace myself, when to pause, when to intervene, when not to intervene, when and how to challenge and when to let pass, when and how to begin and end. And all the other discerning decisions anyone responsible for a live drama needs to be making all the time. And we all know, don't we, how deceptively simple this work can look from the outside, this sophisticated work of orchestration?

I could amplify the other identities I mentioned – alchemist, artist and tour guide – but will leave that to your imagination. I'd love to know if you have other metaphors for teaching that you find compelling.

Let me now turn to my second focus, the Passion of Teachers.

As well as combining all the roles I mentioned above – circus performer, synthesiser, conductor, choreographer – as well as reconciling all these vocational identities, and I've highlighted only a few of them, teachers are fiercely passionate about living their beliefs. Yes, they draw on a repertoire of roles and identities, but to do this they draw on something even more profound – they draw from a very deep well of values, ideals and principles.

In my experience, the words most often heard when teachers are talking about their work are words like co-operation, dignity, democracy, justice, harmony, freedom – in other words, the language of personal and social transformation.

Teachers know that what they do matters. Teachers know their work makes a difference, to individual lives, and to the society at large. Teachers carry a vision in their heads, one often not immediately obvious to a passing observer, a vision of how a particular activity, a particular class and a particular program contributes to a better world. Our work as teachers is about making the vision in our heads come alive in our classrooms. Another way of considering this is to say that, from us, their teachers, students learn not only about reading and writing and cooking and computers and horticulture and health. They also learn what we as teachers value about life.

From what we do and say, they learn:
- whether we advocate peace over violence;
- whether we are "at home" with diversity and difference;
- whether we encourage emotional and social development as well as mental and technical development;
- whether we ensure everyone is heard;

- whether we prize global as well as local citizenship;
- whether we care about the well-being of all life on earth.

Yes, as teachers, we have enormous powers and, for this reason, we also have enormous responsibilities.

Looking for an image that embodies this rich mix of talents, virtues and influence, I turned to a woman who is equally multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and powerful. I turned to Sally Morgan, an Aboriginal artist from Western Australia. In particular, I turned to one of her paintings, "Across Australia", one that depicts patterns in the earth as seen from an aircraft window. (Show OHT: Across Australia.)

For me, her painting represents the colourful, complex and complementary patterns that constitute the identity and work of every teacher here, something that only becomes clear when we stand back a little. It is an optimistic portrait, one that says to me: "Like these ancient landforms, teachers will be with us for a long, long time – constantly changing, constantly reforming, always leaving their mark."

Teachers DO transform lives. YOU TRANSFORM LIVES. On behalf of your students past, present and to come: " Thank you for making all the difference."

Reference

Sally Morgan (1996) **The Art of Sally Morgan/with an introduction by Jill Milroy** Ringwood, Vic: Viking (p. 32).

Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities (2002)

Speech, **"Adult Learners' Week" Awards**
Benalla Regional Gallery
September 5, 2002

Thank you for inviting me to celebrate with you tonight. Thank you also for asking me to speak. It is a great honour and a great pleasure to share my passions with you. Thank you for giving me these ten or twelve minutes of your precious time.

Learning matters. Adult learning matters.
It matters for individuals.
It matters for communities.
It matters for our country.
It matters for the globe we share together.

Adult learning matters. We can never overestimate the importance of learning, and the vital difference it makes to individual lives and to whole communities – in this region, in this country, and all around the world. This is a grand claim but all of us here see proof of this every day. Each of you can tell stories of transformation – how lives and communities have been renewed and regenerated. I'd like to share such a story: I'm sure it will sound familiar.

About five years ago, seven women from seven different cultural backgrounds, decided they wanted to form a study group. As is common with many adult learning groups, there were a number of reasons they wanted to do this. They wanted to explore issues of identity; they wanted to learn more about each other's cultural values; they wanted to develop a more mature understanding of the concept of "multicultural Australia", something beyond food and dance and stereotypes; they wanted to see if they could write something about all of this.

For several years, once a week on Fridays, together they read newspaper articles, watched films and listened to guest speakers, each time vigorously discussing the ideas and suggestions presented. As some were keen to record their insights in writing, space was always left to hear and consider what they had written.

One day, one of the group brought a notice from the Immigration Museum in Melbourne about a forthcoming project. Organised by the Australian Quilters Association, it was part of their "Australian Quilts in Public Places" initiative. The theme was "Journeys: the

Immigration Experience". The publicity encouraged quilters of all ages, as well as community groups, to participate. The group of seven women saw an opportunity to take their learning further, and in a way they could never have imagined at the outset.

For the next nine months, meetings revolved around this activity – recounting stories of immigration, discussing personal and collective interpretations of the exhibition theme, sketching basic designs, purchasing fabrics, cutting and stitching and redesigning, even composing a written statement to accompany the quilt.

It needs to be said here that only one of the women knew anything about quilting. The others were keen to learn but, given the imminent deadline, were limited in what they could contribute, both in time and in skill. Most of the group saw it as a means to an end, a chance to further explore stories of migration and discovery and loss, at the same time creating something artistic and tangible together. Inevitably, as in most groups, there were tensions around roles and commitment and processes.

I cannot tell the whole story here but, suffice it to say, the quilt was submitted on time but, not surprisingly, it was rejected: it did not fulfil the technical criteria for quilting. At the next group meeting, this outcome prompted the most generative discussion in the life of the group, a frank and courageous discussion about what had really been learnt.

The women had not learnt much about quilting but they had learnt some very important life lessons - about group dynamics, cross-purposes, cultural identity and symbolic representation. When some of them later visited the quilt exhibition, they were in a much better position to appreciate the designs of the forty-three quilts chosen for display. They had also learnt where to find the cheapest and most fabulously coloured fabrics, in shops run by women of Somali, Vietnamese and Iranian backgrounds. This adult learning experience transformed their own sense of self as well as their understanding of the different communities that make up Melbourne. Instead of simply talking about multiculturalism, they lived it, tensions and all.

I want to conclude this story by saying how proud I am that their large, dynamic creation now hangs on the wall above my computer, my constant companion when composing this speech. Each day, it reminds me of the thoughts, the feelings and the colourful handiwork of seven women struggling to make meaning of Australia's rapidly changing society. It is a daily reminder too of the hundreds of thousands of other adult learners, all around Australia, all striving to do the same.

This is the vocation of adult education, isn't it, to enable us to live our lives more skilfully, more knowledgeably, more wisely and more humanely. And this is what happens, isn't it, wherever adult learning is taking place. I cannot think of a better way to describe adult

education centres than as powerhouses of personal and social transformation, whatever their name or location or history, I cannot think of a better homage than a Māori chant that praises its meeting place, the "marae". This chant from **The Barefoot Book of Songs for Survival** could be a theme song for adult education.

> We need our meeting place for many reasons.
> That we may rise tall in oratory.
> That we may weep for our dead.
> That we may pray to God.
> That we may have our feasts.
> That we may house our guests.
> That we may have our meetings.
> That we may have our weddings.
> That we may have our reunions.
> That we may sing.
> That we may dance.
> And there find the richness of life.
> And the proud heritage that is truly ours.

What is this "proud heritage that is truly ours"? What vision of ourselves, our country and our world is adult education fostering? If educational work is designing the future, what future, as adult education workers and learners, are we creating?

My response to these questions comes from two inspiring statements, one may not be familiar to you and one certainly will. The first, an internationalist dream, is "Human Family". The second, a local but no less stirring dream, is "Advance Australia Fair".

Let me start with "Human Family", a poem written by a Black American Woman, Maya Angelou, in the late 1980's and still true today.

> I note the obvious differences
> in the human family.
> Some of us are serious,
> Some thrive on comedy.
>
> Some declare their lives are lived
> As true profundity,
> And others claim they really live
> The real reality.
>
> The variety of our skin tones

Can confuse, bemuse, delight,
Brown and pink and beige and purple,
Tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas
And stopped in every land,
I've seen the wonders of the world,
Not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women
Called Jane and Mary Jane,
But I've not seen any two
Who really were the same.

Mirror twins are different
Although their features jibe,
And lovers think quite different thoughts
While lying side by side.

We love and lose in China,
We weep on England's moors,
And laugh and moan in Guinea,
And thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,
Are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways, we differ,
in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences
Between each sort and type,
But we are more alike, my friends,
Than we are unalike.

Yes, we are more alike, my friends,
Than we are unalike.

Isn't this "our proud heritage", both as Australians and as adult learners? Isn't this our motto in adult education, "We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike"?

Let us now consider a song on a similar theme written "closer to home". "Advance Australia Fair" was composed by Scottish-born Peter Dodds McCormick as a tribute to his adopted country, and was first performed in 1878. I have chosen the less well-known second verse as a simple but moving statement of our adult education ideals. I will first recite the whole verse and then revisit each line. On the second reading, I will also display one Australian painting for each line. I have chosen these particular paintings because, for me, they add depth to the words.

> Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
> We'll toil with hearts and hands
> To make this Commonwealth of ours
> Renowned of all the lands
> For those who've come across the seas
> We've boundless plains to share
> With courage, let us all combine,
> To Advance Australia Fair

Now, let's look closer.

The first line is "Beneath our radiant Southern Cross". (This painting, "Native Flowers", is by Margaret Preston.) Let us make sure – in classes and courses on horticulture and environmental studies and organic gardening – that our land stays beautiful and healthy and "radiant".

The next line is "We'll toil with hearts and hands". (This painting, "The Sock Knitter", is by Grace Cossington Smith and this painting, "An Old Bee Farm", is by Clara Southern.) Let us make sure – in courses on work preparation and vocational education and computing and parenting, in our community development and our community employment projects – that everybody has worthwhile work to do, work that includes mind and soul as well as "hearts and hands", work that builds social and cultural wealth as well as economic capital.

The next line is "To make this Commonwealth of ours". (This painting, "Palm Valley", is by Albert Namatjira.) Let us make sure – in our policies of equity and access and inclusiveness – that the "wealth" of our country is shared by all, including the original inhabitants, and that it is not restricted by class, race, ethnicity, gender, physical attributes, income, occupation or educational background.

The next line is "Renowned of all the lands". (This painting, "Dancing Children No 1", is by Russell Drysdale.) Let us make sure – in the values that permeate all we do in adult education, in our teaching, our learning, our groups and our projects – that Australia is "renowned" for the right reasons – for justice, for compassion, for courage and for democracy, a place where children dance.

The next line is "For those who've come across the seas". (This painting, "Coming South", is by Tom Roberts.) Let us remember that our settlement history is a story of immigration and that this land has long welcomed people fleeing persecution and hardship, those seeking a new life and a fresh start and keen to make their contribution.

The next line is "We've boundless plains to share". (This painting, "Field Naturalists", is by Jane Sutherland.) Let us make sure – in our general education classes, in our literacy classes, in our classes for youth, our classes on politics and economics – that we emphasise global geography, connectedness and generosity.

The last two lines are "With courage, let us all combine, To Advance Australia Fair". (This detail of "Quilt of Many Countries", was made by young refugee students in a new arrival English Language school.) Yes, courage and creativity and compassion and care and connectedness and commitment, and all of us and all together. With this quilt from the Immigration Museum exhibition still before us, let me conclude by returning to where I began.

Yes. Learning matters. Adult learning matters.
It matters for individuals.
It matters for communities.
It matters for our country.
It matters for the globe we share together.

We are never too young and never too old. It is never too early or too late. The work of transformation never ends.

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Photos: Ponch Hawkes

July 2022

Winter Solstice (1999)

I changed the strict chronological order earlier so I could group all the "Transforming" pieces together.

This letter to our son Finn, written at the very end of the twentieth century, seems well placed at this point in this collection to provide a pause, a breathing space, a few moments of wider reflection, before a new year/decade/ century/millennium begins.

Winter Solstice (1999)

Dear Finn,

We are halfway through 1999. In six months, we'll be leaving the 1990s behind. As we sit here, poised between one millennium and the next, I find myself thinking about what sort of world we are living in now and what sort of world we are in the process of making, whether we are conscious that is what we are doing or not.

I find myself wondering how the future looks to you and how you feel about what you see. I find myself thinking about what sort of virtues and qualities you will need to make a good life in the next millennium and about how well Bill and I have prepared you for what (by any measure) is bound to be a testing time.

Let me begin with a stocktake of where I see we are now.

Many would count the 20th century as the most violent in human history. Of course, people point to all sorts of advances – mostly technical and technological – implying "we've never had it so good". Yes, life is comfortable for most of us in the affluent, Westernised countries. So comfortable, I sometimes wonder if we've lost the imaginative capacity to know the physical and emotional agony of crops failing or terrorists crashing through the door or children dying before our very eyes.

Do we really understand what it's like to rise at dawn every morning, as millions of women do every day, to gather the firewood and cart the water necessary for the family's meagre survival? Our comfort so easily severs our connections with those who do not live as we do. Any other life seems so remote and insignificant - like looking at people from a great distance, seeing only hazy, pinpoint specks on the horizon.

Sure, lots of pictures of others' suffering come into our homes, but do we see the life story, the day-to-day struggles, beyond the image? How often do we deliberately try and extend the life of the image in our consciousness, keeping the people alive long after the camera moment has passed? How mindful are we that "the story" continues long after the cameras move on? How often do we pause to remember that the exhausted refugee or the homeless family

or the mutilated crime victim has to go living with the terror and hunger and cold and agony and nightmares for hours, days, weeks, even years, after our split-second glimpse? A glimpse that is circumscribed by the size and speed of the lens. A glimpse that fades so quickly, often supplanted by another equally out-of-context fleeting snapshot.

It seems to me that we "know" so much but "feel" so little. Is this progress? Is this the way we want things to continue?

Before naming my hopes for the next century, let me declare what I want us, in this country, to discard as we cross the threshold into the 21st century. Let us *leave behind*:

- Mean-ness of spirit – that urge to turn our back on alienation and aggression, on depression and despair
- Distaste for the "other" – that tendency to separate our country, the world, into "us" and '"them"
- Adherence to an outmoded (never representative) view of what is "Australian" and "un-Australian" – that inclination to bolster those with power, to ridicule those who look or sound different and to discredit those with little or no power
- Greed in all its guises – that fixation on "winning", "beating the others" and "being number one"
- Flashiness – that deifying of show-off cleverness, the quick fix and the smart reply.

What I want for you, as you move from your early 20s to your mid-20 and beyond, is a world that understands the preciousness and precariousness of life, a world that frees itself from the "I must have it now – and fast", a world that moves from an obsession with "How will it make me look?" to a concentration on "How can we make it better?"

Let me be precise about what I want us, in Australia, to choose as our guiding lights into the 21st century. On this journey, let us *take*:

- A vision that gives primacy of place to generosity and co-operation
- A vision of Australia – in politics and art – that sees this country as part of a bigger whole, a vision incorporating our hearts and souls as well as our minds and bodies
- A passionate and profound love for this land – its forms, its rhythms, its differences, its fragility, its many-layered histories, pre- and post- colonisation
- A commitment to acknowledging the wisdom of Indigenous Australians and to healing past and present injustices
- A stronger connection with those societies dedicated, philosophically and materially, to multiculturalism
- A desire to position "a humane education for all" centre stage
- A richer sense of leadership and the urgency of authoring good leaders – this means being explicit about ethics

- A determination to create a variety of places where young people can shape the debates and the decisions
- A much more definite commitment to prevent further fragmentation of communities, an ardour to recreate an ethos of connections and continuity
- A pledge that life-giving activities be given prominence and that life-poisoning ones be eradicated.

Australia is well placed – geographically, materially and culturally – to demonstrate that it is possible to craft a society where "goodness" matters. Dedicated to this aim, it could be a role model for the rest of the world. As expressed in today's "Faith" column in **The Age**, "hope is an act of will. It is a conscious choice to believe in life."

This is the time of year, the winter solstice, when darkness gives way and points to the return of light. Turning to another recent "Faith" passage, may "the pale greyness begin to soften our darkness and, in the centre of ourselves (and our communities), let us imagine the light." As you and I have discussed, change on a global scale may seem beyond our powers but change on a small and local scale, in our workplaces and in our friendship groups, is well within our reach.

This is my dream for your future, our future.

With love, Delia.

July 2022

From Fear to Fervour

The new year/decade/century/millennium signalled
new horizons in my work, the move online.

The lengthy account that follows tells the story of me, a fearful online
novice, becoming a fervent fan. It was first published locally in Victoria.
I was delighted when a UK publication requested to publish it too.

The structure, at first glance, seems complex. It consists of a description
of the course, "Teaching and Leaning Online Pilot Program",
seven letters I posted on a collective online bulletin board, two reflections
I shared on the same bulletin board and a final summary of what the
course meant to me. I recorded all this detail as I was keen that readers
walk each step with me. I was aware many ACE educators
were fearful, if not apathetic or hostile.

This piece seems somewhat quaint now when e-learning and online
learning have become so commonplace, sophisticated and widespread. Yet,
it captures the mood when a new day was dawning, when pioneers like
Dale were leading the way.

I am delighted that, these days, most adult educators
share my fervour.

I return to e-learning several years later, this time as a fervent
researcher and educational mentor. That story lies further
down the track in this publication.

From Fear to Fervour: A Novice Online Learner's Tale (2001)

OLS News: The Independent Voice of Online Learning

OLS (Open Learning Systems)Newsletter, UK

For a long time, and well after they'd become commonplace, I was fearful of computers. When a computer first made its way into our home over fifteen years ago, I used to cover it with a hand-embroidered cloth, partly to beautify something I found ugly, partly to pretend it wasn't there. Over time I moved from distaste to delight, certainly as far as word processing and amateur desktop publishing are concerned. Of late, that shift has also occurred with online leaning.

Before proceeding further, let me give a quick sketch of myself.

I have been working in adult education in Victoria, Australia, for nearly 25 years. I have been a teacher, program manager, researcher, curriculum writer, project worker and public speaker in a wide range of contexts. These include community organisations, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes, universities, workplaces and government departments. My special interests are women's education, multicultural education and access education.

I believe passionately in the power of adult education to transform individual lives and the communities to which those individuals belong. Daily, I witness the power of education for good, culturally and civically. I have written and spoken often on these subjects and, for some time now, I have been including "e-access" and "electronic communities" as vital ingredients in good adult education practice.

It is because e-terms are recurring so frequently in my professional reading and in my conversations with colleagues that, early this year, I decided it was time to move from watching and listening to doing. I wanted to gain first-hand knowledge of this ever-present but often vaguely used concept, "teaching and learning online". I needed to know about Mooing and Live Chat and Bulletin Boards and Web Publishing from the inside. I was keen to see if, and where and how and why, online learning enhanced and extended classroom-based good practice. In short, I wanted to be able to participate confidently and intelligently in educational discourse and practice around online learning.

A timely e-mail, a professional development invitation that arrived late in February via the ACEWEB list, made all this possible. In part, this offer read:

> There are 6 vacancies for the **Teaching and Learning Online (TLO) Pilot Program** being run for the "E-Learning Communities Flexible Learning Project" through Term One. This introduction to net based technologies is designed for teachers working in the Adult Community Education (ACE) field and/or TAFE. Mixed mode delivery. All sessions scheduled for Friday mornings. Cost: Free.

A quick visit to the website that provided a detailed outline of the course, its objectives and activities, convinced me this was exactly what I was looking for. I submitted my application the next day.

What appealed to me was that this pilot 8-week course combined three face-to-face sessions (each three hours in length) with five online sessions (each up to two hours in length). The face-to face sessions occurred at the beginning, midway and at the end. Each of the eight sessions focussed on a particular theme. These included MOO conferencing, other chat modes, the multiple roles of the internet (including publishing on the world wide web), simple webpage design, the uses of e-mail and the possibilities inherent in combining all or any of these technologies for educational purposes.

Each week, we learnt, practised and discussed the theme or topic in question. Between sessions, we posted reflective messages, related primarily to the most recent session, on an electronic bulletin board established specifically for our course. As well, we read background articles, many from **Online ACE: sharing good practice**, in readiness for the session to come. This mix of face-to-face meetings, live chat, focussed readings and message bank communication allowed for, and generated, much energetic interaction.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate my growing confidence and enthusiasm is to tell the unfolding story as it happened and the best way to do this is to quote from my bulletin board postings in the order in which they occurred. Some are letters to the group; some are my own reflections, shared with the group.

> Bulletin Board Letter
> *Fri Mar 02, 2001 18:51: A gentle, jolly beginning*
> Dear Friends on the Journey,
>
> Our first face-to-face meeting today was a perfect beginning, I felt. Even now, I'm picturing where each woman sat, remembering the shrieks of joy as tentative attempts turned to electronic success. Having immediate access to Dale and Lee, our course leaders, and to you, my educational peers, each of us at different stages and with

different Net experiences, made for a very rich learning environment. From the very first minute, trust, eagerness and optimism were powerful forces for good. It was as if we became a group in an instant. I wonder if that happens, at least as quickly, on-line, where there is not physical proximity.

Another important aspect, I felt, was the size of the group. Eight is enough for a multiplicity of perspectives but small enough to engender a feeling of safety and ready access to help. At no stage did I feel abandoned. And requests for assistance were answered so promptly. Does seeing the person close at hand create a greater sense of security, and therefore courage? I remember my few unsuccessful times on-line in the past. On those occasions, I felt lost and confused and uncertain how to seek help. I knew that my eloquent body language was not signalling my difficulties to people out of sight. I had to say something "electronically" before things would get better, and I didn't know how to do this. I knew there was a command but I'd either forgotten or misused it. Having our first time together today in real space, in a beautiful space, created a perfect foundation for future communication in virtual space.

Thank you to everyone for making our beginning so pleasurable.

Delia.

Bulletin Board Letter
*Sat Mar 6, 2001 16:53: **Typing***
Dear Jenny,

You have raised a very important point in your recent posting. The MOO medium to which we were introduced in our f2f class last Friday certainly favours the fast typist, and the one who can do touch-typing. I'm neither. I find myself trying to minimise and reduce my thoughts into their briefest form. I dare not start communicating anything too long or complex for fear of how long it will take me to type what I want to say. If I decide to go ahead and type, I know the conversation will have moved on and I will have missed exchanges on the screen while I've been concentrating on the keyboard. On the positive side, it is a good discipline in quick, economical thinking. Despite my limitations, I do love the immediacy of live chat. Bye for now,

Delia.

Bulletin Board Letter
*Sat Mar 10, 2001 16:42: **Our first virtual encounter alone***
Dear MOO friends,

Last Friday was a momentous day. We came together, we connected, even though each of us was physically separate, some many miles away. I'll simply let my thoughts on this achievement roll out, and in no particular order.

* I learnt that if the technology fails, if the electronic connection is broken, push on. Slipping in and out of the chat is second best to being there all the time, but it's worse leaving prematurely, involuntarily, abruptly and completely. If I'd given up, intimidated by technical hazards, it would have felt as if I was abandoning friends, and with no way of explaining my sudden disappearance.

* How keenly I felt a sense of helplessness when it was the technology that failed, and not me or my capacities. There I was, enjoying the thrill of this new domain, flowing with the conversation, excited by the prospect of what was going to happen next, when, suddenly, without warning, the technical connection, and hence my connection with all of you, was broken. At those times, I experienced an intense sense of loss with such a strong desire to be re-connected. What was doubly frustrating for me was not only that my Internet connection had been severed but also that simultaneously my screen kept freezing. The only thing I could do was shut down my machine and start all over again. (Of course, these breakdowns happen with all technologies, even a biro when the ink runs out at the wrong time.) Although this unwelcome interruption occurred three times, miraculously, even with all the coming and going, I still felt part of a community at work on a task of mutual interest.

* At times, as the conversation was moving forward, I had trouble wondering what to do next. Sometimes I felt restrained to speak or act. Will my response appear in time or will the discussion have moved on? When there's silence or inaction, what's the best thing for me to do? Should I wait because others are thinking? Or should I take the initiative because everyone is waiting for someone to make a move? And what if I cut across something Dale has in mind for our next activity - should I save my concentration in case he's about to take us in a new (and maybe demanding) direction?

* I was struck by the number of things, ONCE WE ARE ALL IN THE RIGHT PLACE, and all getting to the same place at the same time is no mean feat, I was struck by how much in chat mode we need to do at once. Let me list some of the activities that come immediately to mind – following and digesting the rarely-still, ever-advancing log on the screen; thinking through my response to the comments and questions raised; typing (slowly and with eyes on the keyboard) my own response,

including remembering (or locating in my notes) the correct protocols and commands; catching up with the whole chunk of text I've missed while my eyes are off the screen; switching focus and train of thought when a new direction emerges; keeping track of all the threads in a conversation, especially when 3 or 4 different ones are unravelling simultaneously; choosing which of the threads to follow; forgetting the commands and having to check again (with Dale or my notes on my lap or examples earlier in the log) and then having to catch up. And this is not all that's racing through our heads, is it?

* Those moments when I wanted to say something, when I wanted to join in the liveliness of the discussion, and didn't know how (for example, at one point I'd forgotten how to locate and write on the electronic blackboard), those moments were painful ones. I realised how important it is to ask for "Help", providing I'm together enough to remember how to do this. There is a sense of powerlessness, waiting, hoping someone has heard the cry for help, hoping someone will come to the rescue, unsure how to navigate my own way out of the impasse.

* The reverse is also true, the relief and pleasure WHEN OTHERS IN THE GROUP sense difficulties or frustration, acknowledge this and come at once to help.

* I have since found myself wondering if MOO communication is easier for people who speak more than one language. For me, yesterday's experience bears many similarities to learning another language – where I not only have to learn new vocabulary and grammar – but where I have to THINK in another way if I'm to be fully at home in the culture.

* Like learning anything new, it seems that the HOW (the technique) takes considerable energy, headspace and attention away from the WHAT (the content). I found my absorption in being able to "do it" took primacy over "what I think about so-and-so" in any complex way. I wonder how long it takes for the HOW to become automatic and second nature, leaving me free to compose more articulate thoughts about the WHAT.

* When it's all flowing – when everyone is there, when everyone's at ease with the technology, the norms and the conventions, when the chat is smooth and cheeky – and this happened several times yesterday, it's magical.

Thank you for yesterday. I was acutely aware of each person's sensitivity. Until next time,

Delia.

Bulletin Board Reflections
Sun Mar 18, 2001 17:35: **Personal Reflections on March 16, our second MOO**

Last Friday felt like a gathering of old friends in a familiar place. Our greater confidence and capability freed us to laugh and joke and seriously converse.

Our first MOO the week before reminded me of the first moments of any new public occasion – say, the beginning of a conference, a course or a meeting – that is in a place not visited before. At such times, anxious newcomers are properly concerned about: "Where am I? Who else is here? What do I need to do first? Will I successfully find the place I'm meant to be? What if I get lost? Will I able to do what's expected? Will I remember everything and everybody? Have I made a mistake agreeing to come?"

A week later, and only our second MOO, and it felt like we'd been meeting like this for ages. Concentrating on "getting and staying there" gave way to "being there". My sense was that our conversation was not only more fluent but richer.

Whilst I'm still conscious of the (apparently) arbitrary way in which the written discussion unfolds on the screen, and am never sure what explains the sequence of contributions and whether my hasty scribble will still be relevant or comprehensible by the time it appears, my overall feeling last Friday was the pleasure of participating in a coherent, cogent and colourful conversation. There were several threads unravelling at any one time, but never too many. And more often than I'd have thought likely, the order in which our contributions appeared turned out just right! Like a well-designed script. And as if by magic!

The MOO log of our online discussions that Dale posts so promptly on our course website now becomes a valuable reference text in its own right. It is a prompt for further thought as well as a cherished record of a memorable interaction. A comparison between the two logs, last Friday's and the one before, not to mention the full-bodied Bulletin Board reflections, testify powerfully to how much progress we've made in a VERY short time.

I feel daunted by what lies ahead but much relieved that I'm in such good company.

Bulletin Board Letter
*Tue Mar 27, 2001 16:45: **The agony and the ecstasy***
Dear TLO friends,
Yesterday, I spent several hours (unsuccessfully) trying to save a graphic on file in preparation for uploading a simple webpage I'd designed. I felt so helpless and agitated. Let me go back a step.

It was my first time at the computer since our second face-to-face, voice-to-voice, laughter-to-laughter day together last Friday. I'd deliberately avoided doing my homework on the weekend because I needed a break – there's nothing like a little distance to get perspective. Perhaps, more importantly, I was still trying to knit together in my own mind all the strands involved in webpage design.

For me, it's very important I have a clear picture of what I'm trying to achieve before setting out. I don't need to know every step – in fact, I love meandering and taking side-tracks – but I do like to know my ultimate destination. Besides, I'd had a very hectic week and was exhausted by the weekend. I've learnt from bitter experience the foolhardiness of trying to attempt something new AND difficult with low-energy levels.

Come late Monday, and I felt brave. Dale had succeeded in stressing the importance of keeping the page file and the graphic file in the same folder. I had no trouble saving the page but, no matter what I tried, I couldn't save the picture I had selected from the Clip Art gallery. (I was trying to save it in my web-publishing folder on the disc Dale had made for us.) I was sure I was following the instructions on the handout Dale had given us to the letter but no matter where I looked no record of the graphic file's existence could I find. After four hours of frustration, I went to bed. My last act was an e-mail asking Dale to respond to my two most urgent problems. And, yes as you'd guess, my dreams were filled with computers as instruments of torment.

Today, I was determined to succeed. I deleted everything from yesterday and made a fresh start. With Dale's reply e-mail and all my notes from last Friday, I was even excited. Again, however, impediments. More communication with Dale and it appears there may be some conflict between Composer (on the disc Dale gave us) and Frontpage, the program I'm using. Taking a new approach and prompted by Dale's encouragement to make my own tables and create a new folder for the webpage, I at last succeeded: I was able to save and then immediately locate the two files required, both the page and the graphic.

From then on, everything seemed so easy. I followed the steps in the handouts for Uploading and Pathway Creation and it all worked like clockwork. You can imagine

my relief and jubilation when I clicked on "Louisa" (the name of my webpage in "classwebpages") to see both text AND graphic in place.

At many points along the way, I thought: *"I wonder how the others are faring. I feel heartened that we are journeying – and struggling – together"*. The sense of solidarity does give me strength. Or I'd think: *"I wish I was with our group right now – somebody would be able to solve this problem. I'm sure there's a simple solution but I need someone to point it out to me"*.

As it turned out, a large part of the problem seems to have been technical incompatibility. Initially, I'd blamed myself, assuming I was doing something incorrectly, even if inadvertently. Once again, I've experienced the (Freirean) power of articulating questions that enable "liberation".

All the best, whatever your desires!

Delia.

Bulletin Board Reflections
*Wed Apr 04, 2001 13:15: **Personal Reflections on the art of teaching: as important as ever***
DALE'S ROLE AND EXAMPLE AS A TEACHER

Lately, I've been thinking about Dale's work behind the scenes. Even more perhaps than in a face-to face class, the work involved in guiding us through this new territory is largely invisible. My rough and ready estimate of preparation for my own classroom face-to-face teaching is something like 2-3 hours for each hour of class time. I can't imagine what it must be for Dale in his online teaching role – not only planning each

session but setting up a multitude of sites and responding to our calls whenever and wherever we get stuck.

Contemplating the magnitude of this, I find myself thinking about three matters in particular:

1. The multi-faceted nature of the teacher's role in on-line learning – technically, pedagogically, psychologically, socially, intellectually and artistically, to name but a few of the facets.

2. The amount of time and effort required if the teacher is to create and sustain "good on-line practice". The quality of the learning, it seems to me, is in direct proportion to the quality of the teaching. I suspect that institutions or bureaucracies often promote on-line courses because they think they'll be cheaper to run. My sense is that on-line learning needs as much, if not much more, off-line time and preparation. If this is not the case – if students are expected to be absolutely self-directed and independent, working on poorly designed courses, with little or no interaction, and with no access to human assistance (as distinct from electronically determined "Help") – then I am forced to question the value of the learning offered or possible.   What all this points to is that on-line learning is NOT cheaper. If this is the only reason that institutions favour it, if it saves money, it is at the grave risk of failing to ensure deep and broad learning outcomes for the learners involved.

3. The potential of this educational mode. It has enormous potential in its reach and scope for adult further education students – the mixed media, the colour, the movement, the networks, the interactivity, the speed, the convenience, the world at our fingertips – but only, I believe, if in the hands of gifted, creative, generous and well-resourced teachers.

Far from being redundant, the art of teaching is as vital as ever, perhaps even more so.

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Bulletin Board Letter
Thu Apr 05, 2001 18:04: **Re Linda's posting on the 5th**
Dear Linda,

I enjoyed reading your reflection immensely. I love the idea of computers being somehow transparent so we see the people and not the machine. Now, as I'm talking with you, I'm barely conscious of the machinery linking us. It's your face I see and your voice I hear.

And another of your points. These days, because I "work" a lot at home, the home/ work boundaries are very blurry. There are virtues in this – being able to work when and how it suits me – but there are dangers too – making sure I don't feel bound to be at the computer all the time, ever at its beck and call. I do check my e-mails – and now the TLO website – several times a day. Most of the time, I still get excited as I'm waiting for the messages to appear or the site to download (provided I don't have to wait too long!). When it becomes a chore, I know it's time to walk along the foreshore, visit my favourite café, write my journal, chat with friends or snuggle up with a book.

Thank you for naming these vital issues. Hoping we all make plenty of time to re-create ourselves in the days ahead. Warmly,

Delia.

Bulletin Board Letter
*Wed Apr 25, 2001 12:44: **Doing online with/in my class***
Dear TLO friends,

I've just mysteriously lost a Bulletin Board message I took an hour to compose. I've searched everywhere and can't find it. Because I want to go out into the sunshine, this second attempt will be a much shorter version.

Dale asked us to reflect on how we'd use what we are learning in our own classes, especially commenting on the combination of technologies and methodologies. In my present circumstances, I'd find it hard to apply much of what we are learning to my teaching situation due to a number of factors – lack of easy access to computers; my own rudimentary knowledge and inexperience; the size of my class (22); the range of computer, keyboard and literacy skills among my students; and the pressure to cover many other areas and activities I value in the short time my class and I are together (six hours a week for seven weeks).

However, if I did make the move, I'd like to gather together students from around Victoria who are studying the same subject. I'd like us to meet both on-line and face-to-face. One possibility is the creation of an electronic **Gallery of Australian Heroes**. In brief, this could involve:
- students researching "heroes" (and I'd stress this includes women) through libraries and the internet
- students composing a one-page document, preferably with graphics, that introduces and justifies their choice

- teacher establishing an e-mail mailing list
- students introducing themselves and their heroes via this list
- students reading all the presentations and responding to at least two
- teacher organising a chat session around 3 or 4 key pre-set questions connected with the nature of heroes and their representation
- students and teacher organising an excursion to the State Library (or other site displaying heroes) to extend students' range and repertoire, to evaluate the learning experiment and to plan future endeavours, possibly the creation of a website.

Perhaps all this will become second nature in time, when computers and Internet access are considered standard classroom resources and when I've extended my horizons to automatically think "teaching and learning on-line".

I'm off. The sun is calling.

Delia.

Bulletin Board Letter
*Sun Apr 29, 2001 19:23: **Our final online session***
Dear TLO friends,

I have very little to add to what Linda and Jeannie have said. Their summaries of the pro and cons of WEBCT chat and MOO are so comprehensive. At the risk of repeating some aspects, I'd like to add my comments about each chat mode.

With WEBCT chat, I too loved the clear, pleasant, light-filled, uncluttered pale green screen, which is so soft on the eyes. By comparison, the design of the black and white MOO screen is heavy and dull; the font in MOO is not easy to read and pathways through the text do not always stand out clearly. Sometimes, I feel there is too much text/information on the MOO screen at any one time, creating a sense of confusion and overload.

With WEBCT chat, I also liked the facility for introducing a website into the discussion so effortlessly. We noted the problems with this – and the need for very careful preparation and guidance so students don't stray off or get lost – but it is a powerful resource.

With WEBCT, the fact no commands are needed is both a strength and a weakness.

In the early stages, as we are, it gives the learner the freedom to concentrate on the content, on what others are saying and on what response they want to make. Its limitations become clear after a visit to MOO where, once the commands are mastered, guests can move around, visiting an endless variety of spaces and environments, not limited to the one fixed place.

For me, this is the great strength of MOO, the invitation to inhabit and explore a rich world of the imagination. As with other texts that rely on the printed word, MOO encourages the reader/visitor to bring the words to life by actively and energetically imagining a wide range of locations, milieux, settings, personalities and activities. In this way, it honours both the visitor's creativity and the significance of the imagination in our lives and learning.

The other limitation of WEBCT chat is its linearity. The format – A. said, followed by B. said, followed by C. said – seems similar to a traditional theatre script but naturally lacks the spark that comes from crafting and redrafting the dialogue form to make it as evocative as possible. By contrast, in the MOO environment the visitor can play not only with the space but also with the flow and purpose of the text. There is the conventional conversation form but also, embedded in the dialogue and moving in and out of it, are all sorts of other communicative possibilities – holding up signs, taking books from a library, writing on a blackboard – that do not confine the visitor to an immutable strict pattern of statement/response or question/response.

As for the virtual learning space itself, after the abundance of adorned, idiosyncratic spaces in MOO, WEBCT chat feels plain and decontextualised, as if the conversation is taking place in a huge vacant lot or a sterile vacuum in the sky. Some might argue that this simplicity gives primacy of place to the relationships between those conversing with each other, focussing on the individual contributors and their words rather than technical gimmicks or gadgets, and thereby bringing the warmth and colour of the participants to the fore.

In conclusion, as with all media, each of these two technologies has attractive aspects as well as drawbacks. It's great to have had first-hand experience of each. See you soon at our last face-to-face, our last session together, next Friday,

Delia.

Our last face-to-face session included a Focus Group discussion with a researcher evaluating online courses from the learner's point of view. Then, and many times since, I have been asked: "What do you think are key elements in good teaching and learning online?" My Bulletin Board postings, already cited here, indicate how I tend to answer this question, thanks to the way they demonstrate my evolving understanding and estimation of the significance of online education.

If pressed to summarise succinctly why this course meant so much to me, I'd highlight the following aspects. They are not listed in order of priority as I've not yet weighted each in terms of importance.

- The availability of a clear and concise course plan from the outset
- The careful sequencing of topics and degrees of difficulty in tasks
- The mixed or hybrid mode of presentation
- The creation of strong group dynamics before working separately alone
- The multi-talented and responsive course leaders
- The generosity and solidarity of co-learners
- Reliable technical equipment and internet access
- A stable TAFE VC (TAFE Virtual Campus) platform
- Out-of-class perseverance
- The small size of the group, all of whom were women
- Prior competence in certain skills – time management, typing, basic computer literacy and print and visual literacy – that seem essential prerequisites for successful online learning
- A burning desire to learn.

Thanks to the happy fusion of all these factors, my fear was transmuted into fervour. It's why I'm writing this now.

Reference

Pobega, D. and Russell, M, July 1999, **Online ACE: sharing good practice**, Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Victoria.

A Trusty Bridge

This account comes from an action research project publication called **Room to Move: Why school/ACE partnerships expand opportunities for potential early school leavers**.

I was one of four researchers/writers, each allocated a case study to write up in detail.
Mine was Upper Yarra Community House.

I was glad to promote the wonderful (often unknown or under-appreciated) work of ACE with young people.
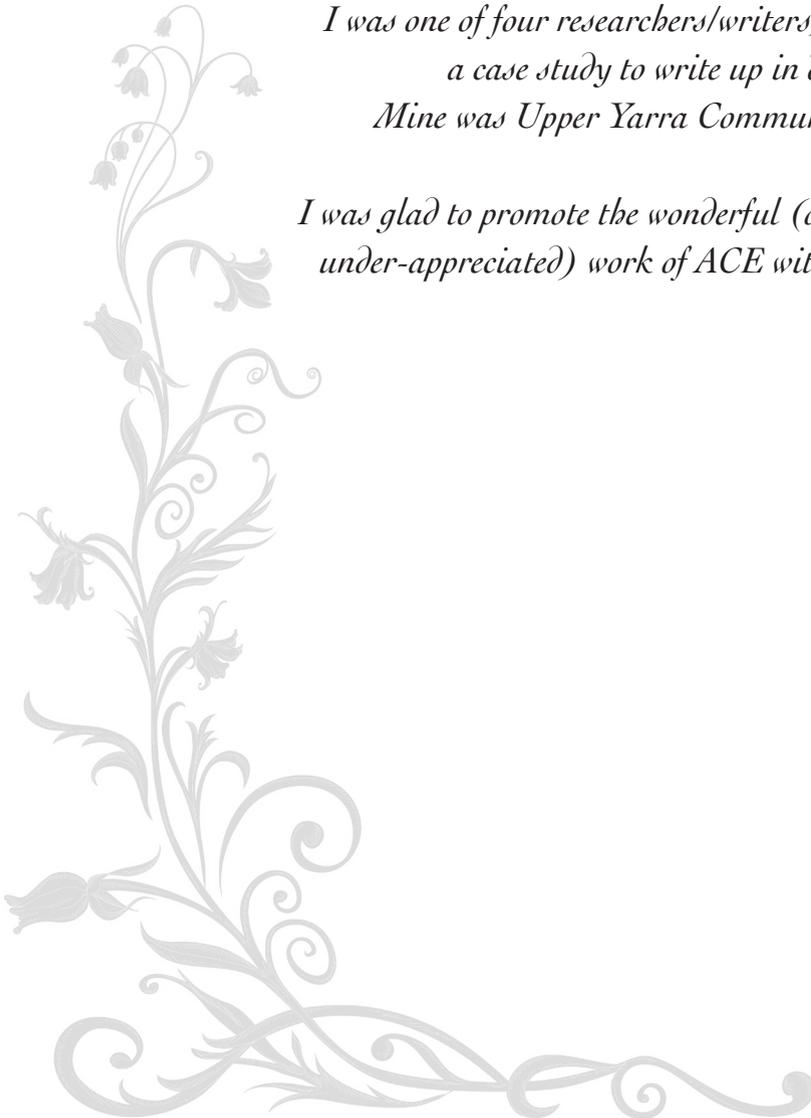
A Trusty Bridge (2001)

In Room to Move: Why school/ACE partnerships expand opportunities for potential early school leavers

Department of Employment, Education & Training (DEET) Publication

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One image stays with me from our visit to Upper Yarra Community House: the sight of two groups, coming from opposite directions, and meeting on the wooden bridge that links the front part of the community house to offices and classrooms at the back.

From the main building comes a group of mature-age women, laughing and talking, coffee mugs in hand, heading for their classroom. From the other side comes a group of young people, mid-teens. They've just vacated the room where they were talking to us because it is needed by the women. They're heading for the one spare room available, balancing chips and dips, to continue their conversation with us.

The two groups meet in the middle of the bridge and, for a few brief seconds, intermingle, blend and become one. There's no sense of separateness or wanting to keep apart. They merge as part of the bigger community that is Upper Yarra Community House. Then they move apart as easily as they came together. A minute later, the bridge is empty, each group settled in its place, focussed on their separate purposes.

This tiny incident is a powerful image of young people "at home" in a world made up of many ages, many cultures and many walks of life.

STEP Ahead

The young people are STEP Ahead participants at Upper Yarra Community House. This adult education community agency is at Yarra Junction, a rural community on the outskirts of Melbourne's eastern suburbs. STEP stands for Skills, Training and Education Program, funded by DETYA (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs) through the JPET (Jobs Placement, Employment and Training) program. The Australia-wide JPET program offers an alternative to school for young people experiencing difficulties, either socially or academically.

An Upper Yarra Community House brochure elaborates:

> Maybe you are having problems at home (perhaps you have left home), problems at

school or because of your cultural or religious background. Maybe you have been charged with a criminal offence, have experienced abuse or violence, or need help to look for a job or accessing allowances from Centrelink. Workers are here to assist you if your age is between 15 and 21 and if you are doing it tough and need to talk to someone.

The semester-long program is especially suitable for 15 and 16 year-olds who don't expect to complete Year 10 or who are no longer at school. It is a welcome option for local schools seeking alternatives for the students they consider "at risk". In fact, Upper Yarra Secondary College has referred students for some time.

Through a relaxed, supportive and wholistic approach, STEP Ahead strives to provide young people with the information, skills and self-esteem necessary for future well-being. They are supported until a positive outcome is achieved. The program is delivered through course work sessions and work experience. Participants are in courses at the community house for 3 days a week, and in work experience for 2 consecutive days a week. The course work includes training in computers, driver education, first aid, numeracy and literacy, health and well-being, food hygiene and preparation, workplace communication, résumés and job search, and creative arts. The work experience is organised after finding out what type of experience the participant wants. Popular choices are hospitality, child care and the automotive trade.

STEP Ahead has built up an enviable reputation since it began in 1997. Evidence of this is the recent nomination of Upper Yarra Community House as a "Best Practice" JPET provider. STEP Ahead is an integral part of a much larger and more comprehensive program for young people. Intensive formal and informal arrangements such as complementary programs, support services and open access facilities centre on the needs of young people, particularly young people at risk.

STEP Ahead is popular both with young people and local agencies. Julie Hanman, Manager, Youth Services at the community house, gave us a strong sense of this:

> Word-of-mouth is extraordinary. Lots of kids want to do this course. As well, there's a growing span of referrals, for example from Human Services as well as from schools in the district.

Reasons for its success and popularity include:

- first-rate, tailor-made pioneering curriculum
- quality and continuity of staff experienced both in teaching their technical and vocational training areas and with young people
- expertise in meeting a complexity of learning needs shown by Upper Yarra Community House's outstanding success with those who have failed at school

- extensive and intensive one-to-one support such as counselling and referrals readily on hand
- clarity and accessibility of pathways: to "Work Trax" which gives young people a taste of a range of accredited vocational courses; to traineeships; back to school; to paid and unpaid work
- continuous monitoring, evaluation and improvement of course design and outcomes
- breadth and depth of involvement in local community and government networks, and nearby schools.

On being partners

Upper Yarra Secondary College is a key partner in the history and development of the STEP Ahead program. The original JPET funds came through a successful joint tender prepared and submitted by the school and community house together. The Assistant Principal of the College, Garry Embry sees it this way:

> Small, semi-rural communities like this lend themselves to these partnerships. We'd been looking for an alternative setting for a long time. A school can't cater for these students on the same basis.

The long-standing connection between the adult education community house and the secondary school has taken many forms:
- after-school homework support programs at the house
- out-of-school hours use of school rooms and facilities by the community house
- representation of the school, via the Principal, on the Upper Yarra Community House Management Committee
- School Focussed Youth Project meetings at the house
- school membership of JPET Advisory Group
- regular exchange of publicity brochures and other written information.

Today, the partnership continues to evolve through lots of informal phone contact, particularly between Mika Pediaditis, STEP Ahead Coordinator at Upper Yarra Community House, and Jana Riverans, Middle School Coordinator at Upper Yarra Secondary College. They talk about referrals to JPET, adjustment of students' timetables, transport issues and use of the school bus. Quite clearly, both educational agencies place the best interests of young people at the heart of what they do. Part of their work together in partnership involves developing a shared understanding of what "at risk" means and agreeing on what environment is most supportive for individual young people experiencing problems.

The secondary school is keen to overcome any misconceptions about STEP and JPET that show up in comments from parents like *I don't want my kid there, hanging out on the street all day* or comments from teachers implying that *STEP is for the dummies, a babysitting losers' program*.

The school counteracts opposition by circulating, through official school channels, the success stories of JPET graduates.

And the success rate of STEP Ahead is high. In all the time it has been running, only one participant failed to finish the course, and that young woman is now back at school, in a new school for her, making a fresh start.

Jana described Upper Yarra Community House as:
> A place where students who have failed at school are given a fresh start, without any history attached. The students don't see it as a school – the people at the house aren't authority or discipline figures for them. With the removal of "school" barriers, the source of conflict is removed and this allows learning to occur. I love JPET. Often we at school are maintaining them until we can get them into that program. The level of support is immense. They provide individual learning plans for each student. We're very happy for Upper Yarra Community House to be <u>taking them out</u> for that middle school period. The benefit for the kids is being <u>out of school</u>.

The young people themselves gave us many reasons why STEP was better than being at school:

- *Don't like the teachers at school.*
- *School's boring.*
- *I prefer to work on cars.*
- *We get treated like a person at JPET.*
- *The teachers at the house listen more.*
- *They don't treat you as stupid.*
- *They treat you older, not like we're really, really young.*
- *Grow up faster.*
- *Not as many students around.*
- *The course is not as boring.*
- *The groups are small.*
- *We can smoke.*
- *There's no uniform.*

Some said that, if not for this course, they'd either have stayed at school and failed or dropped out and stayed at home. All of the young people we met not only loved what they were doing but had plans for the foreseeable few years, whether to get a traineeship, do further study or achieve employment goals.

Asked about the future of STEP Ahead, Sally Brennan, Manager of Upper Yarra Community House, replied:

I see this program getting bigger and bigger. It'll grow in different directions and into different forms, with more and more schools getting involved.

Barriers

Whilst the partnership between Upper Yarra Community House and Upper Yarra Secondary College is strong and vigorous, neither partner denied there were tough areas, key aspects needing attention and action.

Funding

The limitations imposed by funding were mentioned time and time again, in particular the policy constraints that prevent Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) registered agencies from taking certain students, from using ACFE funds for them and for reporting on them. It seems timely to review funding arrangements and demarcation boundaries that make it difficult for schools and ACE agencies to work together to improve prospects for young people around the legal school leaving age of 15. Current guidelines work against easy movement for these students between ACE and school. As well, without consistency of funding, it is impossible for the two agencies to do forward planning on curriculum matters, particularly VET courses, together.

Duty of Care

Flexible but legal arrangements around health and safety matters such as insurance and duty of care need further work. For example, if school insurance covered two days a week of work experience, instead of the current one day a week, a lot more versatility would be possible at year 9 to encourage experimentation with different mixes of in-school and out-of-school programs.

Divided Cultures

Young people who leave school to take part in courses such as JPET want to maintain friendships with those still at school, in other words, to make the transition from school to JPET and then (if they choose) from JPET back to school easier. At present, the two cultures are quite separate and the divide too great. Again, a blend of being at school and simultaneously in something like a JPET program could bridge this gulf.

ACE needs a better press

Some teachers in some schools still see ACE as second best to TAFE. A soft option, good on welfare, but not quite up to speed. Sally believes the ACE sector needs to do much more to market its capacities.

Poor communication

Asked what advice they'd give others considering school/ACE partnerships, both partners

stressed that open, clear communication from the very beginning is vital. In Jana's words:

> This means keeping in constant touch, maybe 2 or 3 times per week. Truly working together, with all the relevant parties talking in great detail.

Fear of young people

Knowing that some ACE organisations find young people threatening or frightening, the Upper Yarra Community House staff recommended seeking out local youth networks, including JPET providers. *Make contact with anyone running a successful young person's program*, urged Julie. Sally added:

> Young people aren't something else. They're not a species apart. They are just <u>young</u> people. The majority of the time they're no different at all. The real issue is about commitment to a broad sense of community. How can you have a picture of your community without a sense of family? Part of providing for youth is about providing for families. If young people take you out of your comfort zone, you're the one with the problem and it's important to have a good look at this.

This brings us back to the bridge, the meeting place of different ages and life stages. Not that it's always peace and harmony. There are days when the young ones are noisy, even rude. There are days when older participants are intolerant. What matters is that, as in any community, the issues are dealt with as they arise, on a day-to-day basis. For the young people at Upper Yarra Community House, being able to cross that bridge safely and freely is a huge step in the direction of bridging bigger life difficulties. And the chances of them crossing confidently and co-operatively are much greater if community agencies, both ACE organisations and schools, works as partners.

From: Bradshaw, Delia. Clemans, Allie. Donovan, Cathy and Macrae, Helen., **Room to Move: Why school/ACE partnerships expand opportunities for potential early school leavers** (2001), Department of Education, Employment and Training: Victoria, pp. 21-25.

ACE and Young People

I have placed this presentation here, out of chronological order, as it follows naturally from the piece before.

I welcomed yet another opportunity to promote the wonderful work of ACE educators at this national gathering in Sydney. As it was an oral presentation, there is no list of references.

ACE and Young People (2004)

❧

Introduction

Good morning. I am honoured to be able to speak about the marvellous work of ACE in Victoria. I'd like to start with three "hands up" questions:

1. *Who knows what ACE stands for?*
2. *Who has ever attended an ACE class/program? Examples?*
3. *Who has ever taught in an ACE class/program? Examples?*

Commentary

Yes, ACE stands for Adult and Community Education. Victoria is unique in the strength and diversity of this movement. Today, I'd like to introduce 2 ACE organisations to you, two of hundreds in Victoria.

Description of Two ACE Organisations

ACE Organisation 1: Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre (GNLC)

<u>Location/Mission:</u> GNLC is situated in Glenroy, a semi-industrial suburb in the northwest of Melbourne, with programs in other sites nearby. In its 26 years of operation, it has grown and changed in many ways, reflected in its several name changes. In recent years, GNLC has been working more and more with young people.

GNLC's 4 main goals for 2002-04 are:

1. To respond and connect with its local community and key agencies through partnerships
2. To sustain and develop a vigorous lifelong learning program (for all ages)
3. To generate a neighbourhood house/community development program
4. To build its organisational strength and capacity.

<u>Programs:</u> The Youth Program offers Youth Literacy & Numeracy, Youth Workforce Skills, Youth Living in Glenroy, Youth Media and Youth Computers. Outside of class, time is allocated for individual student review and pathway planning.

At GNLC, democratic participation is highlighted and fostered. For example, young people take part in planning local initiatives such as the recent "Hey, We're Here: The Voice of Youth" project designed to improve the health and well-being of young people across Glenroy. Young people from GNLC created aerosol art that was displayed in shop windows throughout the shopping centre over several weeks.

<u>People:</u> Young people made up about 10% of the 528 participants in 2003. The 15 to 16 year-olds tended to join the Youth Program. Some young people also studied in Literacy for Road Rules and other Adult Literacy programs.

ACE Organisation 2: Upper Yarra Community House (UYCH)

<u>Location/Mission:</u> UYCH is located at Yarra Junction, with various sites in the Dandenong Ranges on the semi-rural eastern edge of Melbourne. UYCH has been offering programs in adult, community and further education since the late 70s. For many years now, it has been developing and expanding educational opportunities for young people in a local, supportive and youth-friendly environment.

In "Youth Week 2004", celebrations coincided with the opening of the new VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) classrooms. It is the young people's own space and they treasure it. The hospitality students put on lunch featuring bush food they had grown.

<u>Programs:</u> As advertised in the Semester One 2004 **UYCH Course Guide**, Youth Services include:
- JPET – providing support and assistance with work, training, finance and accommodation
- STEP Ahead – a 6-month program for 15 to 16-year-olds who are not in school, are leaving school or who need some time out (with a follow-up program, REAM, Real English and Maths)
- Youth Pathways Program – for 15-18-year-olds not in mainstream school, combining general education, vocational training and career goal setting.

As well, young people take part in:
- VCAL – at present, in response to need, a Young Mums VCAL is being negotiated and
- "Burning Spear" – the horticultural program propagating and retailing bush food.

<u>People:</u> As with similar ACE programs, young people come for a wide range of reasons. In the words of young UYCH participant:

I got kicked out of school, I always felt a loser/an outsider at school, I hated school and hardly went after Year 8.

Considering Three Key Questions

Question 1: What do these two learning communities share in common with each other and with similar ACE organisations?

In them, we find:

- An <u>adult environment</u> in which taking responsibility is prized, demonstrated and learnt
- A deep and <u>genuine respect</u> for young people where modelling humane adult relationships is expected and spelt out
- The presence of trustworthy, trusting, attentive, knowledgeable <u>adults as teachers and mentors</u> with the selection of suitable staff and the sustenance of staff cohesion both top priorities
- An <u>educational environment</u> that is very particular about the curriculum with an emphasis, for young people, on learning who they are as much as what and how and why
- A commitment to <u>social and community development</u> as well as personal development by creating a learning community to which young people feel connected and want to belong
- An explicit concentration on <u>meaningful pathways</u>, not only to further education, vocational training and employment but also to greater participation in the community, with detailed attention to follow-up and follow-through
- ACE = Adult <u>and Community</u> Education. One aspect of the community development role, in relation to youth, is a focus on <u>changing the attitudes and relationships of communities to young people</u>, for example, building stronger connections between young people and local businesses or between middle-aged ESL learners and the young people who share the same lunchroom.

Question 2: Why are ACE programs successful for and with young people?

- There's the unique character and positioning of ACE – learning communities are <u>small, local, wholistic</u> (bringing together education, vocation and socialisation) and very quick to respond
- ACE has a <u>longstanding and proven track record in working successfully with people of all ages and backgrounds</u> but especially with people who have been disadvantaged, marginalised, neglected and/or rejected by "the system", as evidenced in its highly-regarded Adult Literacy programs and pioneers.

Recent evidence of public recognition is:

- The Department of School Education approving formal "Memoranda of Understanding" allowing students enrolled in secondary schools to study in ACE settings

- The large number of reports commissioned to document and analyse ACE′s successes: the Bibliography in HANDOUT 2 gives details of these "Reports and Resources".

Question 3: What is the influence of ACE?
- The 64 partnerships assembled in 2001 in the DEET publication **Room to Move** show how and why school/ACE partnerships expand opportunities for potential early school leavers. That study describes the <u>many combinations and permutations</u> possible, and this growth and diversity continues
- At present, many ACE organisations (including these two) have developed <u>strong, relevant and enduring partnerships</u> (often project-based) with local councils, Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENS), local community organisations, local schools and the networks around VCAL
- As these partnerships mature, so <u>cross-fertilisation and rich hybrids</u> will continue to offer new visions that, in turn, will contribute to re-thinking and re-forming all education for young people.

CONCLUSION

When composing a mural in the Glenroy shopping centre some years ago, young people from GNLC gave pride of place to the words, "Life is Respect".

In conclusion, I'd like to finish with the words of two other people who know a lot about what matters to young people.

First, I'd like to refer to the words of an internationally respected American researcher, Sandra Kerka, summarising the features of effective alternatives for at-risk and out-of-school (not terms I'd use) youth. Her list could be a snapshot of ACE at work:

1. Caring knowledgeable adults
2. A sense of community
3. An assets approach, seeing young people as resourceful, not deficient
4. Respect for youth
5. High expectations for academic achievements and responsible behaviour
6. Wholistic, comprehensive, multidimensional, developmental curriculum
7. Authentic engaging learning that connects school and work
8. Support and long-term follow-up services.

Second, my final words come from a young woman I met in the course of my research. Echoing the views captured so economically in the report **Life is Respect**, she said:

> I'm here because I stopped going to school because school had a lot of not very nice
> people. I was constantly at the top of everyone's gossip list and got into a lot of fights…
> The (ACE) teacher can just make the curriculum more to suit the age group that they

are taking and not judge us. They help you a lot, they treat you like you are equal, they give you confidence… I want to finish this course. I think about lots of things and I'm not yet sure what to concentrate on. It is going to be my life and I want it to be good so the decision about my next step needs to be right…

In solidarity with everyone here, and around Australia, who are working to broaden and deepen learning choices and experiences for young people, ACE is also creating "Room to Move" so all young people can move to where they want to go, and can move there knowing they are respected every step of the way.

Professional Development Workshops

At this time, 2002-2004, I was running a lot of workshops around Melbourne at the invitation of ACE organisations. They covered a broad range of topics, for example, classroom practice, networks and pathways. I am including a sample of them in this collection because I think it is time to show me at work as a teacher. When I hear other educators talk about education, I am curious and keen to see them in action. So, here are three examples of my workshop plans. I love planning in great detail.

I remember them all as lively workshops generating a wealth of stories and examples.

I hope the plans are self-explanatory. They might be still useful today as models to be adapted to other topics and circumstances.
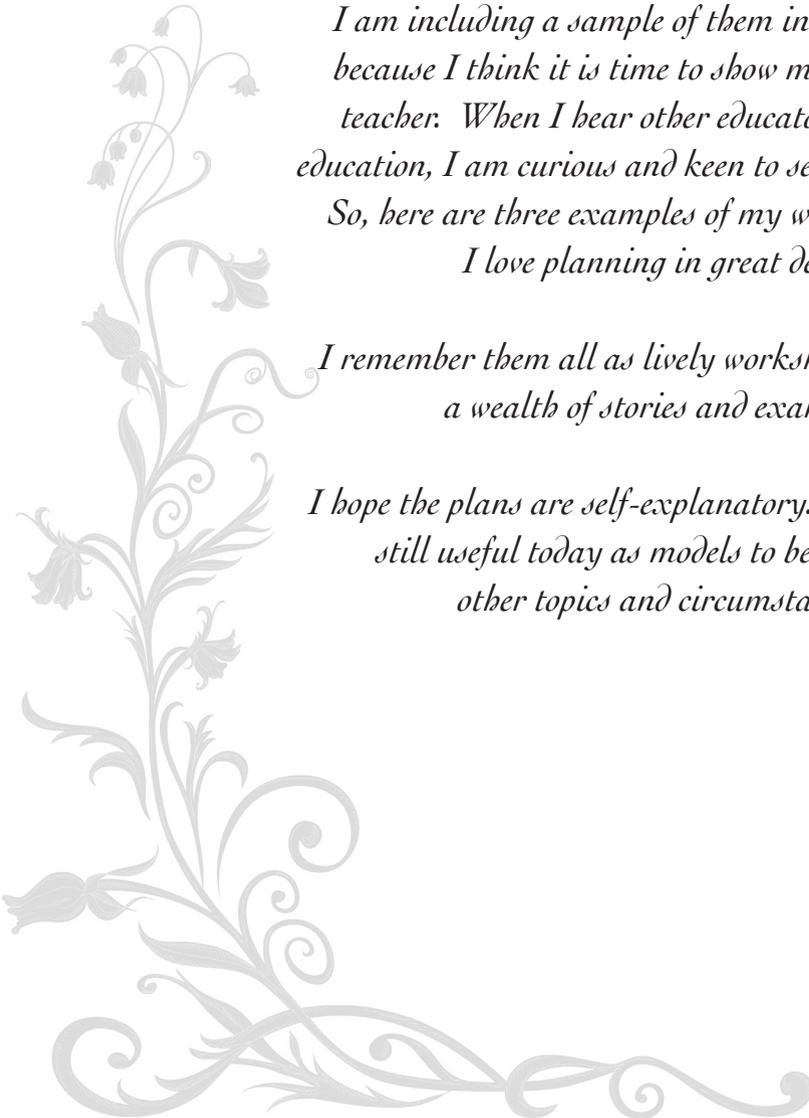
"What I take into the Workplace with Me" Workshop (2002)

Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre (GNLC)
April 19, 2002

11am - 12.15pm

Introduction

- Ask participants to share: "Something special about working at GNLC is … "

This workplace

- Invite group discussion: "What are the various aspects and faces and domains of GNLC? The classroom? Others? Consider the tearoom, all sorts of meetings, chats with students and colleagues and discussions at reception".
- Note responses on whiteboard.

What I bring to this workplace with me

- Hand out baskets, one per participant. On small pieces of coloured paper, participants, from memory, write down what they bring in their bag or basket or case or backpack for class activities when they come to work here. Participants pass their basket to the person next to them who silently notes the "contents" of the basket before them.
- Ask for "contents' samples", which I'll record as a collective picture, on the board. Return baskets to owners who may add anything they may have forgotten.

Now, has anything been omitted?

- Ask participants to consider: "Now, what about the Beliefs/ Intentions/Actions you bring? There is a lot of emphasis in professional development on Actions, some on Intentions and very little on Beliefs. It's Beliefs we'll focus on today."

A review/extension of things we bring

- Start group discussion: "What do we bring with us to the classroom in the way of Beliefs/Values/Ideals/Habits/Cultural Protocols or Preferences? What are some examples of these?"
- Hear suggestions from the group and note on whiteboard.
- Discuss: "Have you considered values around AESTHETICS, TIDINESS, POLITENESS, PUNTUALITY, DIRECTNESS, AUTHORITY, EDUCATION, PROPRIETY, PRIVACY, NOISE, ACCENT, and DRESS? Are there OTHERS?"
- Write these examples and other suggestions from the group on whiteboard.

- Ask: "Do you want to add any of these values to your basket of "what I bring to class"?"
- Ask for *ONE* example of an addition from each person and note on whiteboard.

My Self – A complex fusion of ideals and judgments

- Ask each participant to sketch on a big piece of paper his/her own mix of VALUES, ones that really matter to them, ones they bring with them to work. They are encouraged to refer to the board for extra ideas.
- Next to <u>three</u> of these values or beliefs, participants note their own version of this as they express it in action. For example, next to PUNCTUALITY: write "I hate people coming late".
- Participants share these statements with one other person.
- Moderate final discussion: "Is anyone willing to share an example with the whole group?"

LUNCH BREAK (One Hour): 12.15pm – 1.15pm

1.15pm – 3pm

What's in my bag (Literal)

- Preamble: "Before lunch, we looked at what we bring to class in our hands and our heads. Now, let's see what we literally bring with us. Our handbags or wallets will acts as a metaphor for this values activity. Empty the contents, any items you are happy to be seen in public, on the table."
- Ask participants, with one other person, to consider the *similarities* and *differences* in each of their bag/wallet contents.
- On the board, I note two sorts of items, the *similarities*, items that everyone has in their bag (for example, keys) as well as the *differences*, examples of what is distinctive, that is, what is a highly significant individual "bit", for example, a religious item.
- Moderate group discussion: "What do we make of this activity? Do these personal items come into the classroom and also influence our practice in some way? If so, how?"

What's in our workplace (Metaphorical)

- Ask participants to nominate what is COMMON GROUND in terms of "what we bring" to work here.
- These are noted on the board.
- Participants are then asked to write down ONE thing, ONE HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENT, INDIVIDUAL "BIT", they bring to their work that is different or distinctive. It may be about style or manner or judgments. It may be something deeply ingrained or something recently embraced.
- These are also noted on the board.
- Each person then tells/shares with the rest of the group what "this bit" is, where it

comes from, why it matters and its significance or not for others. It is stressed that this identity characteristic is not static or fixed or final or forever – "we are constantly choosing to include, exclude, embrace, reject and delete values, beliefs and ideals".

Conclusion

- Invite participants to write (anonymously) on paper: "Something new I've realised today that I bring to work with me is …"
- They then put their writing in the centre and, as a final activity, each participant chooses one reflection from the centre to read to the rest of the group.

"Making Connections" Workshop (2003)

Professional Development Day for Teachers
Greater Dandenong ACE Cluster
December 11, 2003

FIRST SESSION (9.30am – 11.00am approx.)
Welcome and Introductions (20 mins)

Participants organise themselves in 3 small groups in quick succession according to:

1. Birthday Month
2. Place of Birth (Melbourne; Country Victoria; Other Australian State; Overseas) (Ask group: *What does "Overseas" cover?*)
3. Subject Groups (AL/ESL; Computers; Personal Development; Art & Craft; Other) (Ask group: *What does "Other" cover?*)

"Show and Tell" (70 mins)

1. In small groups, teachers share educational resources, activities, events (for example, guest speakers or excursions) and/or stories that have been educationally significant for them this year and that may be valuable for other teachers.

(Teachers had been previously invited to bring examples. After the activity, participants are invited to place their tangible objects on a "Display Table" during Morning Tea.)

Morning Tea (approx. 11am – 11.30am)

**SECOND SESSION (11.30am- 1.00pm approx.)**
A consideration of our educational work around the theme MAKING CONNECTIONS

Within this topic are embedded a number of questions such as:

- What is the full range of personal and community CONNECTIONS possible for learners who participate in our centres' activities?
- How do we name these and integrate them into our work?
- What is the ROLE and POTENTIAL of teachers in promoting and strengthening connectedness?
- How do we make it happen?
- How do we plan – create activities and new horizons – to achieve connectedness for learners in its many forms?
- How do we ensure learners can name what they have learnt?

Let's first brainstorm the concept of **MAKING CONNECTIONS**, a powerful way of looking at our work as adult educators.

- What does this concept mean to you? Participants share their initial responses with the whole group.
- Then, the mindmap below is sketched on the whiteboard.

	Political Connections networks, ??	**Other types of Connections** ??	**Social Connections** friends, ??	
Community Connections services, resources, people, ??		**Making Connections**		**Conceptual Connections** ideas, ??
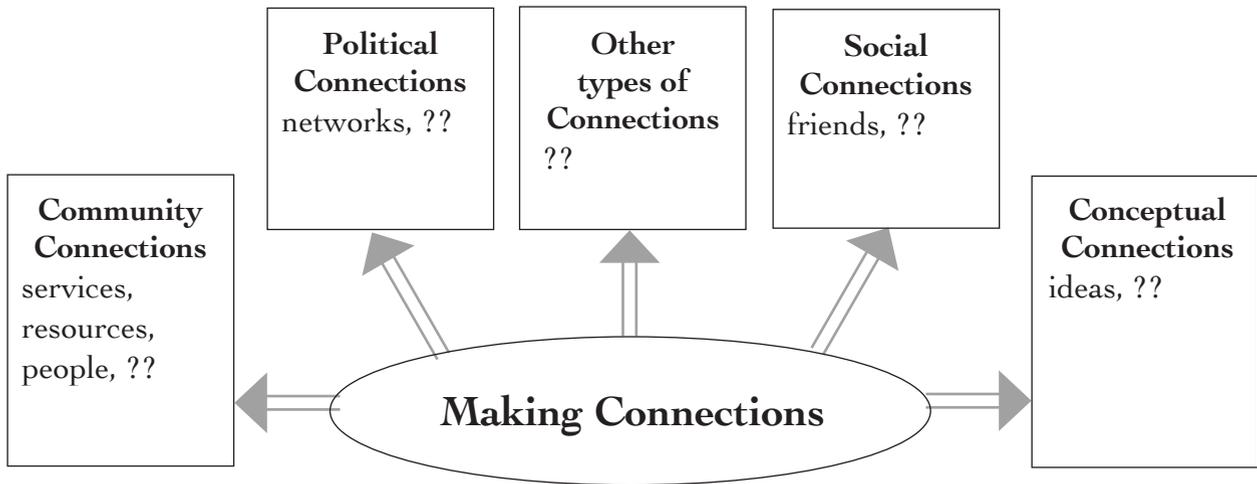
- What <u>types</u> of connections are part of your work? Ask for a show of hands for each <u>type</u>. Can you give some examples of each type? (10 mins)

Let's now turn these ideas into practices by turning our mind to **PROGRAM PLANNING.**

- Let's look at <u>one plan</u> as a group first, the "Multicultural Childcare" plan, adapted from **TLTC** (<u>Handout A</u>). Distribute, read through and explain it. In the process, call for more examples in each of the EA/LO/RO/PO sections. <u>Which</u> are *particularly* about "Making Connections"? Highlight on handout. (10 mins)
- Form small groups of 5 with "new" people. After hearing what each person teaches, choose a 6-week, 2-hour course or block of time from one of those mentioned.
- Let's consider the following program plan model. (Distribute <u>Handout B</u>). <u>Together</u>, sketch a Program Plan for the chosen course with an emphasis in activities and outcomes directed towards "Making Connections" (MC).
- On the handout, list some desired "Making Connections" Outcomes. Then, record some MC Activities that will achieve these Outcomes. ("Though tidy in the planning, as we all know, it's much messier in practice.") (30 mins)
- Together, prepare a "good copy" Program Plan on A4 for the purpose of later wider distribution. Use coloured papers and pens. (10 mins)
- Choose a representative to make a brief presentation of the program plan to the whole group, giving the name of the course and highlighting <u>one activity</u> that is particularly focussed on "Making Connections".
- Place each group's plan in an ornamental tray in the middle of the circle so they can be photocopied and distributed to participants. (15 mins)

Concluding activities (15 mins)

1. Each participant writes and shares verbally:

One thing I will take away from today's gathering is ….

Lunch (approx. 1pm)

Handout B: Program Plan

PROGRAM NAME:	
MC ACTIVITIES (For "Making Connections")	MC OUTCOMES (For "Making Connections")
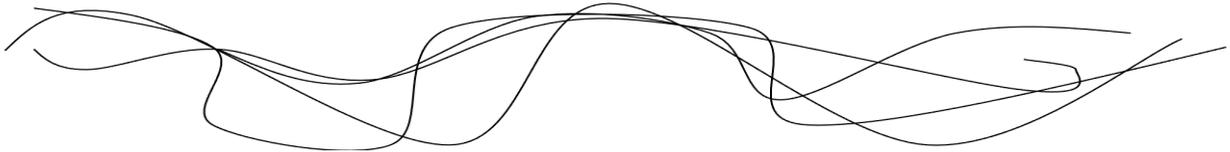
(To remind us, that it is messy in practice.)

Handout A: A Sample Plan (TLTC)

NAME OF COURSE:
"Introduction to Multicultural Childcare and Language Skills"

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (EA)
- Formal presentations from guest specialists.
- Problem-solving workshop sessions around childcare policies and practices.
- Research of childcare options and programs, including Internet searches.
- Field trips to other centres, workplaces, resource centres and educational sites.
- Multicultural perspectives on childcare practices.
- Discussion of learners' own life experiences as children, parents and grandparents.
- Storytelling from a variety of sources in a variety of languages and modes.
- Multicultural art and craft activities suitable for young children.
- English for community, vocational and academic purposes.
- A test on relevant municipal and legal regulations.
- Preparation and presentation of an activities program for children from a range of cultural backgrounds.
- Contribution to regular course reviews.
- Workplace placement.

252 / Making Connections

LEARNING OUTCOMES (LO)

- Knowledge of legal guidelines for childcare services.
- Ability to plan and organise a range of multicultural activities for pre-school children in care.
- Proven ability to provide a safe and nurturing childcare environment.
- Expanded repertoire of parenting and grandparenting knowledge and behaviours.
- Development of oral and printed storytelling crafts, in English and in mother tongue.
- Working knowledge of sources of information, resource centres and relevant agencies for future reference.
- Recognised increase in self-confidence and ability to participate in community organisations and public affairs.
- Consciousness of alternative learning pathways and own learning needs.

RECOGNITION OUTCOMES (RO)

- Community centre certificate detailing course topics.
- Report confirming work experience.
- Booklet with drawings and photos documenting the children's stories collected by the learners.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) application forms.
- Proven ability to access local services and community organisations independently and with others.
- Proven ability to access the Internet independently.
- Unsolicited recognition of extended parenting and grandparenting skills.

PATHWAY OUTCOMES (PO)

- To other community centre classes.
- To general education classes at other sites.
- To TAFE childcare courses.
- To TAFE healthcare courses.
- To employment in childcare and in community work.
- To English classes in a variety of settings.
- To a wider range of community organisations and services.
- To the Internet.
- To committee work in community organisations.
- To mentoring within own ethnic community.

Adapted from pp. 32/3,
Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities (TLTC) (1999) ACFEB, Melbourne.

"Pathways Planning" Workshop (2004)

NMRACFE

April 2, 2004

Workshop Plan
INTRODUCTIONS
ACE OUTCOMES
PATHWAYS – Meanings, Lives, Programs, Examples
ONE MODEL
PATHWAYS STORIES
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES
EVALUATION

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

- Introductions: "My name is … . A path/track/pathway I love is … ."

ACE OUTCOMES (15 minutes)

- Let's sketch an overview of the range of educational activities represented in this group here. To give me an idea of your work and the range of educational programs, could we make a quick sketch of your classes/programs on the board? *(Note responses on the board.)*

- Let's consider: ACE outcomes: How would you name the outcomes (both actual and desirable) from these ACE programs? *(Note responses on the board.)*

- The publication **ACE Outcomes** gives us ways to think about ACE Outcomes. Distribute and read HANDOUT 1.

- Another publication, **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities**, talks about 3 sorts of outcomes – Learning Outcomes, Recognition Outcomes and Pathway Outcomes. We'll come back to this. Let's consider the notion of PATHWAYS first.

PATHWAYS (10 minutes)
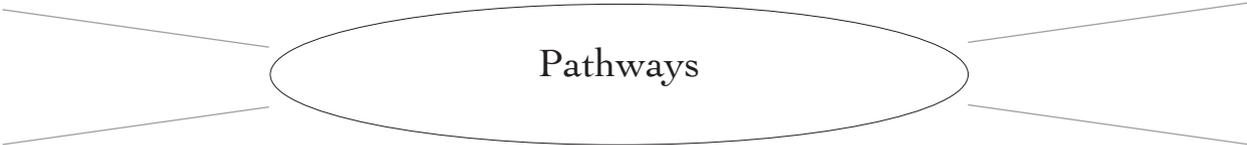
Pathways

- Let's get some ideas up on the board: "What does the term PATHWAYS mean to you?" (Note responses on the board.)

- Discussion: "Does this concept matter in your educational work? If so, HOW and WHY?" Let's look at this a little more closely.

ONE LIFE PATHWAY (15 minutes)

- As the result of doing an ACE course, a person's life path can take any number of turns or pathways, heading in any number of directions. Explain the diagram below. (OHT 1)
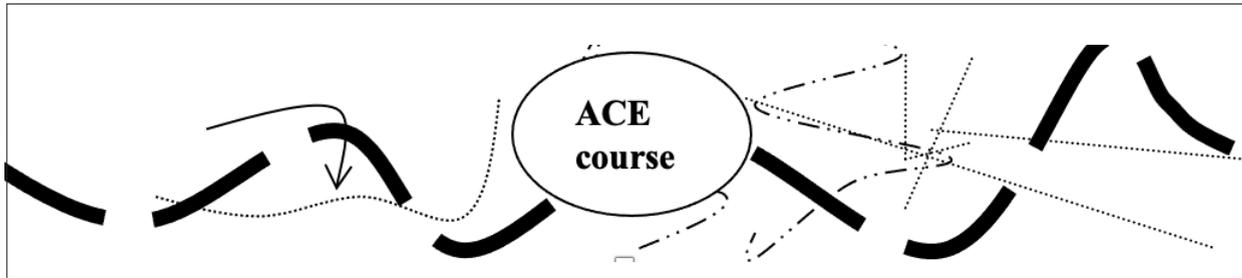
- Think of a student (past or present). What are/were of some of the uppermost **life concerns** for that student in the past/now? *(Note collective responses on the board.)*
- Let's compare your responses with OHT 2. Do these suggest other life concerns for your students that you might add to your original thoughts? Now, map your response on to this diagram. (HANDOUT 2)
- Let's extend this thinking a little further. Think back to the same student: What life paths did they take during or after the course? How did participation in an ACE course shape that person's life pathways? Record responses on HANDOUT 2 and share.
- Let's look more closely at this idea of PATHWAYS.

ACE PROGRAMS AND RELATED PATHWAYS IN AND OUT (15 minutes)

- Let's take as an example of <u>one</u> further education program represented in this group in Diagram 1 below. "Can someone suggest a program?"

DIAGRAM 1

Name of program
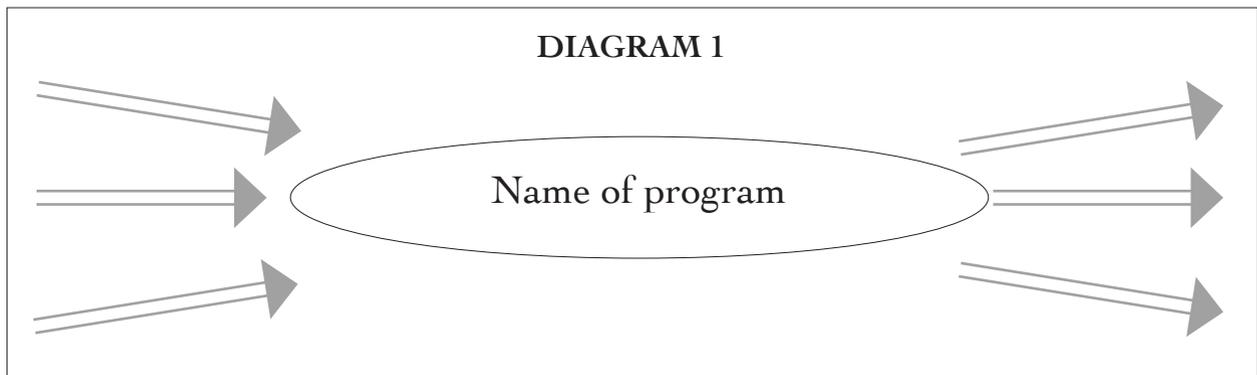
- Ask: "Where do students **come from** (from what other pathways, learning sites or key life sites or situations) and **where do they go** (to what other pathways, learning/life sites?)" *(Record these on the board.)*
- Now, mark these same pathways **"from and to"** on a similar diagram for a class you know. Create your own Diagram 1. *(Hear examples.)*
- Consider: "Are there any pathways you've recorded that we didn't name before that we could add to the ones on the board?"

GENERAL DISCUSSION: ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PATHWAYS (5 minutes)

- ✎ Should pathways be an <u>INTEGRAL</u> part of ACE courses?
- ✎ **If so**, why? Is that the situation NOW? If so, HOW? How else COULD it be?
- ✎ **If not**, why not? And should it be?

BREAK

ONE MODEL OF PATHWAYS (25/10 minutes)

- ✎ Another model of "Pathways": Is anyone familiar with **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities?** Can we together compose a picture of its four key elements? *(Record these on the board.)*
- ✎ Let's look at one example, "Introduction to Multicultural Childcare and Language Skills", exemplifying these four elements. HANDOUT 3 is an adapted version. The full description of the childcare course can be found on pages 32-33 of **TLTC**.
- ✎ Let's focus on "Pathway Outcomes". Take time to read the handout, adding any other Pathways Outcomes that come to mind. *(Hear suggestions.)*
- ✎ Let's return to our earlier further education program example. On your own Diagram 1, can you add any new possibilities for pathways for the program you mentioned?
- ✎ Ask: "Are there any extras we should add to Diagram 1 on the board?"
- ✎ As a group, let's discuss: "How do you respond to these documents, HANDOUTS 1 and 3? Are they helpful?'

PATHWAYS STORIES (20 minutes)

- ✎ Let's look at some "pathways stories" together, following the proforma in Diagram 2 below. Thinking of a recent student, in about 10 minutes, sketch out a short (no more than 2-paragraph) "pathway story", including something about who (a pseudonym) they are (WHO), the educational activities in which they participated (WHAT), the milestone(s) (MILESTONES) they reached and subsequent pathways (PATHWAYS TAKEN). *(Sketch Diagram 2 below on the board.)*

DIAGRAM 2
A Pathways Story

WHO

WHAT

MILESTONES

PATHWAYS TAKEN

- ✎ Let's hear some of your first drafts.

PATHWAYS PLANNING: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES (15/10/20 minutes)

- There are repercussions in broadening our understanding and practice of PATHWAYS, for example, issues such as organisational vision, organisational ethos, curriculum development, staff selection and professional development. Let's evaluate where we are at present.
- Consider and complete HANDOUT 4. What are you doing well now regarding PATHWAYS? What needs extending? And how to do that?

PATHWAYS AT...		
WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW? (Both curriculum practices and organisational systems)	WHAT NEEDS EXTENDING?	HOW?
Practices		
Systems		

- Share responses in pairs and then with whole group.
- Are there other Issues and Challenges you see around PATHWAYS? Let's record them on the board on Diagram 3 below.

DIAGRAM 3

Issues and Challenges
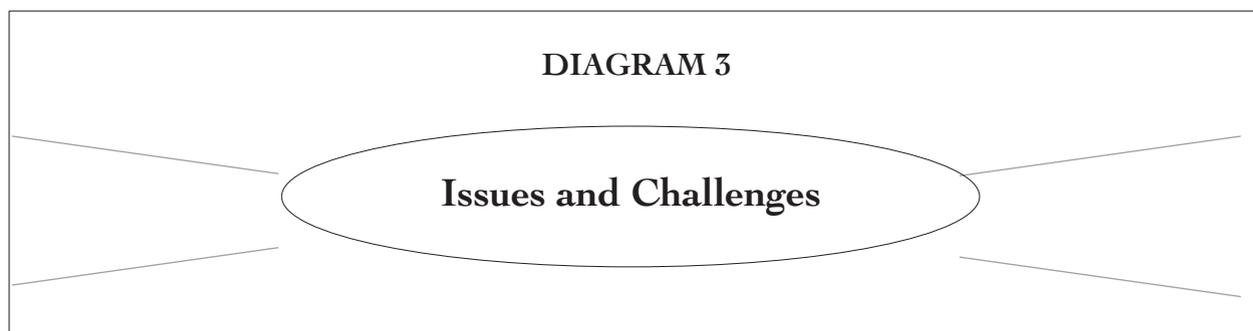
- Write down the most urgent PATHWAYS issue/challenge for you in your position, putting it in the form of a question that we will all consider and problem-solve as a group.
- Hear sample questions, with group suggesting possible "solutions".

EVALUATION (10 minutes)

- Ask each participant to write and share: *"One thing that I will put into practice after today is … "*

Ways To Think About Ace Outcomes
Individual ACE learners

Private life
1. Knowledge of self, the world, and how to learn
2. Skills for living in the private domain of family, friends and personal interest
3. A healthy, mature self-concept in private life
4. Supportive connections in personal settings

Public life
5. Knowledge of democratic community life
6. Skills for democratic participation in the public domain
7. A healthy, mature self-concept in public life
8. Supportive connections in community settings

Working life
9. Knowledge of work and work places
10. Skills for finding and sustaining voluntary and/or paid work
11. A healthy, mature self-concept in workplaces
12. Supportive connections in workplace settings

**ACE agencies and their wider communities**

Community development
1. Collective knowledge and understanding of community life
2. Skills for joint action to develop community life
3. A purposeful local community with a strong identity
4. A community that values and embodies diversity, trust and reciprocity

Economic development
5. Local knowledge and understanding of economic life
6. Skills to develop local economies
7. An innovative and sustainable local economy
8. A confident local economy that prospers by making the most of its diversity

From: Clemans, A, Hartley, R, and Macrae, H. **ACE Outcomes**, NCVER, 2003

OHT 1
ONE LIFE PATHWAY

ACE course

OHT 2
ONE STUDENT'S LIFE CONCERNS

Participation in community groups

Daughters: their physical and emotional needs; their study

Husband

Coming to English class

Swimming

Riding her bike

Daughters' schools: teachers, meetings

Negotiations with DIMIA

Church and choir

ONE STUDENT'S LIFE CONCERNS

**Name
of
student**
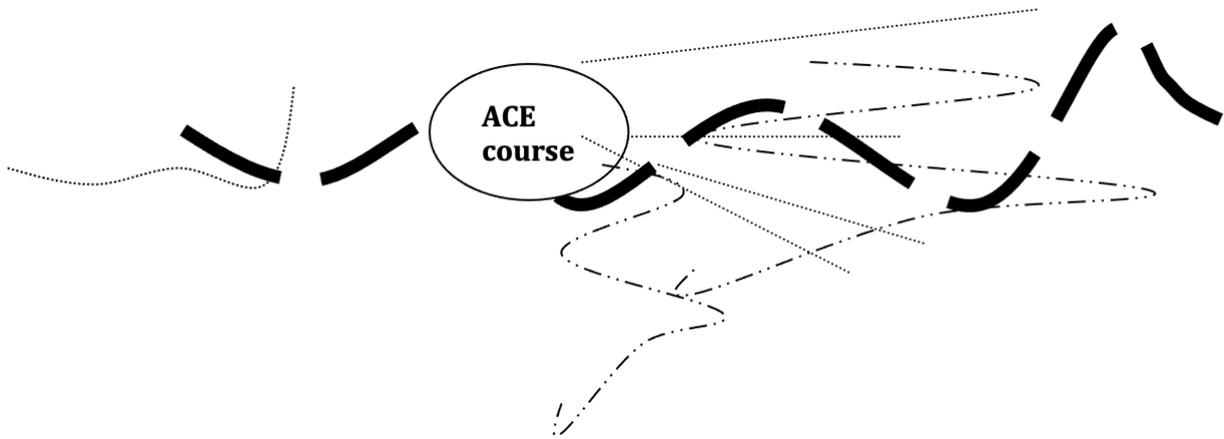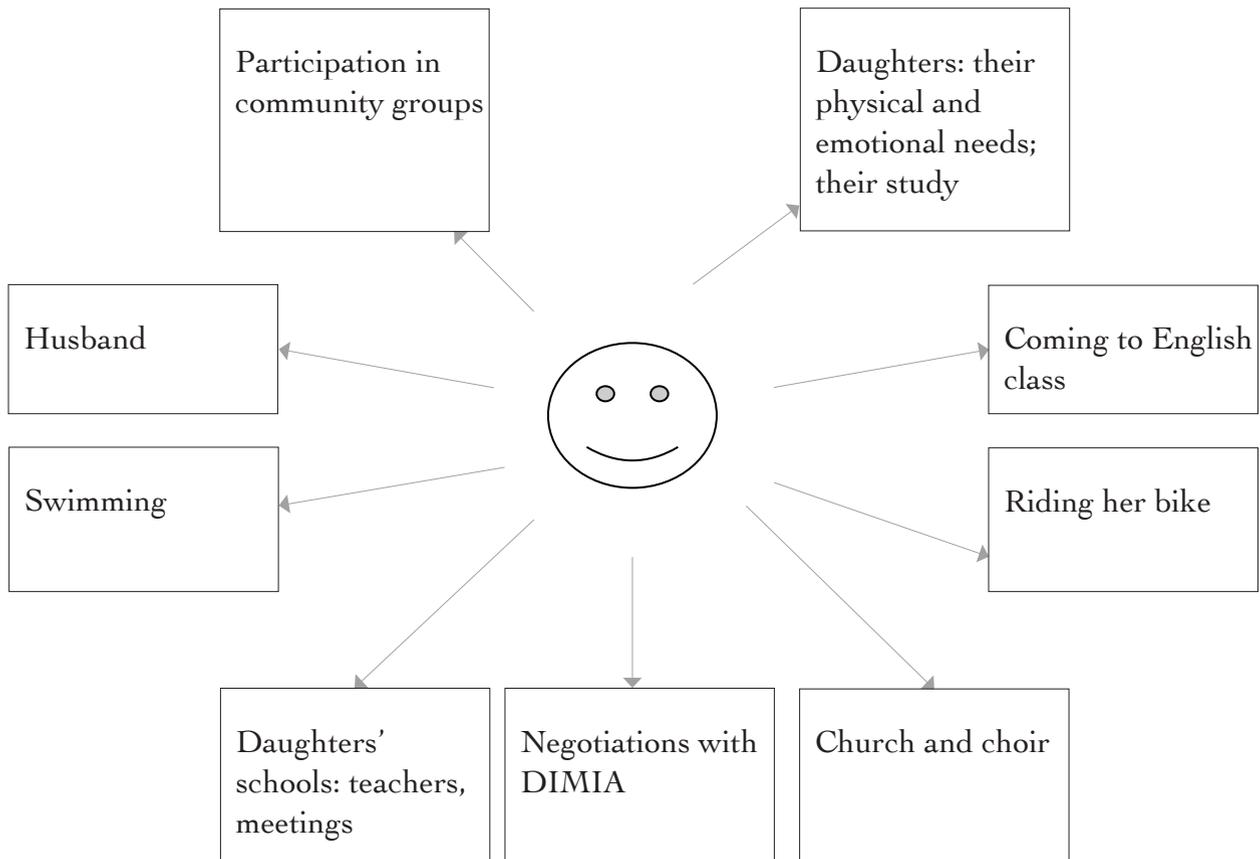
SAME STUDENT'S LIFE PATHWAYS
List the life paths that person took, during or after the ACE course.

How did participation in an ACE course shape that person's life pathways?

What are/were other possible pathways?

NAME OF COURSE:
"Introduction to Multicultural Childcare and Language Skills"

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (EA)
- Formal presentations from guest specialists.
- Problem-solving workshop sessions around childcare policies and practices.
- Research of childcare options and programs, including Internet searches.
- Field trips to other centres, workplaces, resource centres and educational sites.
- Multicultural perspectives on childcare practices.
- Discussion of learners' own life experiences as children, parents and grandparents.
- Storytelling from a variety of sources in a variety of languages and modes.
- Multicultural art and craft activities suitable for young children.
- English for community, vocational and academic purposes.
- A test on relevant municipal and legal regulations.
- Preparation and presentation of an activities program for children from a range of cultural backgrounds.
- Contribution to regular course reviews.
- Workplace placement.

LEARNING OUTCOMES (LO)
- Knowledge of legal guidelines for childcare services.
- Ability to plan and organise a range of multicultural activities for pre-school children in care.
- Proven ability to provide a safe and nurturing childcare environment.
- Expanded repertoire of parenting and grandparenting knowledge and behaviours.
- Development of oral and printed storytelling crafts, in English and in mother tongue.
- Working knowledge of sources of information, resource centres and relevant agencies for future reference.
- Recognised increase in self-confidence and ability to participate in community organisations and public affairs.
- Consciousness of alternative learning pathways and own learning needs.

RECOGNITION OUTCOMES (RO)
- Community centre certificate detailing course topics.
- Report confirming work experience.
- Booklet with drawings and photos documenting the children's stories collected by the learners.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) application forms.
- Proven ability to access local services and community organisations independently and with others.
- Proven ability to access the Internet independently.
- Unsolicited recognition of extended parenting and grandparenting skills.

PATHWAY OUTCOMES (PO)
- To other community centre classes.
- To general education classes at other sites.
- To TAFE childcare courses.
- To TAFE healthcare courses.
- To employment in childcare and in community work.
- To English classes in a variety of settings.
- To a wider range of community organisations and services.
- To the Internet.
- To committee work in community organisations.
- To mentoring within own ethnic community.

Adapted from pp. 32/3, **Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities (TLTC)** (1999) ACFEB, Melbourne

HANDOUT 4

July 2022		
WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW? (Both curriculum practices and organisational systems)	WHAT NEEDS EXTENDING?	HOW?
Practices		
Systems		

A Change of Scene 10: Community 1
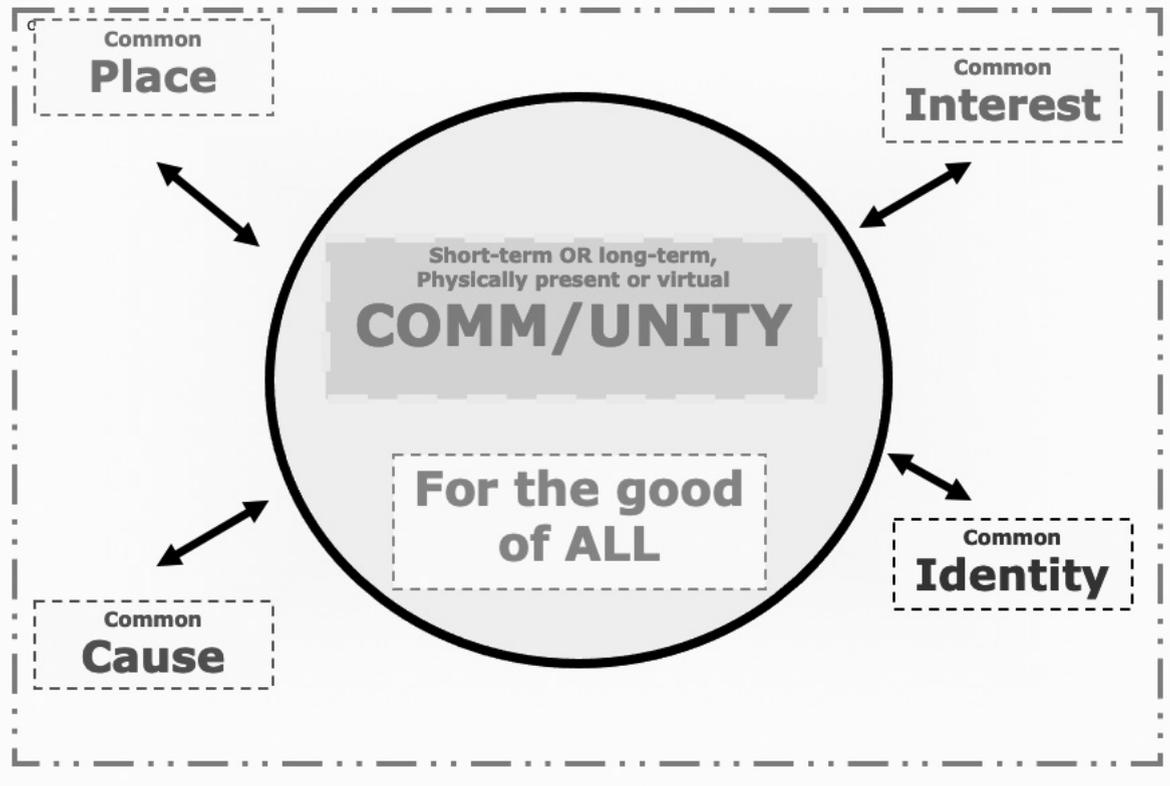
Common Place

Common Interest

Short-term OR long-term, Physically present or virtual

COMM/UNITY

For the good of ALL

Common Cause

Common Identity

/ 263

**All Mapped Out?: The dynamic relationship
between worldviews, democratic imaginations
and educational practices**

This chapter comes from a book, **Lifelong learning
and the democratic imagination**. *It expands
a presentation I gave at an all-day colloquium,
"Lifelong learning and the democratic imagination:
Revisioning justice, freedom and community",
held at Medley Hall, Melbourne University,
on Saturday, 28th September, 2002.*

I love this piece. Along with **Signs of the Times**
and **From Fill-ins to Foundations**, *it articulates
my educational credo.*

*Once again, metaphors carry the story and the
argument. Once again, stories of my own practice
ground my reflections.*

All Mapped Out?: The dynamic relationship between worldviews, democratic imaginations and educational practices (2004)

Chapter 18 in **Lifelong learning and the democratic imagination**

❧

MAPS AS WORLDVIEWS

I love maps.   At home, on my bookshelves, there are many maps, and many different sorts of maps. A recent addition is a rather old fashioned schoolbook, **A Sketch-Map History of Britain and Europe: 1485-1783**. What caught my eye, early in the book, is a mediaeval map of the world (p. 17). According to the worldview portrayed by this map, Jerusalem is at the centre of the universe.

Turning back a page in this same book, I find a map called "Routes of Early Discoveries" (p. 14). It depicts pioneering European sea voyages of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The territories familiar to the medieval world do not include the Americas, most of Africa and Asia, and certainly not Australia. In fact, the space we now call "Australia" is represented as "Undiscovered till the Seventeenth Century". A modern reader cannot help exclaiming: "undiscovered" by who? Given the absences, I take special notice to see who does feature prominently. For example, it is telling to note the extent of Arab trading in the 1500s.

Near the end of this same book is a sketch of the "English, French and Spanish Spheres in North America" in the seventeenth century. On this map, the West Indies, shaded in black, is overwritten with the words "too hot for white people to make permanent homes" (p.112). Another shocking statement, another eye-opener for a contemporary reader.

You might wonder why I am going into such detail about a rather obscure book that I found in the dimmer reaches of a second hand bookshop in a small Victorian country town early last year. The reason I bought the book, and the reason I'm featuring it here, is its power to give instant access to how people see and think and to the conceptual and imaginative worlds

they inhabit. At once, we are in touch with worldviews that reveal much about perspectives, prejudices and priorities. Who would have thought that such a small and rather plain book could be so illuminating?

This book of sketch-maps was first published in London in 1939 and was reprinted ten times, the last cited being March 1960. It was intended for senior pupils of secondary schools in England and, probably, for students much further afield as well. In his preface to an earlier book, **A Sketch-Map History of Europe: 1789-1914**, the author George Taylor stresses :

> Moreover, the book should not entirely displace the historical atlas. It should be noted that an attempt has been made to simplify the complicated maps of the atlas mainly by the omission of relevant matter (p. 6).

Whilst in admiration of the author's honesty, it is difficult to refrain from asking: How does he decide what is relevant? And what has been lost in the simplification?

Let me explain why I think maps like this can help us better understand our work as adult educators.

First, there are the maps themselves.

We are accustomed to thinking globally; these days, we know there are multiple centres of power, not one, and they are often difficult to locate. It is sobering to be reminded that, for generations of Europeans, not only was the earth flat and its extremities hazy and dangerous, but indisputably Jerusalem lay at its centre. I can think of no more powerful way of contrasting profoundly different worldviews than by placing two maps side by side – a medieval map of the world and a present day map of the world. Two maps of a known world, yet two utterly different ways of representing its extent, boundaries and key points.

This simple act of comparison draws attention to what we think the world looks like, and how similar or different it is to the two maps placed side by side. It highlights the worldview we carry inside ourselves (the parts that are significant and the parts that are empty), a perspective that influences our view of everything, including where we stand in relation to the whole. To quote, Aidan Davison:

> The power of the map is that it helps us gain distance and perspective on the conceptual worlds we inhabit, ones learnt in the experiential worlds of cot, car and classroom (p. 2).

Many of us will remember, from childhood, world maps boasting huge swathes of pink depicting the extent of the British Empire; in retrospect and from a distance, they could be seen as a subliminal way of stressing how fortunate we were to be members of this mighty imperial family. They were telling us far more than the names and borders of countries.

Maps are never neutral, objective, eternal or complete. They present a particular view of the

world and, as Taylor pointed out, there are many omissions. This awareness raises serious questions about the "accuracy" and purpose of maps. It forces us to enquire: Who draws and names them, based on what knowledge and why?

Second, there are the interpretations of the maps.

In the seventeenth century maps of North America mentioned earlier, I welcome being reminded early European settlers spoke many languages and came with quite different histories and missions. I welcome this antidote to an Anglo-centric view of the world. Who, however, deemed that the West Indies were "too hot for white people to make permanent homes"? Is this the author speaking? If so, on what authority? Is he quoting (but not identifying) a view of the time? Is he aware that such a pronouncement could be challenged on many grounds, or does he assume this is "common knowledge"? How much is he a man of his times, reflecting widely held colonial views?

These are not inconsequential questions. Maps are not simply about geography; they also delineate political and moral territories. Having the power to shape the worldview of thousands, and possibly millions, the worldview that mapmakers promote has enormous social, moral and political consequences. For example, maps such as Taylor's run the risk of giving the impression there can only be one view of the world – and that, a white Europe-centred one. How many young people from the 1930s to the 1960s, and probably well beyond, unconsciously adopted such views as gospel?

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MAPS

So far, I have mentioned only two books of maps. Maps come in many shapes, and serve a variety of purposes. If I were to list the many different types of maps on my bookshelves, it would become abundantly clear how each one displays a particular view of the world and how, implicitly, that view promulgates what counts and what doesn't count in human affairs. **The Times Concise Atlas of the World** favours land forms, vegetation and minerals. **Peters Atlas of the World** foregrounds languages, health, child labour, the status of women and many other socio-political thematic maps. This atlas, to quote the foreword, "represents all countries and continents at the same scale" (p. 3), quite deliberately countering a traditional Eurocentric view of the world. As might be expected, **The Gaia Atlas of Planet Management** spotlights environmental and social crises as well as the potential for wise management. And so on – a quick visit to any bookshop highlights the hundreds of different maps being produced all the time. Different maps, different worldviews, different priorities and different consequences.

Consider a most distinctive book of maps that came my way last week. It is called **On the Map – stories of people seeking refuge in Australia**. Near the front of the book, the author

Tricia Bowen explains:

> Lines, dots, colours and shapes marked on a flat surface. Maps. We're often reading them, or drawing them in one form or another. They offer direction when travelling to a new place. They rekindle memories. They provide new layers of knowledge about places you thought you knew (p. 2)… Maps can generate talk and foster connection… Maps could also be used to offer some help to…people in finding their bearings in a new country (p. 4).

In this publication, maps not only show a view of the world; they also affirm identity, belonging and community. They help us "find our bearings" in times of confusion, uncertainty and alienation. A book like this challenges the view, and quite a dominant one, that promotes mapping as a "fait accompli", a remote technology of objectification, in essence, a tyrannical means of legitimating terrains as "absolute fact". Tricia Bowen's book reclaims mapping as a democratic practice of engagement and solidarity. This view knows and advocates that many maps – a Melways map, an indigenous painting, a tourist guide, a childhood sketch – can be made of the one place, each one favouring certain aspects and concealing others. It implicitly emphasises that, if our society is to be inclusive and just, maps of the same ground need to be constantly re-drawn in endlessly different ways and each of the diverse views given prominence.

MAPS, EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY

So, you must now be asking, what have maps to do with Education and Democracy, the topic for this book? So far, I have explicitly referred to two-dimensional maps in books. By inference, however, I have also been talking about conceptual frameworks, political perspectives and cultural perceptions – the sorts of elements that constitute a worldview or a way of mapping the world.

All of us carry maps of the worlds within us. They might be global or local. They tend to be crammed with detail in some areas and piecemeal or blank in others. Some are political maps: these indicate the countries we know and their ideological relationships. Some are cultural maps: these depict our understandings of ethnicity, class, gender and other identity characteristics and how they interact. Some are conceptual maps: these feature the ideas we consider significant and how they inter-relate. The maps we carry today will almost certainly be different to the ones we carried a decade ago, and will be different again in ten years' time. They will also be quite different from the maps in the heads of adult educators in Mexico or India, Palestine or the Philippines.

I believe the "maps" making up our view of the world – how it is and how it should be – are very powerful in their consequences. Those (often unstated) worldviews shape all our educational work, the aims we name, the activities we design, the resources we choose and

the evaluations we undertake. I also believe these aspects are much more significant in their effects on adult learners, no matter what the context, than those currently singled out for "quality" assessment, with the latter's almost exclusive emphasis on quantitative data and orderly record keeping. Given their all-pervasive influence, isn't it vital we pay more attention to these worldviews? In fact, how often do we examine the maps embedded in our psyches, the maps that shape who we are and what we do as adult educators?

These questions bring me back to the subject of Democracy.

MAPS OF DEMOCRACY

Let me start by asking myself a few questions.
> What maps do I carry in my head about Democracy?
> How do I envisage this terrain?
> What are its distinctive features?
> How does it compare to others' maps?
> Are we all talking about the same place with the same identifying marks?

When I think of Democracy, I think of interaction and decision-making. My "map of democracy" is of the community groups to which I belong and the ways in which we work together to create a more just, humane and compassionate world. Others I know think of regulating human affairs. Their "map of democracy" is of governance structures; they focus on monitoring mechanisms that ensure these instrumentalities are fair but not too numerous. Others think of elections and voting. Their "map of democracy" is of political parties and politicians and a three-year duty. And there are countless other "maps of democracy", each one informing teachers' and students' beliefs and behaviours in quite different ways.

Let me broaden the scope of my questions. As adult educators:
> Which maps of democracy are we presenting and representing?
> Are we, consciously or unconsciously, privileging some and excluding others? And
> what are the consequences of our choices?

A cursory library and web search around the terms "adult education" makes it clear that nobody doubts that democracy matters. There is scarcely a paragraph that doesn't mention "democracy" or "democratic"; the words are repeated over and over, like a mantra. There is extensive talk of concepts such as democratic dialogue, democratic identity, democratic disposition, and democratic conscience. Commonly recurring phrases are "education for democracy", "a democratic educational climate" and "democratic literacy".

What is not so common is *exactly* and *specifically* what this education looks and sounds and feels like. In other words, I've yet to find an educational writer who shows the dynamic

relationship between education and democracy in action, either in the classroom and/or beyond. A lot of the writers concentrate on citizenship and adult civic education – providing abstract definitions and long lists of democratic imperatives, ideals, values, virtues, characteristics and choices. But "civics education" is only one aspect of "democracy". Other writers focussing on democracy related to education enumerate hosts of definitions and compile comprehensive classifications but rarely move beyond conceptual generalisations. In responding to each other's definitions, there are as many different interpretations of these abstractions as there is of the term "the Middle East" but few examples of how education can contribute to the way democracy is or can be lived.

The more I read, the more I want to ask each writer:
> How do you visualise these abstract terms in concrete ways and in concrete places?
> Do you (as I do) distinguish between education about democracy, education in democracy and education for democracy?
> How do you practise what you advocate?

Naturally, I'm constantly asking myself the same questions too.

The best way I know to give my own answers to these questions is to tell stories or, to put it another way, is to offer a narrative mapping of my experience. Through these stories, three different examples of recent adult education action and reflection, I will reflect on the following matters:
> What is the picture or map of democracy that I hold? (In other words, what does the ideal I am trying to create look like?)
> And why did I choose the particular activities that I did at that particular time? (In other words, what is the justification for the educational acts I selected, and why did I believe they had some chance of realising this ideal called democracy?)

Before beginning the stories, however, I need to say a word or two about three key definitions.

For me, education *about* democracy means learning about the structures and ideals of good governance, whether applied to a classroom, the smallest community group, a national government or a multinational corporation. Education *in* democracy means experiencing and practising the values of democracy, particularly power sharing, through egalitarian dialogue, creation of access to key knowledge and consensual decision-making. Education *for* democracy means being committed, as educators, to act democratically in all aspects of our work in order to strengthen democracy in the society as a whole. At best, the three co-exist and mutually reinforce each other.

Now, to the stories.

THREE STORIES

The first story
The first story took place in a TAFE Institute in the western suburbs of Melbourne, one that pioneered a Diploma of Liberal Arts. I was teaching "Stories Cultures Tell Themselves", one of the core subjects in this course. The main aims of this subject are to explore the role of stories in our lives, to discuss the significance of stories in shaping cultures, to identify the ways in which stories are transmitted by cultures and to examine the dynamic relationship between stories in our everyday lives and stories told by or about the culture at large.

In past years, this subject had focussed on the evolution of fairy stories in Western Europe. I wanted an Australian focus. As this class took place in the first semester of 2001, and with the euphoria of the "Sydney 2000 Olympics" still in the air, I decided the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games would make a good reference point for our investigations. The reason for my choice was that it gave the class the opportunity to take a closer look at the way Australia had been represented to the world, an opportunity to study how that spectacle had presented who "we" were, who "we" are now and who "we" aspire to be. A key part of our project was to identify gaps and flaws in this particular "map of Australia", a depiction the students soon came see as both incomplete and inaccurate.

Throughout the course, four questions recurred regularly:
> Who made this map?
> For what purposes?
> Who are the "we" on show?
> What might be a "better" map?'

A close scrutiny of this carefully choreographed national drama taught us many important lessons – how national myths are made and/or reinforced; who gets included and who gets excluded; how stereotypes are perpetuated; how cultural events are determined by economics and politics; and how images work to promote particular national and cultural ideas, values and identities. Much of the time in class was spent seeking out, telling and hearing the stories of those who had not been represented or who had been poorly represented. In particular, attention was given to the stories of women, immigrants and indigenous Australians. The supplementary stories came from many sources – from literature, paintings, newspapers and magazines, films, video documentaries, libraries, art galleries, "Centenary of Federation" exhibitions and oral histories, especially those told by the twenty-five, very diverse, students themselves.

The historical, social and cultural map of Australia that emerged from this research as "cultural scholars" was a far more complex one than the Opening Ceremony had portrayed. This discovery aroused strong feelings in many students:

If Australia, is so democratic, how come so few people got to decide on such an important matter as The Opening Ceremony?
And how come the injustices, the lack of equal participation in Australia, were papered over?
Isn't this insulting to the victims of these injustices?

The realisation that "entertainment" is deeply political was both novel and shocking.

I clearly remember a decision I made in the last week of semester. I was acutely conscious that I wanted the last classes to summarise and reinforce everything we had learnt to date. I asked myself:
What is the most important "Australian story" for our culture to be telling itself at this time?
What are the big, blank spaces in popular maps of Australia?

I concluded it was the stories asylum seekers had to tell. This meant tracking down their stories, no easy matter, and a powerful lesson in who and what are given preference in the public domain. It meant confronting the way stories are misshaped, misheard or ignored.

As I look back, I realise that "democracy" was a vital element in the educational choices I made throughout this course. I felt impelled that students hear voices that were being silenced, that we question the reasons for this and that we assess ways of responding to this denial of rights and freedoms. Our final investigation into whether asylum seekers are "on the map" in Australia today affirmed the tenor of the whole course – education about democracy, education in democracy and education for democracy. My most enduring memory is of a young woman whose preoccupation most of semester had been planning her eighteenth birthday party. Her final contribution revealed a new sense of being adult:
I'd like to give some of my new clothes to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre that has just opened. I know my parents will be furious but I am adult now. I can't bear to think this is happening in Australia, the so-called "land of the free".

The second story
The second story concerns a study circle that, for the year 2002, chose the topic: "Islam and the Middle East: what we know, what we don't know and what we'd like to know". Again, for me, the emphasis was on the "maps" we carry in our heads, those internal images and pictures that determine how we behave both as Australian citizens and as global citizens. With this in mind, an early activity that I planned involved group participants in locating Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Pakistan and Afghanistan on a map of the region in which borders were retained but place names erased.

This simple exercise, one that highlighted the vagueness and piecemeal nature of our knowledge of this part of the world, prompted a long and lively discussion on many topics.

What explains why we know so little about most of this part of the world, and the little we do is so fragmented and outmoded?

How come we know so much about one tiny part, Israel?

How do we deal with what we hear or read about these unfamiliar places?

Does what we hear and read sit in a vacuum, disconnected from people and their histories?

Do we tune out when we cannot picture the place or the people?

What are the effects of our ignorance on people from the Middle East, whether they live in Australia, in their homelands or in refugee camps?

What can we do about the widespread ignorance in the Australian community? What are our responsibilities as "good" citizens?

What can we do if our "democratic" government is failing its citizens?

One way we began to answer these questions was to recognise the need for genuine dialogue with those who have been labelled "other", in this case, the local Muslim community. Concerned about truth and justice, we knew we needed to hear first-hand "the other side of the story". We were delighted that men and women, young and old, permanent residents and asylum seekers, from a wide range of Islamic backgrounds accepted an invitation to visit our group. Listening to the stories of Muslim Australians, we were reminded that "who the other is" depends on where you are standing, what you can see and how you interpret that view. Different "maps of the world" – both literal and metaphorical – display different preferences. We knew we had to locate our own blind spots.

In striving to explore and embrace "the other" in this study group, "democracy" featured conspicuously. "Education about democracy" meant we made a close study of formal decision making processes in Australia and elsewhere, always alert to detecting miscarriages of justice. "Education in democracy" was evident in our own decision-making processes where roles, power and responsibilities were shared, where all voices were equally valued and where reflection and evaluation were habitual. "Education for democracy" propelled us to action – to study more, to respond to untruths, to organise and to advocate.

The third story

The third story took place during the first half of 2002 in a Bachelor of Adult Learning and Development (BALD) course at a university set in Melbourne's east. This course is designed for people experienced in working with adults as trainers, tutors and facilitators who now want a tertiary qualification in education. The first semester introduces students to key issues and concepts relating to the world of adult education. I taught, "Adult Education Practices 1", a subject that explores the main traditions in adult education, the main theorists associated with these traditions and the implications of those traditions for teaching and learning.

Again, democracy was very much to the fore and, this time, in a very explicit way. I wanted

students to see that particular educational practices are the enactment of particular theories and, conversely, that particular theories favour certain practices. I wanted to reveal the worldview infusing (apparently innocent) educational choices, and to stress that choosing particular practices reinforces particular views about humans and society. In the hope that these intimate connections would become blatantly obvious, I decided to focus on a socially, politically and educationally powerful discourse, that of "democracy".

Some weeks after we had discussed articles written by Knowles, Brookfield, Freire, Thompson and other influential thinkers, I continued our academic exploration of the close relationship between theory and practice with the following question:

> Imagine you have been asked to run a session for adults on the subject of "Democracy". It can be a workplace or a community setting. What would you do?

Each student started sketching the session he or she would run and then, ten minutes later, shared it with a small group.

A short time later, I distributed the handout below and asked students to fill it in.

DEMOCRACY	DEMOCRACY
What key words, places, events, concepts, do you associate with "democracy"? What 3 questions, for you, demand urgent answers regarding "democracy"? (Make sure your questions refer to both *thought* and *action*, that is, that you are being a problem-poser and a problem-solver.)	TOPIC: METHOD/RESOURCES: FINAL PRODUCT: DEADLINE: CRITERIA OF SUCCESS:
DEMOCRACY	**DEMOCRACY**
Jot down all feelings, images and responses to: DEMOCRACY What are the strongest feelings aroused? What does this mean for you?	Complete the following: Democracy was born in Greece in ……. All citizens could vote. Today, it is best exemplified in the free market nations of the West, especially in such countries as the United States, ……… and ……… The two most significant features of democracy are the right to vote and ………

After students had completed and exchanged responses with a few others, we reassembled as a group. I asked the group as a whole to comment on this set of four tasks from the following perspective:

> Are particular theoretical maps of the field of adult education suggested by any or all of these activities?

As they identified pedagogical differences between the activities, they began to see how particular activities related to particular views of some of the thinkers we had studied. For example, the task in the top right hand corner looked very much like the sort of individual learning contract Knowles promotes. The top left hand corner evokes Freire and critical literacy. It was agreed that tasks rarely appear as singularly and baldly as presented in this worksheet; most times, there is a mix of activities, and hence a fusion of philosophical sources. Students were then asked to re-visit their own rough session plans of "Democracy" to see if they could detect particular views of the world at work.

For many of the BALD students, this exercise was a rude awakening.

The *first* surprise was coming to see how all practice is "theory in action" and that no practice is detached from the philosophies and values and ideologies of a particular worldview. An exercise that asks questions and urges ethical action comes from a very different view of the world, and the place of education in it, than one that wants "the right answer" for a text that cannot be challenged.

The *second* revelation was that some practices are more "democratic" than others. Because something is "about democracy" does not ensure that it is inherently democratic. Some practices encourage multiplicity, connectedness, critical intelligence and transformation; others reward simplification, narrowness, compliance and competitiveness.

The *third* vital insight for the BALD participants was that "Democracy" means different things to different people. There is no one fixed, immutable definition, much less one "correct" way. The different methods presented in the handout hinted at some of the differences. Activities that foster autonomy, personal success and self-direction point to a map of democracy where the individual is responsible for his or her own destiny, and outside interference must be minimal and only to ensure direct personal benefit. Activities that prize questioning, meaning making and healthy social relationships point to a map of democracy that prizes community well-being, is open to change and welcomes personal and collective action when change is vital.

LESSONS LEARNT

Having related these three stories, it is time to step back a little. The lessons learnt in these three different adult education contexts are of paramount importance for both students and teachers. I have already sketched some of the lessons that students learnt. Let me now turn to what I, as an adult educator, learnt.

Some of what I learnt was local and particular; some reached beyond time and place. The complexity of the relationships between "adult education" and "democracy" and "good practice" is not easily or wisely conveyed as universal truths. That said, I do think there are some commonalities across all contexts. I'd express these general lessons as something like:

> Everything we do as adult educators is the embodiment of one or more worldviews. Worldviews are more or less democratic in nature. In any particular activity, are we aware of what worldview we are favouring? Is it one that commends education about democracy, education in democracy AND education for democracy? Or is it, even unwittingly, one that gives mixed messages? In other words, what are the "maps" determining our practices?

Let me now refer to the lessons of time and place. During, and after, each of the three situations described above, I consciously reflected on the ground that had been covered. One of the outcomes was that I came to see how my own maps of education and democracy changed as a result of these experiences.

With the Liberal Arts class, the ages and cultural attributes of the students extended my pedagogical boundaries. Many of the young people, their ambivalent feelings towards secondary schooling still fresh in their minds, forced me as a further education teacher to expand my ideas around "adult". Their stage of life meant they were confronting very different issues from the ones faced by students who were, or had been, full-time workers or parents or community activists. Class activities had to embrace these young people's concerns about parents and police and authority figures generally. Simultaneously, young women from the Horn of Africa showed me participation did not always mean saying it out loud assertively. Their response to pressure from a classmate, an older ex-Muslim woman, to "liberate" themselves from Islam was to model (often in an unspoken way, in behaviour rather than word) its virtues of tolerance and dignity.

In the study circle, the guests who accepted our invitation reminded me, in my role as co-leader, that dialogue is not a one-way exchange, a convenience for those issuing invitations. Certainly, they were willing to answer our many queries about Islam and the Middle East but they were also active initiators, with many questions of their own. They wanted us to explain attitudes, apparently taken as norms in mainstream Australia, that are not "givens" in

their various communities. For example, simplistic, uncritical views of the United States of America puzzled and bothered them.

The enthusiastic responses of the BALD students increased my resolve to advocate more broadly the values of adult education that I espouse. As a teacher educator, I was heartened that adult education theories and practices spoke powerfully to them as workplace trainers: none of them had encountered the richness and diversity of its traditions before. Inclusiveness, justice, humane relationships, critical enquiry and a broad social vision can and should be applied far beyond the community and further education sector. One student summed up the views of many when she said:

> These ideas and activities dedicated to a better world not only can work in workplaces but they are urgently needed there. We'd not been given alternatives before. We thought there was only one way and that the instructor always knew best. We want to put the E back into VET.

REVISITING MAPS

So, if our work in adult education is to be thought of as worldviews in action, it is worth revisiting the concept of maps and mapping that I introduced at the very beginning of this chapter. In the following quotation from the introduction to **Mapping the Subject**, I sometimes substitute "education" or "education and democracy" for the "human subject" that the editors Pile and Thrift (1995, p. 3) refer to in the opening line:

> The human subject is difficult to map for numerous reasons. There is the difficulty of mapping something that does not have precise boundaries. There is the difficulty of mapping something that cannot be counted as singular but only as a mass of different and sometimes conflicting subject positions. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is always on the move, culturally, and in fact… Then, finally, there is the difficulty of deploying the representational metaphor of mapping with its history of subordination to an Enlightenment logic in which everything can be surveyed and pinned down.

> There is, however, another way of thinking of mapping, as wayfinding… 'exploring it on foot rather than looking down on it from an airplane' (Mathy 1993: 15)…

This passage reminds me that the metaphors of map and mapping mean different things to different people in different contexts. To this point, I have stressed the virtues of these metaphors. However, the ambivalences associated with these terms must be acknowledged and stressed. Maps can be deceptive in very many ways – they can objectify by putting a distance between the viewer and the viewed; they can deny pre-existing terrains; they can parade as the one and only "truth"; they can reinforce the status quo; they can make exclusive claims on space and ideas; they can present reality as fixed and apparently unalterable. The diagrams Taylor presents in his sketch-maps incline in these directions.

But maps need not confine and strictly delineate and monopolise. Rather than being the status quo written down, they can be visions of how power can be re-distributed. As opposed to colonising space and ideas, they can be used to explore space and ideas. Such possibilities are eloquently expressed in Paul Carter's book, **The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History.**

> This was the essence of the maps he [Cook] made, that they did not mirror the appearance of natural objects, but preserved the trace of encountering them (p. 23)… For, while discovery rests on the assumption of a world of facts waiting to be found, collected and classified, a world in which the neutral observer is not implicated, exploration lays stress on the observer's engagement with his environment (p. 25)… Before it became the instrument of geographical knowledge, the map, too, belonged to the discourse of travelling. The map only gradually became flat and smooth, equally authoritative in every part… It was not a collection of geographical objects imprisoned beneath the grid of latitude and longitude. It was closer to a picture or to the journal itself. (p. 71).

The more we ponder the intricacies of this metaphor, the more cautious we need be. No maps are fixed and final and no maps can be taken for granted; we need to be seeking new and fuller maps all the time, whatever the terrain. This is as true of our maps of adult education, our maps of democracy and our maps of education and democracy as it is of our maps of the Middle East.

In **The Book of Visions**, Drambo reminds us:

> Tomorrow is born of today's decisions and actions. To create the future you need tools: knowledge, experience, insights and methods (p. 322).

Every educational act, every educational moment is making one choice as against another, is shaping one future as against another. If we, as adult educators, are committed to remaining "conscious and courageous in reflecting on the ways particular maps imprison the democratic imagination" (Davison, p. 3), we need to be constantly evaluating: what future is being created by the conceptual maps that determine our educational decisions and practices?

Let me summarise what I've been saying in two succinct points.

First, it is imperative we know our own maps of education and democracy, the ones guiding where we are going and how best to get there. As adult educators, we have a responsibility to be mindful of this viewpoint, the one shaping our picture of the way things are or should be, whether of democracy or adult education or any other concept or subject. *Second*, it is equally imperative that we keep revising and reconfiguring these maps. In company with Pile and Thrift, I find it exhilarating to picture ourselves and our students co-investigating and re-defining this tricky terrain of "Democracy", together exploring and revising it on foot, an

intimate and experimental venture, not an abstract viewing from a detached distance.

As a way of showing how we might identify our own maps and, if necessary, re-form them, I will conclude by returning to the three atlases mentioned earlier in this chapter. Atlases are especially useful for this discussion because they demonstrate dramatically that the position from which we view the world largely determines how we depict that world. It is imperative we understand this connection for it profoundly influences the plans we make and the texts we choose and what we do with those plans and texts.

Let us now re-visit those three very different atlases.

ALTERNATIVE MAPS OF DEMOCRACY AND OUR WORK

The first atlas, **The Times Concise Atlas of the World**, portrays the world principally as a **physical/materia**l entity. It concentrates primarily on geographical features, climate, vegetation and population. Because it favours physical aspects, it could be said to be an essentially mono-dimensional view of the world.

The equivalent mono-dimensional approach for educators concerned with democracy is a concentration on one aspect: most commonly this tends to be on technical matters such as voting methods or meeting procedures.

The second atlas, the **Peters Atlas of the World**, provides 246 thematic world maps, not only on physical subjects but on **social** themes as well. Certainly, climate and vegetation are included but there are also socio-economic maps of the globe representing matters such as languages, scripts, education (even the pupil-teacher ratio), communications, health, energy, industrial products, urbanisation, social order, unemployment, child labour, the status of women and relative military strength. This is clearly a multidimensional view of the world, in which the social, the economic, the material and the physical are seen as inseparable. In fact, they are displayed as inextricably interconnected with each other.

Relating this to adult educators concerned about democracy, multiplicity and connectedness emerge as key concepts. Complementing a multiplicity of aims, ideas, texts, attitudes, values, disciplines, philosophies, perspectives and activities is an emphasis on articulating meaningful relationships. Students realise that "democracy" and "being democratic" mean different things to different people in different places at different times for different reasons. They come to understand how vital it is to see "the bigger picture" and to determine the key relationships.

The third atlas, **The GAIA Atlas of Planet Management: for today's caretakers of tomorrow's world**, opens with a dedication:
> To the poor of this world, denied their share of the world's rich resources (p. 5).

It goes on to expand this overtly **political** stance with the following declaration:

> This is no ordinary atlas. It maps and analyses a living planet at a critical point in its history – as one species, our own, threatens to disrupt and exhaust its life support systems (p. 5).

This far-sighted, wide-ranging book is organised in seven sections deemed intrinsic to preserving life on earth – Land, Ocean, Elements, Evolution, Humankind, Civilisation, Management. Each section is surveyed from three perspectives: "potential resources", "the crisis" and "management alternatives". This wholistic, multi-disciplinary perspective is portrayed through detailed commentaries accompanied by a wide range of culturally inclusive drawings, diagrams, graphs, maps and photos. This multicultural, multidiscursive view of the world, a call to action, openly reveals its values. It not only presents its political position unequivocally: it makes it quite clear that a neutral, a-political, value-free portrayal of the world is not only intellectually impossible but ethically irresponsible.

The parallel for adult educators concerned with democracy are practices that are not only multi-faceted but also action-focussed: "Now well-informed and familiar with the ethical and political choices, what am I/what are we going to do?" Students learn what it means to act democratically in all spheres of life. When considering "maps of democracy" for home, work, community groups or political parties, both what it is and how to get there, it is not a simple matter of this map OR that map but something much more complex and more like this map AND that map, and many others too. And, equally importantly, it is about making concerted moves towards a better world for all.

The parallels between our work as adult educators and these atlases are striking. No matter what the focus or subject, key educational questions face us:

> Do we provide simple, one-dimensional maps?
> *OR* More complex, multidimensional maps?
> *OR* Problematising (inevitably complicated and messy) maps that engage us in issues of power as well as providing technical skills and background knowledge?

Democracy is not something to be relegated to a few units in a "Civics" course. It is, or ought to be, a continuous dialogic construction of a preferable future. In specifying aims, choosing texts and planning activities, are we committed to "democracy across the curriculum"? What we choose to present, what we choose to include and to exclude, the texts and activities we choose to embody and justify these choices, all depend on our view of the world. A monodimensional view or map of democracy will result in monodimensional aims and texts, risking the danger of monodimensional activities and attitudes. A multidimensional view or map of democracy promises multidimensional aims, multidimensional texts, multidimensional approaches and multidimensional stances. An explicitly multi-purpose and political view

or map of democracy insists on texts and activities that do not separate learning, action and reflection.

One way of identifying how "democratic" we are is to study our work in the light of the following questions:

Who draws the boundaries?
Who gets in the picture? And who doesn't?
What gets in the picture? And what doesn't?
What do we bring back into view that has gone out of view?
Whose story gets told? And whose doesn't?
Are counter-stories heard?

I believe our mission is exactly the opposite of George Taylor's, the mapmaker mentioned in the opening paragraph. I believe, as map makers, map readers and map guides, adult educators must consciously work against simplifying the complicated, against perpetuating a hard and fast "border mentality".

Education **about** democracy means presenting and discussing democratic theories and practices in all their complexities and messiness. Education **in** democracy means modelling and practising democratic ideals in all their individual and collective forms. Education **for** democracy means these ideals and actions are transported beyond the classroom to the many sites in the world beyond. We need to be trying to do all of these, all the time. Democracy is about giving space, not confining space. It is an imaginative project, not simply a procedural one. What education **as** democracy looks like is far from being all mapped out. The wayfinding through this terrain is a collective and liberating endeavour, open-ended and never-ending.

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Workshop refreshments

Kilbreda Girls Grow Up

I was invited to give this speech as part of the centenary celebrations of Kilbreda, the Catholic girls' secondary school I attended in the late 50s and early 60s. On the night, my speech was illustrated with many PowerPoint slides.

I welcomed the opportunity to look back on my formal education, to try and identify its role in my intellectual, philosophical and ethical development and to discover the clear links between what happened then and what matters to me today.

I include this piece in this collection to share my origins and my early educational story. Feminism. Social Justice. Multiculturalism. Languages, Symbols and Rituals. These are four gifts my school gave me. They foretell a life to come, one guided by these significant signposts. Almost every piece in this collection provides evidence of their presence within me and can be traced back to this source.
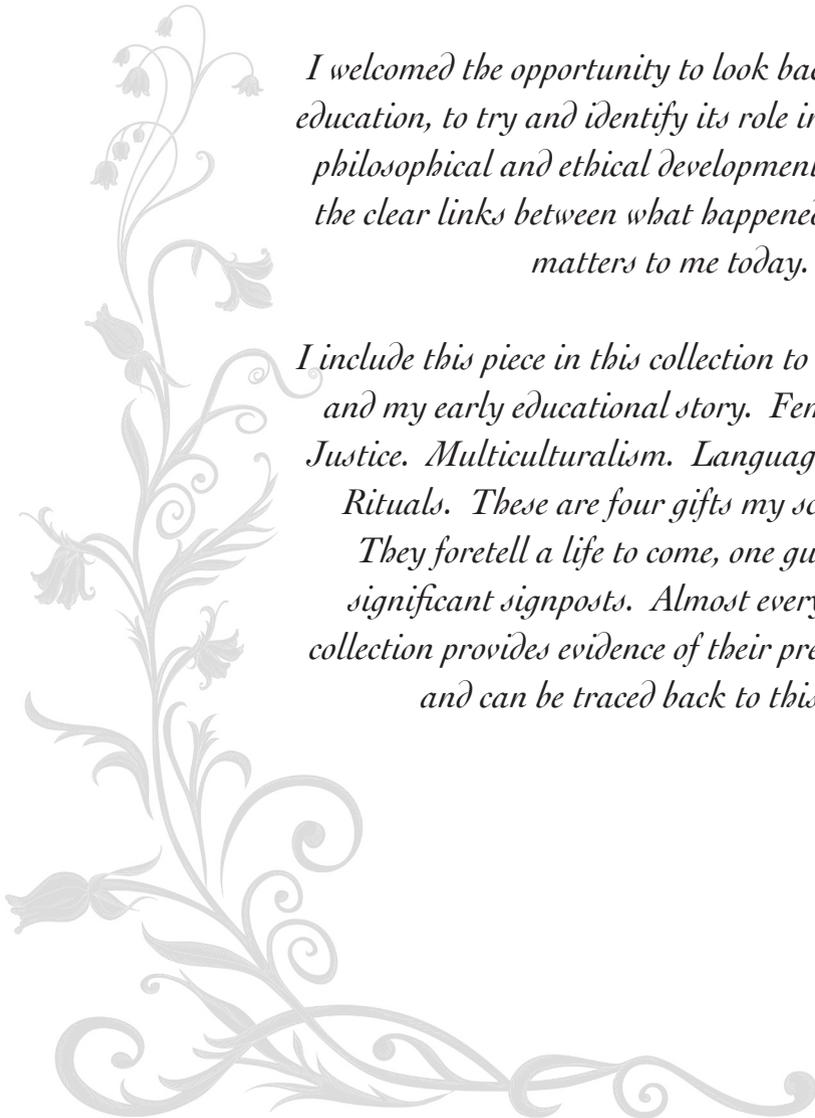
Kilbreda Girls Grow Up (2004)

Address, **"Centenary Conversations: Views from the Tower"**

Kilbreda College, Mentone
Friday, July 16, 2004

❧

Good evening. I am deeply honoured to be starting tonight's Centenary Conversations on the theme, "Kilbreda Girls Grow Up". I will be naming some of the key features of my time at Kilbreda, and am particularly keen to illustrate how this formative experience fashioned and flavoured the rest of my life. I stress that it is NOT an "comprehensive" or "authorised" history of Kilbreda. It is very much my own personal story.

I loved school and I loved coming to this school. I did not come to Kilbreda with any preconceptions or grand plans. I was the first in my family to tread this path and so the way was unknown, with no pre-set route.

Some in my family saw me as a pioneer; others teased me, their nickname "Miss Kilbreda" uttered with a raise of the eyebrows intended to deflate any snobbish pretensions.

I arrived at Kilbreda in Year 7, (then Form 1), in 1958 – keen, naïve and open-eyed. I left, after Matriculation, (now year 12), in 1963. The school annual for that year shows me as keen, adventurous, relatively wise and still open-eyed. Setting forth into the big wide world, I probably felt very "grown up". Possibly more than I do now. But "grown up" means different things at different times, doesn't it?

Ten years ago, our son Finn turned 18, in legal terms, "grown up". Bill, his father and my life companion, and I wanted to honour this life milestone with a meaningful ritual. We asked ourselves: "What does Finn need as he journeys through life? What are important gifts we can give him as he sets out on that voyage?"

At a birthday dinner, in the presence of friends and family, we presented him with a suitcase. In the suitcase, we had assembled necessities for his life journey, essentials such as socks, soap, tissues, a range of novels, cooking equipment, chocolate, a pen and paper, maps, guidebooks, tickets, keys, a tape of musical favourites, clothes pegs and a poem.

When I was thinking about tonight's title, "Kilbreda Girls Grow Up", this ritual came back to me. "That's what I'll do," I thought. "I'll take a basket, not a suitcase, and in it I will assemble the "goodies" I was given during my time as a school girl here, at Kilbreda."

Naturally, before I could fill my basket, I had to consider:

- ❧ How did Kilbreda equip me for life's journey? What gifts, necessities and provisions was I given for the road ahead?
- ❧ And what did these Kilbreda gifts contribute to my life – both then, now and in between?

Let me say at once that it is now very evident to me that I was richly endowed, an insight that becomes clearer and brighter as the years pass.

As a university student, I was most conscious of my academic good fortune. It was at Kilbreda that I discovered the world of books and literature, of imagination and ideas. Here, I learnt to read critically, to write cogently and to speak eloquently; here, I learnt to read, write, speak and think in languages other than English; here, I was encouraged and enabled to go to university, the first girl in my family to do so. In fact, if Mother Margaret Mary had not provided the university application, I might be still working in the bank, a familiar job that most of my relatives favoured.

As time passed, I became aware of subtler, yet equally significant, gifts dating from my time here – gifts associated with vision and values, with courage and commitment. So many of the beliefs, ideas and ideals I cherish today, I now see, have their origins here.

To represent this rich legacy, I have filled a basket with items symbolising these gifts that have inspired and sustained me. To stress its connection with Kilbreda, I have adorned this bountiful basket with ribbons in the Kilbreda colours of red, fawn and bottle green. I will spotlight FOUR of these gifts, four of the provisions that have stood me in such good stead on life's journey. Each gift represents one strand in the story. Together, they weave a multi-layered tale about how this particular Kilbreda Girl has grown up.

Let me introduce these four gifts one by one.

1. The <u>first</u> gift is FEMINISM.

It never occurred to me that women couldn't do everything. Not that this was made explicit at school. It was simply evident all around me – women teaching every subject, women organising public performances as well as a big school, women overseeing construction and hosting dignitaries, women fired with a love of learning and its lifelong significance, women making all the decisions.

I observed, and unconsciously absorbed, many role models for "being a woman". This OHT image of a multi-dexterous woman – symbolising the many identities that constitute our lives – conveys this succinctly for me. At school, I was an apprentice scholar, yes, but I was also

learning to be a public speaker, a philosopher, a leader, a writer, an organiser, an advocate and an activist.

2. The <u>second</u> gift is SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Social justice was the touchstone for everything. I learnt to incorporate values into every aspect of my life through my involvement with the YCS, Young Catholic Students, a student social action movement that was very active at Kilbreda. "Look, Judge, Act", inherited from my YCS days, is still a mantra guiding my thinking and doing, each stage in this powerful trio equally important. It is only recently that I have realised how much "Look, Judge, Act" is an intrinsic part of my life, providing a firm foundation for a commitment to social responsibility. I'd like to ponder these three words for a few moments.

For me, "To look" means to see which issue or situation or injustice needs attention, to gather the facts and organise the findings. "To judge" is not to pass judgment or pre-judge but to reflect mindfully on the injustice, and to bring a moral or ethical perspective to bear. "To act" is to consider alternative forms of "good" or "right" action, choose the most appropriate and then to DO IT. Each of these three steps is intimately connected with the other two; each one is crucial. It's not sufficient to simply think about things. Relevant moral and political ACTION is vital.

I learnt that everything in life is an expression of a worldview. Everything we do and say creates one sort of world or another. Nothing is values-free or consequences-free. Today, I would put it this way: "Let's be clear about the values we are enacting; let's remember that we are creating the future by the way we act today". I learnt that racism or sexism or any other injustice cannot be justified by saying "This is only a joke or a clever T-shirt slogan", as if such activities are beyond ethics. Through the habit of look/judge/act, I learnt to be aware of the values I was promoting through my thoughts, words and deeds. It became automatic to ask: am I LIVING compassion, truth, justice and mercy as my core values?

At school, forty years ago now, we were not sheltered from the world beyond the school walls. Consider a sample of the books we read and discussed in depth in our Matric year – **Cry, the Beloved Country**, about apartheid in South Africa; **Tess of the D'Ubervilles**, about 19th century class and sexual oppression; **Canterbury Tales**, where the whole spectrum of humanity is on show; **King Lear,** confronting us with feuding families and painful old age; **The Wild Duck**, exploring the price of Truth; and **The Writer in the Modern World**, an anthology of writers including C. P. Snow and Orwell, introducing us to Big Ideas about power and politics and different cultures and public language.

3. The <u>third</u> gift is MULTICULTURALISM.

Language is a common theme in my musings tonight. I loved our French and Italian classes. I loved learning there are many ways of seeing and describing the world. It was a revelation

to discover that translating from one language to another was not a matter of neatly matching one word with another. No, each language has a unique way of capturing human perceptions and priorities. Reading and writing and speaking in another language, translating from one language to another, means encountering the world in new ways, seeing the world with fresh eyes, discovering equally abundant ways of living and loving and being.

Madame Fajdiga, my French teacher, also gave me wings to worlds beyond. With her, I discovered Swiss cheeses and chocolates, Europe's cosmopolitan lifestyle, Edith Piaf's Paris, Camus' anguished struggles, Baudelaire's poetry juggling art and life. I still feel the tingle that ran down my spine on first hearing Piaf's penetrating voice.

And our beloved Irish inheritance. The Brigidines who taught us were living links to Ireland. Thanks to them, I have never assumed that the Anglo perspective is the only view of the world, much less the norm.

Through these many influences, I learnt that "multiculturalism" cannot be reduced to pasta and polka, to exotic food and dancing. "Multiculturalism" is knowing that we need as many cultural perspectives as possible in every aspect of life if we are to make meaning, socially and spiritually, of our individual and collective lives. I have been hungry for knowledge and understanding of other cultures ever since, acutely aware of the perils of monoculturalism.

4. The <u>fourth</u> gift is LANGUAGES, SYMBOLS AND RITUALS.

Not only did I learn French and Italian but also the many and rich forms of English as exemplified in poetry, debate, critical reflections and religious rites. Both in class and in the wider life of the school, I learnt that language, symbols and rituals come together in life-deepening ways. Each day – through word, sound, movement and colour – I experienced their collective power to embody beliefs, to uplift hearts and souls and to consolidate community. Meaningful communal rituals are still central to my life today.

I became attuned to the magic and beauty of metaphor quite early. It became second nature for me to ponder the significance of symbolism in holy pictures and to be mindful of the multiple resonances in seasonal rituals. I learnt to be attentive to the nuances of colour and tone and shape. I loved searching for layers of meanings in the words and images we encountered in books, in performances, in ceremonies and in everyday life.

Consider the images on my Kilbreda blazer pocket, for example. Two symbols in particular still invigorate me. First, there's *Brigid's Cross* that links me to Ireland and Celtic spirituality and 5th century Brigid, truly a woman for all seasons. Brigid was a teacher, healer, visionary, farmer, artist, administrator and leader, born of a Celtic Christian slave mother and a Druidic chieftain father, the offspring of two lush traditions. Thanks to her creativity and example,

within the span of her lifetime thousands of Irish women formed communities that were vigorous, and often the only, centres of learning, art, hospitality, healing and agriculture in the locality. Second, also featured on this emblem, there's the *lamp of learning*; it lit a flame that will never die.

Finally, I cherish this red ribbon, the hair ribbon I wore as captain of Lisieux House on our annual sports day in 1963. It still symbolises and evokes for me an emerging 17-year-old Delia, a young woman on the brink of understanding the joys as well as the responsibilities of leadership.

Leadership was encouraged in a variety of ways, for example, through lots of public speaking. First hand, we learnt of the power of language – and its power for good or ill. We were encouraged to harness that power, to speak up and to speak out. I smile with affection thinking of the young woman shown here, the opening speaker in the first "Parliament of Youth" television program for 1963. Despite my demure appearance in the photo, I argued most ardently: "Yes, the establishment of Malaysia <u>is</u> desirable".

The gifts represented in this basket are a priceless legacy. At a critical moment in my life, I was initiated into feminism, social justice, multiculturalism and the significance of language and symbols and rituals. I was given access to sources of wisdom that have stood the test of time. I imbibed optimism, hope and a faith that goodness and good people can, and do, transform the world.

Tonight, I am delighted to pay tribute, formally and publicly, to my Kilbreda teachers. I feel deeply indebted to what Kilbreda gave me but also to (what I now recognise as) the Brigidine legacy in general. The Brigidines I have met in recent years – contemporary embodiments of this generative Brigidine legacy – are courageous, committed, life-loving, laughter-loving, passionate, intelligent, generous women all, with a lifelong and lifewide dedication to peace, justice and the collective good.

How does this legacy, then, compare to what others have to say about the role and potential of schools?

Preparing for this presentation tonight, I scanned my bookshelves and recent newspapers for what others thought made "a good school". Here are two findings:

- In **Three Guineas** in 1938, 34 years after the founding of Kilbreda, Virginia Woolf asks herself and us:

  > What is the aim of education, what kind of society, what kind of human being, should it seek to produce … what should be taught? She replies with: Not the arts of dominating other people, not the arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital … It should teach the arts of human intercourse, the art of understanding other people's lives and minds … The aim should be not to segregate and specialise, but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to co-operate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life. The teacher should be drawn from the good livers as well as good thinkers.

- Closer to our day, in February this year in the **Education Age**, Genia Janover, principal of Bialik College, affirms:

  > When life tests your courage and your integrity, that's when the A+ really counts. A good life is made up of 3 parts – something to do, someone to love and something to hope for … We must educate for hope … by providing our children with the five C's – competence, connectedness, community, commitment and courage.

For me, Kilbreda came close to both these ideals, and at a time in my life when having access to intellectual, cultural and spiritual wealth made a huge difference to my life, both then and later on. Tonight, I have concentrated on what is most dear to me about my time at Kilbreda. This understanding has come clearer and dearer of late but it was not always uppermost in my mind. As with all life, there is a shadow story.

In 1987, in a piece I wrote for a women's writing group called "Self-Control", I put my mind to exploring personal inadequacies I was keen to re-form. Part of this soul-work involved identifying childhood influences I felt had limited me. In this piece, I wrote:

> The phantom of "self-control" permeated every feature of my schooling… It was revered as the wellspring of sanctity.

While there is truth in what I said in 1987, it was not the whole truth. The issue of "self-control" was something I needed to examine then. I would speak less dogmatically now, aware of the other counter-forces, ones I identify here, also in play. However, another aspect of my schooling – the encouragement to speak out – allowed me to be frank then and now, to own "the shadow side" as a contributor to an evolving understanding of myself and of the forces that shaped me.

Drawing to a close, I cannot stress ardently enough that, in the brief tale I have told tonight, I am not speaking for others. This is MY account, written in my words, seen through my eyes and told from my perspective. The 12,000 other students who attended Kilbreda in the past one hundred years would tell different stories of their time here and its influence on them.

Each would note, interpret and highlight different aspects. For a much more comprehensive narrative, a story of one hundred years of Hope in Action, Margaret Underwood's book, **A View from the Tower: Kilbreda 1904-2004**, is a beautiful account.

Tonight, I have hinted at how I grew up whilst <u>at</u> Kilbreda. What was begun then will never end, inspired and sustained by the many "goodies" in this basket. There are more gifts I inherited, and could add, but my bag of provisions for life's journey is already well stocked. Indeed, I'd have to say my basket overfloweth.

Thank you.

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July 2022

Fancy Footwork

*The following two pieces come from a time when I was involved
with a writing group called "Women of Spirit"
that later produced a publication called*
Fancy Footwork: adult educators thinking on their feet.

Fancy Footwork: what does it say to you?
*Though written a few years later, this 2007 journal article seems
to "naturally" follow on from the 2004 Kilbreda chronicle.
The writing project in question took place over several years and,
as described in the article, evolved as it went.
It is another story of the power of women in groups.*

*Looking back, I'm glad I documented our story. Too often,
marvellous initiatives are lost to later generations. A strong
motivation in assembling these writings is to present to educators
today, and beyond, how it was then and, as well, how and why that
might be relevant and welcome today.*

Late October thoughts
*This is one of the pieces I wrote during the life of the writing group
that was chosen for our publication,*
Fancy Footwork: adult educators thinking on their feet.

*The opening sentence, perhaps a little confusing out of context,
refers back to a prior meeting at Bev's place, one of the other
writers. At the end, I also include two handouts from the session,
conceptual maps of the PAR (Participatory Action Research)
model to add more context for the occasion.*

Fancy Footwork: what does it say to you? (2007)
Fine Print, *VALBEC Journal*

Women of Spirit

I love listening to teachers. I love hearing them talk about their work. I welcome any opportunity to do. So, imagine my delight when an opportunity came that enabled me to do this regularly and often. It happened two years ago when a group of eight women adult educators decided to do just this. From our beginning, in April 2005, we chose to embark on a journey together for the explicit purpose of sharing histories and reflections on the world and work of adult education.

Who made up this group of explorers? How often did we meet? Seven of us – Jacinta Agostinelli, Clara Brack, Beverley Campbell, Helena Spyrou, Jules de Cinque, Lynne Matheson, Liz Suda and I – met every six weeks throughout 2005, 2006 and 2007 Though our focus was adult education in general, we had all been adult literacy teachers in a wide range of community, TAFE and university and workplace settings, and some still are. Allie Clemans, a contributor of ideas from the beginning, joined us in person towards the end.

We called ourselves "Women of Spirit", a name that embraced aspects of women's spiritedness – courage, passion, compassion, contemplation and inspiring leadership – that we all admired.

The group

Let me tell you some of the story of this group and its formation. To start, I'll quote Beverley's account, written nine months into the life of the group:

> "Women of Spirit" began as a disparate and tentative collection of women, early in 2005. We met for the first time at Delia's home, in response to an invitation from Delia to come and bring something we might talk about which represented an aspect of our adult education experience, important to us… Mostly I had encountered these women professionally at public adult education events and now here we were meeting in the tranquillity and comfort of Delia's home…

> Drawn together initially by a shared passion for adult education, after nine months of meeting, we have become a group. Now we are bound together by shared values about what adult education might be, and a commitment to making these values explicit… we

not only meet to talk about what we value in adult education but we agreed early in the life of the group, that we would write a piece for each meeting as well (pp. 11-12, **Fancy Footwork**).

THE WRITING

So, as Beverley says, we met to converse but we also came together to write and read each other's work. Clara, another member of the group, continues the story:

> Early on, we decided to write responses to a common question arising from discussions in the meeting. The writing would provide continuity and focus for discussion at the next meeting. We decided not to read other's writing before writing our own piece, so as not to be influenced. We would keep discussion for the meeting…
>
> Often what comes up in the writing does not respond directly to what emerged in the discussion. Given that the next session is six weeks away, and that most of us write about five weeks after the initial question is proposed for discussion, the responses to the question draw from what is happening at the time (pp. 14-15, **Fancy Footwork**).

THE BOOK

From early on, there was the idea of a publication. However, we did not write with a book to the fore of our thoughts; to the contrary, publication plans were very vague and in no way determined our written and oral reflections. Quite deliberately, we wrote for each other, prompted by priorities of the moment. Over the weeks, during 2006 and for most of 2007, our focus was on a wide range of educational issues that were urgent or pressing for us right there and then.

Yet, whilst we had no deadline or publisher in mind, we were nonetheless conscious of the importance of documenting some of the rich traditions of adult education in Victoria. As well, as teacher educators, we were acutely aware of the scarcity of publications available that foregrounded Australian women's voices and women's perspectives.

So, when, in late 2006 thanks to Allie's initiative, support from the Professional Learning Research Group in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, made a book possible, we enthusiastically put our minds to organising our writing from the previous eighteen months. And so, in this serendipitous way, our "Women of Spirit" writing culminated in the publication of a book, one that came to be called **Fancy Footwork**.

I'll say more about the publication later. For now, I'd like to concentrate on the writing. Let us hear the voices and views of the women adult educator-writers themselves. Let us sample their writing and "fancy footwork" first-hand.

To give a taste of the diversity of views and tone of voice in **Fancy Footwork**, I have arranged a selection of quotes from the book under educational threads that weave themselves in and out of all the writing.

Role of the teacher

The role of the teacher was discussed vigorously in our conversations and appears often as a topic in the book. Here is what Jacinta has to say:

> I do not overestimate my power as a teacher. Change is ever only small. It is incremental and comes from many sources. If I look at my own life, it is the confluence of many people and events and my perceptions of these that have influenced change within me. What I teach and what students learn together create change, but not of an earth-shattering kind. Change comes in shades, and on a day-to-day scale it is imperceptible. We adapt to change and may not even notice it happening. The person I see when I look in the mirror is the same person I saw twenty years ago; the only difference is that I have realised the potential that was waiting in the future. For the students I teach, my teaching is just a component of their self-realisation (p. 112).

Purposes of education

The purposes of education also received a lot of attention in our "Women of Spirit" meetings. As with the role of the teacher, our group represented a wide range of views on this topic. In **Fancy Footwork**, Liz puts it this way:

> I guess I tend to veer towards the political because I am concerned that a content neutral approach to adult literacy means that we are not educating for life as active citizens - informed consumers and voters. I wonder if we share the same political perspectives even in our small group of 'spirited' women who seek to educate. Freire (1972) argued that all education is political. Is that a negotiable concept (p. 182)?

I investigate this topic from the point of view of online learning:

> … In many circles, online learning has a reputation for being conservative, instrumental, a-political and narcissistic. Ulises Mejias is a man who seems to position himself firmly in the educational tradition dedicated to liberation that we were discussing at our last meeting. In my experience, this is a rare find in e-circles. It is why, having read his article, I made a point of hearing Ulises speak at the online launch of his article in **The Knowledge Tree: An e-Journal of Learning Innovation.**

The two points Ulises makes that I particularly like are:

1. The "online" world is not something second-best or "unreal" or lightweight. More and more, it is a world to be taken very seriously.
2. However, whatever "enlightenment" or "empowerment" or "transformation" (all my

words, not Ulises') occurs online is gravely limited and suspect, if it is not transported and translated into action offline

I agree with both his points (pp. 122–123).

As evident from above, closely related to the "why" (or purposes) of education are the "when" and "where" (or times and spaces). Jules evokes this intimate connection when she writes:

Spirituality is about connecting with time and place. That is, our land, and the living things upon it, past, present and future. This interconnectedness creates passion for social justice, peace and harmony. And from spirituality is born art, as a means of expressing and experiencing spirituality.

When I work with young people I strive to impart more than content. In fact, the content is merely the vehicle for accreditation and accreditation is just the means of negotiation through the system. There are more important aspects to education.

Many of the young people I work with are sad and in pain. I often think of them as difficult, hormonal teenagers with the life experience of an 80-year-old and the emotional needs of an infant. As their teacher, I want to begin the healing process. I try to facilitate a constructive connection with others. I try to create a safe learning environment where they can be calm in the present, learn from the past and be hopeful about the future (p. 42).

Professional identity

Questions about the purposes of education inevitably lead to questions of professional identity – who we are and how we have been shaped. This is named explicitly by the editors – Beverley, Allie and me – in the introduction to **Fancy Footwork**:

… The writing in this collection points to the need to reframe notions of professionalism which are traditionally associated with what is public. Too often, the private and personal stay in the shadows, unacknowledged and undervalued. The professional identities and actions of adult educators, these women say, rely on the dissolution of private and public spaces. Here, readers will find that educational professionalism depends, in fact, on insights, reflections, influences and values drawn from all aspects of life. There are no rigid boundaries between the public and private, personal, political and professional. The spaces do, and must, blend productively to become the inspiration for professional judgment and robust professional action (p. 27).

Lifelong learning

As demonstrated by the passage above that explores professional identity, all of us as writers are aware of the interplay between formal learning and informal learning. As Lynne reflects on this, she concludes:

The lived experience of a new concept or skill, as mind and body absorb and enact, are the markers of our educational journey. As we continue daily learning new things and reaching higher levels of understanding, the often random intake of information or else the enforced study to broaden our knowledge base, all contribute in one way or another to the bigger sense of individual lifelong learning (p. 169).

THE PRODUCTION

As anyone who has published a book will know, there are many stages between the decision to publish and the arrival of the book from the printer's. On behalf of the group, the three editors assembled all the writing, organised it into sections, named the sections, wrote section introductions, did some light editing and, at the very end of this process, co-wrote the introduction to the book. We deemed it important to provide a "meta" view of the writings to both honour the sophistication of the writing and to set it in an academic context.

The table of contents that we, as editors, designed is organised in six sections. The headings for the six sections highlight the questions and issues that had preoccupied our group over time. They are:

- Teaching with spirit
- Professional identity: weaving public, private and political
- Learning spaces
- Transformation in the spotlight
- The art of pedagogy in action
- Bodies and/of knowledge.

Taken as a whole, these headings summarise the key themes that grew out of our six-weekly cycle, during 2005 and most of 2006, a regular rhythm of conversing, reflecting, writing, reading and conversing once again.

At the same time as the editors were preparing the text, Helena Spyrou was working on the design of the book and the cover. We were delighted that Julie Parsons, a Perth artist, gave us permission to reproduce her arresting image for the cover and that Helena, one of our group and familiar with its particular culture, had volunteered to do the complex and arduous work of desktop publishing.

THE NAME OF THE BOOK

As all parents know, naming is a powerful act. We considered many alternatives before finally choosing the name, **Fancy Footwork: adult educators thinking on their feet.** The reason for this title is partly explained in the introduction:

> On the one hand, "fancy" is often characterised as private, genteel, domesticating, artistic, elitist, and sedate. We confine the fancy to an essentially reproductive, leisure activity and see it dependent on good hands and a good eye. At its most extreme, this view reduces "fancy work" to an inessential and bourgeois luxury.

"Work", on the other hand, can easily be presented as public, robust, liberating, practical and democratic – a vigorous and productive activity requiring a strong mind and body. **"Work"** is perceived as the place where the 'real thing' happens.

… Not only does "foot" in "Fancy Footwork" act as a bridge between "fancy" and "work", it also reveals ways in which both "fancy" and "work" can emerge as co-operative contributors rather than as hostile, competing opposites.

By positioning "foot" at the centrepoint, as in "Fancy **Foot**work", this new alignment moves our attention to matters such as nimbleness, split-second timing, precise judgments, pacing and spacing. All of these are sophisticated capacities drawing on the whole body, the whole self, including heart, mind and spirit. It becomes clear that "fancy footwork" requires being mindful of what has just happened, is happening now and what could/should happen next. As displayed by teachers in this book, the versatility of "fancy footwork" means that past, present and future co-exist in every moment (pp. 24-25).

The launch

Fancy Footwork was launched by Helen Macrae on the 4th May at the VALBEC 2007 conference. Whilst Helen named nine distinctive features, I will draw attention here to five that struck her as important about the book. I'd like to quote from her speech at length and, in particular, the connections she makes between our book and VALBEC.

This is a Victorian book about adult education
It's published by VALBEC. It's wholly written, edited and designed by Victorians. The only non-Victorian contribution is the splendid art work on the cover by Julie Parsons from Western Australia.

Now Victoria is a state where adult education is done very well indeed. I believe it's done better here than anywhere else in Australia. If there was a Nobel Prize for adult education, this state would surely deserve to be on the world wide short list. So, you get a strong feeling of place from **Fancy Footwork**.

This book is written and produced by women
We also only have to look around the room to know that adult education is a sector with a steady 1:9 ratio of men to women… Yet male voices have dominated published discourse about adult education in Australia. So, who better to talk to us about adult education than women who are well known… for their high calibre as thinkers, teachers, friends and co-workers?

This is a book full of new thinking about issues that are really tough to articulate.
Well, if you're like me you'll be surprised and delighted by this book because it goes into places I'd never even think to go to by myself and likely you wouldn't either.

This book asks questions
As any good pedagogical text would, it answers some and others it leaves hanging in the air.

This book is infused with the culture and values of VALBEC
Since it began VALBEC has been an organization where equals sit at one another's feet and learn. VALBEC creates the space for practitioners to learn from each other. That's what this group of women did. They came together and learnt from one another. They moved easily all the time between teacher and learner. And at the start of the book several of them give an account of how that happened.

Warmest thanks are due to VALBEC who agreed to be our publisher. This generosity gave us access to publicity, payment options, distribution and a welcome and vital online presence.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR ME

As initiator, I am often asked what this project, this community of practice, means and has meant to me. Though I cannot (and do not) speak for the group, I would like to identify some of the ways in which this collective process and its fruits have enriched my life, both personally and professionally, if it's even possible to separate parts of my life in this way. I will highlight four aspects in particular.

Harmonious co-existence of roles
On those Saturday afternoons when "Women of Spirit" met as a group at Beverley's or at my place, we were conscious of the many parts of our lives that came together in our conversations. For example, we were simultaneously adult learners and adult educators, consciously living the values and ethos we advocate for healthy and democratic adult learning environments, that is, the sharing of power and life experiences. Each person took responsibility for the life of the group and no artificial boundaries existed between "private" and "public" lives. I loved this living out of "wholistic" learning.

Rich mix of modes
There was such pleasure in the convivial conversations and gripping story-telling, a multi-modal fusion of narrative and reflection, dialogue and analysis, in speech and in writing. I see it as "blended learning" with a new face. The speaking and listening, the reading and writing, the constructing and deconstructing, electronically and in person, all these strands were knitted into a complex and integrated fabric of social, cultural and political commentary on adult education. We continually came back to the same topics, knowing our multi-generic thinking was always a work in progress.

Slow learning
Both the multiplicity of roles and the diversity of modes made for deep and wide learning. This wealth is well encapsulated in an exciting new concept that came my way a few months ago, the concept of "slow learning", a notion that allies itself with the more familiar concepts of "slow food" and "slow design". I first came across it in an article/podcast by Geetha Narayanan in the online journal, **The Knowledge Tree**, published earlier this year. The name Geetha gives her article reveals her ideals: "A Dangerous but Powerful Idea - Counter Acceleration and Speed with Slowness and Wholeness".

Describing her work (Project Vision) in India, Geetha says:
The need seemed to be to re-envision and to design a new system - one that supports both personal and social transformation and creates 21st century learning…

Project Vision addressed these fundamental inequities by shifting the notion of a school from a fixed place to a set of spaces that exist and operate simultaneously within and without the community. It does this in a way where flows of knowledge and understanding are created at and through many levels – physical, emotional, cognitive and psychological – in ways that interact, making the end transformative…

What slowness has allowed us to do is find the time to work on the mind and the body as one whole and not as two distinct and separate parts. Slowness has allowed us to focus not just on learning but on unlearning… Wholeness has allowed for us to be mindful and contemplative…

But in order to generate value, they [the new digital technologies] need to be integrated into new forms and structures in an invisible and contextual manner so that *they work slowly and with great finesse to create an unquiet and critical pedagogy* (my italics) – one [that] can sustain social change.

What Geetha says about "the new digital technologies" applies to the transformative power of our group where change was gradual and, given the six-weekly rhythm of our interactions, there was ample time for new insights and ways of being to be absorbed. I relished this gentle pace.

Joy of women's culture
Something else I cherished was/is the positive energy generated by our group's gatherings and afterthoughts. When I think of our times together, images of laughter, compassion, wisdom, gutsiness, generosity, grace and the trust of genuine companionship come to mind. So many jokes were told. So many moral and pedagogical dilemmas aired and examined. So many courageous stories told and applauded. So many delicious biscuits and cakes baked and shared.

Last words

So, we return to where we began, the formation and identity of "Women of Spirit". Our group continues to be a community of practice, one in which we move effortlessly back and forth between being adult learners and adult educators. Our community has a life of its own, with its own practices and protocols, its own rhythms and rituals. We are deeply committed to the ethical foundations of adult education; all of us see a close connection between a commitment to social justice and a broad and deep understanding of spirituality, a multi-dimensional ethos fusing body and mind, head and heart, contemplation and activism.

If it ever occurs to you to ask: "What else do people do on a Saturday instead of going to the footy?", think of us and groups like us, now that "Fancy Footwork" means so much more.

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Late October Thoughts (2007)

In Section Five – **The art of pedagogy in action**
Fancy Footwork: adult educators thinking on their feet,
VALBEC Publication

A few minutes ago, I took out the list of themes I compiled at the end of our last group meeting together, made late Saturday afternoon at Bev's. As I read my notes, and it's the first time I have revisited them since we met, one item jumped off the page, immediately seizing my interest and eclipsing all others. It was the last item on my list and it reads:

> What are the reference points, the conceptual maps, we carry in our heads that determine, consciously or unconsciously, all our pedagogic choices, both micro and macro?

This is a huge question, one that has preoccupied me for a long time (we all have our pet themes, don't we?) and one I have written about in an academic book under the chapter heading, "All Mapped Out? The dynamic relationship between worldviews, democratic imaginations and educational practices". That was a piece of writing that speaks broadly but quite generally about the relationship between theories and practices, between thoughts we carry in our heads and what we do as educators. What I'm more interested in right now is writing about the micro decisions we make, in looking close-up at "a teacher in action" over a short span of time. Let me explain myself a little.

Often when I hear people dismissing the work of teachers as lightweight or automatically repetitive in some way, I find myself saying:

> *It's the hardest work I know. Every second of the teaching engagement requires the teacher to be constantly reading the group and each of the individuals in it.*

I usually follow up pretty quickly with:

> *Reading them emotionally (who is fearful? who is angry?), intellectually (who is following? is anyone lost?), politically (who is feeling dominated? who is being dominant?), socially (is the group developing a group identity and ethos? is anyone feeling excluded or unwelcome?), psychologically (who has a healthy sense of self-esteem and who not?)*

and so on.

There is more, I hasten to point out to the complainant. There is not only all the non-stop split-second micro-readings being made but also the split-second micro-responses, each one shaped by the teacher's lightning-quick evaluation of the situation. And, I add:

> *At the same time, the class needs to be "moving forward or making progress" in some way.*

In other words, there is the particular educational purpose for that day and time.

Taking all this into account, and navigating a way that is fair to everyone involved, means making choices, selecting one approach or path over another, and acknowledging priorities. It is simply impossible to respond to every sign, every request and every observed need. At the same time, teachers know that someone else in the same situation might make quite different decisions. And this is what interests me: on what basis and with what justification do we, as adult educators, make these dozens of micro-choices every class, choices that are philosophical and ethical as well as educational in nature?

I thought that one way to investigate something of the texture of these micro-dynamics would be to have a close look at the first moments of a session, a time that is critical, as we all know, in setting the tone and direction for the rest of the session. To do this, I'm going to describe the opening minutes of a two-hour workshop I ran recently for a Community Leadership Program sponsored by the Shire of Yarra Ranges. My responsibility for this morning session was to introduce participants to "Action Research" to see if this theoretical model might be of value as they plan and carry out their daily community development work. To put this in context, I am including a shortened version of my full workshop plan . (See following page, p. 304).

What I want to focus on in this piece is how the first thirty minutes, the INTRODUCTIONS section, unfolded.

Before the twelve participants (whom I'd never met before) arrived, I had written "Good morning, social researchers!" on the whiteboard. In the last few years, I have been paying careful attention to how I identify the people with whom I am working. I opened my session with the same words, "Good morning, social researchers!", explaining that was how I characterised their identity in this context, even if they may not have thought of themselves in this way before.

As they introduced themselves, I made notes around the original script, "Good morning, social researchers!", that I had written in mixed colours in the centre of the whiteboard. I wrote their names, sketched a quick summary of their project focus and crystallised their work purpose under a heading such as "community artist" or "local historian". I signified each person with a different colour. As each spoke, I drew lines between the projects where I saw similarities and links.

What did I see as my key responsibilities?

Initially, it was to describe and model the way we would introduce ourselves. After that, I called for volunteers and listened hard. It was up to me to decide what to write about each and what to highlight in colour or capitals. I also had to decide where to locate each contribution on the board. I was extremely careful to allocate to each participant the same

Action Research Workshop

VISTA Community Leadership Program
Wednesday morning, 12 October 2005

9.30: INTRODUCTIONS

Can you please introduce yourself, giving

    a) your name and role

    b) the title of your project and

    c) a one-minute project summary, as if you were answering a stranger's question: "What's it about?"

10.00: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

A. Prior knowledge (mapped as a collective mind map on the whiteboard)

- What do you already know about PAR?
- What *might* it mean?

B. A conceptual map

- Introduce the PAR cycle (HANDOUT 1), referring to the action research project, "Small business women learning in community settings", that I had chosen as an example to illustrate each stage of the cycle.
- Call for examples of the group's community development work and record them on the whiteboard as demonstrations of each stage of the cycle.

C. Application

- Distribute a clean copy of a PAR model. (HANDOUT 2)
- Ask participants to see and mark those stages of the cycle they have begun and/or completed.
- Share and discuss their descriptions with one or two others.

10.50: A brief break

11.00: EVALUATION

Thinking of your own project to date, complete the following sentences:

- *The most valuable thing that has happened so far is …*
- *In retrospect, the most important step I have taken to this point has been…*
- *The most urgent matter now needing attention is…*

Share some of your insights by reading samples out loud.

11.30: FINISH

amount of space and to write legibly, neither too faint nor too small, so as not to discriminate against anyone. I also made sure I did not marginalise by positioning any person's narrative too distant from the others or from the centre. Sometimes, I asked for more information or expansion. As well, I encouraged the more hesitant and modest to participate or say more. I regularly expressed delight and admiration for what was being shared.

What was going on during this time?

By the end of the introductions, everyone had spoken and been heard, everyone was visibly present on the board, each contribution occupied an equal amount of space and each person's role had been validated by the socially valued name given to it. It was an added bonus that new professional connections were also made. Although the colourful whiteboard was crowded and quite messy in appearance, everyone could (literally) SEE themselves there, as individuals and as a group. The outlines of a vibrant community had been sketched. The groundwork had been laid for the rest of our joint venture together, the rest of the workshop.

Looking back, my questions for myself are:
      Did my practices correspond with the educational vision and values that I cherish,
      ideals to do with democracy, justice, compassion, hope and inspiration?
In other words,
      Did my micro-decisions embody and realise my macro-ideals or not?
      Did I fail those ideals at times?
      Did any of my practices even contradict or undermine my ideals?

Postscript: HANDOUT 1 and HANDOUT 2 can be found on the following pages, pp. 306-307.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

AN EXAMPLE

Issue / Problem: Small business & learning in community settings

Research
- Methods: written & participatory Questionnaires, Interviews, Literature search, Focus group, Observation
- 2. What is the role/potential for Ace?

Analysis / Reflection / Synthesis
- Evidence for question, compilation of responses, Identification of theme, Design of publication, List of whiteboard work

Questions Needing Answers
- Challenge faith? Ace begin? more questions
- Questions: How does a small business & make the time to learn, given her competing roles?

Conclusions / Recommendations
- Stories: 4 different stages
- Findings: 5 themes — Theme 1, Theme 2, Theme 3, Theme 4, Theme 5
- Ideas for future action / Questions / Ideas for action . . . . .

Action
- Publication launch
- Seminar
- Networks

Evaluation
- Gathered from: Research participants, Publication readers, Seminar participants, Authors

PARTICIPATORY
ACTION
RESEARCH
CYCLE

Issue / Problem:

Questions

Research

Methods

Analysis
Reflection
Synthesis

Questions
needing
answers

Conclusions/
Recommendations

Evaluation
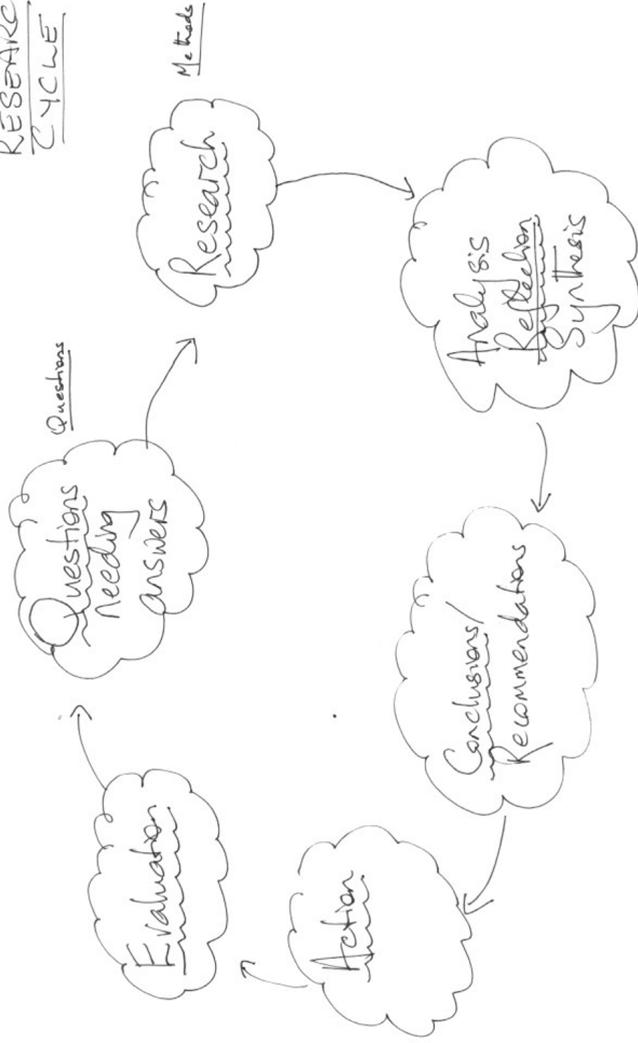
Action

HANDOUT 2

July 2022

Three pieces on e-learning

It seems apt to place these pieces one after the other.
They signal a change of direction and preoccupation for me.

Different Voices, Different Spaces: reflections of a mentor

This journal article tells how and why I became involved in e-learning as a mentor. The technologies mentioned here have long since been surpassed or supplanted by a vast array of online media. The purpose of this article was to encourage teachers to "take the leap" at a time when the majority of adult educators were fearful, uninformed, misinformed or fiercely opposed to any sort of online learning.

It's a different cyber world today but the centrality for teachers and learners of critical evaluation still holds true.

A Change of Scene speech and workshop

The sub-title for this presentation was "Community, Technology and Learning Working Together". There were 23 PowerPoint (PP) slides in total. In the text, I refer only to the ones I have reproduced for this collection.

I love planning and I love constructing detailed plans. This journal article is a good example of such a plan, depicting the thinking and preparation involved prior to the "performance". It is also a good example of my preference for including and integrating quite different activities within the one event. Participants always love take-aways, hence the **Activities Booklet** *(included here) and a* **PowerPoint Booklet** *(not included here).*
I love making PowerPoint presentations and have very clear preferences. I restrict words to a minimum, at the most five or six per slide, giving powerful visual images pride of place.

Yes, We Can: The power of 'e': extending the 'E' in ACE

This was my last keynote address in an official leadership position. It summarises well all that matters to me in adult education – community, courage, clarity and commitment. I'm glad, looking back, that I paid tribute to the pioneers of e-learning in ACE in Victoria.

My hope, in assembling this collection, is that readers and adult education practitioners today can learn something from our rich past. Something about vision and values as well as people and practices.

Different Voices, Different Spaces: reflections of a mentor (2006)

Literacy Link, *ACAL Newsletter*

❦

INTRODUCTION

In April last year, an unexpected invitation came my way. My acceptance changed the course of my professional life.

Let me tell you some of the story. I remember the day well.

It was just before 8am on a Friday morning.
>   *Would you like to be an educational mentor?*
asked the unfamiliar voice on the other end of the phone.
>   *What does that mean?*
I wondered out loud.

The voice proceeded to tell me about three **New Practices** projects in e-learning featuring voice technologies.
>   *I'm certainly interested enough, I replied, for you to send the background reading.*

Initially, I was a little hesitant. By any measure, I was a novice in e-learning. On the other hand, I am very experienced in curriculum and professional development. For nearly 30 years, I have worked in adult education, in many roles and many contexts that include universities, TAFE institutes, government departments, community agencies and ACE organisations.

After considerable thought, I decided that my comprehensive adult education experience would bring a fresh perspective to the world of post-compulsory e-education. As well, and this strengthened my resolve, I would be representing thousands of teachers like me, on the borderline of online teaching and learning, who know enough to want to know more but not enough to proceed confidently.

My "Yes" began my life as an educational mentor for what came to be known as the **Different Voices, Different Spaces (DVDS)** project.

The **DVDS** project incorporated a number of initiatives. Its name is intended to include the range of teachers, learners, practices, contexts and perspectives covered by three 2005 **New Practices** projects, all funded by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. The purpose of each of the three projects was to examine voice technologies and related social practices in a range of adult education and vocational training environments.

The names of the three **New Practices** projects are:
1. **Beyond Text:** using your voice online
2. **Connecting the Dots:** breaking down the barriers to participation
3. **Social Interaction Packs:** overcoming social barriers to online learning.

Links for each of the projects are provided in the "References" section but a brief description of each now follows.

Beyond Text, a joint initiative involving AMES (Adult Multicultural Education Services), GippsTAFE and TAFE SA, examined the use of online voice tools for teaching and learning. The resulting resource provides models of practice, a sample of online tools, case studies and a framework for moving beyond text and integrating online voice technologies into education and training.

Connecting The Dots, based in the adult community education (ACE) sector, examined the potential of podcasting as an additional e-learning tool for learners with little time to attend face-to-face classes, isolated by their geographic location or with physical or learning disabilities. The final documents provide a set of case studies, guidelines and resources to assist ACE and VET organisations in further investigating podcasting.

Social Interaction Packs, auspiced by Chisholm TAFE Institute, examined the social barriers often associated with online learning and proposed some practical solutions. The resulting resources provide case studies for various learning areas and a searchable resource for teachers and trainers to access practices, strategies and examples.

MENTORING: WHAT AND HOW

I discovered early on that the concept "mentor" means quite different things to different people. I wondered whether a mentor differs from an "evaluator" or "reflector" or "action researcher" or "rapporteur", all roles with which I was familiar. Drawing on my multi-faceted experience in curriculum and professional development in adult education, I came to see that what I had to offer was a breadth and depth of experience, not technical, but pedagogical.

As a mentor, I found I was able to supplement and complement the projects, educationally speaking. I could suggest ways of reviewing or re-imagining educational goals, practices,

perspectives and program possibilities. I could make explicit the often implicit or tacit thinking and doing. I could ask questions related to naming, fostering and foregrounding "good practice" in adult education.

So, as an educational mentor, what did I actually do?

First and foremost, I identified as a teacher. From the very beginning, I immersed myself as fully as possible in the three online voice projects, **Beyond Text, Connecting the Dots** and **Social Interaction Packs**. I eagerly explored the new domains they were opening up, always considering them from an adult educator's point of view. When visiting the three project sites or talking with project participants, always at the forefront of my mind were the following questions:

- What is going on here, educationally speaking?
- What does it all mean for teachers?
- What lessons can be learnt to improve teaching and learning?

Throughout the whole project, I foregrounded the following priorities for myself:

- Experimenting with dozens of new e-resources and e-spaces
- Observing carefully the teaching and learning taking place in the projects
- Participating in discussions about the pedagogical rationale for particular activities or tools
- Reading widely
- Applying global research findings to local educational developments and priorities
- Extending and re-examining existing e-pedagogies in the light of new technological possibilities
- Sharing the educational applications of new technologies across the project groups
- Asking generative questions, not only about the WHAT but also about the WHY
- Identifying educational themes
- Responding promptly to educational dilemmas or difficulties, to draft reports or evaluations, to group discussions and network activities
- Keeping a detailed journal record of my readings, experiences, observations and discoveries
- Developing a conceptual overview that captures the "educational good practice" inherent in the three projects
- Producing drafts for a final written synthesis in the form of a report and professional development materials.

Day to day, I participated in:
- ✓ Conversations
- ✓ Meetings

- ✓ Classroom modelling
- ✓ Online networks and activities
- ✓ Blogging
- ✓ Collective problem solving
- ✓ Curriculum design suggestions
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ Research applications
- ✓ Conceptual mapping
- ✓ Journal writing.

I spent hours, long days and long nights, following up leads, trying new technologies, participating in new networks, registering in yet another online domain, practising my fledgling e-life skills. Though identifying as "a teacher'" I was also consciously and deliberately "a learner". I discovered, or was reminded of, the importance of making time and space for pedagogical development alongside technological development. No tool, no technology, no short-term novelty, however initially exciting, can compensate for lack of educational vision, clarity of purpose and detailed follow-through.

I kept two work journals. The *first* detailed visits, observations, conversations and notes on technologies and research. The *second* recorded my efforts at categorising and synthesising the mass of data (experiences, readings and reflections) I was assembling. The second journal tracked my evolving thinking, my attempts to pinpoint and distil, to find patterns and determine priorities.

Mentoring each other

Speaking generally, this project is an eloquent reminder of the value and significance of reflectiveness in our educational practice, of creating regular opportunities for us to mentor each other, to share views, voices and visions.

It is vitally important that teachers receive the temporal, emotional, intellectual, material and collegiate resources to feel sufficiently at ease with new e-initiatives to enrich and expand what they are already doing, pedagogically speaking.

The power of voice

You may well be thinking: what has all this to do with adult literacy?

In particular, **Different Voices, Different Spaces** spotlights the centrality of "voice" in online education. Human voices are powerful. When I asked friends the difference between hearing and reading Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, I was told *It's hearing his voice that makes all the difference; it's the emotional impact.* The spoken word is immediate and intimate. It is compact and economical. The subtleties of intonation carry layers of meaning.

The spoken voice integrates body, mind and feelings.

The three **New Practices** projects celebrate the human voice. They are part of a widespread movement ensuring a central place for the spoken voice in e-learning. The spoken voice is a powerful complement as well as an extension of the written word. That said, it is not a question of one OR the other (writing or speech) being superior. Rather, it is a matter of valuing both modes in online learning and being clear about the virtues and limitations of each.

The three projects that make up **Different Voices, Different Spaces** concentrate on articulating the strengths (though not overlooking the weaknesses) of the spoken word online. The information below is an abbreviated version of a table featured in the **DVDS** report. It is largely distilled from the findings of the three projects. It illustrates some of the educational repertoire – both technological and pedagogical – described in greater detail in the project resources.

Technology	Pedagogical virtues	Limitations	Special Mention
PODCASTING	– It is portable, not time restricted – Automatic subscription enables regular downloads of programs of interest	– If podcasts are long, monotonous monologues, they may require images animations to convey ideas better	– As an alternative to text-based resources, it is a way of overcoming some literacy problems – It democratises publication
AUDIO/ VOICE BOARD	– Teachers and learners can post voice messages with accompanying printed text messages into threaded message boards – Students can listen to a recording as often as needed and re-record until satisfied with the result	– Reviewing learners' voice postings takes more time for teachers than reviewing text submissions. Voice postings cannot be scanned as can a written text	– Teachers can provide models of, and pronunciation practice for, learning outcomes that require correct pronunciation

Technology	Pedagogical virtues	Limitations	Special Mention
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM	– The virtual classroom is communication-rich, providing a range of interactive, collaborative tools to foster socially engaging online learning	– Managing the voice and text areas at the same time with only one facilitator is challenging. It's best if there are two facilitators.	– It offers the use of multiple simultaneous communications, for example, audio chat, text messaging and whiteboard facilities
AUDIO/ VOICE CHAT	– Voice chat provides new ways of creating a sense of community, of engaging learners who prefer oral communication	– Participants need to know the various aspects of audio control	– Voice chat may sometimes promote deeper learning than text chat. Learners with poor keyboard skills can concentrate on the discussion instead of their typing
VOICE E-MAIL	– It is especially good for introductions, icebreaker activities, announcements and reminders about tasks due	– When using text-based email, 'select reply' to return a message is simple. This is not the case in all voice email applications	– For important announcements, voice emails can reach learners not inclined to read written information
AUDIO BLOGGING	– While voice boards are an effective discussion tool for learners enrolled in courses, audioblogs are more personalised, a simple means of creating personal or interactive webpages that remain active post-course	– While voice boards are an effective discussion tool for learners enrolled in courses, audioblogs are more personalised, a simple means of creating personal or interactive webpages that remain active post-course	– Audioblogs may provide an accessible online communication for shy learners or those who prefer oral or auditory learning

THE VIRTUES OF VOICE

Voice online certainly promotes speaking but, equally importantly, it also foregrounds listening, especially listening to voices otherwise unheard. Consider the podcasting site, **Global Voices Online**, for example. Its motto is:

> The world is talking. Are you listening?

It is an international effort to diversify online conversations by involving people from around the world. Its aim is to build bridges between speakers talking about their country or region to a global audience. As the website says:

> **Global Voices** is your guide to the most interesting conversations, information and ideas appearing around the world through participatory media such as blogs, podcasts, photo sharing sites and videoblogs.

A local blog, **Our Class 2006**, another bridge-builder, also integrates voice with other online media. This marvellous example of blended, rich learning describes itself as:

> A blog for an Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) class at St George College of TAFE, Sydney Institute, Australia. There are podcasts, quizzes, competitions, links to students' own blogs, students' recipes, photos and a lot more.

I urge you to visit the **Podcast directory for educators, schools and colleges** where you will find a wealth of topics, speakers and perspectives, an infinite number of opportunities to both listen and respond. I also urge you to visit the sites listed below. I am confident you will be as excited as I am by discovering the ever-expanding quantity and quality of "Different Voices in Different Spaces." New voices of adult literacy teachers and students appear online each day. Teachers and learners are discovering voices not previously heard, including their own new voices.

CONCLUSIONS

Introducing teachers and learners to voice tools, their related social practices and a whole new world, as demonstrated by **Different Voices, Different Spaces**, is a gift for life. Not only have teachers and learners acquired extra resources to add to their repertoire as independent lifelong learners; as well, they have practised new possibilities in community participation.

Using the **DVDS** resources, teachers and learners have made other important discoveries too. They have learnt the importance of evaluation; they have learnt new ways to value themselves and others as well as new ways to evaluate the information, ideas and voices that compete daily for their attention. These educational gifts will endure long after formal ties with education have passed. They are precious gifts, ones considered by many scholars to be essential pre-requisites for navigating today's complex, often contradictory, world.

References

N.B. The URLs below can all be found on my podOmatic site, **Delia's podcast**, at http://snipurl.com/x2m2, where you will be able to connect directly to the links listed.

New Practices Audioblog:
http://npaudio.blogspot.com/

Different Voices, Different Spaces:
http://dvds.flexiblelearning.net.au/index.html

Beyond Text:
http://btresource.flexiblelearning.net.au/index.html

Connecting the Dots:
http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/flx/go/home/projects/2005/connectdots

Social Interaction Packs report:
http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/flx/go/home/projects/2005/pid/125

Social Interaction Packs resource:
http://sipresource.flexiblelearning.net.au/index.html

Global Voices Online:
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/globalvoices/top/about-global-voices/

Our class 2006:
http://ourclass2006.blogspot.com/

Podcast directory for educators, schools and colleges:
http://recap.ltd.uk/podcasting/index.php

A Change of Scene: speech and workshop (2006)

"Adult Learners Week" *Professional Development Day*
SMR ACFE Region
September 8, 2006
Later published in **Fine Print**, *VALBEC*

9.45: WELCOME/ACTIVITIES A: WARM-UPS (20 mins)

Welcome (3 Mins): Good morning. I am delighted and honoured to be sharing the morning and early afternoon with you. This morning will be a mix of presentation and workshop activities. After some warm-up activities, I will talk for about 20 minutes, followed by some group activities and then morning tea around 11. This format will be repeated after morning tea, taking us up to lunch at about 12.30. A short evaluation session will follow lunch.

I have prepared an **Activities Booklet** for you to take away; it contains today's activities, references and relevant web links. We will be using it during our time together today.

Shortly, we'll spend a few minutes finding out a little more about each other, about this adult learning community (or community of practice) that has gathered here today.

Just before we do, though, let's transform this space or, in other words, let's change the scene a bit. I've brought a few adornments. Choose a paper circle. On it, write ONE WORD that describes the type of learning space you aspire to create in your educational work. Then, choose one of the balloons overhead and attach your word to its string. Thank you. I'll explain the significance of this later.

Now, who are we gathered together here?

9.48: Welcome Activity A1 (9 mins: 1 min per number)

FIND A PERSON WHO   NAME   WHAT
1. Plays a musical instrument
2. Has made a digital story
3. Grows their own vegetables
4. Has a personal blog
5. Has the same star sign
6. Has an mp3 player
7. Writes songs or poetry

(Encourage collective discussion: "What did you learn?". Hear a sample of the results/ understandings: 2 mins.)

9.57: Welcome Activity A2 (8 mins: 4 mins to complete sheet)

COMPLETE THIS SHEET

My favourite Community is…

My favourite Technology…

My favourite Way to Learn is…

My best e-Learning experience to date has been…

("What did you learn?". Hear a sample of the results/understandings: 2 mins.)

10.05: SPEECH 1 (25 mins)

Community. Technology. Learning. We hear these words all the time, perhaps too much of the time. Have they become "Weasel Words", words that have lost their power and meaning OR are they still words that stir our hearts and heads, words that can move us to action?

I think these words still have great force. But I also think it is time to revisit and reinvigorate them. Let me explain what I mean.

There was a time when to call someone "black" was taboo, when the word "wog" was automatically an insult. But no more. Both words have been reclaimed by their communities and, in this redefinition process, black and wog can denote strength and pride. In other words, new meanings have displaced old ones.

I believe it is time to do the same, to give the words Community, Technology and Learning – overused and often misused words – a whole new lease of Life. Especially when all three are working together. Let me elaborate.

In preparation for today, searching for suitable companion images, I visited the free photo site, "stock.xchng". The first word I inserted into the search facility was **Community**.

PART 1: A Change of Scene 2: Community?

I found 16 photos, surprisingly few I thought, and these included a housing estate, a number of couples, several individuals, and even a trail of ants. From the selection available, the one that came closest to my understanding of community was this one **(A Change of Scene PP2)**, not that it portrays the togetherness I associate with the term, "Community".

The next search I tried was **Technology**. By contrast, there were hundreds of photos on offer, however, these were mostly machines or tools. Here is a typical one **(A Change of Scene PP3)**. Or more spookily, this forlorn, unplugged specimen **(A Change of Scene PP4)**. Human beings were rare in the photos but, if there was a hint of a person, it was most commonly a disembodied hand. Like this one. **(A Change of Scene PP5)**.

A Change of Scene 3: Technology?

A Change of Scene 4: Technology?

A Change of Scene 5: Technology?

101 ways to handle a disc
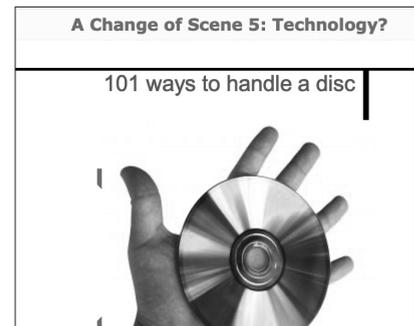
However, there was one exception in this dehumanised world; it was the touching photo below **(A Change of Scene PP6)**, with the title "Farmer Clem and the 21st century".

A Change of Scene 6: Technology

The photo's subtitle reads:
> A farmer, cultivating his crops by hand because his horse died, as his wife calls him on his cell phone.

I'm not sure if this photo was catalogued under "Technology" for the phone or for the hoe.

**A Change of Scene 7: Technology**

(As an aside, my favourite technology is probably the fork. It is perfect for its job, just are the spoon and knife are for theirs, each having evolved to meet specific needs. Attempts to blend all three **(A Change of Scene PP7)** – such as the short-lived splade or spork, an all-in-one combination of knife, fork and spoon – have never succeeded. One of our main jobs, I think, is to identify the virtues and limitations of each of the vast array of technologies jostling for our attention.

As a second aside, the fork was once considered sinful, a tool of the devil, and condemned by the early medieval Church for this reason. That's another story; however, it's a timely reminder that it is our perception of the tools, and not the technologies themselves, that is the most powerful element in determining their role, significance, status and power.)

Getting back to "stock.xchng", the free photo repository, my third search was for photos around **Learning**. Under "Learning", as with "Technology", I found a preference for objects rather than people. When people were featured, they tended to be very young school children, hardly ever adults. I was aghast, I must confess, when I found the following images, **(A Change of Scene PP8)**, empty unpopulated spaces, under the heading, "Learning". Can this be called learning when there are no people present?

A Change of Scene 8: Learning?

A Change of Scene 9: Café
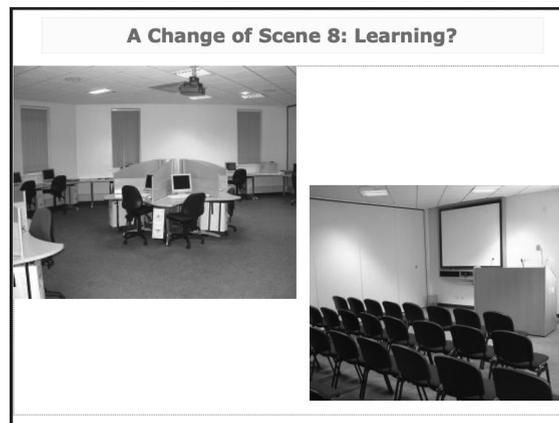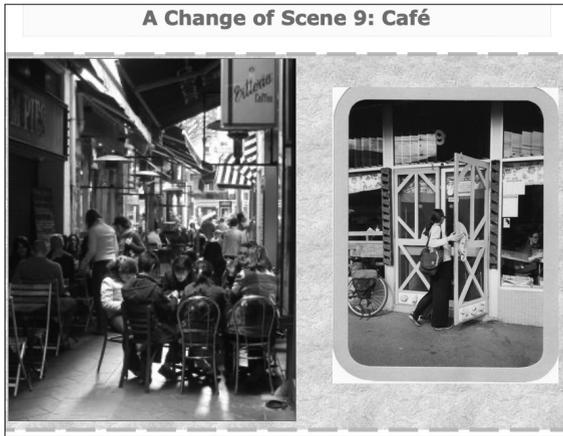
I'll conclude this introduction by saying that the most appealing photos **(A Change of Scene PP9)** I found featuring groups of people – one of the very few, in fact, in this vast repository with thousands of photos – were under the heading, "Café". These photos, unlike those catalogued under Community, Technology and Learning, featured people who were animated, engaged, absorbed and alive. There's a clue for us here, isn't there?

Now, let's take a closer look at the words themselves. Let's give each of them another chance.

COMMUNITY

For me, **Community** evokes a lot of associations **(A Change of Scene PP10)**.

A Change of Scene 10: Community 1
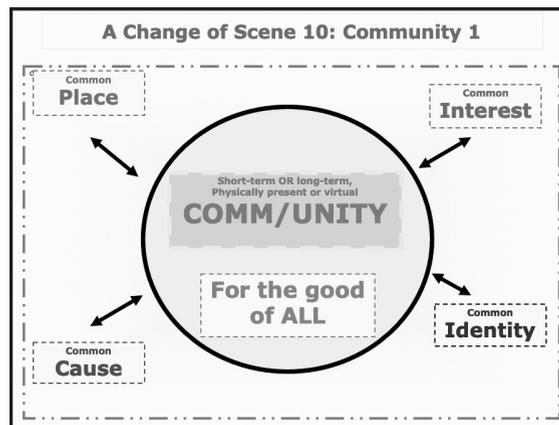
Communities can be geographical, (based on place), they can be interest-based, they can be cultural (based on values and identity) and/or they can be united by a cause. People can be physically present or can be connected virtually. Communities can be ad-hoc and short-term (like many classrooms) or enduring and long-term (for example, community organisations such as VALBEC). Communities are united, hence the linguistic fusion of comm/unity, by something they share in common – a common place, a common interest, a common identity or a common cause.

What communities also share in common is a dedication to "the good of the whole", at no cost to any of the individuals involved. The total creativity and well-being that results from this collective ethos is far greater than a series of isolated solo acts.

TECHNOLOGY

When I think **Technology**, I think Tools and Techniques. **(A Change of Scene PP11)**
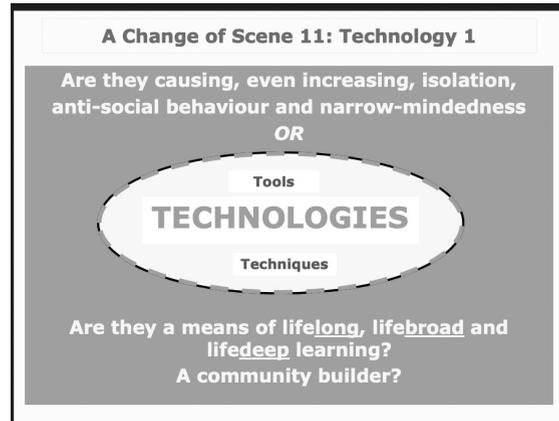
I think cutlery, paint brushes, pens, whiteboards, DVD players, mobile phones and computers. A computer can cause, and even increase, isolation, anti-social behaviour and narrow-mindedness **OR** it can be a bridge to lifelong, lifebroad and lifedeep learning. In other words, technology <u>can</u> be a powerful contributor to community building but it is not automatically so. People's intentions make the difference. Whilst each technology is potentially <u>very</u> powerful, each has its limitations.

Technologies are not "neutral" – they come with values, priorities and methods **embedded**. It is easy to forget how much we have learnt to "fit in" with or accommodate the technologies we use – from redesigning our workspaces, our homes and our lives to working within the parameters pre-set by particular ICT programs or equipment.

Consider the current educational debate over SMS English – is it debasing our language or not? While there is no doubt technology shapes language practices, could it also be shaping our brains? There is considerable support for the view that the brains of young people, to quote Marc Prensky, "are almost certainly *physiologically different*". As Prensky explains in his discussions of "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants", young people "have been networked most of their lives" and, he continues:

> Our children are furiously retraining their brains in even newer ways, many of which are antithetical to our older ways of thinking.

So, technologies are not "neutral". They bring about immense change in their wake, as evidenced by social, physiological, educational and linguistic consequences.

Nor are we born automatically knowing these technologies. Do you remember the first time you tried using a knife or chopsticks? We acquire these technological skills because our culture values them, even requires them. But, not all cultures prize the same technologies or for the same purposes.

For us as adult educators, then, this raises critical questions:
> **What** is the most important learning for our communities?
> **How?** That is, which technologies combined with which educational practices?
> **Who** will be included and who not?
> And, most importantly, **Why?**

LEARNING

Let's now turn to **Learning (A Change of Scene PP12)**.
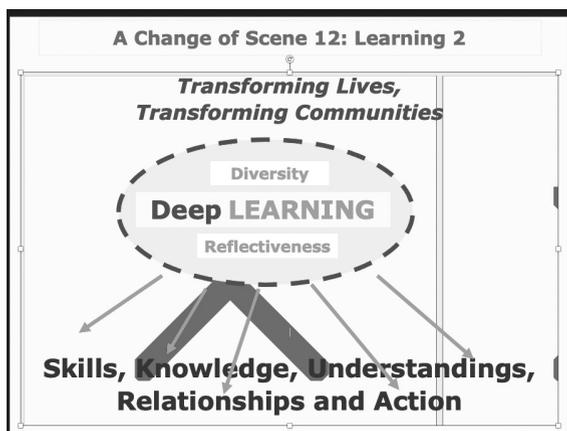
Many people in adult education proclaim, *We are learning all the time*, and this is true. Consider how often you hear the saying: *You learn something new every day.* Incidental or informal learning is undoubtedly important. It will happen in abundance in all of your classrooms every day.

Equally important, and I'd argue, more powerful, is reflective learning, learning where evaluation and reflectiveness are explicit, integrated and ever-present. This sort of learning is what is sometimes called "deep learning" or "rich learning" or, a term I've recently met, "sticky learning". This method of learning weaves many threads together. It consciously highlights and incorporates Skills, Knowledge, Understandings, Relationships and Action, for both personal and social purposes. This sort of learning is about, some would say, "Transforming Lives and Transforming Communities".

Having considered each of the three – **Community, Technology and Learning** – separately, what happens when we put them together? Or, to put it another way, what synergies are created when we blend all three?

As adult educators, <u>you</u> decide <u>what technologies</u> are going to make your learning communities more creative, more humane, more hopeful and more democratic, and all the other ideals that matter to you. To achieve these ideals means deciding <u>what learning</u> or pedagogies are most effective. At the heart of these decisions is having a clear vision of the sort of community you want to create or, in some cases, re-create.

Creative communities are born and flourish in all sorts of ways.

I think at once of the **Women's Circus** here in Melbourne, a community dedicated to ensuring that women of all ages, shapes, ethnicities and abilities participate. And, there is **WOMAD**, held in Adelaide earlier this year, a worldwide community movement where the ethos of multiculturalism and sustainability permeates every activity. And, there is the **Online Mentoring Network**, an online community I joined last year, in which all of us were simultaneously learners and teachers, sharing knowledge, stories, software programs, insights and tips.

These communities, and the technologies and practices each employs, are a means to an end; they are not simply ends in themselves. And what is this END, what is their fundamental purpose? From my observations, the primary aim of all of them is making connections, extending learning, strengthening relationships, deepening understandings, initiating positive change and offering new models of living together. Much like each of your classrooms, I'd say.

A close study of thriving learning communities like these shows that some conditions are more fertile for growth than others; attention to the sort of learning fostered is vital.

After morning tea, I want to go into more detail about what sorts of learning, including e-learning, seem to be more fruitful than others. Before that, let's DO some learning together now. Let me practise what I preach by giving time for you to reflect, a space for you to name and incorporate important learnings for yourselves.

10.30: ACTIVITIES B (30 mins)
Group discussion (2 mins):
- ❧ Consider this question: "Why do you think I asked you to inscribe and display those circles at the beginning today?"

Here is my reason. As adult educators, as well as transforming lives and transforming communities, we are creating learning spaces or, might I say, transforming spaces. The circles are a symbolic way of illustrating this. They stress that our educational purpose is what moves us to Change the Scene. Now, to our next activities.

10.32 – Activity B1 (8 mins):
- ❧ Complete this sentence: "My best e-learning experience to date has been… because …"
- ❧ Find two people you don't know very well to share your thoughts.

(Hear a sample of the results/understandings.)

10.40 – Activity B2 (20 mins: 10/5/5): Using the **Activities Booklet** as a guide, create a graphic representation of how you presently foresee the process of change for your learning community. There are four steps.

1.   First, record in writing some of the characteristics of your community (class, organisation) as it is now ("Our community NOW").
2.   When you have done that, visualise and record in writing some of the changes you hope will take place over the course of this year. ("Our community LATER").
3.   Then, in between the two, note down **HOW**, at this point in time, you imagine these changes will take place. In particular, specify how e-learning might contribute to a vibrant learning community, to the achievement of your educational vision and goals.
4.   When I signal, **(10.50?)**, join with one other group to share your mindmaps and chosen e-learning activities.

 (Near the end, **(10.55?)**, ask the whole group: "What are some samples of HOW you imagine changes will take place?")

<div align="center">

11.0 – 11.15: Morning Tea
11.15: SPEECH 2 (20 mins)
</div>

Many thinkers are pondering the questions that we, as adult educators in a fast-changing world, are pondering. I'd like to give you a taste of some of their thoughts.

My FIRST SAMPLE comes from Robert Theobald, a futurist. In his book, **Visions & Pathways for the 21st century**, he says:

> Those of us who are serving as **midwives of the change process** are experiencing the same patterns of overload that develop for those who assist human births. We keep strange hours. We have too much to do. We sometimes experience patterns we do not understand (Preface, p.4). Luckily, we are beginning to understand how and why **the world and social systems work as a web.** If we are to make the required shifts, we shall have to learn to think in new categories that challenge the thinking and behaviours which humanity has developed over thousands of years.

Here is ANOTHER TASTE of what forward-looking thinkers are saying. This quote comes from **A Whole New Mind,** a book written by Daniel Pink, one of the guest speakers at this year's e-Learning Guild Gathering in Boston, an annual worldwide gathering of e-learning professionals. In his introduction, Pink says:

> Today, the defining skills of the previous era – the metaphorically 'left brain' capabilities that powered the Information Age – are necessary but no longer sufficient. And the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous – the metaphorically 'right brain' qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness and meaning – increasingly will determine who flourishes and flounders. For individuals, families and organisations, professional success and personal fulfilment now require a whole new mind.

With these thoughts in mind, let's return to the questions I raised before morning tea: What happens when we put Community, Technology and Learning together? How does this fusion help us and our learning communities learn, think and act in more creative and humane ways?

I'd like to consider these questions by focussing on three examples: one from recent personal experience and two from my research last year. The links to all sites mentioned are listed in the **Activities Booklet**.

Each of the three examples I'm about to describe could be describing our lives as adult educators, whether in the classroom or as participants in an educational organisation. All three are examples of learning communities encouraging democratic conversations and collective well-being. I find each of them very inspiring. Together, they offer us new ways of thinking about learning, community and learning communities. They show us how technology can be a bridge-builder, both locally and globally. Let me begin.

My **FIRST** example is the **Online Mentoring Group (OMN)** (hosted by EdNA Groups) that I mentioned earlier.

The Online Mentoring Network is a group of teachers and mentors exploring ways of mentoring online. Last year, we met two evenings a week, Tuesdays (usually with Skype) and Thursdays (usually with Elluminate), for an hour or so each time. We explored how to work with individuals and with groups, both synchronously and asynchronously. As the OMN network website says, it works on the principles of "shared leadership" and "knowledge sharing" and takes the approach that "we are all teachers and all learners".
Activities over the course of the year included:
- setting up individual and group online **blogs** as spaces for reflection
- contributing to a weekly email **newsletter** featuring a "cool tool" of the week, favourite websites, tips and tricks etc.
- having different members of the group join in **forums** or give presentations on topics they were passionate about
- practising being **moderators** of sessions
- "**playing**" with tools and new methods in a friendly environment
- **sharing** resources, knowledge, stories, software programs, insights and tips
- telling **stories** of success and struggle
- posing problems or difficulties as a basis for drawing on **collective wisdom**
- identifying and discussing **emerging** technologies and related social and educational **issues**.

On the PP17 slide, I have noted the pedagogical virtues of these Online Mentoring Network activities. The features I have highlighted are its commitment to:
- offering a diversity of spaces, topics and avenues

- modelling co-operative problem-solving
- providing individual support and assistance
- integrating learning through regular reflection
- encouraging discussion of emerging social and educational issues
- demonstrating the dynamic relationship between theories and practices
- creating a welcome and safe environment and
- fostering a democratic community of practice.

My **SECOND** example, **The World Café**, is a site that I found on an internet research expedition. The motto of this website is: "Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter". A Café Conversation is a creative process for enabling collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes.

The site quotes William Greider:

> Creating a positive future begins in human conversation. The simplest and most powerful investment any member of a community… may make in renewal is to begin talking with other people as though the answers mattered.

The seven principles of the World Café, I'd call them pedagogical principles, are to:
- Clarify the Context
- Create Hospitable Space
- Explore Questions That Matter
- Connect Diverse Perspectives
- Encourage Each Person's Contribution
- Listen Together for Patterns, Insights and Deeper Questions and
- Share Collective Discoveries.

The site explains each of these vital ingredients in more detail.

My **THIRD** example is **Global Voices Online**. Its motto is: "The world is talking. Are you listening?" Global Voices Online is a non-profit global citizens' media project, sponsored by the Harvard Law School. It is an international effort to diversify online conversations by involving speakers from around the world, and developing tools, institutions and relationships to help make these voices heard.

A growing number of bloggers around the world are emerging as "bridge bloggers": people who build bridges by talking about their country or region to a global audience. As the website says:

> **Global Voices** is your guide to the most interesting conversations, information and ideas appearing around the world through participatory media such as blogs, podcasts, photo sharing sites and videoblogs.

Consider the following example. I am now quoting from the site:

> **Adventures with Mr. Behi** is written by an anonymous man… living in Teheran...
> Mr. Behi told me that by blogging "he can report events and ideas that are not actually
> covered by regular media here. Media from Iran report what they want and what
> the government says. And reporters from different parts of the world who come to
> Iran occasionally, they can't really get a good sense of what's going on in the minds of
> Iranians sometimes. So, I try to make my role in bridging this gap by getting people in
> the U.S. informed about regular people in Iran, how they think".

The picture **(A Change of Scene PP21)** is the "face" he shows on his blog… and he says it's
also the mug he drinks coffee from while blogging.

A Change of Scene 21: Global Voices Online 2

It is time to draw all these threads – the relationship between community, technology and
learning – together. I will do this by sharing three quotes that, I believe, offer pathways to
the learning communities we want to create, communities that have much in common with the
ones advocated by the thinkers above.

The **FIRST** quote, about quality learning relationships, is from **Susan's Blog**. Susan Hurley-
Luke lives in Atherton Queensland and teaches youth work and community services. In a
reflection in her blog on a student's enthusiasm for her class, Susan writes:

> What is good for that student is also good for us as Teachers. Teaching is about
> relationships to me. Unless a learner feels safe enough in the learning environment
> to try new behaviours, new patterns of thinking, how is s/he to learn? Respect in the
> classroom is a foundation. There is definitely room for humour that does not denigrate
> or humiliate too.
>
> I wonder how long I would continue to be a Teacher if it was not enjoyable? It is
> rewarding to me to see the changes in people's thinking, in their expanding horizons…
> They expand my horizons too.

The **SECOND** quote, about quality communication, is a verse by Robert Theobald called **Dialogue**. It highlights the importance of listening:

Talk.
Talk, talk, talk.
Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

The endless flow of words.
The loss of meaning as they flow over me.
The sense I have of drowning in infoglut.

I need the silences which come from reflection.
The surprise as somebody sees something new.
The belief in the wisdom of the group.

But I war with myself.
Too often, I add to the words and not the silences.
I control rather than involve myself.
Learning to listen,
Learning to trust,
It goes against the grain.
But when it flows,
What an incredible sensation! (p. 126)

The **THIRD AND LAST** quote, about hope, is from the anthropologist, Margaret Mead. These seem perfect last words:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world… Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

11.35: ACTIVITIES C/FINALE (45 mins)

11.35: Activity C1 (45 mins: 25/20):

Bearing in mind the powerful fusion of Community, Technology and Learning, let us now concentrate on the learners, the people at the centre of all our efforts. We will return to the **Activities Booklet.**

1.   I am circulating a range of images of people of different genders, ages and backgrounds.
2.   From this selection of images, choose a picture that resembles the learners with whom you work.
3.   That done, fast forward to the end of the year, and articulate 4 things you imagine these learners might have learnt by then. Referring to the **Activities Booklet**, fill in the speech bubbles in their own words.

4. Next, list 3 things YOU (as teacher or coordinator) can do towards making this happen.

12.00: I now invite volunteers to perform their productions, their four student statements, for the whole group.

12.20: FINALE (10 mins)

I'd like to conclude with three brief moments:

1. First, a multimedia record of an earlier version of this presentation, **A Change of Scene,** (with images, voice and text), that was presented at an Induction Workshop for the Australian Flexible Learning Framework initiative, **E-Learning Creative Communities Partnerships,** managed by ALA. It can be found at: http://snipurl.com/rukw

2. Second, a reflection from you. On a sheet of paper, write your response to this question:
   "Thinking back over what I have said, what is the most urgent question for you, **right now**?"
   I'd like to collect these as evaluation for myself and respond to them after lunch.

3. Finally, a short reflection from me in the form of a short digital story. I made this story just after WOMAD 2006, a creative community that epitomises for me the magical fusion of Community, Technology and Learning.

So, that is it. Thank you.

12.30 – 1.15: Lunch
1.15: WRAP-UP

- Let us return to your pre-lunch responses:
  "Thinking back over what I said this morning, what is the most urgent question for you, **right now**?"
- As I read each response, I'll share my reflections with the whole group and I invite you to join in.

2.00: TECHNOLOGY TIME

Here are some resources for future reference:
- **Different Voices, Different Spaces (DVDS)** CDs
- **DVDS** website
- **Beyond Text** website
- Other? Suggestions from you?

Thank you and bon voyage!

3.00: FINISH

A CHANGE OF SCENE:

Community, Technology
and Learning
Working Together

ACTIVITIES BOOKLET

Prepared by Delia Bradshaw
September 2006

ACTIVITY A1
Introductions

FIND A PERSON WHO	NAME	WHAT
1. Plays a musical instrument		
2. Has made a digital story		
3. Grows their own vegetables		
4. Has a personal blog		
5. Has the same star sign		
6. Has an mp3 player		
7. Writes songs or poetry		

ACTIVITY A2
Some preferences

COMPLETE THESE SENTENCES

> My favourite Community is...
>
> My favourite Technology is...
>
> My favourite Way to Learn is...
>
> My best e-Learning experience to date has been...

ACTIVITY B1
Some reasons

> My best e-Learning experience to date has been...
> because...

ACTIVITY **B2**
**A map, drawing or representation of transformation
within our learning community**

Our
community
NOW

**HOW will I/we be
creating a vibrant
learning
community? In
particular, how
might e-learning
contribute?**

Our
community
LATER
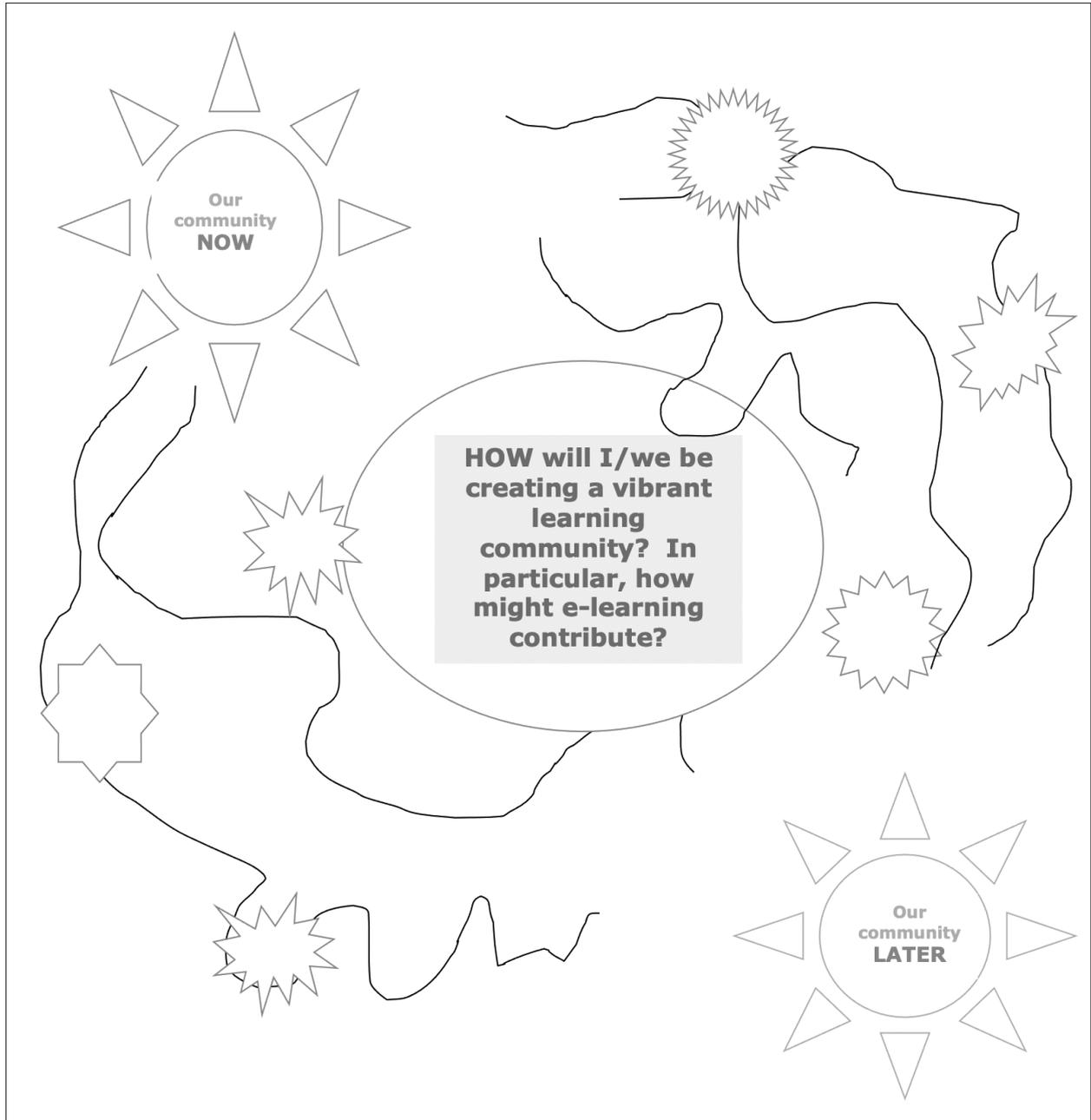
ACTIVITY C
The learner's perspective

From this collection of images, choose a picture (or pictures) that resemble(s) the learners with whom you are working this year. Glue it/them in the centre of a blank page. Now, fast forward to the end of the year. Looking from the learner's perspective, consider: *What are 4 things they might be saying about what they've learnt this year?* Write these in speech bubbles.

By the end of 2006, learners will be saying:

3 THINGS I CAN DO AS TEACHER/CO-ORDINATOR TOWARDS ACHIEVING THIS ARE:

1.

2.

3.

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Different Voices, Different Spaces
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http://dvds.flexiblelearning.net.au/index.html

Photo Credits
community dinner 3
lhumble
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/77066

palmtop
insane2
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/377009

computer monitor in stairwell
babagadude
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/487594

101 ways to handle a disc
ugaldew
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/487915

farmer Clem & 21stc
lumix2004
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/333970

splayd
http://www.aussiethings.biz/splaydset.jpg

conference room 1
Vixs
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/129359

training room
Vixs
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/71242

café
nsoup
http://www.sxc.hu/photo/333258

door to café
Delia Bradshaw

Mr Behi's mug
https://globalvoices.org/2005/07/11/mr-behi-podcasts-from-iran/

Yes, We Can
The power of "e": extending the "E"
in ACE (2009)

Keynote address,
**"E-Learning Showcase 2009: Celebrating good practice
in e-learning in ACE"**
Melbourne 20, 2009
Later published in **Australian Journal of Adult Learning** *(2009),*
ALA Journal and **Fine Print** *(2009), VALBEC Journal*

I want to begin by affirming ACE and what it stands for. ACE. Adult. Community. Education. Let us pause to linger over these three lighthouse words that guide our lives. Adult. Community. Education. It is this powerful trio that unites us, the ACE tribe, as we gather today to celebrate the contribution of e-learning to the grand tradition of Adult Community Education in Victoria.

As with all tribes, it's important to celebrate our cultural heritage – to cherish our stories, to admire our grand feats and to sing the praises of our heroes, women and men. Everyone present *here, today, now* has made her or his contribution to our story. Every single ACE story matters.

The gradual development of e-learning in ACE is an unfolding story that has taken place over many years. The collective wisdom of this story is our legacy. Today, I provide a few snapshots of this vivacious and audacious story. It's far from the whole story but it's enough to see it is an inspiring story. In telling this story, I hope to do justice to the individual and collective endeavours of those who paved the way for us, to those who, in the process, showed us how to **extend the "E" in ACE**.

What do I mean by this? Before embarking on the story, I want to draw attention to the title of this presentation. **The power of "e": extending the "E" in ACE.**

As a start, let's think a little about **the little "e"** before moving on to what **extending "the big E"** might mean.

Not everyone is familiar with the term "e-learning". Saying that the little "e" is short for

"electronic", and no more, can stifle discussion prematurely. All the emphasis then is on the "electronic" bit, with equipment such as computers, digital cameras and (more often these days) mobile phones and mp3 players taking prominence as the key factor in e-learning.

It's a rather impoverished view of "e", isn't it? The "e" in "e-learning" means so much more to me. It means emerging, emotional and exhilarating learning, exemplary, essential and effective learning; it means sometimes exotic, regularly exhausting, but always exciting learning. For me, as well, "e-learning" means every day and everywhere and everyone learning and, possibly most important of all in ACE, it means egalitarian and ethical learning.

So, when I refer to extending the "E" in ACE, I am thinking of infusing the little "e", with all the richness we have just named, into our ACE ideals and activities. From this point of view, incorporating "e-learning" is not simply a matter of buying new equipment or adding the odd computer-assisted learning task or attending an obligatory PD session on blended learning. It means giving extra breadth and depth to all aspects of Education in ACE – in what we do and how we think about it.

Putting it another way, to incorporate "e-learning" in the ways we've just named is to automatically **extend the "E" in ACE**. A bountiful interpretation and practice of "e-learning" in ACE <u>inevitably and automatically</u> results in extending our educational work – it extends the WHY (our purpose), the WHO (our community), the WHEN (the timing), the WHERE (the learning spaces), the WHAT (the scope), the WHAT FOR (the learning achievements) and the HOW (the modes, methods and media). In other words, the power of "e" as a multidimensional force in "e-learning", the way it extends meanings, values, ideals, purposes, practices and participants, means it redefines our understanding of Education itself .

<u>**That**</u> is the gift of "e-learning" to ACE. When recognising its power to make education richer in SO MANY ways, it is clear that this small "e" is not so small at all.

So now, a little history. Let us turn our minds to some of the key moments or milestones that have brought us to where we are today. Let us hear from those who have travelled this path before us, role models who know the breadth and depth and significance of their explorations into e-learning.

In preparation for today, I asked a number of our e-learning pioneers and innovators to complete the sentence:
        A memorable moment OR milestone in e-learning for me has been…

Let us consider their responses.

Michael Gwyther said:

Well, Delia, ... seeing the link between the **emerging web and possibilities for learner publication** in ALBE and ESL classes. I have been involved in a few projects since then but none were as exciting and "Frontierlandish" as those few weeks in '96 when we taught ourselves those skills and published our work together.   It was STUDENT PUBLISHING that motivated me. I was very much inspired by the work of Dale Pobega at Duke Street Neighbourhood House which inspired a few of us …at Ballarat East Neighbourhood House to learn html for the sole purpose of uploading our student writing to the web!

Clint Smith said:

I'd name the **two 1996 documents, The New Literacy** and **Getting Wired**, the Report and the Kit on convergent technologies that we did for ACFE … That EARLY RESEARCH really mattered.

Josie Rose said:

For me a key experience was management of my first "LearnScope Project" in 1999. It set all who participated at Narre Community Learning Centre on a technology path that they still follow to this day.

As well, it catapulted me into a very different, more **national sphere**. I was working as an ESL teacher at Narre at the time. We were invited to present at the "Spotlight on the Provider" conference in Sydney that year. We were so nervous, but I remember standing in our presentation room at the conference centre in Darling Harbour thinking: "I think we have arrived".

Gillian Ryan said:

❧ using My Connected Community with adult literacy students
❧ my first time using Elluminate
❧ using the internet to engage reluctant learners in learning
❧ my first online meeting using Skype
❧ That is, many forms of **popular online communication**.

Michael Chalk said:

When Libby Barker decided in 2001 that PRACE needed a **flexible learning coordinator**... and to encourage the strengths of a sessional adult literacy teacher by appointing me to the role, the importance of **Organisational Leadership** became clear.

Glenda McPherson said:

Josie as a "Flexible Learning Leader" in 2000 and then Michael Chalk in 2004 were significant in terms of lifting the e-learning profile within, but more importantly, outside the ACFE sector in Victoria & nationally…

As well, the TAFE frontiers initial **Flexible Ace Research** in 2004 & the opportunity to revisit it with **AccessACE** in 2006... a rare opportunity for follow up research!

Mary Schooneveldt said:
Personally, it was the **ACMI 2004 Digital Storytelling** and then the process of creating an ACE friendly (free!) way of introducing the concept to people in the region.

I will now put these memorable moments in a wider historical perspective.

In preparation for today, I did quite a bit of research on the evolution of e-learning in ACE. One result is a timeline of key initiatives, projects, publications and funding sources that you will find on the conference wiki at http://eshowcase.acfe.vic.edu.au

The scope of research and experimentation over nearly twenty years is truly remarkable. This Flickr slide procession, https://www.flickr.com/photos/biddyb/3230473098/in/album-72157612809077443/, shows some of the texts that mark key milestones along the way. Some might call them foundation texts. Some of the covers are reproduced below.
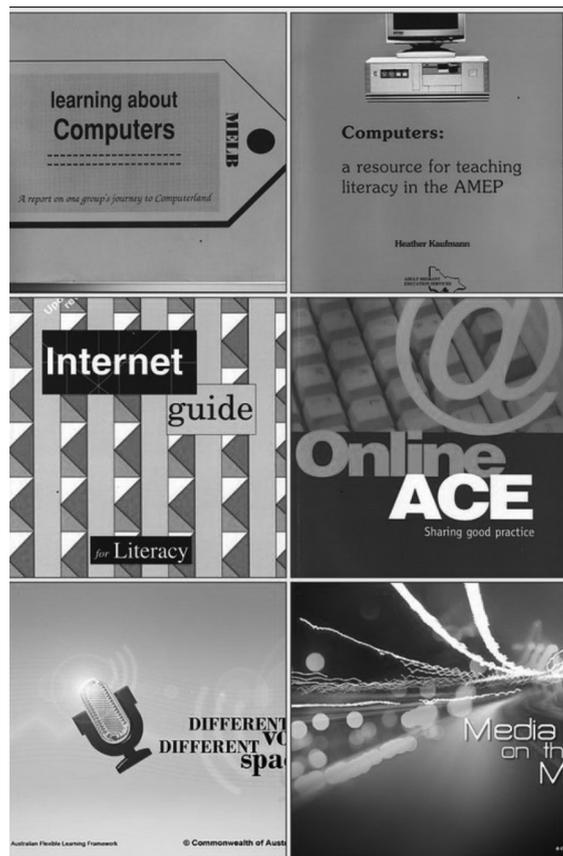
Another outcome of my research is a collection of **Fine Print** quotes I assembled from between 1996 and 2001; the VALBEC journal has long documented and promoted e-learning in ACE.

These voices of some of our pioneers and visionaries allow us to follow in the footsteps of our hardy ACE explorers. Their words evoke the new educational horizons they glimpsed, a vision of e-learning that they recognised would refresh ways of conceptualising and enacting adult education. Their words are as fresh today as when they were first uttered quite some years ago. I have organised them chronologically.

In 1996, Alan Wayman, ALBE coordinator at Yarraville Community Centre, wrote:
> With a little skill and a lot of patience, you can retrieve information, images, programs and sounds. Make friends, get ripped off, become involved in political activities, study at a college on the other side of the world, find work, play games, listen to poets, watch the weather change in Hawaii – it's endless, and the possibilities are increasing by the minute.

Here, Alan points to *the magnitude or multiplicity of educational purposes*.

In 1997, Mexie Butler, Multimedia Project Officer at Flemington Reading and Writing Program, wrote:
> One day when I was browsing on the web, I found this thing called "chat". It meant that I could talk to people anywhere in the world in real time... Amazing, to think that somewhere on the other side of the world there was someone sitting in front of their computer, doing the same as I was doing.

Here, Mexie points to the ease and excitement of *global reach*.

In 1998, Dale Pobega, language teacher and Online Literacies Worker at Duke Street Community House, Sunshine, wrote:
> The 1998 Central Western Metro ACFE student conference is currently being organised by three groups of adult learners as part of their CGEA… The students are increasing general knowledge while improving their screen literacy skills, establishing friendships through Moo and e-mail, and feeling part of a community of learners on the Net without losing their "real life" sense of connectedness as they work on the student conference project with its practical orientation.

Here, Dale points to the community development potential of *participating in online communities*.

In 1999, Josie Rose, educational technology manager at Narre Community Learning Centre, and NLT project worker for Southern WesternPort ACFE, wrote:
> There are two crucial factors to the success of a New Learning Technology in the language and literacy classroom – teacher confidence and a sense of enjoyment and fun.

Here, Josie points to the role of *"serious play"* in professional development.

In 2001, Michael Chalk, project officer at PRACE, wrote:

> Term one, Y2K, and PRACE is entering the trial stage of an exciting ACFE project to examine new learning technologies in ESL provision. Other providers on the project are Olympic, Meadow Heights and Lalor Living and Learning… on day one of the inter-class communication trial, the learners at Olympic are writing their first introductory letters to the learners at Preston… "I'm finding this very demoralizing", said student M, genuinely frustrated, as she wrestled with the e-mail sign-up procedure. I sat with her knowing how important it was to find some success at that point… When she finally got herself an e-mail account, the letter M sent her partner in the other group was very inspiring, urging the other woman to believe in herself and not give up.

Here, Michael shows a new, vital version of **learner empowerment for lifelong learning.**

In 2001, Dale Pobega, manager of ACEWEB, wrote:

> Twenty-seven online workshops were held across the four days of the e-conference with morning, afternoon and evening sessions attended by 300 conference participants and presenters logged in from Israel, the USA and Thailand. Transcripts of all e-conference sessions can be found online.

Here, Dale points to the wonder of **transcending the boundaries and limitations imposed by time, space and distance.**

What comes through so strongly in these words are the features of e-learning in ACE we cherish so much today – the diversity of educational purposes, access in all its forms, capacity for lifelong learning, personal and community development, democratic participation both locally and globally, the role of play in professional development, freedom from the limitations of time and distance. And these educational virtues were first sighted and trialled by our ACE explorers as early as a decade ago.

THE TIME IT TAKES

But, as we all know, significant and sustainable change does not happen in an instant. As Glenda indicated in her response to me:

> E-learning does not happen overnight. It is a **slow process** before it can be embedded. TAFE Frontiers research showed how long and hard it was for TAFEs – it is much longer and harder for ACFE … Infrastructure – hardware, software, professional development and personnel – is very sparse…and that means …it is much more down to individuals within providers.

Two timeline documents, put together by Mary Schooneveldt, trace highlights of the e-learning story from 1998 to 2007 of Southern Western Port Learning Communities in the

Southern Western Port ACFE region. Taken together and studied closely, they portray succinctly the time it takes for change to happen and endure.

Other ACFE regions now also boast a similar track record in e-learning, displaying maturity in both breadth and depth. Now, over ten years on, what are the "lessons learnt" from all this commitment and activity?

Three themes recur when listening to those have been involved in extending e-learning in ACE. The three themes are:

- Leadership
- Action Research Projects and
- Professional Development in all its forms.

Let's focus on the theme of *Leadership* first.

When they take a leading role, government agencies make a huge difference. Consider the vast amount of good generated by the array of projects and activities funded and fostered by the **Australian Flexible Learning Framework** over many years.

Many ACE mangers and teachers have also commented on the key role, before it was disbanded, played by **TAFE frontiers**, citing it as a powerful source of knowledge, support, professional development and networking that was particularly supportive of ACE.

A number of ACFE regional councils have long affirmed e-learning initiatives and, more recently, the ACFE Board has consolidated past successes by supporting the 2007 **AccessACE** and 2008 **E-Mentor** projects.

Individual leaders are also very influential. Mary Schooneveldt remarked in her response to me:

> A key moment is a very recent one: the realization that we now have … **tech savvy managers & teachers** in ACE willing to enthusiastically travel down the e-learning path.

Perhaps the most effective local leadership comes from the combination of organisational commitment AND willing, dedicated individuals. In other words, individual passion PLUS organisational backing are an irresistible, dynamic duo.

In her contribution to the **AccessACE** wiki in the section called "E-learning around the regions", Lynne Gibb, e-learning mentor at Coonara Community House in Upper Ferntree Gully reinforces this idea:

Despite quite a deal of interest in the use of technologies in adult learning within the Eastern Metro Region the uptake was slow until **the recent emergence of organisations and individuals keen to take a leadership role.**

LOCAL LEADERSHIP
The partnering between Morrison House and Coonara Community House in 2005 for a **New Practices Australian Flexible Learning Framework Project** explored the use of podcasting... This project lead to the identification of a couple of key individuals within the local ACE sector who had the necessary passion and drive to set new learning technologies firmly on the agenda.

The second recurrent theme highlighted by those have been involved in extending e-learning in ACE is *Action Research Projects*.

Never underestimate the power of community-based action research.

Michael Chalk singles out the following e-learning examples for particular mention:
- **Australian Flexible Learning Framework** projects and resources: with their strengthening of networks of people and communities
- The national **Community Engagement** projects: vital for gaining a national perspective
- The Victorian ACFE board's full support for the 2007 **AccessACE research** and built on with the 2008 **Regional e-mentor project**.

Also, let's not forget the marvellous and popular educational e-resources that have emerged from community-based action research projects. The following examples spring to mind: **World Wide Water, Online Banking, Snakes Alive!, English at the Beach, The Learning House** and **Dream Holiday.**

The third theme, *Professional Development,* is the one, time and time again, named as NUMBER ONE priority in "lessons learnt". This theme includes networks and mentoring.

Two recent ACFE-funded reports – the 2007 **AccessACE: clever uses of ICT in ACE**, subtitled "Lessons learnt in blended learning – a guide for managing and teaching" and the 2008 **E-mentor Project Final Report** – illustrate this well.

In the latter of these two reports, Josie Rose, the author of both, sums up the present situation this way:
> It often takes a three-year period to make deep and broad change. The regions were asked to provide feedback on what **the next step** should be.

For today's presentation, I have chosen 3 of the 10 they listed.

The recommended next steps, all to do with professional development, are:

1. Providing professional development opportunities for organisations to **"try out"** different technologies in non-threatening settings
2. Extending the **e-mentor** project to assist providers with the implementation of identified projects
3. Developing a **community of practice** in the region … to broaden and deepen their skills and knowledge.

Year after year, the evidence is the same. A judicious combination of Leadership, Action Research and Professional Development makes a world of difference, no matter what the size or stage of the organisation. ACE has never been in a better position to say: "Yes, e-learning is for everyone". Today is about finding out the WHAT and WHY and WHO for you. There truly is something here today for every ACE place and every ACE situation.

I began with ACE and I want to end with ACE. Above all, I want to return to that all-important big "E" in ACE. How has the arrival of e-learning extended our understanding of "Education" in Adult Community Education? What difference has it made to our ACE policies and practices?

Over the years we have seen "e" moving from the exceptional and exotic to the everywhere and every day and everybody, from being a novelty to being intrinsic, from "acting locally and thinking globally" to "thinking locally and acting globally".

In the process, this educational evolution has been redefining our understanding and practices of ACE in profound and comprehensive ways. E-learning has given us new possibilities of connectedness, community, democracy, global citizenship, lifelong learning, transformational learning, learning to learn, critical literacy and much else.

Putting it another way, incorporating the little "e" in "e-learning" into ACE means extending the big "E" in far-reaching and significant ways. Consider, for example, as we have heard in today's stories, how it changes:

     IDEAS and IDEALS
     MEANINGS and MEANS
     PRINCIPLES, PURPOSES, PRACTICES and PARTICIPATION.

This deepening, broadening and enriching of Education is not another "thing to do"; it's an automatic bonus when "e" is there. And this will continue to happen wherever and whenever "e-learning in ACE" is alive and well. As it is today.

As I draw to a close, I have two final questions:
     What potential "goods" beckons us?

What work – both thinking work and educational work related to "e-learning in ACE" – is still to be done?

My response to these two questions is determined by reflecting on the critical attributes and literacies for 21st century education. This means naming ACE purposes and priorities precisely and proudly.

Let's consider the 21st century attributes, first.

"E-learning" is not simply about "Technologies and Media". It is also about the "critical attributes" featured on the **About 21st Century Schools** website. In other words, "e-learning" is about Lifelong Learning, Global Classrooms and Globalisation, Adapting to and Creating Constant Personal and Social Change.

Let's also consider the 21st century literacies, called "multiple literacies" on the same site.

E-learning cannot be reduced to "Cyberliteracy", important as that is. It is also Ecoliteracy and Multicultural Literacy and Arts and Creativity and all the other literacies foregrounded here.

So, for me, "e-learning in ACE" is about aiming for, and achieving, these critical attributes and multiple literacies, ones that are necessities and not luxuries in our 21st century world. In the stories you will hear here today, you will see how "e-learning in ACE" is doing this now and doing it well. In the process, you will hear a variety of answers to the question:
How has/does/might e-learning extend the E in ACE for me, for us?

To conclude, our ACE history tells us "Yes, We Can". The ACE tribe gathered here today proves "Yes, We Can". Our vocation as 21st century adult community e-educators declares we must, and will, continue to explore the power of "e". This means all of us here will continue the tradition of extending the "E" in ACE. The future looks good.

As a last statement of optimism, let's claim and chant together: **"Yes, <u>We Can</u>, Yes We Must, Yes We Will and Yes We Do!"**

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Appendices

July 2022

Appendices

Philosophical Statement
*I wrote this statement to accompany job applications and
requests for biographical information.*

Academic Qualifications

A Snapshot of Work History
*This stops at 2010 when I ceased being in paid employment
on a regular basis.*

An Interview with Delia Bradshaw
*This interview spells out more of my educational thinking
in a different context, one where I am responding to others'
priorities and preoccupations. My responses are in italics.*

The ALBE educator of the century?
*In 1999, a number of Victorian ALBE educators were
asked to nominate favourites for "the ALBE educator of the
century".* **Fine Print** *later collated the results of their poll.
This was my submission.
It lists those who inspired me at that time.
They continue to do so.*

Some Technical Details
*This section refers to preparing the text for publication,
bibliographic conventions and permissions to reproduce.*
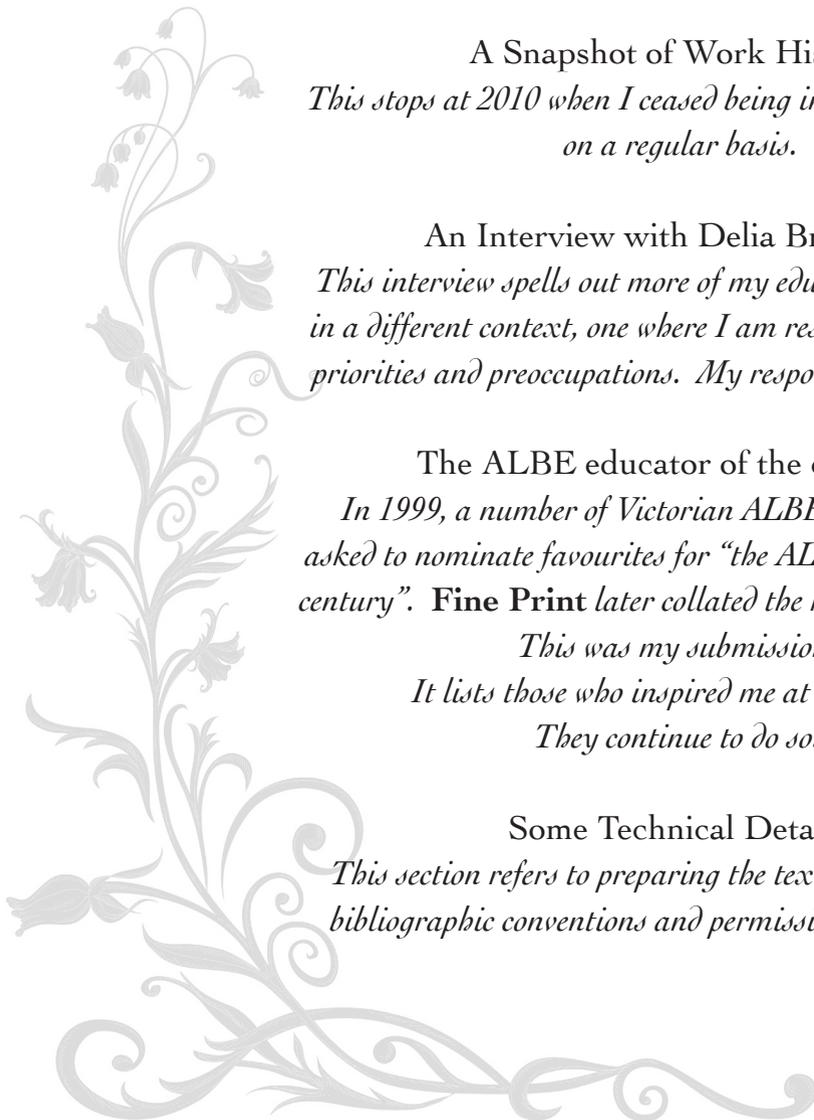
Philosophical Statement
Part of every job or project application

I believe that social action in general, and education in particular, should be primarily committed to ensuring that citizens develop an extensive repertoire of ever-expanding intellectual, linguistic, personal, psychological, social, cultural, vocational and political resources.

This philosophical position is grounded in three ethical principles against which I judge the quality and worth of any human endeavour or social activity. These three principles are:
1. one, how much it contributes to the collective storehouse of knowledge, that is the degree to which it illuminates the human condition and life on earth;
2. two, how much it contributes to social justice, that is the degree to which it enables wealth and power to be shared;
3. and three, how much it contributes to the creation and sustenance of a healthy world, that is the degree to which it works towards all people and creatures on earth living a peaceful, fruitful and fulfilling life in harmony with their cultural and natural environments.

I am especially dedicated to critiquing the politics of language, and to the task of unearthing and analysing the cultural messages connected with gender, class, age, place and ethnicity that are embedded in language.

Academic Qualifications

Master of Education (Monash University): 2010
Diploma in Training and Assessment (Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE): 2008
Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE): 2007
Feminist Cultural Studies (Melbourne University): 1994
Adult Literacy Teaching Course (Western Metropolitan College of TAFE): 1992
Graduate Diploma in Community Education (Monash University): 1981–1983
Bachelor of Education (LaTrobe University): 1978 – 1982
Diploma of Education (Melbourne University): 1967
Bachelor of Arts (Melbourne University): 1964 – 1966

A Snapshot of Work History

Role/Organisation	Date	Key Achievements
Consultant Textcraft Educational Consultancy	2010 – 1993	Pioneered educational mentoring for national e-learning projects Authored four highly influential adult education curriculum documents Designed innovative online university preparation curriculum for local and international contexts
Manager Return to Study, Council of Adult Education	1993 – 1985	Expanded the educational scope and quality of this exemplary adult further education department
Development Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee on Migrant and Multicultural Education	1987 – 1985	Initiated and organised a dozen multicultural education projects of statewide and national significance
Researcher and Activist YWCA of Victoria	1985 – 1982	Developed ground-breaking, culturally appropriate informal learning opportunities for hundreds of Victorian immigrant women
Community Worker A variety of settings	1982 – 1976	Designed literacy and life planning programs for women at home, in workplaces, refuges, community centres and TAFE colleges
Secondary School Teacher Melbourne, rural Victoria and overseas	1976 – 1968	Chosen as mentor for new teachers, including part-time English Method tutor at LaTrobe University

An Interview with Delia Bradshaw (1996)
Fine Print, *VALBEC Journal*

A note sent to Bill Daly, interviewer, prior to the interview:

> Imagine my surprise when I saw the questions. Yes, I'd agreed, reluctantly mind you, to be interviewed on how my thoughts on methodology had evolved over the years. And then I saw eight HUGE questions, each prompting dozens of other questions, each a subject for a PhD in its own right… And who was I to speak, anyway? I could think of a multitude of others better placed and better qualified. I found myself feeling very isolated, wishing I was one of a number making comments, not the only one… As we all know so well, there is not one answer to the questions below, much less a short and simple answer. There are no easy cause-and-effect explanations. No one person can be an authority on any one of these matters of such vital importance, much less on all of them. What is needed is sustained collective discussion, and not only focused on the answers but on the questions as well... The only way I could proceed was to imagine my tentative words as the beginning of a long, lively conversation amongst peers.

1. What have been the most significant changes in teaching methods in the adult literacy field in recent years, say in the life of VALBEC, and what do you think were the influences that prompted them?

The most significant changes I have noticed have been connected with the move from a dominant, almost exclusive, focus on the "who" of teaching to the broader focus that gives equivalent status to the "what", the "how" and the "why" of teaching. When I entered the field about ten years ago the primary concern of teachers seemed to be with the emotional and social well-being of their students. Over the years other imperatives, ones more concerned with defining exactly what constitutes a broad general education, have become equally, if not more, significant in ALBE teaching circles and practices.

What strikes me about teachers these days is how thoughtfully they have reached the educational positions they hold, be they positions on content (the "what"), on classroom methods and activities (the "how") or on purposes (the "why"). In my experience, they are positions that have been reached after a careful scrutiny of a wide range of theoretical and practical alternatives, a conscious choosing of stance. Knowing the inherently political nature of teaching, I am constantly impressed by how hard teachers these days work at investigating their own practices, to see if what is happening in the classroom is consistent with the views they hold about the purposes of education. And for most, "education" means acquiring the capacities to critically read ourselves, our world and the texts all around us to better engage with, and contribute to, all forms of private and public life. Very few ALBE and ESL teachers these days would see themselves as social workers. They perceive themselves quite clearly as adult educators, with a special responsibility for

strengthening students' language capacities to enable more knowing participation in all domains of life. Who can say what explains these changes, this move from a concern with personal and psychological development to a preoccupation with linguistic, conceptual, intellectual, social and political development? If I think of my own story as a teacher, at once I want to give credit to the following influences - feminism, multiculturalism, linguistics, critical theories, internationalism (as distinct from globalism) and cultural studies – on my teaching practices. When I think of the field as a whole, I believe that quite a number of people provided invaluable leadership in making bridges between these invigorating disciplines and ALBE. I think of Rob McCormack's writings; Bill Cope's and Mary Kalantzis' curriculum materials; Geri Pancini's research forums in the early 90's; Rosie Wickert's research; Alan Luke's and Pam Gilbert's publications; all the authors of national and state-wide project reports. And I'm sure every reader can add their own favourites to this preliminary list.

2. We have seen the recent development of a lot of new ALBE and, to a lesser degree, ESL Teaching Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas. Has the increased emphasis on teacher qualifications improved the quality of teaching in the field?

Not having surveyed teachers in the field, I cannot comment comprehensively. However, my hunch would be that it probably has. For a long time now, the opportunities for professional development for ALBE teachers have been relatively limited – the occasional conference here, the odd workshop there, now and then a forum. Now, I don't want this to be taken as criticism, for I would be the first to applaud VALBEC's professional development record, and to acknowledge the important contributions it has made and continues to make. Nor do I want to imply that the ALBE field has been an a-theoretical or unreflective one. Quite the opposite, for its size, the ALBE community has an impressive history of commitment to action research and of being studiously mindful of its own ethos and practices, even if these initiatives have had to be random, short-term and scattered.

What has been missing though, at least until very recently, have been sufficient, accessible, regular opportunities for sustained study. Study that gives us the chance to pause, to read widely, to listen to others' justifications, to discuss the complexities and contradictions of teaching and being a teacher today, to make explicit the theories implicit in particular methodologies and activities, to try out other theories and roles and scripts, to think and act a-fresh from a broad range of positions. I do not want to over-romanticise formal study (who enjoys having to add yet another essay to an already intolerable workload?) but it is the only sustained opportunity I know for colleagues to collectively and persistently work together on matters of classroom practice, to jointly question, to speculate, to investigate and to articulate not only their own practices but also today's perplexing, shifting times where there are no easy answers to the questions: "Why am I doing what I am doing? How could I be doing it better?".

This sort of comprehensive, soul-searching and analysis can only be done over time: no one workshop can ever achieve the breadth and intensity of scrutiny that comes with a sustained span of study, the sort of in-depth scrutiny that is usually a precursor to lasting, voluntary change.

3. There's been a lot of interest in the adult English language and literacy teaching field from higher education lately. Is this attention effecting the methods that teachers use in their classroom?

It should be no surprise that higher education is interested in adult English and literacy teaching, an exciting contemporary site where educational hybrids are evolving and flourishing. Because adult ALBE and ESL stand at the cross-roads of so many educational and social influences and because this field thrives on diversity and difference, it is in the privileged position of being able to plait strands from different sources into quite original educational theories and practices. Such cross-fertilisation deserves to be studied closely, especially in partnership with ALBE and ESL practitioners themselves.

I'm not sure, however, how many ALBE and ESL teachers are aware of this interest. When this attention from academia does manifest itself in public, as a VALBEC keynote address or a project report or a workshop presentation or as a professional journal article, teachers are certainly curious to hear the view from the "outside", to compare what is said with what they know, often surprised by the excitement expressed by academics at aspects of their work that ALBE/ESL teachers take for granted. How much what is said or published by academics effects classroom practice depends, I think, on whether teachers have the opportunity to come together to study the speeches and the articles and the research findings.

But who, these days, has the opportunity to read across a range of disciplines and countries and sites, the freedom and time to attend conferences or forums, even the mental space to re-view classroom practices by testing these new theories and practices? Teachers can only be influenced by the views or conclusions or recommendations of academics, I feel, if they have the time to read about them, to digest them, to trial them and to evaluate them. These days, this is a tall order. Whilst I know no group of teachers more willing to extend their intellectual horizons and to refine their classroom practices, I can't think of a single colleague who is not mentally, emotionally and physically exhausted. Those undertaking formal study are probably best placed to do this comparative, reflective work. I hope the essays they are producing can be put into circulation.

4. How do you think the new emphasis on electronic communications in the ALBE classroom will affect teaching methods?

For those with access and those with confidence and competence, and these conditions currently exclude the majority of the field, e-space could provide marvellous opportunities for play - to play the game, to play at new roles, to play with words and forms. Certainly, there is untold potential for community building. For these possibilities to be realised, however, I believe that certain pre-conditions have to be met.

Firstly, of course, people have to both have the "toys" and to know what they can and cannot do. Secondly, I doubt that people can participate in virtual communities unless they have prior experience of living in community, alert to the ways unwritten rules and norms shape community life. From my point of view,

there is no better environment for learning this than the face-to-face classroom. While machines and distance education can certainly extend our reach, they are no substitute for the complexities and subtleties of learning in the physical presence of others, especially given that the principal purpose of ALBE and ESL classrooms is the development of a repertoire of language capacities to suit a range of social contexts, and not just electronic sites. As a complement to full-bodied exchanges, however, I think e-communications promise limitless space for exploration and experimentation, as long as we bring the same critical eye to these texts as we do to books and images and all the other texts competing for our attention.

5. In what ways do you think the new credentials, such as the CGEA, and new reporting systems, such as the National Reporting System, are affecting the way we teach?

As I understand these initiatives, their original intention was a brave attempt to make a rough sketch of the vast and complex and circuitous terrain known earlier as adult literacy and later called adult English language and literacy. However crude and incomplete the attempts, they were pioneering texts for their times in that they foregrounded the idea of "literacies" rather than the universally popular term "literacy". They highlighted the complexity of the dynamics between readers and texts, between writers and texts, between texts and social and political imperatives. They incorporated or embedded critical perspectives into all literacy and language activities. By naming some of the key textual practices dominating contemporary life, they ensured that students encounter a representative variety of texts and contexts and perspectives. Thanks to the multidimensional understanding of literacies made explicit in these questing texts, students are now guaranteed an introduction to a wide range of language intentions and situations and forms, no longer as at risk of inheriting a simplified, naïve view of reading and writing.

Nonetheless, if these documents are seen as the only word, the last word, then they are extremely dangerous. They were originally designed as rough maps, not as the ultimate guide. My first concern is for the anxiety that such a literal, short-sighted view causes teachers and students alike when both become obsessed and permanently overwrought about "getting it right". My second concern is how such a policy belittles the scale and scope of ALBE and ESL work by reducing it to a series of disjointed, fenced-off fragments. The documents mentioned above were intended to point to a grand vision off the page. They were meant to be suggestive, assuming teachers would read between and beyond the lines, never envisaged as a rule-book for binding minds and hands. As all good readers do, it is now more vital than ever to search for the meaning between the lines in such documents, to look well beyond the minimalist words on the page.

6. Teachers in the ALBE and ESL fields often come from a wide range of backgrounds: primary, secondary, tertiary, English as a Foreign Language. This creates a great deal of difference in the way people teach. Does this result in a rich and positive methodological diversity or inconsistent and contradictory delivery?

These differences make the ALBE/ESL field the marvellously multicultural one it is. Publication and circulation of this diversity of histories and methodologies, in places such as VALBEC conferences and

forums and here in **Fine Print**, *have meant that the best of each background is available to the whole field, thus strengthening both the field in general and individual practitioners in particular.*

However, similar to questions surrounding multiculturalism in the wider society, what is required to ensure that this becomes (and remains) a cohesive culture is agreement about a common core of purposes, values and practices. This task, the most demanding form of quality control or continuous improvement, requires intellectual rigour, moral courage and political vision. I think the need is more urgent than ever for us, as a mature field, to start naming some of the special features that set the adult ALBE/ESL culture apart, to be assertive about what we believe in and what we oppose. This will be a matter of ethics as much as ethnography.

I find I keep coming back to Terri Seddon's 1994 VALBEC conference address when she reminded us that such activity:

> *... depends significantly on the ALBE field working out what is important and what it stands for. You can only protect what you value if you know what you value. What this highlights is the need to build some kind of common truth which captures what you value, educationally and socially. The field must be clear about what should be preserved in ALBE, what is non-negotiable, but it must also be hard-headed about what is dispensable.*

If we no longer tolerate "anything goes", what exactly do we cherish and advocate? I'd like to see future editions of Fine Print publish a range of responses.

7. Now that various forces are driving the ESL and ALBE fields together, do you think ALBE and ESL teachers can learn from each other about teaching methods. What similarities and differences do you perceive between teaching practice in these two fields?

The similarities that I see is the mutually held belief in the power of language and its central role in terms of constructing identity, working life and citizenship. These commonly shared values remind me of something I wrote ten years ago in an article called "Language Means Life" in which I said that:

> *Our sense of our own power is critical in shaping all of our life-aspirations, life-chances and life-outcomes. And the languages we absorb and learn as life unfolds, and our resourcefulness as language-beings, are key contributors to our being or feeling powerful.*

I do not see differences so much between the fields as within each of them. Thinking of the two fields, I think of a common spectrum along which both ALBE and ESL practitioners could be found at any point. This spectrum ranges from those, on the one hand, who see learning to read, write and speak English better as a matter of learning the right norms, of finding the right English word or expression, to those, on the other hand, who see this educational work more as the "saying-writing-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations" that Gee talks about, as a multi-textured activity to do with knowing, identifying, critiquing and choosing positions or stances whence we view and act upon the world.

I think that the differences of practice come from where teachers position themselves on this educational-ideological spectrum rather than from what they call themselves or what qualifications follow their name. Some teachers – some ALBE, some ESL – prize critical pedagogies and others, even in the same department or workplace, favour functionalism. Some teachers insist on asking questions while others see themselves as having to provide the answers. Some teachers consider it obligatory to point out how each individual utterance is related to, derived from and inseparable from, the whole of society, that complex pattern of others' voices and values and views, whereas others say there is no reason or need or justification for mixing language and politics. Some teachers would see a topic on 'Australian History' as a chance to contemplate the history of this country from as many points of view as possible - others would see it as the time to supply dates and give the 'official' story.

For me, it is where teachers, be they ALBE or ESL, are located on this spectrum that accounts for the most fundamental similarities or differences. Not that this is always easy to spot. It is certainly much easier to see the superficial differences (such as a greater emphasis on oral practice or a close attention to the Roman alphabet) than the more powerful philosophical ones.

8. The ALBE field is known for its diversity of providers. How much is methodology affected by the specific features of the learning environment? For example, are there generalisable differences between the methods employed in the community, TAFE and industry sectors?

Once again, I believe it is where a teacher is philosophically placed on a spectrum of educational ideology that accounts for the differences rather than where that person is physically situated. Across the three sectors, there is an enormous variety of educational approaches and practices within each. And, of course, many practitioners work across all three. What would make a fascinating article for a future **Fine Print** *would be to ask someone currently teaching in all three to describe how much they do or don't change their practices from site to site, and if so, exactly how and why.*

There can be no denying that there are broad organisational and diagrammatic differences between the three, say in terms of management structures or cultural histories or the particular configurations of stakeholders. From my reading and stories of colleagues, however, there does not seem to be readily generalisable or categorical differences with regard to the educational practices actually to be found within each sector. The most adventurous and the most cautious, the most radical and the most conservative, the most expansive and the most parochial can be found in all three, even within the one house or one college or one workplace.

I do not wish to imply, however, that teachers consider themselves free agents who feel they can do whatever they like wherever they like, irrespective of the local culture and prevailing politics. Of course, their work is effected by the milieu in which they are teaching, but there may be less change moving from a community centre to a TAFE college or a workplace than from one community centre to another. What is consistently present as pressure, as the key dominating influences, is not, I hear, whether it is the community, TAFE or

industry setting but who is funding, on what terms, for what outcomes and how they are to be demonstrated. And now we are talking about accreditation procedures and management and government priorities and all the other stakeholders (training officers, the Commonwealth Employment Service, boards of directors) wanting to have their say about what should be taught. No site is free from these contests . No teacher can ignore them. They demand much more of the teacher's attention, make a greater claim for ownership of methodology, than sectoral loyalties or traditions.

It is in charting a course through these rough seas that teachers' courage, confidence and creative capabilities as classroom practitioners are being most tested.

As mentioned earlier, Delia Bradshaw regrets that she is not one of a group of adult educators commenting on these very important questions. These questions deserve a range of answers, and not simply one person's perspective, with all the limitations and blind spots inevitable when standing in one position. She recommends that readers consult **Multiple Images, Common Threads**, a 1995 publication on good practice in adult community education available from ARIS, for a more detailed account of her own philosophical and ethical preferences.

Submission for Fine Print poll on
The ALBE educator of the century *(1999)*

Paulo Freire – author of **A Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Pedagogy in Process and Cultural Action for Freedom** – for distinguishing between education for domestication and education for liberation, for drawing our attention to the inextricable relationship between "reading the word" and "reading the world", for stressing the power of naming and for urging us to begin our work against social injustices by formulating the most politically generative questions

Roberta Sykes – National Executive Officer for *Black Women's Action in Education Foundation* – for tirelessly alerting us to the racial injustices inherent in our educational systems and for initiating and maintaining ways of furthering Aboriginal women's education

Sue Middleton – author of **Educating Feminists: Life Histories and Pedagogy** – for documenting how our personal, social and educational histories inevitably shape how and why we teach

Jane Thompson – author of **Words in Edgeways: Radical Learning for Social Change** – for reminding us of the time-honoured concept of "really useful knowledge"

Nancy Jackson – contributor to **Critical Issues in the Sociology of Education** – for encouraging us to consider: "If competence is the answer, what is the question?"

Gunther Kress – author of **Writing the Future** – for asking us to be mindful of the social consequences of the curriculum choices we make, for accentuating the prevalence and power of images and design in texts

Rob McCormack – author of **Learning to Learn** (with **Geraldine Pancini**), **The World of Work** and **Public Literacy** (with **Peter Moraitis**) – for linking our educational thinking to the big philosophical debates concerning the past, present and future

Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope – authors of **Social Literacy** – for their commitment to incorporating multicultural perspectives into all educational work

The **collective** of the **New Internationalist** magazine – which I've read cover to cover for years now – for instilling in me the habit of taking an internationalist perspective on all aspects of educational theory and practice

All the teachers and students with whom I have worked over the years for constantly leading me to ask: "Why am I doing this? How can I do it better?"

Some Technical Details

Preparing the text
I have loved assembling my writings that span close to three decades.

My first task was a technical one as the writings were in a variety of formats – some handwritten, some typed, others on floppy discs of various sizes and others in print in books and journals. Only my more recent writing was in accessible digital form on my computer. Converting the different formats to digital form, to the one font and with the same formatting, took several years, on and off, with invaluable assistance from others more technically capable than me.

My next task was editing. I printed off a hard copy of the 450-page manuscript and, over several months of visits to my local St Kilda library, I paid close attention to the text. I didn't add to or subtract from to any of the pieces, as I wanted to retain the spirit and words of the original writing, but I did aim for consistency of design formatting within each piece. I also wrote notes for a possible prelude and post-script for each piece. I later combined these into a brief introduction for each piece with the heading **July 2022**.

Finally, I considered book design and publishing options. I wanted this publication to be a beautiful one, even if not an illuminated manuscript, an artform that captivates me.

Bibliographic details
I have left the original bibliographic conventions intact, that is, referencing details appear here as they are in the original work. This means the conventions are consistent within each piece rather than throughout the whole manuscript.

As a result, you will notice different conventions throughout this collection. I made this choice because I cherish the writings as historical artefacts, evocative of a time, a place and an era. I deliberately did not want to correct or standardise them.

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Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABEAF	Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework
ABEL	Adult Basic Education & Literacy
ACAL	Australian Council of Adult Literacy
ACE	Adult Community Education
ACEWEB	Cluster Project – ACE 'collectives' promoting collaborative educational provision and professional development
ACFE	Adult Community & Further Education
ACFEB	Adult Community & Further Education Board
ACMI	Australian Centre for the Moving Image
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ANHLC	Association of Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres
ALA	Adult Learning Australia
ALBE	Adult Literacy & Basic Education
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ARIS	Adult Education Resource & Information Service
ASLPR	Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings
CAE	Council of Adult Education
CBL/CBT	Competency Based Learning/ Competency Based Training
CGEA	Certificates in General Education for Adults
DEET	Department of Employment, Education, Training
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education, Training & Youth Affairs
DETYA	Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs
DFE	Department of Further Education
DIMIA	Department of Immigration, Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JPET	Job Placement, Employment & Training Program
MICT	Multiple Images, Common Threads
NIACE	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NLT	New Learning Technologies
NMRACFE	Northern Metropolitan Region of ACFE
NOW in FE	Network of Women in Further Education
OHT	Overhead Transparency (for use with Overhead Projector)
OLS	Open Learning Systems

OMN	Online Mentoring Network
PP	PowerPoint
PR	Public Relations
PRACE	Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SMRACFE	Southern Metropolitan Region of ACFE
SMS	Short Message Service
STEP	Skills, Training & Education Program
TAFE	Technical & Further Education
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
TLTC	Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities
TWT	The Weekly Times
UK	United Kingdom
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
UWA	University of Western Australia
UYCH	Upper Yarra Community House
VALBEC	Victorian Adult Literacy & Basic Education Council
VATME	Victorian Association of TESOL and Multicultural Education
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
Y2K	The Year 2000
YCS	Young Catholic Students
YCW	Young Christian Workers
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Index

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I came to adult education over 40 years ago when I joined a women's study group at my local adult learning centre. I have been involved ever since.

This collection, *Making Connections,* tracks the evolution of my thinking over many years, from 1983 to 2009, as an educator, writer and advocate in Victoria, Australia. The photos on this page show me at either end of this time span.

This collection also tracks the main thread that runs through all my work: a passionate belief in the power of adult education to transform lives and transform communities through making connections in a multitude of ways.