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contents

page

features

Regulars

Editorial

A warm welcome to all readers for 2005. The *Fine Print* committee hopes to bring you a new year's worth of engaging and provocative articles on adult literacy education in its many forms. We're rightly proud of our 2005 Autumn edition and hope you enjoy the rich reading we've prepared for you.

Janine Oldfield reports on the Arlparra garden project at Utopia in remote Central Australia. This project of combined literacy and VET training challenges the mono-cultural construct of training packages and VET national competency system. Oldfield makes a compelling argument for greater literacy and numeracy support, and project planning which caters for remote Indigenous communities.

Without a doubt, the Internet has an important role as a teaching and learning resource. The challenges and benefits of using the Internet effectively with literacy learners operating at very low levels was part of research investigated by Jan Hagston. She reports on her findings.

Kay Viola and Robin Kenrick tell us about an important new resource available to ACE teachers. *The right to be here: Working in ACE with learners with mental health issues* was published in 2004, and gives teachers and community organisations great insight into how community education organisations can become 'mental health-friendly'.

Sue Constable gives an insight into one of the adult education growth areas. Coaching has a growing profile in the Australian executive and corporate worlds. Sue tells us about how coaching has been recognised as an effective teaching and learning tool, and how it differs from other forms of adult education and training. Her 'day in the life of a coach' allows us to observe her in action; perhaps it is a pathway for adult educators looking for their next opportunity?

Blogging won't be a mystery after you've read Jane Wentworth's Practical Matters. Everything you need to know about getting you or your literacy students into weblogs is there. Jane explains what they are, who is using them, how and why you should use them, how to get started setting up a blog, and even has tips on running a group blog as a discussion board.

In Policy Update, Jay Derrick gives us a whole new perspective on what assessment can be when unleashed from the constraints of public officials hunting 'hard data'. Jay suggests assessment can become a range of contingent evidence bases for improvements in language, literacy and numeracy, where systems for assessment of learning are explicitly based on trust and professional judgments and where the broader benefits of learning are recognised and evaluated.

Foreign Correspondence comes from the Temotu province of the Solomon Islands. Annabelle Leve tells us it is one of the most remote, sparsely populated and poorly resourced and serviced areas. Her reflections of a small island paradise are both enchanting and provocative. She questions what the really useful skills are for this island's inhabitants.

In Beyond the Whiteboard we catch up with former Olympic Adult Education manager Rachel Wilson in her new role at the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. Rachel reflects on her time at Olympic and shares what she's learned.

So you see, another feast of Fine Print reading. Enjoy!

Robyn Hodge

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

Constructing Utopia: constructing literacy and numeracy in a remote indigenous community

by Janine Oldfield

In Utopia, an isolated and scattered community hundreds of kilometres from Alice Springs, a literacy and VET training combination produced a project that challenges the accepted ideas about training packages and the VET national competency system. As Janine Oldfield explains, the Arlparra garden project is another argument for specific project planning for remote Indigenous communities.

At the beginning of 2004, following successful (albeit short) trials, two central Australian Indigenous education institutions—Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT)—collaborated in the delivery of training at Utopia in the Northern Territory. The training combined dual qualifications from Certificate I in Written and Spoken English (CSWE-1), and the Certificate I in Applied Design and Technology (CADT) from the Construction Training Package.

The Utopia community was identified as the best place to deliver the training as a group of women students there were highly motivated and had been involved in previous collaborations. Since they comprised a class in one location, any infrastructure gains from the training would benefit the broader community.

A newly built BIITE study centre in Utopia required landscaping, and the Arlparra garden project presented the perfect opportunity to combine student interest with course delivery. Another Alice Springs Indigenous organisation, the Tangentyere Council, provided knowledge, materials and the management of an intensive two-week phase which entailed irrigation, constructing paths and creating garden beds as well as plantings. The other tasks included garden design, concreting, barbecue construction and the selection of native species for planting. Literacy and numeracy tasks were designed to support the tasks in CADT and exploit existing student interest, such as cultural knowledge associated with the bush. The project took seven months.

This article is the story of the outcomes of this collaboration involving the delivery of the Construction Training Package, Certificate I in Spoken and Written English, and the participation of 20 women ranging in age from 20 years to 80 years, two female lecturers and two female tutors.

Constructing Utopia

Utopia is approximately 240km north-east of Alice Springs. It was known until quite recently as Utopia pastoral station. Currently the area has a population of approximately 1000 people dispersed across 17 outstations. Students largely come from three main outstations. Outstations can range in size from one or a few families to more sizeable communities. The furthest outstation is one hour from Arlparra (a major community centre), but most are within 15 to 30 minutes travel. The two major languages spoken by communities are Eastern Anmatyerre and Alywarr and it is in these languages that the students predominantly converse, speaking halting English to the few white English speakers in Utopia (largely shop owners and hawkers).

The region can be regarded as Utopian in many respects—the richness of the languages, culture and soil and plant and animal life that subsidise the expensive and nutritionally poor Western foods available at the community shop. The garden project can also be regarded as ideal in terms of a post-colonial experiment of literacy and numeracy acquisition, conducted in the year of the United Nations Literacy Decade which focused on an 'increase in absolute numbers of those who are in literacy' facilitated by partnerships at local, regional and national levels. But it was not a Utopian post-colonial experiment. While many of the students have succeeded in many of the preliminary CSWE-1 and some CSWE-1 competencies, they have not achieved any construction competencies.

This begs the question, why has applied vocational education delivered in partnership between two Indigenous educational organisations, the local community and an Indigenous community organisation not resulted in the successful completion of both courses? The answer is complex and is in part due to prior neglect of successive territory and federal governments in terms of both education and the development of a sustainable economy in remote areas.

Utopian history

Since European contact the region has been a site of intense Western exploitation, in terms of human and natural resources, and Indigenous 'pacification' including various massacres leading to the almost complete genocide of Anmatyerre people by 1901. Initially investigated for mineral deposits, it was then invaded by pastoralists in the 1920s under the auspices and sanction of the colonial state. It wasn't long before few native plants and animals remained on the land, and the locals had little choice but to become 'enslaved' by the lease holders under the approval of the federal chief protector and the sub-protectors of the Aborigines in the region (the latter being policemen, one of whom was involved in a massacre). Despite the land purchase for the locals by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission in 1976 and its conversion to inalienable Aboriginal title, this exploitation continues today.

It wasn't until 1969 that a primary school was established in the region, largely due to the resistance of pastoral leasees (there has never been a high school). According to those who have taught in the area, the school (or rather caravan) only managed to service 20 per cent of the children by 1979 and was woefully inadequate in terms of addressing curricula required. Education at that time involved the promotion of 'compliant workers for the pastoral industry' as opposed to creation of pathways to tertiary education. High staff turnover, inadequate facilities and conditions, and inadequate training of staff as well as extremely low educational department objectives and erratic funding served to compound the difficulties in delivering relevant curriculum within the community.

The legacy of this pointed marginalisation is that the vast majority of adults currently living in Utopia are functionally illiterate and innumerate and highly dependent on the vagaries of white interlopers, (and this includes the BIITE/CAT project group). Those with any significant literacy and numeracy (30 per cent of the group) attended Yirara

College, a boarding college for Indigenous students, in Alice Springs for approximately nine years but operate at NRS Level 1, or Year 3 or 4, at best.

The general historical and social context in which the students live has also created poor health status, with most suffering diabetes and some suffering heart conditions, poor hearing and poor eyesight—all of which have inhibited their learning.

The Utopia students share some of the same characteristics as Australian Migrant Education Service students from the Horn of Africa. These characteristics include:

- a lack of understanding of the purpose of tasks and activities (probably a product of cultural dis-similarity)
- difficulty following instructions, particularly written ones
- difficulty in taking risks in their learning
- liking routine and repetition in their learning
- the need for a slower pace of instruction and learning
- reliance on the teacher to direct all learning
- being easily distracted and lacking concentration
- coming and going in class due to family and other priorities (resulting in different class composition of students at every workshop).[1]

For the Utopia students, absenteeism is accentuated by 'sorry' business—the result of early and high rates of mortality in remote Indigenous communities.

Most students in the Arlparra garden project enrolled as pre-CSWE-1 (preliterate). Although they generally have quite low written literacy skills, they have been engaged in literacy training for some years and so have a number of pre-literacy skills already, such as the manual dexterity, fine motor coordination and eye-hand coordination needed for writing letters and numbers. Living in an environment where there are multiple languages spoken, and where oracy is integral to all communication, the students also possess good English language comprehension skills. However, their speaking skills are limited. Students can participate in a English conversation using 'highly simple code', and are conservative in the amount that they speak.

Constructivism in Utopia—constructing methodology

The teachers involved in this project view knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon, and language as the tool through which to create social meaning. The teachers take Piaget's view that knowledge is 'constructed' on the foundations of a learner's own knowledge framework and where conflicting concepts arise, these frameworks are modified or abandoned.[2] Our approach was to capture this

view by making learning and literacy and numeracy tasks experiential and meaningful. The task-based and content-based approach (in terms of construction) that is endemic in the delivery lends itself well to these views of learning.

As a result of a limited exposure the students involved in this project had to both English language and culture, there is an apparent absence of fundamental Western conceptual understandings. Where concepts proved 'alien', particularly in regards to Western numeracy, every attempt was made to make learning experiential, visual and 'real' world—in effect, creating a foundation of knowledge. Students worked with visual aids (such as MAB blocks, dots on paper and measuring tapes) to show numerical values and the results of simple calculations. Students who already had some foundations in this area went onto task-based activities related to the project (quantities and costs).

This task-based constructivist approach, where students were acknowledged as bringing with them knowledge and previous experience, relates intimately with the pedagogical philosophy of 'Both Ways' learning that CAT and BIITE share. Although this is loosely defined by both institutions, it relates to the practice of, where possible, using the cultural 'artefacts' and 'tools' of the students in order to gain a shared meaning and create shared discourses and access to dominant discourses, as well as the creation of multiple Indigenous identities that usurp existing colonial narratives. 'Both Ways' also entails educating non-Indigenous participants so that they can become more effective teachers of Indigenous people. In this project, these goals were manifest in the design of the garden (using the traditional Tjurkupa design of one elder in the course) and through the incorporation of students':

- lifestyle in aspects of design (outdoor sleeping and eating areas), learning the students' language and cultural protocols, and incorporating this into classroom practice
- cultural interests and knowledge into the curriculum (such as the identification of plants, and making and describing bush medicines)
- own oral knowledge for the creation of 'model' texts derived from the construction tasks, and the students' experiences living in the bush and living in an Indigenous culture.

Generally, the literacy and numeracy activities for construction comprised repeated cycles of construction tasks, or construction 'excursions' (with embedded oral English skills), literacy tasks (such as reading whole texts then devolving to phonics, syllable, spelling activities and simple grammar), and then production. We used video footage and photographs from the 'physical' tasks in order to start from and orally review the oral and visual activities

that the students had already experienced, and ensure that they formed a firm basis for written texts.

However, due to the need to meet preliminary competencies in the CSWE-1 course, as well as the lack of foundation skills for the lower levels, at least one session per day for this group was devoted to repetitive preliminary tasks such as graphology, alphabet recognition, alphabetical order, numbers and number recognition, filling in forms and providing basic personal information. Reading social sight signs was achieved within the OH&S component of the construction course, and had been a repetition of previous years.

Phonetics, word recognition, grammar and text, as well as the macro skills of speaking and listening were taught largely within the context of the project after doing 'physical activity', or were related to the project and of high interest to the students. Texts were often repeated and gave a sense of progress to students in their ability to recognise words. In addition, delivery was such that disparate levels were separated, but joint lessons and joint construction tasks were delivered where possible so that individuals did not feel too 'removed' from the group (even though some still complained of this).

Although some students were reticent about participating (and so didn't achieve as highly as others), most students were highly motivated. This was not only a product of how they enjoyed the construction tasks and the post-literacy and numeracy activities, but how they viewed learning English, often referring to it as 'work' and a 'job'.

Results

Repetition of activities, particularly in terms of preliminary literacy tasks such as learning the alphabet, alphabetical order and writing, has resulted in the completion of many competencies for pre-CSWE-1 participants. However,

repetition has to be constant otherwise the knowledge is lost. Childcare and sickness are also influencing the ability of students to succeed in phonetic and alphabetical knowledge, being highly distracted by the children in the class and tired due to hunger and sickness. Hence, there is often a sporadic achievement in literacy tasks. Students are also still having difficulty recognising the placement and shape of letters.

Higher-level students used phonetic, grammar and structural skills more independently, but there was still a heavy reliance on assistance and care had to be taken that there was no over-scaffolding. There was a lack of independence in learning.

Students did not recognise oral activities as part of the learning process and attention waned severely when oral work was being done. There was also reluctance to take risks, generally, but particularly in terms of speaking. This could be a consequence of cultural factors, both in terms of the need to be 'perfect' before producing something and the fact that there are designated senior spokespeople in the class and, as such, the younger members will not participate since it is not their 'role'. For the senior women, however, there was improvement in speaking functions, if they were repeated regularly.

The desire for perfection also influenced the student performance. Many would copy from others perceived as superior in the task. This resulted in very slow progress for some students, despite constant reinforcement that learning requires making mistakes.

Even though there were small gains in terms of literacy and numeracy, there were virtually none for the CADT course, with the exception of manual skills. The embedded abstract Western concepts in the construction competencies and their language and numeracy requirements have proven to be way above the skill level of any of the students, all of whom have a restricted lexical and numerate repertoire and theoretical understanding.

The slow road to a Utopian VET

Despite the apparent low literacy and numeracy skills of such remote Indigenous students, CAT and BIITE are required to deliver mainstream VET packages to students in the same amount of time as mainstream or functionally literate and numerate students who operate in English speaking contexts. Core construction competencies actually require Level 2, 3, or 4 NRS literacy and numeracy levels for completion. It is little wonder that our garden project did not have the Utopian competency outcomes expected by ANTA. If one considers the BIITE/CAT group as representative of Utopian literacy and numeracy levels

generally, and perhaps equating to those of other remote Indigenous communities, then the forced compliance to VET national competency standards have even wider repercussions, signifying ever-mounting barriers for remote, Indigenous learners.

This is particularly pertinent in the Northern Territory where the sustainability of remote Indigenous populations is stretched and capacity-building enterprises have not delivered literacy and numeracy rewards. Training packages have little relevance in Indigenous contexts where, due to inadequate infrastructure and basic services, the lack of a formal economy, and so the lack of any support for on-the-job requirements, and the failure of primary and secondary education, a set of more generalist skills determined and customised by the community itself and incorporating Indigenous social and cultural practises is eminently more suitable. The issue of increasing marginalisation is alarming, with threats being made to withdraw tutorial support for bridging or access courses, as well as the lack of tutorial support for apprentices and loss of funding to Indigenous educational institutions.

Training packages have been developed by industries with little or no experience in Indigenous cultures. The standards imposed by the current national competency VET system are a means by which to privilege 'white' normativeness as opposed to equity and access.[3] An urgent restructuring of the competency-based system and training packages is required to prevent further economic and social marginalisation.

The slow road to English

One of the major failings of the current training package and competency system is the behaviourist and reductionist approach to learning that underpins competency-based training, whereby the expertise of a trainer in a field and objective truths of the world and positive ontologies are 'inject(ed)' into the novice.[4] This behaviourist approach embodies the notion of Platonic 'essences' and objective truths, giving rise to the idea that the language required by a student can be deconstructed into its parts and sub-parts and assessed accordingly, and the language taught is determined by its functionality, which in effect is the imposition of a pan-Australian standard to make the student socialised 'according to the values of the dominant socio-economic group'.[5] It also suggests that the correct methodological approach, such as incorporating Indigenous Learning Styles and inclusive curricula, 'will be the panacea that leads to improved outcomes in education and hence a pathway to further training or employment'.[6]

Practitioners know that language and the language learning processes, particularly in terms of learning a

foreign language with disparate cultural concepts, are far more complex than those propounded by behaviourist and reductionist approaches to learning that underpin competency-based, empty vessel metaphors.

Learning a written, foreign language acquisition is even more problematic, particularly to preliterate learners, because of the physical, situational, structural differences and differences in form between oral and written languages. This is compounded by the extreme linguistic distance between Central Australian Languages and English generally.[7]

Research shows that the literacy practices in a particular social context help determine the evolution of a successful reader. Exposure to print, either in the form of books or everyday activities, afford emergent (pre-school) readers with 'an awareness of print, letter naming and phonemic awareness' as well as the 'conventions, purpose and function of print'. Similarly, oral exposure to language prepares the language learner for vocabulary and listening comprehension.[8] Due to their social context and lack of schooling, the Utopia students are largely unacquainted with the literacy practices of the dominant culture. There are few opportunities for them to practice using English and where English is used—at the school, the store, the health clinic and the council office—communicative interactions are limited.

With few opportunities to enhance their oral English skills, there is little chance for improved proficiency in reading. Little print literacy circulates in the community, there are no newspapers or libraries, and books are usually stored

and used at educational institutions since the students themselves often live in very substandard overcrowded conditions and/or are itinerant and have no suitable storage.

That is, the 'linguistic ecosystem in which to acquire (English) literacy is impoverished'.[9] Consequently, the students often perceive their own English language skills, particularly oral skills, as being adequate and more advanced and don't strive for higher levels. Due to the lack of employment and infrastructure, there is no evidence in Utopia to support the notion that Western education will result in rewards other than easier engagement with the Western structures and institutions for collective empowerment. Both factors are contributing to a lack of motivation to seek the learning opportunities required for language acquisition.

The social context and social dynamics also appear to influence the learning behaviour of this group. A good language learner is
- willing 'to sound foolish'
- gives 'attention to form'
- and monitors one's own and other's speech.[10]

For the Utopia students, only the most confident and senior are willing 'to sound foolish'. There is more emphasis on perfect product than process. Few students were willing to take risks and most students would repeatedly copy written work from those acknowledged as language intermediaries. Many would not participate in spoken interactions since they were often fraught with errors. This was exacerbated if they held a less senior position or an alternative role (such as the go-getter and physical 'doer') in the group. This dependency and group cohesion is not compatible with the Western ideal of an autonomous successful, language learner.

There is also the view that social context determines how we construct knowledge. However, because the social context experienced by this group does not allow the students an intimate acquaintance with dominant culture, English language acquisition is extremely problematic.

This phenomenon is described as conceptual learning.[11] It is the process of 'learning how native speakers think and use a specific set of social and cultural conventions' such as idiomatic expressions, adaptation to audience and content knowledge domain. Learners need to acquire an understanding of the conceptual uses of language within a cultural way of thinking in order to become 'bicultural' and 'bicognitive'. This requires students to change their way of thinking, their values, their beliefs and their perceptions of self, society and the universe. However, in the absence of many dominant culture features in Utopia,

the process of conceptual learning, and consequently English language acquisition, is extremely limited.

Conclusion

Because of historical educational neglect, the complexity of languages generally, the disparity between the first language and English, and the non-English language and non-Western social and cultural context in which these students live, despite some years of literacy instruction many are just coming to grips with letter-sound recognition and few can engage in oral English communication in any depth with dominant language speakers. In its concretising of English language, the Arlparra project appeared to provide a way in which students could engage with and accelerate their English language learning, and gain the skills and knowledge embedded in a nationally accredited VET program. But it has not achieved the VET ideal. The students are not much nearer to understanding, let alone implementing, the Western cultural artefacts, symbols and tools replete in construction competencies.

Embedding literacy and numeracy tasks in CBT national VET packages, even with an additional 100 hours of literacy and numeracy training, is wholly inadequate in terms of this remote Indigenous group's achievement in VET competency outcomes. If we are to retain a VET national competency system, there is an pronounced need for far greater funding, training and literacy and numeracy support and increased project planning and support which caters more closely to community needs for remote Indigenous communities.

While construction competency completion has been beyond the realms of the project so far, the project has been in many respects a real success. Virtually all the students were highly engaged in literacy, numeracy, design and construction activities and were highly motivated. Their pre-CSWE-1 and CSWE-1 competency achievements showed the extent to which the project facilitated a purpose for both learning literacy and numeracy and English language learning in a context somewhat barren of these opportunities. The project conveners, supervisors and participants hope funding bodies recognise these achievements so far, and the need of remote communities for longer term, integrated and sustainable projects that accommodate the priorities and culture as well as recognise the literacy and numeracy needs of remote communities.

Janine Oldfield has been an adult education lecturer at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education since 2001. She has special interests in Indigenous education, literacy and numeracy acquisition and epistemology (*janine. oldfield@batchelor.edu.au*).

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The internet in learning literacy: are you game?

by Jan Hagston

The Internet is a valuable teaching and learning resource. And as one researcher found when researching Internet use by adults with low literacy levels, the Internet is not only a means by which they develop their literacy skills—it becomes a reason for doing so.

During 2002, four adult literacy educators and their students took part in a research project to investigate the use of the Internet by adults with low levels of literacy. The research used a case study methodology, and four literacy educators at four different providers kept a reflective journal for a period of 10–12 teaching sessions, noting how the Internet was used in provision, learner reactions and any support given. The literacy educators were interviewed and interviews were also conducted with some learners.

Case study sites were community education providers and TAFEs in central and outer Melbourne and outer Adelaide. Students included Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) learners (some relatively recent arrivals), early school leavers and learners with a mild physical and/ or intellectual disability. Their ages ranged from 16 to 60-plus. The four literacy educators involved in the research were using the Internet in their literacy classes. Three of these classes were face-to-face with the use of the Internet integrated into literacy delivery. The fourth group met online.

Use of the Internet with literacy students raised a number of challenges for both teachers and learners. It also brought a range of benefits. This article explores some of the challenges and benefits.

Challenges

Learners varied in both their literacy and computer skill levels. As any adult literacy teacher knows, teaching a student group with a range of skill levels is a challenge: no two students have the same literacy problems, needs or interests. The difficulty of teaching a disparate group of literacy learners was compounded when uneven computer skills were added to the equation. Younger students with low levels of literacy could often confidently find their way around the Internet. Other students had both low literacy and computer skills while others had relatively higher-level literacy skills and few computer skills. A few students had relatively high levels of both literacy and computer skills. The difficulties this caused was evident in one of the case study groups where the teacher was challenged to develop skills and meet the needs of all learners.

However where the skills, both computer and literacy, of the learners were low the challenge was to ensure that the class didn't become a computer class, and that literacy and language skill development were integrated into delivery. The need to develop both literacy and computer literacy skills put pressure on the teachers involved, requiring them to increase their content knowledge related to computer literacy and to merge two content areas in delivery.
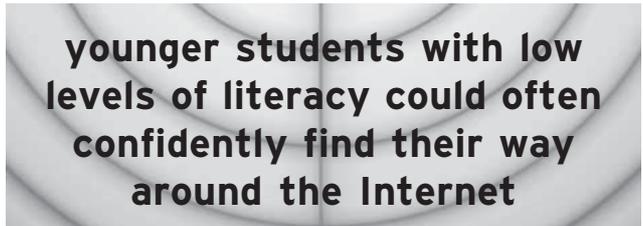
> **younger students with low levels of literacy could often confidently find their way around the Internet**

Even where technical support is available, teachers using computers and the Internet in literacy provision are called upon to solve computer problems. At times, for those teachers involved in this project, it seemed that their main role in the classroom was solving computer problems. Inevitably a level of frustration was evident but as the project progressed both teachers' and students' computer skills improved and the time spent on problem solving seemed to decrease.

The lack of time and access to computers was also a challenge. Most learners only had access to a computer and the Internet during class—for one-and-a-half to two hours a week. This amount of time was seen to be inadequate to teach new literacy and computer skills and to reinforce newly acquired skills and knowledge. This problem was accentuated when students didn't attend regularly. Despite this, learners' computer skills improved noticeably. Time was also an issue for the teachers—time to plan, to find suitable websites, set up email accounts, communicate with learners online between class and develop learning activities, and so on. Texts used in classes

needed to be chosen with care so that all learners gained something from them, and follow-up exercises needed to be developed for learners at different levels.
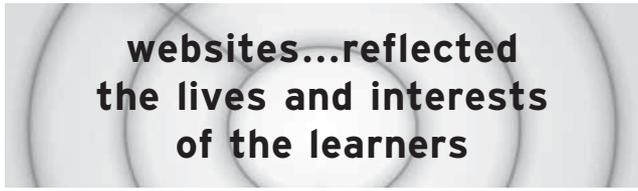
websites...reflected the lives and interests of the learners

How to deal with poor spelling in the public domains of email and discussion boards (while not dampening the enthusiasm of students), developing critical literacy skills and providing the level of support required were also challenges raised in all the case studies. How these challenges were handled depended on the literacy level of the learner group and the teacher's judgement about the audience and purpose for such public communications. Another challenge specific to the online group was how to develop a community of learners that felt comfortable communicating with each other online. Within this project this was successfully dealt with through teacher facilitation of discussion on online etiquette, modelling good online behaviour, responding quickly to students and providing activities that encouraged cooperation and communication.

Benefits

Using the Internet proved motivating for most learners and provided interesting and authentic texts (including emails, discussion boards, chats and websites) that were current and relevant to their lives. Their motivation was related to both content and design features of the Internet.

Students were able to pursue interests, scan a range of possibly interesting information, communicate with each other, family and friends through the Internet and gain an understanding of what their children were doing with computers at school. Websites about football, food and news from their countries of origin reflected the lives and interests of the learners, and provided a way of bringing 'real' texts into the classroom and situating the literacies covered in the educational setting in socially relevant contexts[1]. The immediacy of information also provided a reason to read—students could find out when the next train was due to leave or what the weather was to be tomorrow.

The format and design of websites was also motivation for many learners. Many learners involved in the project seemed to find websites less daunting to read than books. This may have been due to the limited amount of text that appears on many web pages and also to the visual and audio materials that support written text in ways that are

not possible in print-based materials. Not only did the Internet give learners a reason to read, but also provided a meaningful context for writing. Web users are prompted to not only write emails, but to complete forms, request information, write comments on bulletin boards and so on, and students involved in this project were no exception. Emails were eagerly read and responded to, and learners with higher-level skills took part in discussion boards and to a lesser extent, chats.

Broadening horizons

The Internet served to connect learners with the broader world, which was seen to have particular benefit for those learners with limited life experience and who lived in relatively sheltered situations. It not only enabled them to pursue existing interests but to explore possible new interests. The Internet brought learners into contact with different literacies. Although 'document literacy' tends to be the most common type of literacy on the Internet,[2] the breadth of the Internet means there are varied text types, and learners had exposure to text types they would not normally seek out and which are not part of their lives. In all case studies learners engaged with literacy and technology including the Internet in a range of ways[3], thus helping to prepare learners for society's current and future literacy demands.

The use of the Internet in learning environments changes the role of the teacher [4] to one of a facilitator, providing guidance and orchestrating learning experiences [5]. One result of this is increased independence of the learners. Previously dependent learners involved in the case studies took risks and acted independently of the teacher. Motivation to find information and to communicate with others seemed to be the prime factor in bringing about this changed behaviour. Use of the Internet tended to break down the concept of the teacher as the 'font of all knowledge'. Learners shared what they discovered and sought advice from each other about how to solve problems. Particularly in the online course, it became apparent that some learners had greater skill in some areas than the teacher.

With a few exceptions, learners in all four case studies enjoyed using the Internet and felt they developed both computer and literacy skills. Most saw a link between using the Internet and literacy skill development. The reasons given included:
• (I'm) reading more
• because it helps you look up things and gives you ideas
• helps writing.

Teachers felt using the Internet improved learners' literacy skills as learners regularly practised their literacy skills. Skill

development was particularly noticeable amongst the online learners, partly because the on-screen evidence of their growing computer and literacy skills was immediately obvious. Learners who were initially unwilling to write a sentence to the teacher became users of the discussion board; those with more advanced literacy skills asked questions such as 'What are passive voice sentences?'

Teaching/learning activities used were designed to develop skills such as skimming and scanning, prediction, use of visual cues, visual discrimination of icons and words. As a result learners became increasingly skilled at finding their way around websites and extracting information—evidence of the Internet's power for developing literacy skills.

Not only did the Internet support literacy skill development, it also encouraged and supported oral communication, with students discussing issues and problems and sharing experiences and information. Learners using the Internet are keen to talk about what they have found, and share experiences [6].

Weighing up the benefits and the challenges

The success of using the Internet with adults with low levels of literacy in literacy education was apparent in the four case studies. The Internet provided both a medium to practice and develop literacy skills as well as a reason for doing so. Learners' literacy and computer literacy skills and knowledge increased, sometimes quickly and considerably. The challenges of using the Internet with low literacy learners cannot be underestimated or overlooked. Teachers must be supported in helping learners to develop computer and Internet-related literacies that will better equip them for the future.

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The right to be here: working in ACE with learners with mental health issues

by Kay Viola and Robin Kenrick

An important new resource for ACE teachers was published last year. *The right to be here: Working in ACE with learners with mental health issues*, offers practical advice to help community education organisations become, in the authors' words, 'mental health-friendly'.

The disabling impact that mental illness can have on an individual is not always visible.

These learners often don't receive the same understanding and empathy that people living with physical illnesses receive.

The impact of moderate depression on a person's life is comparable to the impact of severe asthma or deafness.

The impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on a person's life is comparable to the impact of paraplegia.

The impact of schizophrenia on a person's life can be comparable to the impact of quadriplegia.[1]

Kew Neighbourhood House was a participating agency in a project by the former Boroondara Primary Care Partnership that aimed to reduce the social isolation of people in the community who were recovering from mental illness and wished to access mainstream agencies, for example clubs and activities. We learned through the project that it takes a great deal of support for people to build up their confidence to access new activities and services. One of the reasons is that there is still a great deal of misunderstanding, ignorance and fear associated with mental illness in our society—even though the statistics tell us that one in five people will suffer from a mental illness or disorder in their lifetime. We only have to listen to the terms that are used to describe mental illness in everyday language—loony, schizo, psycho—these terms are hurtful and alienating. In fact, it is hard to find a neutral language to talk about mental illness.

When people are recovering from the immediate symptoms of a mental illness or disorder, they face challenges and may need considerable support to rebuild their lives. Stigma and discrimination often adds to the difficulties people face in rebuilding normal lives, and being able to access to the full range of services and opportunities we sometimes take for granted. Within the mental health service system, this support comes from mental health case managers and workers in psychiatric disability and rehabilitation support services.

Support networks

Outside of the mental health system, people are supported by families and friends, general practitioners and community agencies such as adult community education (ACE) providers. Community learning centres and neighbourhood houses are well placed to support individuals attempting to rebuild their lives while recovering from mental illness and disorders. They can provide a range of social, recreational and educational opportunities for people in accessible and commonplace settings.

All adults have the right to access adult community education—they have the right to be here. Studies have shown[2] that once teachers understand the cyclical nature of mental illness, its physical basis, and how it may impact on an individual's learning, they are more likely to be supportive. With the financial support of the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council of Adult Community and Further Education, Robin Kenrick researched and wrote *The right to be here: Working in ACE with learners with mental health issues*. Published in 2004, the resource provides ACE teachers with insight and information on the ways they can support learners living with or recovering from mental illness.

The resource provides information, understanding and practical strategies to increase access and success for learners with mental health issues in ACE settings. It suggests:
- some of the possible impacts of mental health issues on an individual
- some of the potential barriers a learner with mental health issues may face in accessing learning organisations
- how to create a 'mental health-friendly' learning organisation that ensures their 'right to be here'
- how to create a 'mental health-friendly' classroom

- strategies for accommodating the needs of learners
- supportive assessment strategies to maximise success
- where to find useful online resources on different mental health issues
- case studies by ACE teachers to read, reflect on and discuss with other teachers.

Access and equity for ALL

Learners with mental health issues are arguably the most invisible group in ACE. With the ACE commitment to inclusion of all marginalised and disadvantaged learners, it is important that the needs of all learners in this group are accommodated, and steps and actions taken to ensure their right to be here.

For learners whose mental health issues are outwardly marked by 'different' behaviour there is an increased risk of discrimination. A person with a disability has the right to study at any educational institution in the same way as any other student. Their rights are legally enshrined under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).

Under the Disability Discrimination Act, disability includes:

> …any condition which affects a person's thought processes, understanding of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour

> …disability that existed but doesn't exist anymore such as a person who has had an episode of mental illness; [3]

Discrimination includes discriminatory questions and harassment. Direct discrimination happens when a person is treated less favourably than others because of their disability. Indirect discrimination is when a condition (physical barriers, policies, procedures, practices, selection criteria, rules or requirements) stops a person with a disability from doing something. The requirement that a certain number of classes be attended during a course may be indirect discrimination if the person has interrupted attendance because of their mental health issue.

The 'need to know' about learners

Just as there is no such thing as a typical adult learner, there is no such thing as a typical learner with a mental health problem. Knowing a person's mental health diagnosis is of little use in predicting how someone will cope in ACE organisations, as no two individuals' experiences of the same mental health issue will be identical.

Due to the episodic nature of mental health issues and their developmental and fluctuating natures, learners will need different levels of support. An 'episode' is a period when the symptoms of the mental health problem reoccur. This can be triggered when a person becomes overstressed or there has been a traumatic event or a change in medication.

All learners will have different needs and be at different stages in the process of recovery. A learner participating in a course may be:
- fully recovered from their mental health issue and not needing any support
- distressed as a result of a recent personal loss
- experienced at managing their long-term mental health issue and able to seek support when needed
- vulnerable, and in need of support having only recently been discharged from a mental health service
- about to relapse
- unaware that they are unwell and having never sought treatment.[4]

Creating a 'mental health-friendly' organisation

ACE organisations can become mental health-friendly, by providing ongoing training for support and staff, and by establishing and allocating staff roles and responsibilities around mental health issues. This training and support can be facilitated by extending networks and links to mental health services. ACE organisations can specifically identify and target this group of learners as part of their organisation's planning process, with varied provision, flexible delivery and assessment options. This will signal to learners that they will have access to supportive non-stigmatising learning environments.

The resource suggests a number of ways that ACE organisations can signal their support for learners with mental health issues: display brochures and information posters related to mental health; establish a community information section on local mental health services; use Mental Health Week and Adult Learners Week to promote awareness and inclusion. Some ACE organisations identify themselves as mental health friendly in promotional materials with lines such as:
- 'Fee relief/support for people recovering from mental illness'
- 'If you feel unwell and miss a few sessions, you will be welcome back'
- 'If you get worried or stressed, this could be the class for you'.

The process of creating a mental health-friendly ACE organisation needs to be driven by the committee of management and the manager. Unless management is committed to inclusion of people with mental health issues, it will not be possible to create a mental health-friendly learning organisation. Additionally, management also has

responsibilities for the mental health and wellbeing of staff and to non-discriminatory practices in relation to the employment of staff.

The role of the teacher in the mental health-friendly classroom

Teachers are crucial to the creation of a learning environment that is respectful and supportive of the rights of all learners. The pivotal teaching role includes:

- Developing relationships with learners based on mutual respect, and support that values their life experience and who they are.
- Being interested in and listening to all learners.
- Respecting a student's confidentiality.
- Focusing on learners' strengths as the building blocks for future learning.
- Providing positive and encouraging feedback to all learners.
- Providing an empowering learning environment where learners feel comfortable raising issues that concern them.
- Using a collaborative approach to problem solving with learners.
- Establishing a learner code of rights and responsibilities as a group at the beginning of the course, and negotiating any changes to accommodate needs of individuals.
- Providing clear boundaries when a learner's actions disrupt the group's activities.
- Empathising with any difficulties that learners are having.
- Exemplifying a zero tolerance to discriminatory behaviour, sexual harassment or bullying by a learner towards another learner—ensuring that no learner is humiliated or embarrassed by other students, and that intrusive or insensitive questions are not asked.
- Being clear in one's roles as facilitator of learning and not that of a counsellor/social worker.
- Maintaining sensitivity to all learners' needs while keeping the focus on learning tasks.
- Being clear about the boundaries for classroom discussions.
- Being prepared to address issues with learners, for example raising concerns if a learner is unwell and suggesting that they contact their GP.
- Seeking permission from a learner to discuss an issue about them with someone else.

Strategies for helping learners come back to the classroom after a difficult or embarrassing situation as result of behaviour caused by their mental health problem are also suggested. It is important to ask the learner what can be done to support their return. There may be a need to explain a learner's behaviour to other students.

Teachers only need to know about a person's mental health issue as it relates to their learning. Learners may want to disclose that they may have difficulty attending class, their medication makes them drowsy, or they get anxious or stressed easily.

Supportive teaching and learning strategies

One of the strengths of the resource is its information about how to support adult learners who are experiencing difficulty. It includes detailed information on the impact of disorganised thinking, anxiety, low self esteem, disturbed sleep, and hospitalisation, for example with tabled information on the implications for the classroom and suggested solutions for how best to deal with them. Adult literacy teachers will be reassured to know that many of the strategies they use to adapt their teaching and assessment strategies for individual needs are reflected in the suggested solutions section.

Managing 'different' behaviours was the most requested topic to be included in the resource. It challenges teachers with an important disclaimer:

> A learner living with a mental health issue is no more likely—than any other learner—to provide challenges in the learning environment. Any learner can display 'different' behaviour.

How others view a situation defines whether a particular behaviour is seen as 'difficult', 'inappropriate', 'unusual', 'problematic' or 'harmful'.[5] As such, any behaviour needs to be considered in its full context: the meaning for the learner concerned, the cause of the behaviour and the dynamics of the situation. Different behaviour, therefore, is behaviour that we don't understand. The more experienced one is working with learners from diverse backgrounds, the more respectful and flexible one will be about difference and the more one can challenge one's prejudices and preconceptions. Different behaviour can make sense once the causes are understood.

> Robert would often lie on the floor talking to himself in our quiet room between classes. Robert has told us that when he lies down he doesn't hear the voices as much. This behaviour makes great sense to Robert but may be interpreted as unusual by others who don't know him or the reasons for the behaviour.

The right to be here also addresses the importance of balancing the needs of the individual with those of the group—and the teacher. There is no suggestion that teachers deny their own needs or the emotional impact supporting others may have on their health. It is important that teachers debrief to others, and that they have management's support in clearly defining their roles and knowing where and when to draw the line.

Resourcing ACE

There are a number of quality resources now available online that can support organisations and teachers to become mental health-friendly. The resource has detailed information on

where to find information on support services, illnesses, carer websites and particular community groups such as youth and aged groups. Websites that will provide fact sheets and useful teaching texts are also included.

The final section provides case studies that give teachers' reflections on working with people with mental health issues in their class. The case studies demonstrate the uniqueness of each situation, the inherent tensions present when managing diverse learner needs, the kinds of accommodations that teachers can make and, of course, the importance of treating all learners as individuals. The case study examples are detailed and honest accounts of the struggle of the student, the teachers and the rest of the class to include students with particular learning difficulties.

This resource reinforces the ACE ethos of welcome and inclusiveness for people whose usual experience is isolation and stigma. *The right to be here* will raise teachers' awareness of the needs and struggles of people with mental illness, and provide them with strategies to adapt their practice to support these learners in community settings. Teachers, supported by this manual, should feel a growing confidence in their capacity to support and guide students with mental health problems in their classrooms.

The right to be here: Working in ACE with learners with mental health issues can be downloaded from the Eastern Metropolitan Region of ACFE home page at: *http://www.acfeemr.vic.edu.au/acfeemr/index.htm*

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Coaching: the changing face of adult learning

by Sue Constable

Coaching today is more than a couple of hours' quick pre-exam revision with a retired English teacher. In business, it is regarded as an effective training tool at executive and senior management levels. Read on, especially the 'day in the life of a coach' section, and ask yourself whether coaching could become your new career.

In recent times there has been growing awareness of coaching as a way of integrating education and training with the demands of changing work roles and responsibilities. Corporate Australia has been quick to embrace this methodology—what can it offer ACE education? What is coaching and can we use it?

Coaching is the second-fastest growing industry in the USA, and the number of coaches has grown significantly in Australia in the last five years. Coaches generally work one-on-one with an individual for between an hour and 90 minutes, and would typically meet between four and six times over a six-month period. Life coaches work with individuals who may be in transition or facing significant life or personal change. Business coaches work with individuals in a work setting to help them enhance their personal and professional effectiveness. Typically, business coaches work with managers in the private and public sector who may excel in the role of technical experts or specialists, but struggle to effectively manage and lead others.

Coaches have varied professional backgrounds in areas like education, psychology, business, human resources and elite sport. In Australia the industry remains largely unregulated, but the Australian chapter of the International Coach Federation, (ICF) has hundreds of members. Coaching is now a subject of academic research: Australia's first PhD in Life Coaching was awarded to Tony Grant from the coaching psychology unit at the University of Sydney. Grant started out as a carpenter, moved into direct sales and marketing, then took up psychology in his 30s. Now, in addition to lecturing and speaking on coaching, he runs a private coaching and consulting practice for executives in the private and public sector.

What is coaching and who is using it?

Michael Cavanagh, deputy director of the coaching psychology unit at the University of Sydney, describes coaching as a:

> collaborative, solution-focused, results-orientated, systematic process in which the coach facilitates the

enhancement of work/life performance, self-directed learning and personal growth of other individuals.[1]

Coaching has become an important part of adult education at senior management and executive levels of industry. It has become much more widespread in the last five years. It is estimated that 25 per cent of senior managers and executives are currently working with a coach. Large organisations such as Telstra, ANZ, NAB, Ford, Coles Myer and Australia Post continue to work with coaches. In some cases, executives on the move between organisations are negotiating coaching as part of their salary packaging. But coaching is not confined to corporate Australia. Its benefits, particularly to management, are being recognised by the government sector. Towards the end of last year the Victorian Department of Education and Training announced plans to implement coaching programs in 2005 for school principals.

Why coaching?

The rationale for the growth and use of coaching is related to particular demographics at senior management levels in Australian industry. A 2002 Australian survey carried out by DDI Consultancy and reported in the *Age* newspaper of June 15 that year showed that 91 per cent of organisations had difficulty finding talent at all levels of management, particularly the senior level. In Australia, the average age of retirement of senior managers has dropped to around 50. Increasingly this means that those appointed to CEO positions of responsibility are younger and less experienced. The survey concluded that: 'Younger CEOs sometimes lack maturity, self awareness and people skills, best practice companies are identifying top talent and creating development opportunities for them'.

Emerging research in the US in the 1990s[2] demonstrated that emotional intelligence (EI)—the broader range of qualities which enable people to excel: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills—were actually twice as important as the technical or cognitive skills needed to operate effectively in jobs at all levels. Researcher Daniel Goleman concluded that 'the most appropriate way to improve emotional intelligence is

through individual coaching, on the job learning, constant practice and reflection'.

Whereas training can increase productivity by 22 per cent, training with follow-up coaching has been found to increase productivity by 88 per cent.[3] In 2001, the US-based Manchester Consulting Group conducted what is believed to be the first major research project to quantify the business impact of executive coaching. In a study of 100 executives who had completed a coaching program between 1996 and 2000, they found that the estimated return on investment was more than five times the initial outlay. Dollar amounts aside, less tangible business impacts of coaching were also noted, including improved teamwork, improved relationship with peers, improved job satisfaction and reduced conflict in the workplace.

General benefits of coaching
- increases productivity, communication, staff commitment and loyalty
- decreases levels of stress and tension
- assists individuals to remain loyal and committed to the company
- helps prevent executive derailment (up to 33 per cent for senior executives)
- develops interpersonal skills
- improves strategic thinking and planning
- aids in developing a culture of trust and personal responsibility
- develops emotional intelligence
- assists in the learning of new competencies
- aligns team members with the goals and visions of their organisation
- develops team unity and team spirit.[4]

What makes an effective coach?
Effective coaches have superior communication skills, high levels of emotional intelligence and a strong understanding of the emotions that individuals experience when they are contemplating and undertaking personal and professional change. Coaching is non-directive, and in both life coaching and business coaching the agenda of the coaching conversations is set by the 'coachee' and centres on goal setting and problem solving.

Business coaches are not required to have the same levels of technical expertise as the individuals they are coaching, but effective business coaches with credibility are those who have been members of large organisations themselves, and may have held senior management roles inside these organisations.

There are many parallels and commonalities between teaching, training and psychology. Coaching borrows heavily from these fields, but is more solution-focused and centres on the individual. See Table 1.

Diagnostic tools in coaching
The lifestyles inventory (LSI) is a tool that measures individual effectiveness by measuring the individual's thinking styles and behaviour. There are two components to the LSI. The LSI-1 is used as a self-assessment and the LSI-2 is an assessment by five others on how they see the individual behaving as a person, team member and manager. The LSI-2 is also known as 360-degree feedback, a challenging appraisal by others with whom one works.

> training with follow-up coaching has been found to increase productivity by 88 per cent

Statistical analysis of the LSI use over the last 20 years, assessing over 30,000 middle and senior managers, has created a database of identified management styles that are clearly associated with excellence. This analysis has also identified the management styles that are ineffective, marginal and adequate. When an individual knows their style they are then able to compare it to those from the database and benchmark their performance against others to evaluate their present level of effectiveness.

Coaches can undertake training and accreditation in the use of a diagnostic tool such as the LSI to provide valid data on how the individual sees themselves, their self-perception and how others see them. Interestingly, in only 50 per cent of cases is there a match between how individuals see themselves and how others see them. The feedback of results to some individuals can be confronting, and it is the responsibility of the coach to make that confrontation meaningful to bring about effective and positive change for the individual and their workplace performance.

Coaches can use or choose from a number of tools. Swinburne University has recently developed an emotional intelligence tool known as SUEIT or GENOS. Larger organisations have developed their own 360-degree surveys on generic leadership behaviours and values, and the results of these may be debriefed with the coachee by the coach.

After meetings to clarify roles and responsibilities of the coach and coachee, and to clarify any concerns that the individual may have about the nature and purpose of coaching, a typical coaching relationship may start with

Table 1

Coaching	Training	Counselling	Mentoring
Continual development driven by individual needs and goals	Occasional, often driven by organisational needs	Sets up specific action plan to address specific underperformance	Invents a future based on the expertise and wisdom of another
Emphasises new thinking styles, developing new behaviours and new actions	Individuals may not always learn new competencies, may not lead to new actions	Looks for causes behind the problem	Gives advice and opinions regarding strategies and policies
Emphasises strengths and weaknesses	Organisation or trainers set agenda, may not pinpoint individual strengths and weaknesses	Emphasises deficits	May have considerable power and influence to advance the individual's career and advocate promotion
Uses comprehensive assessment tools such as the LSI	Minimal or no assessment	Minimal assessment	Conveys and instils the standards, norms and values of the profession/organisation
Proactive, looks at problems before they arise	Reactive, may be implemented because of problems /organisational need	Explores reactive problems and behaviours	Gives advice on how to deal with problems based on mentor's own experience
Ongoing contract of 3–6 months	Occasional	Needs-based and occasional	Needs-based
Individual sets the agenda	Agenda fixed and set by trainer	Needs-based or may be driven by organisational requirements for formal performance appraisal	Mentor may set the agenda
Works with client to clarify values and enhance intrinsic motivation	Change comes from the outside	Works with client, whose behaviours may be 'recalibrated' to fit with the organisation's values and business needs	Mentor works with mentee to ensure behaviours are aligned with organisation
Personalised, geared towards individual's needs and aspirations	One size fits all	Personalised	Personalised
Ongoing feedback and continuous learning	Rarely involves feedback	Depends on competence/skills of manager, feedback may be irregular and reactive	Depends on competence/skills of manager, feedback may be irregular and reactive.*

* = Skiffington, Coaching at Work, Sydney, 2000

an explanation of the diagnostic tool, and then a one-on-one confidential debrief of the results with the coach. The coach then works with the coachee to identify strategies to enhance the individual's effectiveness. According to their individual needs, learning style and commitment to change, the coach may rehearse some strategies with the coachee, engage in role play, talk through the options for changing thinking styles and behaviour, and discuss the likely responses to this changed behaviour by others in the workplace.

A day in the life of a coach

Adult educators contemplating a career change, and thinking that coaching might be a possible pathway, may be interested in reading about a business coach's working day. While the work is mostly one-to-one, the demands are many. Like ACE education, some coaches work collegiately, making time to support other coaches. As in ACE, the confidentiality of participants is respected. In the following profile the names have been changed.

7.30 am—prospective interview

My day commences with a 7.30 am meeting with an HR manager and potential coachee of a large retail organisation.

'Lynne' has years of industry and management experience and is now struggling to effectively manage five additional staff who have come out of another area. They are unaccustomed to her results-focused style, and her blunt approach to giving feedback, and they are feeling unmotivated and insecure.

Lynne's colleague, who is currently working with a coach, has encouraged her to set up an interview with a number of coaches to discuss how coaching could help her to improve the way she manages and motivates her team. I meet Lynne and we exchange professional background histories before discussing her particular work challenges, her view of coaching and her understanding of how the coaching process works. I point out that it is essential that there is the right chemistry between coach and coachee, and that she is doing the right thing by interviewing a number of coaches.

We clarify the role of coach and coachee, and discuss the value of using the LSI as a starting point for ongoing coaching discussions. She is satisfied that this tool will provide her with feedback on how she is performing as a manager, and how she is seen by her direct reports,

colleagues and own manager. I explain that the role of the coach is then to work with the coachee on an action plan to address areas where she might need to develop her skills or change the way she thinks. Lynne asks a few more questions on confidentiality and is reassured when I inform her that as a member of the International Coach Federation (ICF) I am bound by a strict code of confidentiality. The HR Manager rounds off the interview by saying that she will let me know which coach Lynne has selected in the next week or so.

10 am—public sector manager

By 10 am, I am in the city and in the meeting room of a government department where I meet 'Andrea' for our third coaching meeting. Andrea, 35, has recently joined the public sector after a successful career in the corporate world, and is struggling to deal with the different culture that she sees as overly bureaucratic and hierarchical. Her LSI results indicated that others saw her as relatively effective in her current job role but still indecisive, avoiding having difficult conversations with direct reports on their performance and constantly deferring to her own manager for direction. Andrea is frustrated because she feels that she has to defer to her manager, because whenever she makes decisions herself she is criticised and castigated in public meetings. We have been working on strategies to improve her self-confidence and assertiveness and in our last meeting role-played a future meeting with her manager where she would propose a change to a long-standing process.

We discussed how the meeting went, and Andrea professed that even though she felt very nervous at the time, because she was prepared and had rehearsed potential rebuttals to her manager's expected negativity, she felt able to present the proposal in a positive way. Her manager had agreed to the new process being implemented, with a few minor changes, and had congratulated her on her thorough preparation and planning skills. We talk more about other opportunities for Andrea to proactively challenge existing systems and processes, and what approaches she might use. I leave her with some reflective questions to consider and we agree to meet in three weeks time.

12.30 pm—LSI results debrief

I grab a quick sandwich from a city café as I walk to my next meeting, which I know is going to be a difficult one for the coachee. Tom is a 33-year-old business analyst who works for a medium-sized manufacturing company. I have coached the CEO and members of his executive team for the past 18 months, and am now working with 12 people like Tom from the next management level. Tom has good organisational and planning skills and is highly skilled technically. While he is able to develop good working relationships with external customers, his own colleagues

have given me feedback that they find him overbearing, arrogant and aggressive. His LSI profile confirms that this is the way others see him. We exchange pleasantries for a few minutes and then he asks me angrily why we can't just get straight into talking about what the results show. I explain to him again that only in about 50 per cent of cases is there a match between how we see ourselves and how others see us, and that some of the common emotions that people experience when they receive confronting results are shock, anger and denial.
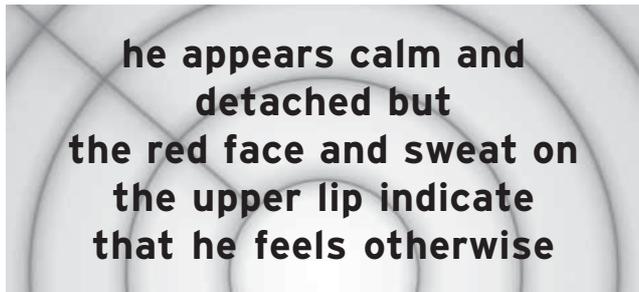
> **he appears calm and detached but the red face and sweat on the upper lip indicate that he feels otherwise**

My job as a coach, I tell him, is to guide him through this stage and lead him to a place where he can accept the results and then move into an action-planning phase where he can work on implementing some concrete strategies to improve his effectiveness. This is met with an impatient shrug of the shoulders, so I show him the results and give him a few minutes to reflect on them. The results indicate that although others see him as an achiever and reasonably affiliative he is considered forceful, dominating and bossy with poor interpersonal skills. He appears calm and detached but the red face and sweat on the upper lip indicate that he feels otherwise.

I ask him how he feels about the results and he mutters something about behaving that way because that is the only way to get results, and he feels that he is the only one in his team who is working hard. I put the results aside and ask him some probing questions about career ambition and direction, and he is quick to tell me that he wants to get to an executive level in a medium to large organisation within five years. I ask him to define the skills that an effective executive would display, and then ask him how he would currently measure up to this ideal, given the feedback that he has received.

There is a long pause and he confesses that he needs to work on his people skills.

We terminate the day's discussion with a commitment from him to respond to an email I will send him in the next couple of days, with reflective questions in it for him to consider on how he could use our next four coaching meetings.

2 pm—check the mobile

I check my mobile and find an urgent message from a colleague who has just finished a difficult coaching meeting and wants to talk about it with me. There is also a message from a client who I worked with six months ago who would like to talk to me about running two coaching skills workshops for her management team. They need to improve their own coaching skills, she says.

3 pm—proposal writing

Back at the home office I call my colleague and we talk over her coaching session. We agree to meet tomorrow for an hour to talk through how she felt about how it went, and what she could have done differently. Supporting coaching colleagues is important. For me, talking with other coaches about my concerns on the lack of progress of some coachees, or their lack of motivation to embrace change is therapeutic. The day concludes with emails, correspondence and proposal writing: a new organisation seeking to embed a coaching culture into their organisation wants the design and delivery of a program to improve the coaching skills of its managers.

So what is it about coaching that I enjoy? My passion, as it was when I was a teacher and then an adult educator, is to work with individuals to help them learn, grow and change. I work with all my clients for a minimum of six months, and there are many whom I still see, more in a mentoring role, for a period of years. My own personal experience of working as a coach inside a global multinational organisation has allowed me to develop a deep understanding of the language of business and commerce and management, and given me credibility with managers whose natural instinct is to value technical skills way beyond interpersonal and communication skills. Coaching individuals to improve their effectiveness at individual, group and organisational levels supports the development of positive and effective organisational cultures, making such workplaces healthier places to work in.

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If you haven't started blogging yet…

What is a blog? It's a weblog, as Jane Westworth explains. And more than that, she tells us who is using them, why you should use one, how to create one and how to use it.

You may not realise that the word 'blog' has become part of our everyday language. It was included in the Oxford Dictionary last year and in the US Merriam-Webster dictionary this year. (*http://news. bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4059291.stm*). Of course, just because something is 'cool' or 'in' doesn't make it important, but if it can improve communication, extend literacy skills and add to your teaching repertoire, it could be worth exploring. This article puts forward a practical approach to starting blogging and using it in a literacy classroom.

Blogging is easy. It's also fun and it's an instant way for any teacher and any class to set up a web page. Consider the benefits. Blogging:

- requires minimal computer skills—yet you learn a lot!
- requires no previous online experience
- provides a basis for the continuing acquisition of both online and computer skills in an educational context
- can be used to create websites for individual students' work.

Blogging is an excellent way to set up a 'discussion board' in which a whole class can participate. This is especially valuable in the literacy or ESL classroom because:

- it links the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking
- it is owned by the students themselves, and gains its momentum from their own enthusiasm
- it provides the teacher with an easy introduction to the concept of online teaching and learning
- a group blog can become a virtual online course, containing a series of scaffolded tasks, with links to selected websites
- a group blog also continues the classroom discourse outside the classroom itself, and provides a safe chat room for students.

Look and try

It's a good idea to have a look at some blogs first, and then just start experimenting. One thing to remember is that you can create as many blogs as you like and delete them. You don't have to use your real name, and no one but you will know about any mistakes you make.

So, what is a blog?

A blog—short for 'weblog'—was originally just that: a log, or journal, on the web. Most blogs now are made on free, easy to use sites such as *www.blogger.com*. Using a tool such as this, it takes about five minutes to get your own website launched. You name your own site, choose your own template, and you receive an Internet address (referred to as a URL) for your site. You can then access your blog at any time, from any computer and from anywhere in the world. Weblogs have been around since the inception of the World Wide Web, although all the early ones had to be created painstakingly by their owners. The majority of blogs may initially appear to be to be diaries, because a blog lends itself to personal writing and is a very quick and accessible way of jotting down thoughts. The blog is, however, constantly evolving. It is probably now better defined as an online journal, distinguished by a mixture of comment, reflection and a network of links. All blogs share some specific characteristics:

- entries (or 'posts') are short, informal and regularly updated
- a blog's contents are displayed in a reverse-chronological order so that the most recent entry, the latest information, is at the top of the page
- each post is time- and date- stamped
- each blog contains links to other blogs—these form a network of information, connecting bloggers to other bloggers, or to other pertinent sites
- most blogs now have space for other bloggers to comment on what has been written, but this is a more recent addition, and you don't have to use it.

And who uses them?

Blogs are increasingly used by journalists (a blog is actually an excellent way for journalists to post their copy from anywhere in the world. Have a look at the BBC blog (*http:/ /news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/2876855.stm*). Recent events such as 9/11 and the Iraq war have given rise to a whole new generation of bloggers writing, posting photos and expressing very strong emotions about the world they live in. Salem Pax, better known now as the Baghdad Blogger (*http://dear_raed.blogspot.com/*) is the creator of a blog that has now been turned into a book, being studied this year as a VCE text.

Blogs are used by researchers to collect and to comment on research notes, and more than one thesis is known to have been written in this way! In fact, Blogger provides a tool called Blog This! which enables the creation of a kind of portable favourites list, and also enables Internet links to be saved as drafts, with brief notes rather than as published copy. Many blogs display specialist information in a particular field, and link the visiting blog reader to additional sites. One excellent blog to check out is that of Dr Anne Clyde at the University of Iceland *http:// www.hi.is/%7Eanne/weblogs.html*. This contains probably the most comprehensive catalogue of links to get you exploring the world of blogs!

Why use blogs in the classroom?

More and more teachers—in every level of education— are using blogs, and discovering the different ways in which they can supplement face-to-face teaching. It is perhaps easiest to begin with a group blog. Here the teacher is the administrator and each student is sent an email inviting them to join the blog, and to take part in the ensuing discussion. Each student comment can be valued and extended by the teacher, and it is an invaluable way to promote discussion, to continue the classroom discourse outside the classroom itself, and to encourage students to explore the Internet. Later, students may want to set up their own individual blogs and these provide a rewarding publication space for individual work.

The degree of teacher involvement in these individual blogs is negotiable: the teacher can be merely a reader of the finished work, or, if the student elects to invite the teacher to become a member of the blog, can comment on individual posts, or be involved in an ongoing dialogue with the student. Each student's blog can be linked to the group blog, and both group discourse and individual writing can be shared. The degree of autonomy, and the accompanying sense of pride, is high, and student writers quickly gain confidence and computer-literacy skills. Conferencing blogs are great ways of getting small groups of writers to share a blog, and to conference each other's writing.

Tips on running a group blog as a discussion board:

1 Make it chatty. Students need to hear the familiarity of your voice. Try to write just as you speak.
2 Reassure and encourage your students, just as you would in the classroom.
3 Model what you want your students to do. Chat about what you did at the weekend. Only then can you invite them to tell you what they did, too.

4 Respond to all students' comments, just as you would in the classroom.
5 Respect what they have to say. One way to do this is to quote them accurately by cutting and pasting a phrase of their actual words, and then responding to their ideas.
6 Provide links to other sites you want them to look at, but be specific about what you want them to do when they get there.
7 Link the blog to the classroom. Talk about the blog in the classroom, and the content of a particular lesson on the blog.
8 Try to have some time in a computer room or library with your students, so that you can sit beside each student and consolidate the link between face-to-face teaching and the online dimension.
9 Remember that your discussion board is an extension board of the work you do in the classroom. It works because you are combining the skills you use every day as a classroom teacher with the flexible access of the online environment.

How to set up a blog

Practise setting up your own blog first while you have time to experiment with it. Use one of the free programs available on the Internet. I initially used *www.blogger. com* because I found it the easiest to use, and the following information is based on the way in which that site operates. There are other sites, but this one is particularly user-friendly. The actual process takes only a few minutes, but, as there are already five million bloggers, it's a good idea to be prepared with a choice of usernames, passwords and even an alternative name for your site. The choice of username is the trickiest: anyone who is familiar with a hotmail account will have experienced this before. Just keep remembering a large proportion of the other five million other bloggers are also called Jane, and that you have to be creative in your use of numbers, repetition or writing names back to front as well. Remember too that everything can be changed at a later date. You can change your password, your name, the description, name and address of your site—even the whole template. You can, if you change your mind, just cancel your site.

Using Blogger

The information given by Blogger is constantly updated. It is perfectly possible that by the time you read this, some aspect of Blogger will have changed, but the guidance offered is always clear and if you do encounter a problem, there is an excellent help service.

Getting started

Go to *http://www.blogger.com/start* and click on the hot link to: Take a quick tour. This will tell you very simply what blogging is, and lead you to the first of the three steps in creating a blog:

1 Create a blog now. This is where you will need to enter your chosen username, password, and email address. You also have to agree to the terms of use. You then move on to:

2 Name your blog. Here you have to remember those five million bloggers again. Your first choice may be unavailable, but adding a few extra letters or numbers will make it acceptable. It is a good idea to host your blog with Blogger. It costs you nothing and the site is maintained for you. Your blog title and your blog address will then be almost identical.

3 Choose a template. Click on as many of the thumbnails as you like and enlarge them to see what they look like. When you have found one that you like, select it by clicking on the spot beside it.

You can see Blogger creating your blog, and only a few seconds later, you can start posting (publishing to your blog). Keep your first message short, and familiarise yourself with the layout of the frame. Notice that you can

change the font, font size, use bold, italics, different colours, links, spell check, shortcuts, and the usual formatting devices that you will be familiar with from using programs such as Word. You can preview your message and publish it. A few minutes later, you will be able to see it.

Troubleshooting—inside your blog

You need to become familiar with the inside of your blog so that you can change anything you wish. The inside of a blog is neatly organised—rather like a filing cabinet. There are four black tabs in the top row: Posting (which you have just done), Settings, Templates and View Blog. It is the last one that enables you to see the outside of your blog, with your first post in the template you have chosen.

Underneath the black tab Posting are three blue tabs: Create, Edit Posts and Status, all of which relate to your actual writing. Create is the page your blog first opened at, and where you will return each time you want to write and publish another post (or entry). You will find that when you open your blog in future, it will open at Edit Posts, and from this page you can edit, view or, if you wish, delete your posts. Status just shows your current state of publication.

All the black tabs enable you to adjust your blog, and it's important to set them up as you wish. Settings contain eight blue subsections:

1 The first, Basic, allows you to write a brief description of your blog, and offers you some basic formatting choices. It is probably best at first to leave these exactly as they are, although you may wish not to publish your blog on the Blogger listings. If you change anything, remember to save the changes. If, at any time, you wish to delete your blog, this is the place to do it.

2 Publishing just summarises your publishing details, and you shouldn't need to do anything to this at this stage.

3 Formatting offers you various options, all of which can be explored at a later stage, but a good one to fix at the very beginning is the Time Zone. If you scroll down, you will (eventually!) find Australia and its various time zones, and you can adjust your time settings easily. You will notice the occasional orange question mark—all of these lead to explanations and advice in Blogger Help and you can return and explore them at your leisure.

4 Comments allow you to decide whether you want to allow anyone else to comment on your blog. If you

want to gain confidence first, select Hide—you can always change your mind later.

5 Archiving merely gives you details of how frequently your posts can be archived, and offers you the chance to give each post its own separate page. Play around with this later, especially if you decide to have a group blog—you may like it.

6 Site feed is a relatively new addition, and until you are a really professional blogger, you probably won't need to touch it.

7 Email gives you two possibilities—you can choose to have your blog emailed to you whenever you publish; you can also provide an email address so that you can post to your blog from your email, rather than logging on each time. And if this sounds too complicated, just leave the boxes blank!

8 When you click on Members, you will see that the only name and email address displayed is your own. By clicking on Add team member(s), you have the facility to invite other people to join your blog. This is the section you need to use if you want to run a 'friends and family blog' with family news (and photographs), or a group blog with students.

The black tab Template gives you two options—to edit your current template (the 'page design' for your blog) or to pick a new one. In order to edit, you need to understand some basic HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language or 'computer language') and it's a really good way of beginning to understand it if you're interested in doing so. (Try out *http://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/techtorial/techtorial026.shtml* to learn some.)

If you just want to check out the new templates occasionally, you can do so easily, and you won't lose your own template unless you choose to.

Keeping your privacy or making new contacts

One of the most important details is not immediately obvious—above the tags you will see three more options: Back to dashboard, Help? and Sign out. The first of these takes you to what will, in future log-ins, be your way in to your blog, or blogs. The dashboard is your 'driving seat' from which you can see the blogs you have, read the updated news (or gossip) from Blogger News, and most importantly, on the right hand side, Edit your Profile. Under the Privacy section, make sure that anything you do not want shared with the rest of the world is not ticked.

The Display section gives you the chance to select a Display Name to appear on your posts. You do not have to use your

own name, or your (probably lengthy and confusing) username. You can choose your own identity! You can also fill in as much, or as little, of your user profile as you wish. You might want to share the fact that you live in Melbourne, and work in the field of education, and nothing else. It's your choice, but it should be an informed one.

Student privacy

It is essential to ensure that student privacy is maintained. Students need to be aware that in publishing to the web, they are publishing their work in a public arena. They need to be assisted in keeping their profiles private, and given assistance in creating a username which is perhaps just their first name, and not a name so complete or so unusual that they can be identified by it. I restrict the comments facility on my students' blogs so that they feel confident that their site is their own, and cannot be commented on by anyone else.

Conclusion

I have been using blogs in my teaching for three years now. I have witnessed and reflected upon the ways in which they have made tentative writers into confident ones, and have helped to form flexible and supportive communities of learners. Blogs offer a different way into online learning, where the discourse is never static, and where a new kind of dialogue of learning and exploration is constantly emerging.

I hope you enjoy using them as much as I have done. Good luck, and happy blogging!

Jane Westworth has taught in England, Denmark, New Zealand and Australia, and now teaches English for Academic Purposes in the RMIT School of Education. She has a special interest in the design and development of teaching materials in new contexts, and in September 2004 was asked to set up a blog to help members of VALBEC and ACAL who wanted to blog. Jane is willing to help to any *Fine Print* readers who want to set up their first blog. Contact her on *jane.westworth @rmit.edu.au.* Thanks Jane!

Other sites to look at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/askbruce/articles/ browse/makeblog_4.shtml brief and helpful introduction to blogging.

http://www.weblogg-ed.com/ - Will Rosen's site about weblogs and education.

ttp://faculty.deanza.fhda.edu/jocalo/2004/06/25 Jocalo's 'Guided Tour to Blogging'.

And, while you're at this writer's site, check out all the other blogs he's involved in.

http://huminf.uib.no/~jill/archives/blog_theorising/final_ version_of_weblog_definition.html. This is probably the best definition of a weblog yet! Prepared for the Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory by Jill Walker, Norwegian academic and blogger.

http://www.hi.is/%7Eanne/weblogs.html. Dr Anne Clyde from the University of Iceland, the Essential Guide to Blogging!

Policy Update

In critiquing the 'objective' methods of assessment in England and Wales, Jay Derrick presents a range of alternatives to standardised testing and hard data. These include self-assessment, assessment done by teachers, and assessment using criteria that reflects the broader non-educational benefits of learning. This paper was presented at the Quebec Literacy Centre's Summer Institute, Montreal June 2004: Adult Basic Education—the impact of policy on practice.

Imagining new paradigms for assessment

Assessment is a critical part of the infrastructure for the delivery of teaching and learning, and of the systems for quality assurance, funding of providers, and of performance measurement and benchmarking. This paper critiques the objective testing instruments being used for assessment of adult literacy, numeracy and language in England and Wales and elsewhere, and the purposes to which the aggregated results are put. The context for this article is grounded in three earlier UK works: *Contested Ground*[1], *A socio-cultural approach to literacy, numeracy and ESOL practice: a practice perspective*[2], and *Making the Grade*[3].

The importance of assessment and performance evaluation

Assessment of learners' progress, and evaluation of the performance of educational provider organisations, or of teachers, is vital. Anyone experienced in the field of adult literacy, numeracy or language will testify to the potential transforming power for learners of authoritative recognition of their achievements, such as a national qualification. It is also true that the ability to pass tests of various kinds is a valuable real-life skill. There is evidence that the use of psychometric testing by employers is increasing[4]. It follows that giving learners practice at taking tests is likely to be a useful part of their learning. All assessment tools have their uses as part of the armoury of effective teachers. It is essential that we continue to work to identify, share and review good practice, and that we monitor the performance of teachers, institutions, agencies and governments to ensure that learners are getting the most effective support. What needs to be challenged is what is the most effective way to do this?

Problems for learners

Serious negative effects for learners such as demotivation and alienation from learning have been identified in programs characterised by a focus on summative assessment and standardised testing[5]. These effects tended to be most pronounced for learners with lower levels of previous achievement and those lacking in confidence. While these findings are based primarily on data from school-age learners, there is no reason to suppose that these effects would not also apply to older learners, and in any case, as the authors point out, these results have worrying implications for governments trying to promote lifelong learning.

They have also found effects on teaching practice that were problematic for learners: a heavy policy emphasis on the results of summative assessment discourages teachers from thinking of broader and longer-term learning goals, and sends the message that only what is tested is important. This produces 'shallow learning', a tendency to 'teach to the test' and a consequent narrowing of the curriculum (no practical test can cover more than a sample of the whole curriculum). A further significant finding of these researchers is the relatively high probability of results which are inaccurate for individual learners, as a result of the combination of less than perfect reliability and validity of any practical test, and which is increased dramatically if grading is used in classifying the aggregated results[6].

Problems for policy

One of the advantages for policy makers of assessment systems based on standardised testing is that it produces output data that is convenient and easy to manage. In England and Wales, standardised tests produce data that is used to measure the progress of individual learners and, when aggregated, is a measure of the quality of the performance of the institutions doing it. These aggregates determine the output element of their funding[7].

There are three sets of problems for the overall system, and therefore for policy-makers with this 'payment by results' scenario:

Firstly, that using assessment data for output funding and institutional benchmarking produces an application of Goodhart's Law: '… any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is put upon it for control purposes'[8].

What happens in practice is that teachers and managers focus intently on the single mechanism against which their efforts will be judged by the government and its agencies—rates of achievement in the tests. The system encourages 'gaming' strategies by institutions such as 'creaming', data fiddling, and 'proxy padding'[9], all of which compromise the reliability of the outcomes, and produce unintended effects on access to learning opportunities and on teaching practice. This would not be such a problem if the assessment tools being used were highly reliable and valid, but as we have seen, standardised tests are, by their nature, imperfect.

The second problem concerns what professionals working within this kind of system fail to focus on. By only assessing what is apparently easy to assess, we are ignoring or devaluing other learning which may well be significant, not only for learners, but also for adult literacy, numeracy and language policy objectives. This issue is the focus of the Wider Benefits of Learning Research Centre in the UK[10].

The third problem with an over-reliance on a standardised testing regime is that it is doubtful how much tests reveal about the use of skills in practice. Work-based learning research attempts to capture complex and dynamic processes in which the application of skill is often tacit, and in which the key aptitudes required are thought increasingly to be ability to learn and to adapt to different contexts[11]. Very recent work suggests that employers are aware of this gap between test results, qualifications in general, and real-world competence[12].

Problems with interpreting data

Assessment systems using standardised tests produce numerical data that are easy and convenient to analyse for systematic quality assurance purposes. Typically, a single number is produced for each assessment, and these individual scores can easily be aggregated for learner groups, departments, institutions, regions and nations. The main analytical process involved is ranking, but this involves a number of assumptions if the process is to be statistically valid. These assumptions are that the tests are:
- reliable, producing consistent results
- culturally neutral, with cultural differences of learners having no effect on the outcomes
- valid, effectively measuring all the skills and activities they purport to measure.

Unfortunately none of these assumptions are straightforward or uncontroversial[13], and this undermines the validity of the aggregated data and the meanings ascribed to them when it is ranked[14]. Furthermore the apparent simplicity and clarity of the results of the ranked comparisons, often expressed for public consumption in the form of league tables, encourages simplistic certainty. The fact that officially valued data on

learning is numerical encourages popular interpretations of numerical data as straightforward and objectively true, rather than complex and problematic.

There are a number of key problems with the use of standardised assessment tools in adult literacy, numeracy and language work: the difficulty of correctly interpreting the meaning of data derived from aggregated scores from standardised tests; the political and organisational uses to which the analysed data are put; the apparent and misleading objectivity of the aggregated numerical test scores; and most importantly, the negative effects on teaching and learning processes of using these instruments for funding and performance management purposes, over time.

The origins of the standardised testing approach

The standardised testing approach to assessment of learning was developed by the IQ theorists of the early and mid-twentieth century. Their work was based on the belief that the qualities being assessed through standardised tests were inherent qualities of individuals, which could be measured in terms of single numbers, and which could be ranked[15]. From this perspective it was crucial to minimise the effects of 'subjective' judgements and reliance on qualitative evidence. One aspect of the radicalism of this approach was that it strove to eliminate the judgements of professionals from the data sets, as they were seen as unscientific and biased.

Although the social and racial theories associated with the IQ theorists are now largely unfashionable, the methodological tools and approaches developed by their adherents are still with us. More recent theories of learning, which by and large reject inherent and static views of capacity and learning, and which have replaced them with social, multiple, developmental and dynamic models, have failed to develop new approaches to the assessment of capacity and learning which are compatible with a view of literacy, numeracy and language as dynamic and complex processes of social interaction between individuals within multiple communities of practice. In this view measurement of capacity and achievements in learning would be provisional, at best indicative, with professional judgement at its heart.

In England and Wales until ten years ago, national achievement data on adult literacy, numeracy and language was virtually non-existent. Adult education, of which it was a part, was until then more or less marginal in the minds of policy makers, entirely provided through local authorities, universities and voluntary organisations and free of almost any national regulatory framework[16]. However, as part of the new vocationalism during the 1980s, adult literacy, numeracy and language training in

particular began to be seen by policy makers as having a significant role to play in terms of economic prosperity[17]. In the early 1990s it was incorporated into the further education framework of national funding, qualifications and performance measurement, in which it became subject to the human capital theory perspective in which outcomes of education are measured in terms of qualifications gained by individuals within a national qualifications framework.

Following the Moser report[18] (1999) and the launching of the national strategy, all adult literacy, numeracy and language work is now funded on the basis that it leads towards new national standardised multiple choice tests. There are high stakes national achievement targets for adult literacy, numeracy and language, divided among the regions, towards which only passes in these tests count. These regulatory developments appear to have ignored international theoretical and policy work over many years on adult learning, on literacy, numeracy and language as social practices, on organisational development, and on complexity theory and risk, in order to provide the kind of data on achievement that would be straightforward to incorporate into existing linear models of workforce development planning. Not only are the IQ theorists' methodological tools and assumptions still with us, but they have been given a new lease of life in England and Wales in the 21st century.

Complex systems and the problem of trust

These developments in parts of the UK are part of a wider phenomenon that involves an explicit commitment by politicians to *evidence-based* policy making. Few would want to argue against basing policy on evidence rather than prejudice or whimsy, however it is reasonable to ask about what kinds of evidence are meant. The phrase seems to imply that when enough well focused hard data is collected and analysed, policy decisions will be made tidily on the basis of certainty. However laudable this ideal might be, risk society analysis suggests that even hard data is likely to be unreliable in a world of increasing uncertainty, unpredictability and continual change[19].

In spite of this, the most common response by civil servants has been to collect even more hard data. Exacerbating this situation is the apparent widespread lack of understanding of basic statistical methods among many policy makers, judging by the number of governmental reports making large claims based on small samples or illegitimate processes of inference. O'Neill suggests that this tendency in policy making, combined with a methodological approach to evidence gathering which values numerical data over professional judgement, is a sign of a fundamental lack of trust in society, and that policies based on this approach materially contribute to further diminution of trust and

social capital[20]. She calls for an approach to policy and decision making in which trust rather than mistrust of professionals is the norm, and for a renewed model of professional practice based on openness, integrity, accountability and awareness of the limits of certainty.

In this model of quality assurance, numerical data from standardised instruments would be used alongside other kinds of evidence, including stakeholder value judgements, qualitative accounts, and appropriate expert and professional judgements, in a system which valued multiple perspectives, reflected more accurately the nature of the processes being evaluated, producing more meaningful results. They would be more meaningful because they would be recognised as indicative and provisional, the product of the best knowledge and expertise available, rather than pretending to an unrealisable and misleading degree of certainty.

Preserving the myth that judgements of educational attainment have some kind of external, scientifically verified status as objective truth is unsustainable. While so many stakeholders continue to look for ways of shoring up this misperception, the system is unlikely to fulfil its full potential. In reality, giving up on the search for 'the answer' that will fix the system's problems is likely to be the first step towards a more sustainable approach to measuring educational standards. A starting point for a complex systems approach to system reform will be acceptance by policy makers of a set of contemporary principles for educational assessment.

Towards a new assessment paradigm

Ten principles for a new assessment paradigm would avoid many of the practical difficulties of the present system, take account of the important implications of complexity, risk and uncertainty, contribute to building trust and add value to, rather than detract from, professional expertise.

1 Literacy, numeracy and language practices are recognised as multiple, complex and dynamic, and as manifested in social relations between individuals rather than as unidimensional qualities inherent in individuals.
2 Learners are recognised as the most important stakeholders in assessment processes.
3 Assessment for learning, and of learners, is detached from assessment for accountability and performance evaluation of institutions.
4 Emphasis is placed firmly on formative assessment, and this is reflected in professional development.
5 Tools are developed for group assessment.
6 The use of multiple and varied assessment methods is required.
7 The use of moderation and triangulation between assessment methods is required.

8 Moderation of assessment is formally structured as collaborative professional development and reflective practice.

9 A range of contingent evidence bases for improvements in literacy, numeracy and language are developed— the wider benefits of learning are recognised and evaluated.

10 Systems for assessment of learning are explicitly based on trust, professional judgements, and the recognition of provisionality.

In a system governed by these principles, we might expect to see a greater emphasis on assessment carried out by teachers; a wider range of assessment methods and tools in use; the use of descriptive, narrative and qualitative discourses as well as quantitative and numerical data; the development of self-assessment skills as part of the adult learner's curriculum; the inclusion of self-assessment by learners; assessment against criteria reflecting wider, non-educational benefits of learning, and assessment work seen as integral to and embedded in learning. Such a system would broaden the range of benefits gained by learners, contribute to building and maintaining the professional expertise of teachers, and would be more likely to raise and then maintain standards of achievement. The task facing us is to convince policy makers and, in particular, treasury economists, that outcomes as measured by such a changed system would be more reliable and of greater utility than the bleakly impoverished and misleading data sets produced through standardised testing alone.

Jay Derrick has worked in adult, community and further education as a volunteer, teacher, outreach worker, organiser, project evaluator and curriculum manager. He is now an independent consultant. Suggestions for programmes and policy developments for investigation would be warmly welcomed, as would comments on this paper. Contact Jay at *jay.derrick@blueyonder.co.uk*

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Foreign Correspondence

Imagine wading across to your neighbour's house for a cup of tea, or waiting for the sea to quieten so you can catch the morning canoe to school. This is part of life in the Temotu province of the Solomon Islands, one of the region's most remote and poorly serviced areas. Annabelle Leve's reflections on this island paradise are as much beautiful literature as they are challenging observations.

Reflections on literacy from a small island paradise

It doesn't have the dense population, nor the desperately low poverty indicators of other non-industrialised 'third world' locations. The people subsist in relative peace and prosperity. Politically, the Pacific region has little sway in comparison to other hotspots around the globe. So in the decade since my initial foray to the Solomon Islands, I have carried an obsession with a kind of difference deemed insignificant; exotic yes, fascinating—absolutely. Relevant? Well, hardly.

The Temotu Province is the most remote, sparsely populated and poorly resourced and serviced area of the Solomon Islands. With a total land surface of only 926 sq km, the islands are spread over 150,000 sq km of ocean. Since the Solomon Islands was granted independence from its status of British Protectorate in 1978, services to the region have in fact declined. Poorly maintained ships bringing supplies from Honiara, around 400 km away, are often delayed or cancelled. The journey takes a number of days, the passenger ships are crowded with seasick humans and terrified livestock, and the ocean passage is rough and dangerous. The alternative weekly flights are also tenuous, often cancelled, delayed, unreliable, expensive and passengers are often mysteriously off-loaded. In our case, our dubious local contact whisked us onto an aeroplane with accompanying baggage we had never seen before, leaving behind the only doctor for the whole province. We spent the next five days waiting for the wind to settle enough for our eventual four-hour powered canoe horror trip to our small island destination.

Our island was a tiny five acres, with a (semi-permanent) population of approximately six humans, two dogs, innumerable roaming chickens, a number of permanent

buildings—generally well-equipped by local standards. However, at low tide we were able to wade across the reef to neighbouring islands and get a more realistic view of small island life. The next island was rimmed with sandy beaches (not as common as you may think—stones, coral and rocks are far more common) and coconut palms, behind which were houses built mainly out of local materials. A large cleared area in the centre of the island was the soccer field (boys) and space for netball (girls).

The closest school was about a half hour wade or paddle, and consisted of three leaf houses with cleared dirt floors and some plywood that was used as a blackboard. We were proudly shown the new library, which was a few shelves at one end of a large leaf house, with a motley pile of books, divided into 'books for students' and 'teacher resources'. There were a number of old and tattered maths and English books produced in either Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands, and the newest acquisitions, a pile of readers. These were the result of a recent aid-funded project for which stories collected from around the different provinces were written in simple graded English, illustrated by local artists and were to be distributed to all primary schools in the Solomon Islands.

The unhappy teacher in charge showed us around and explained how the school functioned. Grades Prep to 3 sat on the floor of one room, and older kids in the other. Numbers of students fluctuate but it appears children have little room to move and there were no multiple copies of books or materials. Few of the Islanders know their date of birth so sizes vary. School ends at lunchtime as children would rarely have had anything to eat, and many had to travel long distances home. Local parents apparently have little interest or say in school matters. Many of the children are naked and suffering from various skin diseases.

A nationwide exam is held at the end of Grade 6 to determine those with the ability to move into senior school. This option requires tenacity and money, and most students who get to this level need to board at the limited number of secondary schools. A large percentage of young people receive no formal education after Grade 6, and many have not learnt the basics of reading, writing and number by this time.

Our neighbouring islands had no electricity or power. Kerosene could be purchased from the store and lamps were widely used. Cooking was done over fires. Fresh water was in short supply. Food was often hard to come by, and gardens were far from houses. Seasonal fluctuations meant that there was little variation in types of food available and dried breadfruit (which resembles lumps of dried cardboard) was an important staple. There was no access to radio, newspapers, magazines or other forms of media. There was a notice board outside the store, occasionally I saw signs about festival days or sports tournaments on other islands, and the occasional tattered old health message from the far away clinic. Services were held in various churches and prayer books and bibles were sometimes seen. I saw little evidence of any other reading materials in or around the houses. Paper was more often used to roll the local tobacco in, or to line walls or furniture.

After the sun went down in the evening, there was much activity. Music from hand made pan-pipes, large enough to be hit on the tops with a piece of rubber, singing, dancing and other less obvious activities kept much of the youth entertained. Beche-de-mer (sea slugs or cucumbers, sold to Chinese traders) and other sea creatures were harvested with the aid of burning coconut fronds. Fires burned on beaches and voices were often heard from the water in the dark.

Language and literacy in the Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands context is a fascinating one that so often falls outside the realms of the dominant theory that has framed so much of my teaching/learning practice. The government-decreed official language of the Solomon Islands is English and there are around 60 local languages spoken within a population of less than 500,000. However, in practice, Solomon Islands Pijin (SIP) is the commonly understood lingua franca (that is, the language of convenience), and only a distinct and powerful minority uses English. English is officially the language of the administration, the public service, in schools and all school materials but in practice, few local Solomon Islanders have the confidence, the expertise or the desire to use English orally.

SIP is becoming more frequently the first language learned in the home for those growing up in urban areas. However, the majority of Solomon Islanders live in rural villages located within the sprawling archipelago. Local, or home languages, are still most often the first language/s learnt by Solomon Island children, and are commonly aligned with a sense of identity and belonging. The importance of language is reflected by the SIP term 'wantok', which derives from 'one talk', meaning those who share a language. 'Wantoks' may be family, community, village, island. In another country the notion may go beyond language so that a 'wantok' is one who has South Pacific Island roots or similar coloured skin. Wantoks are members of a flexible notion of kinship and community.

What does it mean to be literate in a range of languages with no written form?

Alistair Pennycook suggests a way of understanding literacy is as 'a set of contextualised social practices[1]' and argues that it is not literacy in and of itself that provides

advancement, but the practices within the social and political context. The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary[2] defines literate as 'able to read and write' yet illiteracy is defined as 'uneducated'. Elsa Auerbach refers to 'really useful literacy, which entails the acquisition of practical knowledge to help people act on their world, harnessing learning to a social purpose[3]'. Glenda Hull uses the term 'conventionally literate' and describes research that 'shows how people get along without literacy—through the use of networks of kin and friends[4]'. In the 1970 Solomon Islands census, officials equated the completion of the highest grade of primary school with literacy[5]. A 1992 UNESCO survey of literacy and language in the Solomon Islands defined a literate person as 'one who can read anything they could have understood if heard and could have written anything they could have said' and distinguished between literate and semi-literate, which were people who self-evaluated as literate but when tested, displayed memorisation skills rather than literacy skills. Another descriptor is functional literacy—a degree of literacy that enables a person to function effectively within his or her community. These various understandings of literacy impacted on and destabilised my identity as a teacher and hence expected 'knower' of supposedly important and useful knowledge.

> …individuals in a newly literate society, far from being passively transformed by literacy, instead actively and creatively apply literate skills to suit their own purposes and needs[6].

Introducing Margaret

I would like to introduce you to one of my students, Margaret, who was able to show me how one could be contextually literate in a supposedly non-literate society, whose levels of literacy went far beyond functional, and who highlighted the inadequacies of my own pedagogic knowledge. Margaret forced both my son and I to reconsider our values and prejudices.

I had been invited to open up a school on a small remote island in the far east of the Solomon Islands. I would be the sole teacher, working with eight students of various ages and abilities. I was to be paid by the father of one of the students and was expected to teach 'whatever it is that they do at school.' As I was a trained and experienced teacher, and from a wealthy educated country, he was sure I would know what this was. He was concerned with his daughter's education; that she should be taught the type of things he had learnt in his own schooling in New Zealand. The other students were there as support, to provide company for her and my younger son. Each of the students, however, had their own reasons for being there. They all had needs, desires and interests that were rarely made clear to me, as did their

families and communities. Margaret had somehow convinced my benefactor that she should be included.

Before our classes began, Margaret presented me with a stack of her Form 1 (first year high school) exercise books so that I could gauge her levels. Inside were pages and pages of neatly written text—English grammar and comprehension, history, geography, politics, environmental science and mathematics. Margaret always appeared confident and interested, always listening intently, nodding and smiling at appropriate moments. She would arrive early to the classroom, paddling in a canoe or wading over. She would often decorate the room with hibiscus flowers and then sit quietly waiting for school to begin.

During classes she would often reprimand the younger kids, making sure they paid attention and did their work. She taught us all how to make balls out of coconut fronds, and strings of frangipani and hibiscus to wear.

A visiting Norwegian professor of linguistics chose Margaret as his local informant because she was able to translate concepts and ideas from the local language into SIP and speak clearly and confidently enough for him to make recordings of her speech.

One day my son asked her about a 'motu' and she promptly made a miniature construction of a stone oven and leaf wrap to demonstrate how the locals would cook a bat to eat.

Yet Margaret was not able to read the simplest text, nor could she construct her own. She could not make out the difference between 'tip', 'tap', 'top', 'bit', 'bat' or 'but' and had never learnt basic phonetic sounds or symbols. She could not add numbers together and was unable to tell the time even after many hours of tutoring. In the classroom Margaret seemed unable to follow what I believed to be the most direct and clearly scaffolded tasks. Yet Margaret had developed what I would term literate skills that never ceased to amaze me, and was able to participate actively in our small island school on a daily basis. The binaries between literate and non-literate, civilised and primitive were glaringly unhelpful in this context.

> Many students never learned to read or write beyond a basic grade one or two primary school level…but all of them are operating in a world that has required of them multiliteracies beyond which the teachers had imagined[7].

The ability to read and write would, in a village of unschooled Islanders, be a sometimes valuable asset. To be able to decipher a written text, and perhaps translate it into a form that makes it understandable to the decision makers (often the 'big man' or committee) would be quite

sufficiently useful. The ability to critique that text, once it has been put into a form that makes it comprehensible, could be left to some quite illiterate individual or group. The skill of deciphering an alphabetised code, the skill of producing it, the skill of fixing broken bones and the skill of growing and cooking food for the family can perhaps be readjusted on the scale of importance for communities and individuals. Being literate in this small island context is no automatic ticket to success.

> Noticeably absent…are those types of reading and writing which are stressed in Western Societies and educational systems…(people) do not read to gain information about people they do not know or about events which do not directly concern them…there is no notion in the village that everyone should read…[8]

Government policy, community and parental attitudes and ambitions, and my (private) employer decreed that school students were to leave their own language and local knowledges at the school door (or in this case, the water's edge). I could not ignore the message this was potentially giving them, yet nor could I expect to make much of a difference in the short time I was there.

Conclusion

There are have been many literacy programs, policy documents, surveys and recommendations that have been conducted in different parts of the Solomon Islands, with varying results. The recent political tension has both helped and hindered these programs, halting or holding up some, but provoking interest and aid that will serve to spur on new initiatives. Aid-funded government and non-government organisations will continue to introduce and run programs with varied agendas and perceived levels of success. Outsiders will come and go as did we, bringing new ideas, reviving old ones, making mistakes, demands, providing entertainment and demonstrating incompetencies. Outsiders arrive with expectations and preconceptions and leave with newfound competencies and a better knowledge of differences. A very limited number will ever touch Margaret and her small remote island community. In fact, contrary to being a foot in the door, it is a sad irony that schooling for many becomes 'an occasion of failure and disappointment, a sign of their exclusion from the development to which they aspire [9].'

So what is the future for Margaret? She has no family, no money, and no traditional status in any community. There are no local opportunities for her to develop or utilise her rudimentary reading, writing or number skills. Yet Margaret has characteristics that few other people I met had—those of adaptability, flexibility, creativity and resilience. Margaret carries herself with an air of pride that inspires confidence and embraces opportunity. However,

the reality of life in a small island paradise is that day-to-day existence continues to depend primarily on the vagaries of nature and the varied skills available within communities. The ability to read and write, to determine the difference between 'bit', 'bat' and 'but', or to read the time off a clock, are all sometimes useful skills. I only wish I had learnt to spear a fish, grow potatoes, and how to rid my bed of biting ants. These skills may have enabled me to at least be able to concentrate and participate—very difficult with an empty belly and unbearably itchy skin. Only time will tell what opportunities may eventually come Margaret's way, and which skills will prove most useful for her and her community.

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Beyond the Whiteboard

Yes, that's right! In this edition we go *beyond* the whiteboard as former Olympic Adult Education manager Rachel Wilson moves on to her new role at the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. Rachel talks to Robyn Hodge about her years at Olympic Adult Education.

After ten years at Olympic Adult Education in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, Rachel Wilson has taken on a new challenge—professional development and training coordinator for the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. *Fine Print* asked Rachel to reflect on her career thus far, and discuss what she has gained through her involvement in adult community education.

Can you tell us a bit of your professional background and your career pathway?

I trained as a secondary school teacher majoring in English as a Second Language, and went straight into adult community education, largely bypassing the experience in more mainstream education systems which people often bring to working in ACE. I did have a bit of a flutter with the TAFE system but found that the environment of a small, developing ACE organisation suited me better. All the things they say work about ACE for the learners worked for me too as a novice professional.

I taught English as a Second Language and adult literacy programs at Olympic Adult Education—or FECH as it was called then—for four years, gradually taking on some program coordination tasks. In some ways I found these more satisfying than the teaching. I know this would sound very odd to most teachers I know (who would say exactly the opposite!), but I can see now (with the benefit of hindsight and the getting of a little bit of wisdom) that the enormous complexity and difficulty of teaching work meant that I could never really do it to my satisfaction, no matter how much I prepared, went to professional development, talked with wiser elders, read journals and so on. I simply lacked the skills and knowledge that are only developed over years and years of experience and reflection and growing up! I can also see more clearly now that teaching and learning are, by their nature, often messy, complicated, frustrating and difficult processes, and that the pathway to the desired outcomes is rarely straightforward—again my impatient desire to master my trade quickly and tick all the boxes didn't sit easily with this messiness.

So the move to coordination was a welcome one for me, in that I could satisfy my desire to complete tasks that were not as open-ended as teaching. I enjoyed working with curriculum frameworks, at least in part because they neatened things up a bit, but also because of the intellectual stimulation of learning about the theories of language, literacy and learning on which they were based. From there, the jump to a management role was not as big as it might have been, but still pretty huge all the same. It's really only now that I'm out of the role that I think I have some sort of grasp of what the job actually was, and the enormity of it. Although I still think that teaching's harder.

How did you come to be involved in adult basic education?

It was pretty much a case of being in the right place at the right time. A few people I studied with at university who graduated before me had already moved into adult basic education, so I had the contacts who helped with getting work, but more importantly, who educated me about a sector that I had previously known almost nothing about.

Once I was there, the work opportunities that came my way kept me involved and inspired. We all know about the poor pay and conditions in ACE, which generally mean that the field of people who are interested in working in the sector is pretty small. This also means that opportunities exist for people to take on roles that they may not get the opportunity to do in other sectors, or certainly not until much later in their careers. Taking on a management role after only four years of professional life was a big stretch for me, but an opportunity that I very much appreciated and one which has certainly been incredibly valuable. And as I had very little experience of other sectors, in some ways I was blissfully ignorant of how poor the pay and conditions are.

What were the major achievements for you in your time at Olympic Adult Education?

Something that was very exciting was successfully applying for an ANTA Adult Literacy Innovative Grant to develop our online banking resource, which was the culmination of several years of work we had done in developing e-learning approaches for adult literacy learners. I felt very proud to be competing successfully on the national stage—I remember repeating endlessly at the time that our application was one of only 11 successful ones out of a pool of about 80 (and here I am shamelessly repeating it again).

Another big achievement was overseeing the development of a second venue as the organisation grew bigger. Gradually

transforming a disused run-down community space into a vibrant, well-used ACE space was very challenging, but now seems like one of the most important and lasting achievements of my time at OAE.

Becoming a funded Neighbourhood House was important too, in that it helped the organisation stay viable in the increasingly lean environment of ACFE funding, and allowed us to develop a broader range of ways in which people could participate in OAE, such as community lunches.

How has the organisation evolved over that time?

The most obvious thing is that OAE has grown bigger and bigger every year. This meant more and more staff and less room for everyone, and also expanding into a second venue. Technology and e-learning also developed enormously, and was a big focus in the years I was there. In general, we became more and more professional in everything we did, coming to terms with quality frameworks, risk management, more formal partnerships and a greater and more diverse range of funding sources.

There were always lots of changes taking place, but I think the culture always remained the same—inclusive, supportive, valuing effort and achievement, and a strong focus on learning in everything we did, which I'm sure will continue in the years to come.

What were some of the highlights and challenges during this time?

The highlight that is freshest in my mind has got to be the farewell event that staff and students organised for me. It was a 'This is Your Life' show that took place in front of a packed audience, and featured many of the key people that have been important in my working life so far, including my mum! It was an incredible, heart-warming, affirming event that I will never forget…it was such a great note to leave on.

Other highlights were all our fantastic organisational events, including AGMs, certificate ceremonies, Adult Learners' Week events and community lunches. Although at the time they always seemed like such hard work, they are the things that stand out in my mind as important moments of celebration and community. And something else that stays with me is the experience of developing strong supportive relationships with colleagues in the sector, both in formal and informal networks. As is often the way, the importance and the joy of these was most fully acknowledged as I was leaving the sector, but these acknowledgements, while sad, gave me much warmth to draw on in making the huge transition to a new job.

The biggest challenge of working and managing in ACE is keeping the stress levels under control, and learning to live with the guilt of never getting enough done, never being nice enough, never getting around to those it would be great if…' ideas through sheer lack of time or just feeling too exhausted and overwhelmed if ever there was any spare time. This is definitely something I learnt to do better, although anyone who came into contact with me in the last few weeks at Olympic might disagree!

What prompted your decision to leave?

Olympic Adult Education was my first workplace on leaving university just over ten years ago. Ten years is a long time, and I have felt the desire for a while to explore other sorts of work, and see what life is like after OAE. It has been hard to let go as I was very tied up in my work at OAE, but I feel like I need to see what I'm like without it again!

I had one week off between finishing at OAE and starting my new job and I felt almost naked without a work role to help define me, which was an interesting experience. Work is still very important to me, but I guess I want something a little less all-consuming for a while, the chance to develop other parts of myself. And to yell at my children less.

Tell us a little about your new position

My new position is soooo different to managing an ACE organisation. No stress! At least for the time being.

My job title is Professional Development and Training Coordinator and my employer is the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. The Foundation provides direct services such as counselling, group work and natural therapies to refugees who have survived torture and other traumatic experiences prior to arriving in Australia. On the basis of this practice experience, the Foundation offers training to other service providers who have contact with refugees, with the aim of improving the responsiveness of the service system to their needs and avoiding further trauma that can occur during the stresses of resettlement.

My job is to extend and improve the training program by exploring various forms of accreditation, partnerships with RTOs and universities, and ways of embedding awareness of refugee issues within the community services and health training packages. It's exciting and challenging, contains sufficient tickable boxes to keep me happy, and involves no management responsibilities! I am really pleased to have found a role where I can use the skills and knowledge I've gained in ACE and apply them in a new context…and isn't that what learning is all about?

What are the skills that you've gained through involvement in ACE that you take to your new role?

On an obvious level I guess it's all the knowledge of the training system—curriculum, funding, qualifications and

quality frameworks. Then there's all the adult learning stuff, particularly within language and literacy contexts, and applying to the teachers and managers as well as the learners—what helps people to learn, and the differences in learning styles.

An area that is more intangible and probably more out of my comfort zone is the community development arena. I'm sure that I/we did this but what it looks like, how to do it well and the role of the ACE organisation in it is something I feel like I was only just beginning to understand. I've gradually developed management skills, including people management, strategic and program planning, financial management, continuous improvement, project management—it's felt like an uphill battle at times, but these skills are really valuable in any context, and are definitely helping me to shape my new role.

I guess more broadly, but in some ways most importantly, is the development of my understanding of how people

work within and across organisations to get things done (or not, as the case may be). The processes that enable the development of ideas, theories, knowledge, good practice, the ways in which work can be organised, the ways in which decisions are really made, the hard work, the frustration, and the rewards of working with others.

ACE Managers need such a range and wealth of skills and knowledge don't they? It's a wonder I'm still alive..

Congratulations Rachel for all your achievements, and good luck in your new role.

Rachel Wilson is Professional Development and Training Coordinator at the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) in Parkville Vic. *www.survivorsvic. org.au*