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assessments: Part 2

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From the ground up

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Strengthening the foundations

By Chris Howell and Leanne
FitzGerald

The Core skills for work framework

By Sally Hutchison

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Editorial

On a Melbourne evening in late October, I ventured into the city to listen to Mary Hamilton talk about the Pecket Well project. The cold city streets, shiny from rain, set the scene nicely for Mary's talk, about an English residential college for literacy students in West Yorkshire. We will invite Mary to cover the project in our next issue of *Fine Print*, but the point relevant to this issue is that this project terminated twenty years after it began, not because of internal problems—as the participants themselves believed—but more because of changes in the broader policy and funding context in which Pecket Well was trying to operate. Closer to home I have also experienced how a changing policy and funding environment can be problematic for small community organisations delivering government funded programmes.

Twenty years ago literacy was more about emancipation, personal growth and community development, but how things have changed. Now it is about economic productivity and social capital. While this change has brought with it unwanted layers of complexity, it may contribute to removing the deficit model from literacy teaching. As you flick through the pages of this issue—hopefully you will be sitting in the sun somewhere, miles away from the cold stone façade of Pecket Well College—you will notice how complex, and less personal, literacy and numeracy teaching has become. Perhaps in the future the pendulum may settle in the middle.

I hope this issue of *Fine Print* can help you unpack the complexity of the frameworks and processes that await you in Term 1: we have approached experienced and excellent

teachers to cover these procedural, bureaucratic topics, and they have done a great job.

But we haven't forgotten you may be reading this journal at the beach so we have a lovely piece on family literacy as it is done in Canada's north, a semi-practical piece about a deadly ute, and reflections from a volunteer tutor, who happens to be the mother of the winner of the 2013 WA Premiers Book Award for non-fiction.

This will be my last edition as editor of *Fine Print*, although I may assist the new editor with the first issue in 2014. I have loved every minute, well apart from the stressful deadline minutes, and hope you have enjoyed the reading. Thank you for your feedback and your interest in *Fine Print*.

Enjoy your summer!

Jacinta Agostinelli



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

Lessons learnt from international assessments: Part 2

By Dave Tout

In Part 2 of this two part series Dave Tout emphasises an often overlooked value of international assessments—they provide an insight and description of task development and complexity that teachers can refer to when creating their own classroom tasks and assessments—see Chris Tully’s article in *Numeracy Matters* of this issue, ‘The complexity scheme’, for an example. Part 1 of Dave’s article appeared in *Fine Print* vol: 36 no. 2, our previous issue.

Introduction

This is the second article about what can be learnt from international adult literacy and numeracy assessments—this time more related to teaching and learning. As described in the first article, when I began working on these assessments I was ignorant about the complex processes, sophistication and the theoretical frameworks sitting behind international assessments. There is information relevant to teaching and learning that stem from both the theoretical frameworks, constructs and descriptions of the assessments and also from the research that occurs based on the rich data set of empirical information about adults’ literacy and numeracy performance, including in relation to the background data. My focus here will mainly be on numeracy as that is my key area of interest and expertise, but I will also include snippets about literacy and hope that the references provided will allow interested readers to follow up the available research papers and reports.

It seems to me that reading behind and beyond the initial and media focussed messages from ALLS and PIAAC about the results to look at the frameworks and what the related research tells us about teaching and learning, is equally important as the results themselves. Building on the empirical and theoretical research emanating from such international assessments and their frameworks strengthens the links between testing, research, and practice. Professionally, being involved in this research and development has enhanced my knowledge, and I have used it in my work on a range of projects, including training and the writing of curriculum and assessment frameworks such as the ACSF and the CGEA.

Literacy frameworks, descriptions and research

As mentioned in the first article, sitting behind each survey is a theoretical framework of literacy and numeracy that attempts to describe what literacy and numeracy in the 21st century incorporates. Each of the assessments involves the

development and publication of comprehensive reports and analyses of each of the domains being assessed.

The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) developed out of earlier national and international assessments including the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (Statistics Canada and OECD, 1996; 1997). The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005; OECD Statistics and Canada, 2011) described knowledge and skills in prose literacy, document literacy and numeracy. In the follow up to IALS and ALLS, the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (Jones et al, 2009), literacy was described as understanding, evaluating, using, and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential. The PIAAC literacy framework elaborated a range of characteristics including:

- medium—pen and paper, digital
- text type—argumentation, description, exposition, instruction, narration, records
- social contexts—work, personal, community, education
- task aspects—access and identify, integrate and interpret, evaluate and reflect.

‘Reading components’

For the first time PIAAC incorporated a lower level assessment of reading, for adults who are identified by a screener test to have low levels of literacy. This aspect of PIAAC is called the ‘Reading components’ assessment. In previous surveys, the information on the reading abilities of adults with poor skills was often insufficient to get an understanding of their difficulties and build a description of their abilities. The assessment of component skills is intended to provide a greater level of information about the skills of individuals with low levels of literacy proficiency. The reading components assessment assesses:

- word meaning of everyday words

- sentence processing—making a judgement of whether the sentence is sensible
- passage comprehension—time taken to read passage and choosing between correct and incorrect words to gain meaning.

Although the data and results from the PIAAC ‘Reading components’ are yet to be analysed for Australian adults, the international research and data that will be generated will add further to our knowledge about the basis and the beginnings of literacy development in adults. As such the assessment frameworks and the material sitting alongside them offer valuable information and background to literacy development for adults and provide a synthesis of research about the assessment and description of reading skills. They provide insights into what can be taught and what components of teaching reading are crucial for successful development of literacy skills. These can also be utilised in the development of curriculum and assessment frameworks.

Benefits of item response theory: task and text complexity

In over thirty years of national and international surveys of adult skills, especially emanating from the IALS and earlier studies, the components of task and text complexity and the variables that interact to determine the level of difficulty of reading tasks have been researched and schemes developed. Key research in this area include those of Kirsch and Mosenthal, 1990; Kirsch and Mosenthal, 1994; Kirsch, Jungeblut, and Mosenthal, 1998 and Kirsch, 2001. This work has been instrumental in the understanding about teaching and learning of literacy skills. The basis of this has been directly attributable to the methodology behind international surveys, item response theory (IRT), and the ability to conduct research using the empirical data from the surveys.

As briefly described in the first article, IRT is the statistical methodology that sits behind international comparative surveys such as ALLS and PIAAC. IRT allows a large number of items of varying difficulty to be developed to assess a wide range of skills across a domain, and the test items can be placed on a scale of difficulty relative to each other, independent of the ability of students taking the test. By being able to align both the performance of people and the difficulty of tasks along such a common scale allows an analysis of the tasks with similar score values—do they share certain characteristics, how do they differ from one end of the scale to the other? This research enables a deeper

understanding of the range of variables that contribute to item and task difficulty.

The research fundamentally argues that a number of variables interact to determine the level of difficulty of reading tasks. The variables relate to the structure and complexity of the text, to the nature of the task (i.e., the relationships between the text and the question being asked), and to the nature of the processes or strategies that relate the information in the question to information in the text.

While a wide range of characteristics have been described and analysed for each of these variables, there are three variables worth noting here that have been found to be highly related to the difficulty of a reading task. These were type of match, plausibility of distractors, and type of information. These are described further below.

Type of match relates to the relationship between what the learner or reader is asked to do in the question and the presentation of the required information in the text. Matching strategies are described including locating, cycling, integrating, and generating. For example, does the reader merely need to locate the information, or do they need to cycle through the text to identify two or more pieces of conditional information, or compare or contrast pieces of information?

Plausibility of distractors concerns the extent to which information in the text shares one or more features with the information requested in the question, but does not fully satisfy what has been requested. Tasks are judged to be easiest when no distractor information is present in the text. They tend to become more difficult as the number of distractors increases, as the distractors share more features with the correct response, and as the distractors appear in closer proximity to the correct response.

Type of information relates to the concreteness or abstractness of the requested information. The easier tasks are judged to be when the information is the most concrete whilst the difficult tasks to process were those with more abstract information.

Further details of all these factors and the research based on them, including their descriptions of levels of difficulty and schemes for estimating task and item difficulty for reading different types of texts are elaborated in a number of the above reports.

Similar and related research about text and task complexity has been undertaken in relation to the literacy assessment of fifteen-year-olds as part of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Not surprisingly there are many similarities, but also differences, between the schemes for fifteen-year-olds and those for adults. For example, see Lumley et al (2012) for the elaboration and research about ten different variables impacting on reading difficulty based on PISA.

Along with the descriptions of literacy described in the frameworks, and the different text and task complexity factors, a number of lessons can be taken that teachers and trainers can use in their literacy teaching. Examples include the need to ensure teaching tasks and activities cover a range of social contexts and text types; teaching students how to *read* the task or question; helping students develop strategies to access and identify information, to integrate and interpret (relate parts of texts to each other); and evaluating and reflecting (drawing on knowledge, ideas and values external to the text).

Numeracy frameworks, descriptions and research

In ALLS, numeracy was defined as the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage and respond to the mathematical demands of diverse situations. In PIAAC, the follow up survey to ALLS, numeracy was described as the ability to access, use, interpret, and communicate mathematical information and ideas, in order to engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adult life. This was elaborated to describe more detailed components of numeracy as shown in Table 1.

Similarly to literacy, this description and elaboration of numeracy can serve to highlight the complexity and extent of numeracy, and the range of factors that impact on someone becoming numerate. This can be utilised to help describe curriculum and assessment frameworks, alongside providing guidance about what elements need to be addressed and covered in numeracy teaching and learning to assist adults to develop a range of numeracy skills.

Task complexity in numeracy

As mentioned previously, a significant challenge, and an unknown, was that the expert group for any new domain in international assessments had to develop a scheme describing the various factors affecting item complexity and difficulty. This theoretical construct had to be capable of predicting, in advance of an assessment actually taking

Table 1. PIAAC's specification of numerate behaviour and its facets, From PIAAC numeracy expert group, 2009: 21–22

Numerate behaviour involves managing a situation or solving a problem:

1. in a real context
 - everyday life
 - work
 - societal
 - further learning
2. by responding
 - identify, locate or access
 - act upon, use: order, count, estimate, compute, measure, model
 - interpret
 - evaluate / analyse
 - communicate
3. to mathematical content/ information/ ideas
 - quantity & number
 - dimension & shape
 - pattern, relationships, change
 - data & chance
4. represented in multiple ways
 - objects & pictures
 - numbers & mathematical symbols
 - formulae
 - diagrams & maps, graphs, tables
 - texts
 - technology-based displays.

Numerate behaviour is founded on the activation of several enabling factors and processes:

- mathematical knowledge and conceptual understanding
- adaptive reasoning and mathematical problem-solving skills
- literacy skills
- beliefs & attitudes
- numeracy-related practices and experience
- context/world knowledge.

place, how difficult each item was going to be and that this needed to be validated empirically. These schemes are used internally by item development teams and expert groups for various purposes, e.g. to inform item design, to evaluate items chosen for inclusion in the final assessment, and to inform the descriptions or interpretations attached to different performance levels on the assessments. Further description of this aspect of the assessments follows.

The ALLS/PIAAC numeracy complexity scheme

In relation to numeracy, PIAAC (based on ALLS) developed a complexity scheme to predict the difficulty or complexity of a numeracy assessment task. This was empirically validated in the ALLS work. A unique scheme of five factors was researched and written that attempted to account for the difficulty of different tasks, enabling an explanation of observed performance in terms of underlying cognitive processes or factors. Table 2: A summary of PIAAC complexity factors summarises the five

Table 2. A summary of PIAAC complexity factors, from PIAAC numeracy expert group, 2009: 21-22.

Aspects	Category	Range
Textual	<i>Type of match/problem transparency</i>	
	How difficult is it to identify and decide what action to take?	Obvious/explicit to embedded/hidden
	How many literacy skills are required?	
	<i>Plausibility of distracters</i>	
Mathematical	How many other pieces of mathematical information are present?	No distractors to several distractors
	Is all the necessary information there?	
	<i>Complexity of Mathematical information/data</i>	
	How complex is the mathematical information that needs to be manipulated?	Concrete/simple to abstract/complex
	<i>Type of operation/skill</i>	
	How complex is the mathematical action that is required?	Simple to complex
	<i>Expected number of operations</i>	
	How many steps and types of steps are required?	One to many

factors, and shows that two of them relate to textual aspects of numeracy tasks, and three relate to mathematical aspects of tasks. For each of these factors a detailed description was developed against a scoring system in the range from one through to three or five, for a total difficulty score in the range five to nineteen. These five factors and associated scoring schema are described more fully in the Annex of the PIAAC numeracy framework (Gal et al., 2009).

As with text and task complexity research in relation to reading, a number of lessons can be taken that teachers and trainers can use in their numeracy teaching. This includes, for example, that a numeracy teacher is also a teacher of literacy and language, and that you need to teach students how to *read* the text, and the task or question—how to excavate the maths from the context. That in teaching numeracy you need to create tasks and teach explicitly the range of cognitive operations and content areas, including the complexity of the mathematical information, the type of operation/skill, and about the impact and complexity of the number and types of operations involved.

Deepening our understanding

As an example of further potential for research sitting behind surveys such as ALLS and PIAAC, in the pilot for ALLS, the expert group described and developed sets of parallel items for three different types of percentage questions related to shopping:

Type 1: working out a percentage of an amount—How much would you have to pay for a TV advertised at 15% off, where the original price was \$300?

Type 2: working out what percentage is saved given the original price and the discounted price—What

percentage is saved on a TV advertised at \$255, where the original price was \$300?

Type 3: working backwards to find the original price given the percentage discount and the sale price—What was the regular price on a TV advertised at \$255, where the percentage discount was 15%?

There were two sets of three items where the team was able to directly compare respondent’s success on the three different types of percentage items. One was the TV items using 15% and the other was using a watch at \$90 with a discount of 50%. Table 3 shows the results (percentage correct) on the sets of items covering all three types.

It appears from these results, that when the context is familiar (a 50% off sale) and the numbers are simple (45 is 50% of 90), adults show that they can solve all three kinds of percent problems equally well. However, when the percent is no longer what we consider a *benchmark* percent and the numbers are more difficult, the performance of adults on the three types of percent problems vary according to expectations, that is, they do best on Type 1 problems and worst on Type 3 problems.

Along with this data, including from other research into the ALLS results, and in work on other assessments, a number of clear messages result about how and what adults can do and cannot do. In particular, these include that the order and hierarchy of number skills are not as per school type curriculum—that adult numeracy skills and knowledge is much broader and chunky. For example, as per the above research, that common percentages and fractions (such as half or 50%, and 10% or 1/10th) can be seen as on about the same level of difficulty as working on the

Table 3

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Watch (50%)	93.3%	90.8%	92.1%
TV (15%)	81.7%	72.4%	40.2%

four operations with whole numbers. Another example from such international and national assessments is that asking questions related to more formal aspects of school type mathematics (e.g. place value) is more difficult than equivalent questions phrased in more contextually based formats.

Conclusion

As I said at the end of the first article, I believe that the results, the research and the underpinning conceptual frameworks for international assessments such as ALLS, PIAAC and PISA add to the expertise and knowledge of both education and research communities. The empirically based research emanating from such assessments, alongside associated theoretical works such as around text and task complexity for literacy and numeracy, can and do contribute to enhancing and supporting teaching and learning. Building on the empirical research from such international assessments and their frameworks strengthens the links between testing, research, and practice.

Dave is an experienced numeracy educator who is interested in making mathematics relevant, especially for disengaged students. He has worked in programmes in schools, TAFEs, ACE providers, universities, AMES and industry. Over the last fifteen years he has been involved in the development of the numeracy components of the International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALLS) and the Programme in Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Dave joined the Australian Council for Educational Research in 2008 where he is the manager of Vocational, Adult and Workplace Education Services.

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From the ground up

By Aggie Brockman

Community-based family literacy programmes tend to be neglected in a policy environment that ties funding for literacy programmes to work outcomes. In these circumstances many communities tackle their own local challenges, and the literacy coalitions in northern Canada are good examples of local communities taking a lead. Aggie Brockman discusses how they do it.

The three territorial literacy coalitions in northern Canada have a shared philosophy but varying approaches to family and community literacy. They all see family literacy as key to improved skills and opportunities for adults as well as children.

The Yukon, Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut coalitions share a broad definition of literacy that encompasses traditional and modern Aboriginal skills and knowledge, as well as the literacies needed for the 21st Century, such as problem-solving skills for a technology-rich environment. These organisations are respected non-profit charities, which depend on project-based territorial and federal funding for their work.

Family literacy programmes work with the whole family and community, making them compatible with the Aboriginal emphasis on the *collective* rather than *individual*. The three northern literacy coalitions see family and community literacy as a priority, preferring inter-generational programming, because people do not segregate themselves in northern communities according to age. As well, northerners often have diverse relationships which can be as important as that with their biological family. Family literacy is seen as one aspect within broader efforts toward healthy families and communities.

All three coalitions view family literacy as positive interaction between children and other family members. It reinforces learning together and strengthens positive parenting practices, especially important for those impacted by the lingering but still significant legacy of residential schools, which took Aboriginal children away from their families and interrupted cultural, linguistic and family interactions. The last northern residential school closed in 1970. The three northern territories have higher proportions of Aboriginal people than the southern provinces, and Aboriginal people are more likely to have lower literacy rates than other Canadians.

Community-based family literacy activities contribute to a stronger foundation for learning, in a region of Canada



Book published in Inuktitut

where many youth do not graduate from high school at all, or do so without the skills to go on to further education. These programmes provide community activities where parents learn skills alongside their children, skills which can be practised together at home.

With a few exceptions, family literacy in all three territories happens as part of existing programmes, dependent on an interested community person taking the lead. Northern family literacy activities might run from libraries, early childhood programmes, or less frequently out of health and recreation programmes. They might be part of an adult learning centre that opens up to children after school to do activities with their parents. Another example is the Miqqut programme in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, which embeds literacy in a non-formal cultural programme, in this case sewing. Children come after school. The Miqqut programme has successfully engaged women, improved literacy and self-esteem levels and reduced marginalisation among participants.

All three coalitions see the benefits of embedding literacy into existing programmes, with children benefiting once adults are engaged.

We don't see family literacy just as singing and playing. It can be anything that engages and inspires

people and we build literacy around that. We're building resilience and community connections within the community. If we want to make change in a community, we have to involve everyone. It has to be inclusive. (Kim Crockatt, the executive director of Ilitaqsiniq, the Nunavut Literacy Council)

The demographics of the most eastern northern territory dictate the strong links Ilitaqsiniq makes between Inuktitut, the language spoken by Canadian Inuit, and literacy development. More than eighty percent of the Nunavut population is Inuit and Inuktitut is the working language of the Nunavut government.

While the Literacy Council in the Northwest Territories (NWT) promotes literacy in all the official languages of the territory and creates some resources in Aboriginal languages, it is unable to do so very often because of the translation costs and logistics associated with publishing in eleven official languages, nine of which are Aboriginal. Instead the NWT Literacy Council focuses on developing English language resources, training local people, and building capacity among communities to deliver family literacy programmes.

Meanwhile further west, the Yukon Literacy Coalition is the only one of the three organisations doing direct family literacy programme delivery. It operates the Whitehorse Family Literacy Centre, while also doing outreach to smaller communities. Standalone family literacy programmes are rare in Canada's north.

Nunavut

Nunavut is currently the territory with the biggest financial challenges around family literacy, without the level of funding from its territorial government enjoyed by the other territorial literacy coalitions, and it has the greatest travel challenges. There are no roads linking communities and airplane flights are expensive. Ilitaqsiniq limits its family literacy work these days to producing materials which community programmes can use.

Ilitaqsiniq makes books, storybooks and board games that are based on traditional Inuit culture. In recent years it translated some books by popular Canadian children's author, Robert Munsch, into Inuktitut. It sends these materials to programmes and child care centres and even to individual families that can't afford to buy books. When funding allows, Ilitaqsiniq undertakes capacity building work, especially training and support from a distance.



Quluq storybooks

Free books are a tangible way to promote the family and community literacy activities that exist and to get children reading. 'Most of our books are taken home by children. But we have a strong storytelling culture and tradition. We always let parents know they can tell stories even if they can't read,' says Ms. Crockatt.

In 2009 Ilitaqsiniq released its report on bilingualism in Nunavut. An evaluation of that research and consultation project shows that people in Nunavut increased their use of Inuktitut in the home and helping children with homework following the face to face consultations. 'That was much more effective than posters or pamphlets. It's easier to talk face to face with people about how they can make a difference in their children's lives,' says Ms. Crockatt.

Northwest Territories

Each year the NWT Literacy Council brings twenty or more community people to an annual Family Literacy Training Institute to learn how to deliver specific programmes, such as 1-2-3 Rhyme with Me, or Storytime Adventures. Participants receive programme manuals developed by the council to take home. If there is funding and enough demand, it delivers advanced family literacy training for more experienced people. The council also administers a small pot of money that communities can access to pay for a facilitator and supplies for short-term family literacy activities. The programme coordinator must be trained by the council to access the money.

'We know that one-time training doesn't work. People come to the institute again or ask for follow-up,' says NWT family literacy coordinator Kathryn Barry Paddock. NWT Literacy Council staff travel to communities to do outreach and workshops as much as funding allows, and mentor by phone. The council also covers the cost of a



couple of community family literacy workers to attend a national family literacy conference each year.

Mary Ann Vital opened the pre-school in Deline, NWT on the shore of Great Bear Lake with one box of materials in the late 1990s. She now receives territorial government *language nest* funding to incorporate North Slavey into her programming and runs a centre full of resources and materials. She and her community have benefitted from the NWT Literacy Council training. Currently she facilitates Books in the Home literacy evenings two nights a week at the local library. ‘As an early childhood worker, I try to encourage more parents to read to their children. But since our literacy nights are at the library anyone shows up, including adults and elders without children.’

Yukon

The NWT Literacy Council is acknowledged across Canada for the number and high quality of the teaching and learning resources it produces for family and adult literacy. It develops resources for both families and family literacy programmes. The Yukon Literacy Coalition uses or adapts these resources and others, rather than



Elder and children stretching muskrat hides

produce their own. Their funding is directed at running a very successful Yukon-wide outreach programme and the Family Literacy Centre, in a space provided by their partner, the City of Whitehorse. Whitehorse’s four-year-old Family Literacy Centre operates five hours a day, six days a week. Drop-in programmes can include activities such as storytime, creative fun, painting fun, free playtime or structured activities.

Other groups use the centre for various programmes, making it a community gathering place, where families come to make connections with others and build relationships. This year a parent asked to use the centre for an after-school book club for kids. The coalition partners with the Whitehorse Rendezvous Rotary Club and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides over a thousand Yukon pre-school children a free book each month.

The Yukon’s family literacy work began with a project to provide family literacy outreach to a First Nations programme in Whitehorse. As elsewhere in Canada’s north, providing outreach to smaller communities is largely about building relationships with communities and key people in each of them. ‘The deeper the contact, the greater the impact,’ says Colleen Segriff, the Yukon coalition’s outreach and family literacy project manager.

Ms. Segriff finds that her outreach work has evolved to better meet community needs. Family literacy is increasingly integrated into cultural activities. Recently that involved storytelling, art and other activities revolving around salmon at a Ta’an Gwich’in fish camp. ‘I love teaching, but I really love integrating and making connections, getting elders, language teachers and others all involved. We have more impact on children and families.’

The Yukon coalition hopes to achieve the stability of multi-year programme funding for centre staff, materials and its outreach worker that would allow visits to every Yukon community at least two times a year.

Challenges and looking ahead

Community-based literacy projects across the north are challenged financially because there is rarely ongoing money for programmes to hire a coordinator or materials. ‘People continue to do what they can, but it’s hard to volunteer when you need to work to feed your family,’ notes Nunavut’s Ms. Crockatt. That lack of stability affects



community participation if people do not see a programme as something ongoing. Programmes can suffer from high turnover of facilitators if there is too much reliance on non-Aboriginal people who often move away from a community. Stable programme funding encourages more people to take family literacy training that will help them get or maintain employment.

The three coalitions work not just on programmes but also to keep the benefits of family literacy front and centre with the governments who fund their work. Research into the life-long effects of early childhood brain and language development, and their own programme evaluations, point to the cost-effectiveness and positive outcomes resulting from an investment in family and community literacy, but each territory has many competing priorities for funding.

For all three territories the family literacy message is clear. Elders and parents are a child's first teacher. Family literacy is what we do every day. It's how we learn in the environment where we live, on the land and within our culture. It does not have to be an additional thing to add on to your list of things to do. The three coalitions learn from each other, share resources, and partner on projects. Family literacy in Canada's north will continue to benefit from this collaboration and what each territory learns from their differing, but complementary approaches.

Thank you to Helen Balanoff, Kathryn Barry Paddock, Mary Ann Vital and Marianne Bromley, NWT Literacy Council, Beth Mulloy, Lisa Young and Colleen Segriff, of the Yukon Literacy Coalition, and Kim Crockatt, of Iltasiniq, for their contributions to this article.

Aggie Brockman is a longtime resident of Yellowknife, NWT with her own consulting business. The great work of the NWT Literacy Council makes it one of her favourite clients. She was in Australia for the first time in 2012 and saw many similarities, (and differences, of course), between the Northern Territory and the Northwest Territories. She can be reached at abrockman@northwestel.net

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About Canada's north

The three northern Canadian territories, Yukon, Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut, make up more than one-third of the Canadian land mass. These areas though are sparsely populated, with a combined population of only 114,000 people. In Nunavut all communities are accessible by air only. There are some roads in the NWT, and in the Yukon all communities, except one, are accessible by road.

Collectively there are seventy-three communities in the three territories. The number of people in each community ranges from Whitehorse, Yukon with a population of 23,276 to 54 people living in Kakisa, NWT.

These northern jurisdictions have the highest proportion of Aboriginal people of any region of Canada. In Nunavut, Inuit make up more than eighty percent of the population. In the NWT Inuit, First Nations and Metis make up fifty percent of the population. First Nations make up twenty percent of the Yukon population.

Aboriginal language use is strongest in Nunavut where Inuktitut is an official language along with French and English. In the NWT there are eleven official languages! Nine of them are Aboriginal languages.

In northern Canada the term Aboriginal is more frequently used than indigenous. It includes Inuit, First Nations (Indians) and Metis.

Strengthening the foundations

By Chris Howell, and Leanne FitzGerald

In 'Building broad foundations' (*Fine Print*, Vol: 35 no. 3, 2012) Jacinta Agostinelli provided a comprehensive review of the factors shaping the development of pre-accredited programme delivery in Victoria. Here in 'Strengthening the foundations' the authors describe recently introduced quality processes that are being implemented by Learn Local organisations delivering pre-accredited programmes purchased by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFE).

Learn Local organisations develop pre-accredited programmes to meet the needs of adults in their community who have experienced barriers to education in the past and find it difficult to undertake accredited courses as their first step into vocational training. The Victorian government purchases pre-accredited programmes from more than 310 Learn Local (community) organisations registered with the ACFE Board, for delivery throughout Victoria.

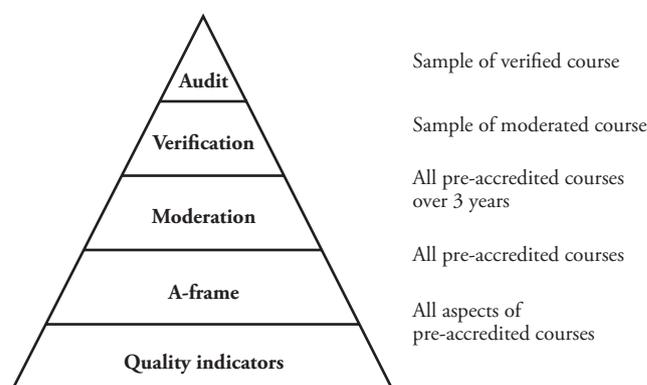
Unlike accredited courses, which are regulated by the national standards policy framework, pre-accredited programmes are regulated by ACFE board processes. These processes provide assurance to learners and other stakeholders that the programmes purchased by the board are of a high and comparable quality regardless of where they are delivered.

The most recent and comprehensive implementation of pre-accredited programme quality processes was launched by the ACFE board in June 2013 after extensive consultation with Learn Local organisations—the Pre-accredited Quality Framework. The framework brings together an updated curriculum document known as the A-frame, which comes with a set of resources to support Learn Local organisations implement on-going quality improvement in the planning, development, delivery and review of pre-accredited programmes.

Quality Processes

This framework is a devolved, locally based quality improvement process. The development of the quality assurance model was also guided by eleven principles adapted from the General Practice Education and Training Quality Framework.

Through its guiding principles, the framework demonstrates a respect for the provider, acknowledges that they are the ones that know the needs of their local community and understands that local needs are best met through the development



The Pre-accredited Quality framework

of local curriculum. It stresses the importance of quality and a cycle of continuous improvement in the operation of Learn Local organisations but does not seek to tell Learn Local [organisations] how to manage their own businesses. It also sets the tone for a collaborative approach to quality development of pre-accredited programmes. (Leanne Fitzgerald, Coonara Community House, VISTA conference 2013)

The Pre-accredited Quality Framework

The Pre-accredited Quality Framework has five key components: Quality Indicators, the A-frame, Moderation, Verification, and Audit. Other guides and resources support the framework.

The Quality Indicators

The Quality Indicators, developed in consultation with Learn Local organisations, provide the foundation for quality design and delivery of pre-accredited programmes. There are three quality indicator categories: course design, learner centred approaches, and quality teaching.

Quality indicators are standards or criteria that guide quality assurance processes, including moderation, that in turn support the design, delivery and outcomes of pre-accredited programmes.

The A-frame

The A-frame is a curriculum model that guides the planning and documentation of educational practices. Initially developed in 2006 through extensive consultation with Learn Local practitioners, the A-frame was substantially revised in 2010 to include employability skills. The A-frame is routinely used by all Learn Local organisations in Victoria who deliver pre-accredited programmes on behalf of the ACFE Board.

Every revision of the A-frame is informed by consultation, focus groups and workshop feedback from Learn Local organisations. The 2013 review of the A-frame was informed from consultations with Learn Local organisations about the development of the new quality assurance model.

The main changes in the latest revision of the A-frame are in the two key documents—the Learner Plan and the Course Plan. The Learner Plan documents what the learner wants from the programme, how the programme will assist them to connect with further study or work, and provides feedback from the learner to the teacher about the progress of the programme. The Course Plan supports the process of designing a pre-accredited programme and documents how the planner addresses critical elements of course design such as identifying the skills and experience of the teacher, learner prerequisites for the programme, how the teaching and learning will be delivered, measurement, evaluation and acknowledgement.

The Learner Plan has been made simpler to use and more useful as a pathway planning document. A key change was in simplifying the way employability skills were embedded in the document.

The Course Plan has been adjusted to allow more scope for recording actions taken to improve delivery on the basis of learner feedback and community and industry input. Learner pathway planning has been made more explicit.

Moderation

The Moderation Guide details processes for analysing, discussing and documenting adjustments to the content and delivery of pre-accredited programmes. It provides record-keeping formats and suggestions as to how moderation can be managed and promotes the role of moderation in professional development of staff.

The peer moderation process for pre-accredited programmes differs from that for accredited training. It



focuses on the content and outcomes of the course not simply on the assessment practices.

Moderation of pre-accredited delivery is a collaborative, peer appraisal process which involves teachers presenting, analysing, discussing and documenting adjustments to the pre-accredited programmes in line with the programme type and employability skills outcomes.

It supports teachers to:

- plan and review sessions and courses
- reflect and document what their learners gained from the course
- address employability skills
- increase their professional experience and skills supported by a peer appraisal model.

Pre-accredited moderation supports quality delivery by:

- providing professional development for teachers—from induction of new staff to ongoing development
- developing staff understanding of pre-accredited course requirements including the A-frame
- providing a continuous improvement tool for Learn Local organisations
- facilitating peer support and sharing because it is based on peer appraisal.

Learn Local organisations are expected to conduct moderation on an annual basis; they are actively encouraged to conduct external moderation, although this is not compulsory.



Verification and Audit

Verification is a process that provides Learn Local organisations with an opportunity to check that all processes are in place before submitting a pre-accredited programme to the ACFE board for purchase. Audit involves a small state-wide sampling of documentation that provides the ACFE Board with an assurance that the programmes it purchases are of a high and comparable quality. Because Audit is primarily driven by the department there is no separate resource for this function.

Other Pre-accredited Quality Framework resources

The Pre-accredited Quality Framework is published in eight sections including the A-frame, Moderation, Verification and Audit. Other resources are described below.

Overview

This section puts the kit in the context of the Adult Community and Further Education Board's purchase of pre-accredited delivery. It provides the rationale and purpose for the framework and its quality assurance processes.

Planning Guide

The audience for the Planning Guide is the management and leadership team of a Learn Local organisation delivering pre-accredited programmes. The guide provides strategies and resources for developing course plans, meeting moderation requirements and planning pathways.

Teaching Guide

The Teaching Guide provides background information and teaching strategies for four key components of pre-accredited teaching and learning: the A-frame, using the learner plan, adult learning, and employability skills. These were the four key areas of need identified by the Pre-accredited Quality Framework focus groups. The suggested teaching strategies were sourced from experienced Learn Local teachers or from publications and websites relevant to the sector.

Induction Kit

The Induction Kit gives an introduction to the framework together with strategies for pre-accredited induction for new teachers. There are also guidelines for managers regarding the intended audiences for various sections of the kit.

Stakeholder Guide

This is an additional resource available for downloading and not part of the printed kit. It provides information for potential industry and community clients of Learn Local organisations about pre-accredited training and its quality processes.

Case studies

Five examples of successful pre-accredited programmes provide those new to the sector or to pre-accredited programmes with a snapshot of the range of strategies used by Learn Local organisations. The programmes profiled are ones that have been selected or shortlisted for best practice awards.

Glossary

The glossary lists relevant acronyms and definitions of terminology.

Strengthening pre-accredited delivery

The Pre-accredited Quality Framework supports and strengthens the process of planning and implementing quality pre-accredited programmes. It builds on previous work undertaken by the ACFE Board in conjunction with Learn Local organisations and puts in place quality assurance and support resources to help Learn Local organisations better serve their learners and their communities. The resources, moderation and verification and the renewed A-frame draw on the advice sourced from many Learn Local organisations, reflecting the learner and community focused work of the many practitioners throughout Victoria.

Continued on page 27 ...

The Core skills for work framework

By Sally Hutchison

The *Core skills for work* framework deepens and expands the *Employability skills framework*. Work skills need to be described and taught explicitly and clearly, and the *Core skills for work* was designed with this in mind.

Having had a long-standing interest in how employability skills are taught in the VET context, I was keen to attend an introductory workshop for the new framework for employability skills, the *Core skills for work* (CSfW) prior to its publication in 2012. Participants at the workshops had some key questions:

Do we have to implement yet another framework?

What are the main differences compared to the *Employability skills framework 2002*?

Will the CSfW replace the *Employability skills framework 2002*?

This paper will provide a background and overview of the CSfW and outline the main similarities and differences between it and the *Employability skills framework (2002)*, providing some stimulus for discussion around how the CSfW could be used. It will also make some suggestions as to why the *Employability skills framework* did not provide the outcomes it was designed to and what strategies were implemented in some areas to improve its efficacy and explore whether these could also be applied to the use of the CSfW.

Foundation skills

The Ithaca group was commissioned by Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIIRSTE) and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to develop a new framework for employability skills with the aim of making clear and explicit 'a set of non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in the workforce' (Ithaca Group, 2013a: 1). These skills, together with core LLN skills, form what are now increasingly known as foundation skills. Foundation skills combine with technical or discipline specific skills to contribute to work performance (ibid., p. 1). This initiative is in alignment with the priority areas for action of the *National Foundation Skills Strategy*: strengthening foundation skills in the workplace, and building the



capacity of the education and training workforces to deliver foundation skills (SCOTSE 2012:3). Ithaca worked extensively with employers to understand what they wanted in employees, and sought input from industry groups and a range of other stakeholders (Ithaca Group, 2013a: 3).

The new CSfW framework is based on the idea that skills are developed over time in learning or work environments and are influenced by culture, attitudes, context and other factors. Importantly, the framework stipulates that these skills cannot be measured nor can they be assessed. It is not a set of standards (ibid., p. 4) but acknowledges that its purpose is to help people in key roles, such as educators, to support learners to understand and develop these skills, as well as to be able to identify and describe core skills in specific jobs or job areas. While I write from a VET practitioner perspective, the framework is relevant for anyone who has a role in providing career advice to students, and could be a useful resource for volunteers, self-employed, those involved in training, universities, schools and for employers and employees at work.

CSfW as a resource

To date there has been no mandate for the CSfW and there is no formal plan for implementation or for replacement of the *Employability skills framework (2002)*. Essentially the CSfW is seen as a resource, an additional tool that anyone can adapt and use for their own purposes. It will be up to each sector to find ways of using it that best suits their needs and to this end it is generic in approach.

The framework came about because the *Employability skills framework* has not been used as much as it was originally hoped. This new framework was designed to present skills, knowledge and understanding in terms that are practical and can be clearly articulated and demonstrated. One of the most significant shifts in focus is the incorporation of the strategies of reviewing, reflecting and evaluating, which in themselves then have the effect of developing the skills being reviewed, reflected on and evaluated.

Differences between the frameworks

The CSfW is a framework for conceptualising and articulating skills, knowledge and understandings that sustain work performance over time, and can be used to guide further development. Conceptually it is different to the *Employability skills framework* and partly this is because it moves from the idea of ‘if you have these skills you’ll be employable’, to ‘these are skills that can be developed to different levels in a wide range of ways, throughout ones whole working life.’ It also focuses more on how workplace environments and workplace cultures differ.

The *Employability skills framework (2002)* organised employability skills under eight main skills areas, each of which had a list of elements that employees had identified as being important, although it was acknowledged that these may vary in different jobs. This provided a simple, single-layered approach. The eight skills areas were communication, team work, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, learning. technology.

The CSfW differs to this in its more complex, multi-dimensional approach that identifies:

- three skills clusters
- ten skill areas
- focus areas
- performance features
- five stages of development
- influencing factors—individual and contextual.

The clusters and skills are outlined in Table 1.

The three skill areas in bold print are the areas that are distinctly new in title. The others are variations in title but similar to those listed in the 2002 framework. Each individual skill area encompasses a synthesis of skills, knowledge and understandings and their application in reference to work (ibid: p.8).

Table 2 describes the skill areas. Some of the similarities in the two frameworks are obvious, but they are packaged in different ways.

Table 3 shows the main skills in the *Employability Skills framework (2002)* and how they can be mapped within the skill areas in the CSfW. A far more detailed mapping can be found in the recently released bridging document (Department of Industry, 2013).

The only skill area that was listed in the 2002 framework that is missing as a specific area in the CSfW, is learning. This is because it is integrated within many of the other skill areas.

Conceptual differences

The Table 3 mapping reveals part of the nature of the conceptual difference in the two frameworks as it demonstrates how the skills areas in the CSfW actually incorporate various skills from the 2002 framework and hence exposes its limitation: the 2002 framework has no inherent capacity to recognise the interconnectedness of the relationships between the skills, due to the way in which it lists the skills as discreet sets. For example, teamwork involves the interfacing of a range of skill areas as outlined in the CSfW, rather than being a skill that exists on its own.

The extent to which someone is able to apply any of the core skills for work, will be affected by both their LLN skills and their technical skills as directly relevant to their field of work (ITHACA Group., 2013a:11).

Table 1. The core skills for work: skill areas and clusters

Cluster 1: Navigate the world of work	Cluster 2: Interact with others	Cluster 3: Get the work done
a. Manage career and work life	a. Communicate for work	a. Plan and organise
b. Work with roles, rights and protocols	b. Connect and work with others	b. Make decisions
	c. Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives	c. Identify and solve problems
		d. Create and Innovate
		e. Work in a Digital World

Table 2. Descriptions of the skill areas

<p>1a. Manage career and work life—being aware of your own strengths and weaknesses, skills, qualifications, interests, and environmental factors and aligning these with options to gain employment or change jobs or job roles; identifying and weighing up options around learning and job/career options; decision-making</p> <p>1b. Work with roles, rights and protocols—awareness of what is expected of you in the workplace based on what are acceptable behaviours and practices, understanding and recognising both implicit and explicit expectations and protocols, how they operate and how to respond to them; being clear about what your responsibilities are and also knowing what your legal rights are and knowing how to find out if not sure</p> <p>2a. Communicate for work—knowing how to understand and be understood; understanding the protocols around communication and communication systems, both spoken and written; knowing implicit and explicit rules about communication at work; knowing who to talk to or where to go to for information/support/debriefing; knowing appropriate communication</p> <p>2b. Connect and work with others—understanding others and building relationships; understanding yourself, your values, expectations, skills, emotions and reactions, monitoring and reflecting on your own behaviour; dynamics of a workgroup: knowing what makes workgroups or teams function well or not</p>	<p>2c. Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives—awareness of differences between people in terms of values, beliefs, behaviours and being able to respond to these appropriately by acknowledging and utilising different perspectives for work-based needs; managing conflict</p> <p>3a. Plan and organise—understanding what is required to engage in and complete workplace tasks and to manage and prioritise workloads; following or establishing processes, organising yourself, materials, resources and other information; planning and reviewing</p> <p>3b. Make decisions—identifying and evaluating possibilities, solutions, choices and alternatives, making informed choices and reviewing outcomes</p> <p>3c. Identify and solve problems—predicting or identifying problems; adopting or designing a process or procedure for addressing problems; carrying out the steps required and reflecting on and evaluating the outcome</p> <p>3d. Create and innovate—recognising and implementing new ideas in relation to processes, products/services and problems; ability to question and challenge the status quo, to use foresight and vision in planning and identifying opportunities</p> <p>3e. Work in a digital world—understanding rules and risks with technology including online protocols; responding to and keeping up with the rapid and constant changes in technology and recognising how digital technology can enhance workplace practices</p>
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Table 3. Basic mapping of skills listed in the Employability skills framework within the skills areas in the Core skills for work framework

Cluster 1 - Navigate the world of work	Cluster 2 - Interact with others	Cluster 3 - Get the work done
<p>a. Manage career and work life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-management • learning <p>b. Work with roles, rights and protocols</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-management • team work • communication • learning 	<p>a. Communicate for work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • team work • problem solving <p>b. Connect and work with others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • team work • problem solving • self-management • learning • technology <p>c. Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • team work • problem solving • learning 	<p>a. Plan and organise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning and organising • self-management • initiative and enterprise • technology <p>b. Make decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning and organising • learning <p>c. Identify and solve problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • team work • problem solving • learning <p>d. Create and innovate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem solving • initiative and enterprise • learning <p>e. Work in a digital world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • learning • technology

Furthermore, skills developed in other work contexts or external to work contexts can be adapted and applied in the current work situation. Note the use of the word *adapted* here, rather than *transferred*, which is the term used in conjunction with the *Employability skills framework*. *Transferability* implies that skills can

be applied in a different context as they are, whereas *adaptability* is a more flexible notion that realises that skills may require some adjustment in a new and varied context. Implicit in this is the notion that such an adjustment may not necessarily be immediate but may require an indeterminate transition time.

Another interesting addition to the CSfW that was absent in the 2002 framework is the attention given under the skills area of 'Interact with others'. This area describes acknowledging, appreciating and integrating different viewpoints of and differences between individuals, and how at times differing opinions can create conflict and so employees need skills to appreciate and manage this. 'Interact with others' also elicits the consideration of how deeper understandings and inclusiveness can enrich and diversify workplace practices and future development. So you can see how the CSfW adds more depth to both communication and to teamwork.

Perhaps one of the most significant conceptual differences between the *Employability skills framework 2002* and the CSfW, is the synthesis of five stages of development with the skill areas. This has been based on the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1985).

The CSfW framework applies these principles to performance in each skill area. The levels, called stages in the CSfW, range from Stage 1, Novice performer, through to Stage 5, Expert performer and can be seen in Table 4. Superimposing these levels in grid format against the skills areas allows details of what is required at each level to be articulated for particular job roles and/or for an individual's skills. This can facilitate easy identification of skills gaps to be addressed as well as ideas for strategic future development of skills to enable progress and success. In identifying skills gaps, it can dispel the notion that experience guarantees expertise.

There is no expectation that employees will need all the skills, neither would they necessarily need to develop them to the expert stage of performance. That would be nonsensical if their job did not require that skill level. Individuals could choose to stay at different levels. They might have no further aspirations to move into a position that did require further skills development and be comfortable in certain skills at a capable level, for example. Development through the stages depends to some degree on your relationship to rules. The rules are instructions, processes, procedures, guidelines or models. See Table 5.

A novice, for example, needs instructions such as 'When this happens ... do this.' There is more support provided by others with more experience or in more senior positions. A capable performer would know the rules, could be trusted to adhere to them, could recognise problems and then use problem-solving processes to fix them. A

proficient performer starts to challenge the rules, whereas an expert performer can quickly identify a problem and make immediate decisions or decide whether they need to sit back and think about things in more depth before making decisions. They can also utilise their intuitive potential, without basing all decisions on logic and analysis. To move from capable to proficient there has to be a change in cognition so that you start thinking more in principles and concepts.

When you move into a new work role or situation you might find that you become a novice again in some skills areas and it could take time to learn the rules and how things work. This is a natural part of the process and relevant to the transition phase mentioned earlier in which existing skills can be adapted to new roles and contexts.

The fact that many of the skills areas of the CSfW have the added dimension of review, reflection and evaluation builds in a continuous development aspect. Opportunities for conscious reflection here is what allows people to grow and develop. It is this, as part of practical experience, which allows people to progress through the levels.

The bulk of the CSfW framework document consists of detailed tables in which each of the focus areas (subsets of the skills areas) have been detailed against the five stages of development in terms of performance features. While this detail is valid and thorough, the sheer bulk of this information can be somewhat daunting when looking for practical ways in which to utilise the CSfW as a tool.

Suggestions for the use of the CSfW

The performance features can be used at different levels to stimulate discussion in a training context. For example, facilitate group or small group discussion about what situations could potentially arise in a specific workplace and explore options for dealing with those at each stage. Introducing the stages of performance to students can provide a new perspective on how their skills might develop over time. Table 6 identifies just one strand of the performance features from the focus area of Managing conflict. Stages 4 and 5 have not been included in this article, as proficient and expert are not going to be relevant to many student cohorts. This is not to say that those levels would not be relevant to some groups of students who have had significant experience in the workplace. There are no specific rules here. The CSfW is designed to be flexible and used in whatever way is useful.

Table 4. Dreyfus model of skill acquisition

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	stage 4	Stage 5
Novice performer	Advanced beginner	Capable performer	Proficient performer	Expert performer

Table 5. Developmental Framework

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
<i>Novice performer</i>	<i>Advanced beginner</i>	<i>Capable performer</i>	<i>Proficient performer</i>	<i>Expert performer</i>
has little or no practical experience of the skill area on which to base actions	has some practical experience of the skill area	has sufficient practical experience of the skill area to identify patterns and organising principles and establish priorities for action	has considerable practical experience of the skill area in a range of contexts and is moving from reliance on externally prescribed rules to recognition of principles that guide actions	has extensive practical experience of the skill area, with both a big picture understanding and an eye for relevant fine detail
is highly reliant on explicit rules (e.g. instructions, processes, procedures, models), guidance and support and priorities determined by others	is beginning to recognise patterns (e.g. routines, regular responses, links and connections) that help understanding and influence action is still reliant on explicit rules and on assistance to identify priorities, but can apply these more autonomously in familiar, routine situations	can comfortably apply the explicit and implicit rules associated with familiar situations adopts a systematic, analytical approach to tasks, especially in unfamiliar situations	organises knowledge and practical experience as patterns, concepts and principles, which makes it possible to assess, and respond to situations in an increasingly intuitive and flexible way reverts to analysis and seeks guidance when making important decisions	operates fluidly, intuitively and flexible in highly complex situations, drawing on knowledge and practical experience organised into highly refined patterns, concepts and principles uses a combination of informed intuition and analysis in different situations, recognising that it all depends will often reconceptualise approaches and practices to produce more effective outcomes, while also recognising which rules and principles are always applicable

Table 6. Developmental Framework

Skill area: Recognising and utilising diverse perspectives
Focus area: Managing conflict

Stage 1 Novice	Stage 2 Advanced beginner	Stage 3 Capable performer
draws on a limited set of strategies for dealing with conflict when it arises e.g. ignore, retreat, respond aggressively	attempts to manage own responses to particular situations and people and makes some attempt to resolve issues that arise	when opinions differ attempts to reach agreement with some consideration of the perspectives of others

What happened to the attributes?

The attributes from the *Employability skills framework (2002)* are not referred to directly in the CSfW. Because the attributes are personal characteristics as distinct from skills, it is not possible to teach them and the CSfW has as its aim, to only include skills that are teachable. However, in a training context they remain a useful source of

information for students who will be looking for work to consider, and certainly, an awareness of what the attributes are, could be valuable. As the skills outlined in the CSfW are developed, they will have an influence on the positive behaviours implied by the attributes.

There is also a list of influencing factors listed in the

CSfW, which can have an impact at any point in time on someone's ability to apply the core skills. These are:

- nature and degree of support
- level of autonomy
- degree of motivation
- self-belief and resilience
- existing skills and knowledge
- familiarity with the context
- complexity of tasks
- cultural and value-based factors
- external factors.

The influencing factors have been built into the framework because they can provide a potential focus for specific learning and development activities and tools. For example, they might be used to help identify factors that need to be addressed in order to gain and maintain work, and how to go about doing this.

The frameworks in a learning context

When the *Employability skills framework (2002)* was released, teachers and trainers were presented with a list of skills that employers found valuable, but were left with questions about how to go about teaching them. With dedicated planning by some teachers, posters of the *Employability skills* began to appear on the walls in classrooms and the skills became more explicitly integrated into each session of delivery.

After some initial exploration and discussion about what the skills were, students were frequently asked during and at the end of classes, which of these skills they had been using in the classroom. Over time, with prompt questions, students' understandings of the skills and how they can be developed became apparent. Teamwork, for example, would start to explore what it was that contributed to a team being successful or not, what roles different members of the team had, what the responsibilities of team members were etc. The intention was to empower students with the understandings and the vocabulary necessary to be able to articulate how they had developed some of these transferable skills and that the ability to do this would be of value to them in job interviews and also in the workplace itself. Rather than a student at a job interview saying, 'I did teamwork in my TAFE course', they might say:

In my TAFE course we often did team work in the classroom. It was really important that everyone in the team got a change to speak and give their opinion, so everyone had to listen to each other. We did a research

project and nobody knew what to do at first. It was a mess. So we had to work out exactly what everyone's role was and what tasks they had to do. We wrote it all down. This helped us a lot and the team worked much better.

Through an employability skills community of practice (CoP) that was established within the Faculty of Further Education at NMIT in 2009, it became evident that teachers across the institute had been producing many innovative resources. The community of practice enabled resources to be shared across faculties and departments. It was also apparent outside this group, however, that employability skills were still being viewed by many as a discreet set of job seeking skills that were taught separately to other course content. These job-seeking skills included resume writing, job search, addressing key selection criteria, writing cover letters, interview skills and personal presentation. It also seemed that the extent of the inclusion of employability skills in some courses existed only in the form of a check the box list of skills in the work programme at the end of each week of teaching. Without significant research and resource development, the provision of professional development, and processes designed to facilitate the sharing of resources, this is bound to happen. If the CSfW is to become a useful tool the same applies. It also became apparent that many teachers were teaching employability skills implicitly without being aware that they were doing so. The CoP raised awareness among staff that this was the case, and then explored ways to make employability skills teaching explicit.

Implementation tools and resources

A range of tools and resources have now been developed to support the use of the CSfW (Department of Industry, 2013). These include mapping documents, examples of how the CSfW might be used in different settings by employers and by trainers, and a self-reflection activity for school students doing work experience placement. With further resourcing, time allocation and professional development the CSfW framework has the potential to offer a useful and flexible common reference point for articulating core skills and could be used in the following ways: to develop learning and assessment materials for particular vocational areas, by individuals about to embark on an employment pathway or within their career development, by organisations associated with vocational counselling, by employers wanting to identify skills gaps that need to be filled and to support staff in skills development.

Continued on page 40 ...

Deadly Ute

By Robert Millar

This article describes exemplary teaching from Robert Millar. Robert presented the Deadly Ute project, conducted at the Wimmera HUB in Horsham, at the 2013 VALBEC conference 'Literacies in a diverse world'.

Overview

The Deadly Ute Project was designed to re-engage local indigenous learners in vocational training, provide experiences that reflect and value culture and connection, and create pathways to schooling, vocational training or employment. Although formally enrolled in secondary education, many of the learners had exited traditional schooling and were repeating historical patterns of indigenous disengagement, low self-esteem and low personal aspirations.

The Deadly Ute Project adopted a person centred approach to learning: identifying interests of the learners, identifying a project and linking nationally recognised vocational competencies to the activity. Learners modified and decorated a utility vehicle and in the process developed skills from the automotive, business, creative industries and general education fields.

Activities included: vehicle maintenance, servicing, modifying and fitting air suspension, installing car audio systems, wheel fitting and balancing, exploring indigenous art (symbols and representations) then painting both the inside and outside of the ute, marketing, promotion, funding and sponsorship proposals and information technology.

Teaching practice

Building professional relationships within the learning environment was and continues to be at the core of the training I deliver. Strong, clearly defined respectful relationships help build trust and a willingness to become involved in the learning, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity or ability. Whether working with learners or with partner organisations, respect, openness and trust are key elements in the learning environment.

- All learning activities were anchored to a larger task or problem and students were clear about the big picture and the end product we were working towards:
 - I started with each student's goal of what they wanted the finished deadly ute to look like and



how it would represent them. We developed a *wish list* of modifications and how they thought the ute should look.

- I encouraged learners to attend the 2011 Long Walk, which was twelve months prior to the showcasing of the completed project. This allowed learners to visualise how they wanted their ute displayed and the marketing material they would need to develop.
- Learners had a clear vision of the outcome of the project. Through a collaborative planning process, I supported learners in developing ownership for the overall project and individual activities and tasks:
 - I helped learners develop shared class rules and clear expectations regarding behaviours. This is important when creating a harmonious classroom and commitment from the students.
- Tasks and the learning environment were structured to reflect the complexity of the environment they work in, while remaining supportive and appropriately challenging.
 - As with many projects, money—or the lack of it—was an issue; however this provided an opportunity to involve students in finding solutions, including advocating to external funding bodies and making requests to corporations for sponsorship. These activities built solid foundations for future learning and developed employability skills.

Practical matters

- I encouraged learners to collaborate and decide on programme activities, which improved their problem solving, communication and negotiation skills. By the end of the project students were proactive and had developed a clear and planned approach to project management.
- Ideas and views were tested through group discussion and collaboration on activities and tasks:
 - At the beginning and end of each day I encouraged students to share ideas on the progress of the project and directions it could take. This created healthy discussion and increased ownership of both the project and of individual learning.
 - Due to the nature of the project only small numbers of students could work on the same task at a time, but through collaboration and creative thinking students were able to utilise their time effectively; I reminded them that we were all working towards a common goal.
- Reflection on content and the learning process was supported through group discussion, activities, individual reflective journals and portfolios of work.
 - I ensured that each day began with self-reflection and a group discussion to plan the day's activities. This involved checking progress towards goals, and the identification of tasks that need to be completed on the day.
 - At the end of each workshop, I provided time for group discussion and reflection on the day, and then each student made an entry into their reflective journal, adding any photos, video or audio they may have collected throughout the day.

Outcomes and achievements

The focus of the project was always the learner, who was assisted to achieve a range of outcomes:

- achievement of nationally recognised vocational competencies, creating pathways into further training and employment
- regular attendance in class over an extended period of training
- development of patterns of respectful behaviour involving team work, negotiation, problem solving, initiative and resilience
- increased self-esteem and confidence



- personal pride in self and culture
- increased awareness of Aboriginal culture
- celebration of historical connections through art work and the decoration of the deadly ute.

Learners developed an increased awareness of, and pride in, their Aboriginal culture and heritage, and there is now a collective desire to discover more about their culture and to develop stronger connections with Elders.

A significant outcome of the project has been the development of self-belief and pride, and the ability to work together to achieve short- and long-term goals. Rather than feel alienated and disconnected from their extended community, learners are keen to re-engage with and participate in other activities that extend their training options and pathways and connect more with their culture and community.

The project would not have been successful without an extensive network of community support and collaboration. The success of the project is because of the sum of the multiple parts. As the project coordinator and trainer, I facilitated the development and maintenance of widespread community networks as people and agencies worked together to support the learning outcomes of the participants.

To further strengthen our learner plans our project steering group regularly met to discuss student progress, identifying any barriers to participation and ensuring student engagement was supported.

Robert Millar is an accredited training coordinator at Wimmera HUB in Horsham, and has over ten years of experience as a youth worker.

Technical matters

Using a Weblog

By Jill Koppel

This year I am using a class blog to enhance delivery of course content for my ESL III class and computer class at Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Whatever your preconceived notions of the purpose of this popular form of social media, I believe that it's time to claim the platform of blogging for learning—it is a catch-all for all kinds of media that engage many learning styles. I view it as an online extension of my classroom role as instructor, presenter and facilitator.

Without being too wordy, weekly posts provide a focus for key themes and topics: they are chronological repositories of Internet links and online media in one place for convenient access during a class and for students to access independently to review, catch up or extend themselves beyond the class. I annotate embedded media and links, reinforce concepts and remind students to do tasks.

I also embed content that I produce, such as PowerPoint presentations (uploaded to SlideShare) and audio recordings (produced quickly and directly on PC or mobile devices to SoundCloud). Documents can be scanned and uploaded to Google Drive in PDF format to embed in a post. Google presentations are also useful: while not as slick as PowerPoint, they can be updated any time after embedding in a post—this is really handy if you want to add slides over several weeks, e.g. of students' work. There is also a Google document which lists students' independent learning items which I update as they submit work to me.

Although in chronological order, the class blog also offers continuity over the year by indexing posts by topic and language skill or task e.g. listening, learning or dictation, so that students can search the blog for all posts that deal with one of these areas for independent revision.

While the blog focuses on the main feed, pages are also available—these might be either an enduring key document, or a link to another regularly used website or our students' blogging domain at Kid blog.

What about wikis?

The academic year is ordered chronologically so why

shouldn't our work be similarly organised? Furthermore, the CNLC wiki had become too cumbersome for me to maintain on a weekly basis. Searching the wiki by topic or language skill was not possible because we had not indexed the pages when we began developing the wiki.

Institutionalising the class blog

I regularly use the blog in class to reinforce its importance to learning. I often pass the cordless keyboard round to improve interactivity and familiarise students with navigation. I also build in *breadcrumbs* or *carrots*: activities that entice students into the blog, e.g. simple grammar drills put into a PowerPoint to make revision a fun task with inbuilt feedback. When I embedded a PowerPoint grammar drill in July this year I noticed a spike in the usage statistics.

Students need lots of practice locating the blog—typing even a shortened URL into the browser address bar is problematic due to typing errors. So we use Google Search regularly to demonstrate how to find the blog.

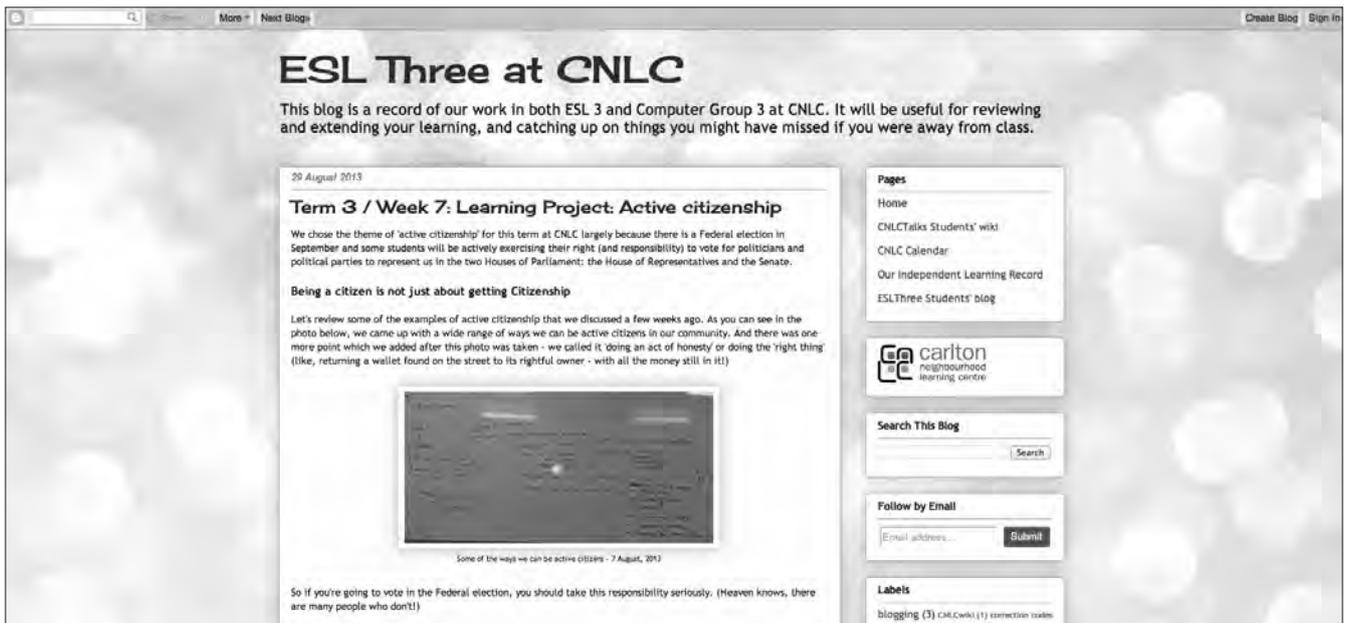
Preparation time

I try to limit time spent adding content to the blog to one or two hours a week, including promoting the posts via email and the class Facebook group. But it is also important to post regularly so students who go there conscientiously are not disappointed.

Equipment and skills

Nowadays I have reliable access to an Internet accessible computer and projector. This was not always the case, and it takes a lot of practice (in front of the students) to get things right. Often the most unexpected things will go wrong, and students need to see that teachers get confronted with technical issues, and overcome them.

If you're considering setting up a class blog, I recommend the use of Blogger for its relative ease of use. See additional class blogs cited below for inspiration. Accompanying skills include: PowerPoint, Google presentations and documents, audio and video uploading to hosting sites, file and photo management. The blog also provides for multiple author contributors.



Student take-up

The majority of students in the classes mentioned at the beginning of this article regularly access the class blog: anecdotal evidence shows that those with Internet access at home have developed the confidence to go to the blog independently to review work or pick up work they missed. An end of semester review of learning elicited the following feedback about the class blog:

I really like blog and VOA learning English. (A 55 year old who has made significant progress in computer class and now types all her homework.)

I very like going to the [class] blog to listening dictation. (A 45 year old, with a daughter in Year 12 who has just purchased her own laptop so she can get practice at home.)

My using computer is not very good so I have some problems for finding some website. (A woman in her late 60s who has just joined the computer class.)

I liked the dialogue and dictation and the links to other website to explore more learning activities. (A woman in her 40s with children at university.)

Concerns and challenges

I am concerned that using a class blog contributes to widening the digital divide. There are three or four students

who don't use a computer at all, with the barriers being age and/or fear of technology. Generally, such students don't enroll in computer classes. An additional very small minority has no PC or funds to purchase one.

At the other end of the digital use spectrum, increasing numbers of students are using Smartphones with Internet plans, and many of these are accessing the blog this way. This is an area for future development as some of my content is not yet compatible with mobile devices.

The challenge for the future is to be able to integrate use of Smartphones into learning in class whilst keeping those who haven't got mobile devices included and engaged.

Rewards

The students have spent three terms experiencing the benefits of online learning, making for a smooth transition into blogging their writing. A subgroup of twelve in the class, who are also enrolled in a two hour computer class, are now using the Kid blog platform to share their writing and learning in a closed class domain.

Other Examples of class blogs are Dale Pobega's Free ESL Club at <http://dalepobega.blogspot.com.au/> and North West E-learning Mentor Projects at <http://nwmentor.blogspot.com.au/>.

Numeracy matters

The complexity scheme

By Chris Tully

This article provides practical application of the ideas discussed by Dave Tout in 'Lessons learnt from international assessments: Part 2' in this issue of *Fine Print*. It is suggested you read Dave's article to fully appreciate the discussion here.

There is often a variety of abilities within a numeracy class. One way of coping with multi-levels is to create worksheets that cover the same concept but are tailored to different abilities. Students choose to begin with the task they feel most comfortable with. Creation of different level tasks permits more students to succeed.

It helps to map worksheets to a measure to ensure that the level of complexity is increasing in a number of categories. One such measure could be the ACSF indicators 0.09, 0.10 and 0.11. The complexity scheme used for ALLS and PIAAC is another measure that can be used and there are five indicators of complexity in this scheme. In this article I will use three different tasks to examine how the ALLS and PIAAC complexity indicators might be used.

Queen Victoria Market visit—Task 1

A map of Queen Victoria Market is available at <http://duntaz713qezt.cloudfront.net>

Use the map of Queen Victoria Market and what you see at the market to answer the following questions. You may like to support students with a list of answer words they can choose from.

The car park is on the corners of Street, Street and

The meat section is next to the section.

The number 57 tram stop is in street.

The cheapest price for bananas is \$...

Apples are dearer/cheaper than bananas. (Circle the correct answer.)

I could buy two punnets of strawberries with \$5. Yes/ No (Circle the correct answer.)

There is disabled parking across from the shed.

The toilets are shown on the map using a picture of

The market is open on T....., T....., F....., S..... and S.....

On Saturday the market is open for a total of ... hours.

Write down the names of any fruit or vegetable you haven't seen before.

We are meeting at the corner of Peel and Franklin Streets. We are then going to have a cup of coffee in the food court. How do we get there from our meeting place? Either describe it to your teacher or write down the instructions.

Map activity—Task 2

Students need a map of the Melbourne central business district (CBD). This could be a Melways map, a map printed off the Internet or a tourist map.

The class will be going on an excursion to Victoria Market.

Locate Victoria Market. What streets is it on?

What public transport will we use to get to the market?

Describe the route from where we get off public transport to the market including the features such as traffic lights, parks, railway lines and other items marked on the map. (Try to use north, south, clockwise, turn etc. in your directions.)

Create a schedule for the day's excursion, including expected travelling times. Give your schedule to your neighbour to check that you got it right.



Places of interest—Task 3

Use the maps available at <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au>.

Use the Internet to find information about the places such as CERES, Victoria Market, the Natural History Museum, the Immigration Museum, and the Collingwood Children's Farm.

Choose three places and list details such as location, cost, activities available, and write why you would like to visit them. Plan out a day's excursion for the class including a timetable, attractions visited and activities planned during the visit and expected cost.

The complexity scheme

I will now examine the three tasks in the light of the five complexity indicators used in the ALLS and PIACC testing.

Type of match/problem transparency

The action required to complete the first task is obvious and it needs only low-level literacy skills. The information students need is supplied and the language is familiar so this is at Level 1. By contrast, the action demanded by the third task is less obvious and the level of literacy skill needed to complete the task has significantly increased. Students need to source their own information, decide what is relevant to the task and determine how to use the information. This makes the task Level 3.

Plausibility of distractors

In Task 1 all the necessary information is available and there are few distractors, or extra information. The use of a real map in Task 2 adds to the level of complexity as the map contains other information over and above that needed to answer the questions. This would make it a Level 2. To lower the level would require the creation

of a simple map with no incidental information on it. In Task 2 the distractors are the information in the map used. Task 3 has a number of distractors as most of the information is not readily available and has to be found. It would be at Level 3.

Complexity of mathematical data

Task 1 is simple as it only involves comparing prices and calculation of time with whole hours. The numbers are small (less than 1000) and the decimals used are familiar as they are money and the students are working with amounts of less than ten dollars. It is at Level 1. Task 2 requires the calculation of expected times, use of simple ratio to create a schedule that includes allowing for travelling and waiting time. It is at Level 3. In Task 3, the students need to calculate distance and travelling time, use own knowledge to estimate times to do activities and expected costs of incidentals. This requires more interpretation by the students but it does not require a higher level of mathematical information. The students are still working with simple ratios and calculations with money and time. It is at Level 3.

Type of skill operation

Task 1 has simple one step calculations with adding or subtracting so is Level 1 in complexity. Tasks 2 and 3 are very similar with ratio of kilometres per hour. There is no requirement to use more complicated ratios or any calculations with fractions or percentages. Both Tasks 2 and 3 are at complexity Level 2 out of 5. In order to make Task 3 a Level 5 activity it would need more complicated mathematical concepts, such as an experiment where data is collected on how long it takes students to walk a variety of distances around city streetscapes. Students would then find a prediction formula from a scatter diagram of the information to estimate walking times.

Expected number of operations

Task 1 would be at Level 1 as it only requires one step for each question. Task 2 is not difficult in mathematical terms but has a few steps with similar operations. Part of the task requires estimation of speed and calculation with time so would be at Level 2. Task 3 has several steps using more than one process. It requires planning out the best route based on location of public transport and attraction, calculation of travel times, costing the excursion and calculations with time, so would be Level 3.

In looking at these three tasks it is now possible to see that the complexity of the mathematical concepts needed for

Tasks 2 and 3 are very similar. Task 3 is only more complex because the information required is not as readily accessible as it is in Task 2. If the intention was to make Task 3 more mathematically challenging then the worksheet would need

to build on the mathematics that students are already using to complete it.

Christine Tully works at NMIT in Melbourne.

Statistics2013

By Rhonda Raisbeck

Not many people outside of numeracy teachers and statisticians were aware that 2013 was the International Year of Statistics, referred to as Statistics2013. I'm sure it won't skew statistics if you attempt the following activity in 2014.

Humans have their own statistics. We can measure so much of ourselves.

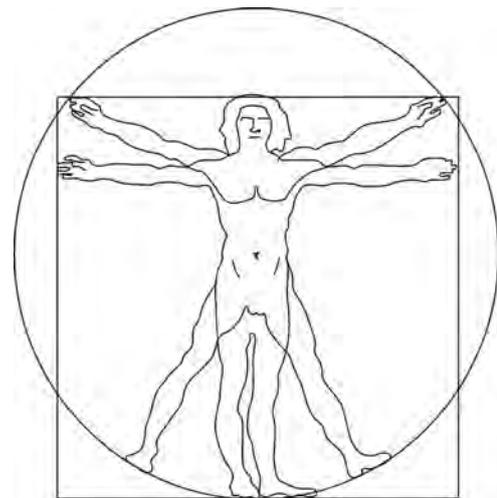
- How tall are you?
- How many digits do you have?
- How wide are your shoulders?
- How long is your arm span?
- How long are your legs?

And then ...

- Is the length of your arm span equal to your height?
- Are you 8 heads tall?
- Is your foot $1/7^{\text{th}}$ of your height?
- Is the length of your hand $1/10^{\text{th}}$ of your height?
- Is your navel your central point?

Do you fit into Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man concept (the golden ratio)?

- Have your students take photos of each other on their mobile phones, just like the two positions of the Vitruvian Man. Look the Vitruvian Man up on the Internet—Wikipedia will do!
- Email the photos to themselves.
- Print the photos or use Printshop—superimpose them over each other.



- Estimate the position of the navel and using a compass or the drawing tools, draw in the circle and the square, a la da Vinci.
- How do they measure up?

This activity is based on an idea from the teachers at Birchip P-12 School, 2012

Rhonda Raisbeck is the programme co-ordinator of the literacy and numeracy programme at Holmesglen Language Centre.

... continued from page 14

The Centre for Adult Education and Coonara Community House were contracted by the ACFE Board to research and develop the Pre-accredited Quality Framework.

Chris Howell managed the A-frame review and the development of resources for the Pre-accredited Quality Framework (PQF). Prior to freelancing as a curriculum and resource developer, Chris worked for many years at AMES in a range of educational leadership and project management roles.

Leanne FitzGerald is the RTO manager and team leader at Coonara Community House in Upper Ferntree Gully. Leanne commenced at Coonara as a volunteer and committee member over twenty years ago, after an initial career in academic libraries. She became team leader in 1994 and has been a passionate leader in the development and growth of adult education across the state during that time.

Open forum

Finding professional development

By Jan Hagston

Jan Hagston has been our wonderful columnist this year. She has shared wisdom and insights developed from reflection on her experience in the field. *Fine Print* would like to thank Jan for transforming thought and research into three fine columns for *Fine Print* readers.

I recently read the consultation paper for the proposed foundation skills professional standards framework (Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology 2013). The section about continuing professional development jumped out at me as I've been thinking about my own professional development. How do I get it? What suits my work life (as a consultant who often works alone or with other time-poor consultants) but isn't superficial?

The consultation paper recognises that most of the professional development of educators is informal and asks how this informal professional development can be captured in a continuing professional development system. The paper asks a number of questions relating to professional development including, 'Could a system for continuing professional development (CPD) be created that will meet the needs of the foundation skills field?' Disregarding the issues of whether there is a foundations skills field and what it is, this question raised a number of further questions for me. What is the aim of professional development? What is it? What is effective professional development? And, how do you get it?

What is it?

Mayer and Lloyd (2011), in a paper prepared for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, acknowledge that while the terms professional development and professional learning are often used interchangeably, there are differences between them. It seems that professional development has gone out of favour as it is seen to be something that teachers do or is done to them. Knapp (2003 cited in Mayer and Lloyd 2011) provides a definition of both terms, professional development being 'the full range of activities, formal and informal, that engage teachers or administrators in new learning about their professional practice' while professional learning refers to 'changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills, and approaches to instruction that form practicing teachers' or administrators' repertoire'. Based on these definitions,



I want to engage in both professional development and professional learning.

When is it effective?

It seems there has been considerable research done on what makes professional development and learning effective (see Mayer and Lloyd 2011 for an overview of some of the research). There seems to be considerable agreement on what makes professional development and learning effective. Factors commonly mentioned are:

- learning that focuses on student learning and examines how to address problems students have with their learning
- learning over time with opportunities to put learning into practice, to receive feedback and review the learning and practice
- access to expertise
- development of own subject/content knowledge
- development of theoretical understanding and using this to make pedagogical decisions
- collaborative learning.

There is also discussion of the importance of the systems and institutions that enable and support professional development/learning.

So, how do you do it?

If the above factors are key in making professional development/learning effective, what are the implications for how professional development/learning should be undertaken? A few things stand out.

One-off activities like conferences, webinars and seminars aren't effective—unless they are part of a broader professional development/learning programme. Of course, they do have other purposes: they are a celebration of good practice, are a vehicle for catching up with people and networking, and sometimes, for gaining inspiration and some headspace to think through challenges.

An effective professional development/learning needs to be undertaken over a period of time so there can be input, reflection, practice, and more reflection with the support of experts and time to discuss and work with colleagues. There need to be activities that address both the subject content and the education theory. And, the activities need to be directly relevant to the students (or, for me, the programmes and resources I develop—which are for students).

How do I get it?

I don't find conferences challenge me or develop my skills or knowledge, except at a superficial level. I'm too busy to do formal study at the moment. I find reading articles and theoretical papers rewarding but only if I can apply them to the work I'm doing or have the opportunity to discuss them with colleagues.

A younger colleague has suggested I join online professional learning networks (PLN). These networks, I'm assured, will connect me to educators worldwide who

can 'offer support, advice, feedback and collaboration opportunities and allow me to collect information from various web sites and access it in one organised area so [I] can stay up to date on the latest teaching techniques, pedagogies and changes in the field of education' (Trust, 2012). It sounds too good to be true but I'm curious and willing to give it a go. I've consulted a few blogs and articles about how they operate and what they offer and I've dipped my toe into the world of online PLNs.

But, what of the foundations skills field?

Are PLNs the answer to foundations skills teachers? Perhaps in part but a system wide continuing professional development model needs to allow teachers and other educators to do more than attend a conference or a one off workshop every now or then. A continuing education model for those teaching foundation skills will need to incorporate the key factors of effective professional learning and development. Anything less is disrespectful to the students and unprofessional.

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Foreign correspondent

By Michelle Circelli

Sacramento: the seat of state-wide governance in California, second only to Paris in the number of trees per capita and having a tourist-friendly, grid-like structure to its city center with a simplistic and effective system of street naming—A to W, 1st to 29th. A city seemingly calm, ordered, logical; an unlikely setting for what some

in California may consider as being the most significant shake up in adult education in recent times.

The timing of my arrival in Sacramento and its alignment with a monumental shift in the delivery of adult education was completely serendipitous. I came to California as



Dr Barry Russell, Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office; Dr Mary Kay Rudolph, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Santa Rosa Junior College; Michelle Circelli; Dr Frank Chong, President, Santa Rosa Junior College

part of a Fulbright Professional Scholarship in Vocational Education and Training to learn more about how outcomes for adult learners undertaking literacy and numeracy programmes are measured. I'm working my way through this—a process that is going to take me from San Diego, through Los Angeles, up through some wine country around Santa Rosa as well as getting across to Washington DC—but I have also been given the opportunity to sit in on state-wide discussions relating to changes in how adult education is to be delivered across California.

As in Australia, adult education in California encompasses enrichment classes such as personal development, current events or effective parenting techniques. It also includes programmes aimed at those from non-English speaking backgrounds, those who left school early and are wanting to gain their high school diploma, those who are looking for job training and those who are wanting to improve their reading, writing and math skills—skills encapsulated under the umbrella term of *basic skills*. In California, there is a tremendous emphasis on basic skills: an acknowledgement that these fundamental skills provide the foundations for further skill development. What is not as apparent in California though, is the contextualization of these skills, which as we know, makes them more meaningful in a job context.

In California adult schools (operated by school districts) and community colleges provide adult education. Adult schools were the first providers of adult education in California with the first record of an adult school occurring in 1856: vocational and some basic-level academic classes provided for immigrants in the basement of St Mary's Cathedral

in San Francisco. In the 1950s adult education was also provided by community colleges, then known as junior colleges, but responsibility for adult education lay with the school districts (California Department of Education 2005). During the late 1960s and early 1970s the Legislature mandated that the governance of community colleges was transferred from the State Board of Education (which governed the schools) to the California Community Colleges Board of Governors. This led to a lack of clarity as to which sector—school or community college—had responsibility for providing state-wide adult education. In the forty years since then the lack of clarity as to the overarching governance of adult education has remained (Taylor, 2012).

As a means of turning the focus from who is responsible for adult education to ensuring that all adults in California have the opportunity to access adult education should they choose, Governor Brown passed Assembly Bill 86. This Bill essentially mandates that school and community college districts work together to ensure there is total coverage of adult education across the state.

Representatives from both the California Community College Chancellor's Office and the California Department of Education are working together to develop a request for a proposal for regional consortia to apply for the Assembly Bill 86 two-year planning and implementation grants. Up to \$US25 million is available for these grants. The funding for the maintenance of programmes developed through the consortia plans will come from a different source.

Eligibility is limited to consortiums consisting of at least one community college district and at least one school district within the boundaries of the community college district. Given there are seventy-two community college districts and almost one thousand school districts of varying sizes, although around three hundred have adult schools, this Bill will require tremendous and previously unseen levels of collaboration. Regional consortia may also include other organisations that provide adult education courses, such as libraries or correctional facilities.

The adult education plans developed by regional consortia must provide for all of the following:

- elementary (low-level skills up to Year 8) and secondary basic skills, including classes required for a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate
- classes and courses for eligible immigrants in citizenship and English as a second language and workforce preparation classes in basic skills



- education programmes for adults with disabilities
- short-term career technical education programmes with high employment potential
- programmes for apprentices.

These five core programme areas are clearly focused on the knowledge and skills people need to participate in the workforce and community. What is causing concern for some in the immediate term, adult schools in particular, is that the Assembly Bill 86 does not cover two traditional adult education programmes: those for older adults and parent education classes. These programmes have tended to be delivered by adult schools and the impact this legislative change will have on the delivery of programmes for these groups is yet to be known.

Each adult education consortium plan must include:

- an evaluation of the current level, types and needs of adult education programmes within its region including education for adults in correctional facilities, and a plan to address any gaps identified
- plans to integrate their existing programmes and create seamless transitions for learners into postsecondary education or the workforce

Building blocks

By *Tricia Bowen*

A project at NMIT in Melbourne helped VET teachers to consider the literacy and numeracy needs of their students when teaching and preparing tasks and assessment.

Introduction

This article describes the work of a project called Unpacking the Package, which was designed to promote VET teaching and learning excellence. The project was undertaken by the Learning Skills and Assessment Unit (LSA Unit) at NMIT in 2013 and was supported by the VET Development Centre. It involved me working with seven bricklaying and tiling teachers from the Building Structures and Services Department at the Heidelberg Campus of NMIT.

- plans to employ approaches that accelerate a learner's progress toward his or her academic or career goals, such as contextualized basic skills
- plans to collaborate in the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities for trainers and other staff to help them achieve greater programme integration and improve student outcomes
- plans to leverage existing regional structures, including local workforce investment groups.

In addition to mandating for greater collaboration between the school and community college districts in the delivery of adult education, the California Legislature intends to work toward developing common policies related to the delivery of adult education across the school and community college sectors including policies on fees and funding levels.

Further information about the Assembly Bill 86 can be found at <http://ab86.cccco.edu/Home.aspx>.

Michelle Circelli is a 2013 Fulbright Professional Scholar in Vocational Education and Training, and when not on study leave she is a senior research officer at the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

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As the title of the project suggests, the primary aim was to unpack the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) requirements of the training packages these teachers deliver. From there, the work centred on developing and re-imagining key resources and assessment tasks in light of the teachers' growing understanding of LLN.

But as this group of bricklaying and tiling teachers would attest, stable and strong foundations are a vital



Steve Lee, Brian Sandl, Craig Clayton

component of any building work. So with that in mind, let me elaborate on how the necessary foundations for the Unpacking the Package project were successfully laid.

Laying the foundations

In 2012, another project, Right Now—LLN Champions, was rolled out at NMIT, once again supported through the VET Development Centre. It was designed around the idea of building knowledge and awareness of the fundamental role that LLN plays in all teaching and learning.

The LLN Champions project centred on the delivery of a series of workshops to interested VET teachers working at NMIT. Participants were introduced to the purpose and structure of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). They described and reflected upon how their students used core skills in completing course tasks. The workshops also provided participants with information as to specific strategies they could use to develop their students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Practical, interactive, and hopefully illuminating activities were part of each workshop. One that springs to mind involved the use of a bundle of paper sewing patterns purchased from a local Op Shop. Participants were asked to read the instructions on the back of the paper patterns and from there complete a range of tasks. They estimated and then calculated what length of cloth would be required to make each of the pictured garments. They were asked to read the tables listing different sizes and measurements and determine what size would be their best fit. They located the instruction sheets, packed neatly inside each pattern, read through them, and then used context clues to decipher any unknown vocabulary. They were also asked to look at each of the individual pattern pieces and determine the meaning of the many symbols found on them.

Very few of the participants had any experience or knowledge of using sewing patterns. This meant that the context was very unfamiliar and the participants had to use numeracy and reading skills to complete set tasks—much like the challenges faced by many VET students encountering unfamiliar course materials. Discussion about the activity focussed on comparing answers and describing the skills relied on to complete tasks. The obvious parallels were highlighted: How do we assist students when they encounter a range of unfamiliar texts, be it around wiring instructions, plumbing diagrams, planning specifications, or building regulations? How do we assist them to navigate and decipher these unfamiliar texts and make meaning from them?

It was during the roll out of this project in 2012 that I met a group of teachers from NMIT's Bricklaying and Tiling Department—Steve Lee the Bricklaying and Tiling co-ordinator, and teachers Brian Sandl, Mark Smith, Craig Clayton, Frank Maierhofer, Frank Tavolaro and Kristian Bengtsson. At the conclusion of the LLN Champions workshops they spoke about wanting to continue their professional development and learning in LLN. They were interested in building on their knowledge so they could apply it to their work with students on the bricklaying and tiling floor. So when the Unpacking the Package project became a reality in 2013, it was this group of teachers that agreed to be involved.

Sourcing the bricks, mixing the mortar

To begin the Unpacking project, each teacher was asked to select one unit of competency from their Bricklaying and Tiling training package, knowing that this unit would be their focus for the duration of the project. The selected units included: 'Handle and prepare bricklaying and blocklaying materials', 'Construct masonry steps and stairs', and 'Construct arches'. Dates and times for three workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions were pencilled in.

During the first workshop we examined the performance criteria in the chosen units of competency and identified words and phrases that required the use of reading, writing or numeracy skills. Participants isolated many examples: *mortar is mixed to specifications*—highlighting the need for numeracy skills to determine measurements; *work instructions are obtained and confirmed*—students would need reading skills to obtain required information. Once participants had identified these LLN tasks, we ranked them according to their level of difficulty then mapped them to an appropriate ACSF level. Participants compared their responses and discussed the reasons for their choices.



Mark Smith

The primary focus of the second workshop lay in asking participants to consider the many factors that led them to engage with a piece of text. One of the activities involved working with a large bundle of magazines, once again sourced from the local Op Shop. Participants were asked to flick through a magazine of their choice and to only stop when they reached a page they wanted to read, a place where they felt engaged with the information in front of them. We discussed how that engagement occurred and compiled a list of determining factors. They nominated features such as level of interest in the topic, the appealing use of visuals and graphics, the amount of white space on the page, the use of bold headings, the size of the font, and the overall format and look of the page. Once the list was written on the white board, we discussed the implications when it came to creating resources that students were likely to use.

The third and final workshop provided opportunity for participants to describe the resources and assessment tasks they used in delivering their chosen units of competency. The list included resource books, PowerPoint presentations, question banks, videos, and other print-based learning materials. We talked about how some of these resources could be designed and re-imagined with LLN in mind.

One-on-one mentoring took place in between each of the workshops. This mentoring occurred in each of the settings where these teachers worked: on the bricklaying and tiling floor, in classrooms, in front of computers, and around the staff room table. The purpose of these sessions

was to reflect on the information covered in workshops, to talk through language and literacy issues that arose for students, and for me to provide additional input and support, when required, into the creation of new resources.

Lay the bricks ...

The resources which this group of teachers developed, and continue to develop, reflect a growing shift in consciousness about LLN. They demonstrate a growing awareness of the literacy and numeracy demands of their courses, and how resources may be developed to support students' LLN learning.

The following question has been taken from an assessment task used prior to the commencement of the Unpacking the Package project. This assessment task consisted of about thirty questions, all requiring detailed written answers.

What hazards can you identify in this worksite and what control measures should be used?

The teacher working on modifying this assessment task was aware of the difficulty many students faced in completing long lists of questions. He described how often students had the required knowledge but were considerably less confident with the writing skills required in producing detailed answers. He wanted to reinvigorate the way that each of the questions was presented, so this was the resource he chose to work on.

As seen in Figure 1, the question and answer format has taken on a very different look. Essentially it's the same question as presented earlier—it requires knowledge about hazards on the worksite and the corresponding safety measures to apply—but now students are asked to match the hazards to the control measure, with all the necessary information supplied in short, accessible language.

This is just one example of the variety of question types that have been included in the newer version of the assessment task. Students are also asked to sequence information in the correct order or select true or false responses from a selection of options. Each of the questions provides a useful scaffold for students, thereby assisting them to complete the tasks more effectively and to actively learn while doing so.

Other project participants have redesigned resources in a number of ways. They have sourced visuals and diagrams and included them in learning booklets. They have

Figure 1.

Match the potential OH&S hazard to the correct control measure. Example 1 has been completed for you.

Hazard	Control measure	Number
1 Manual handling	Access and follow MSDS's safety procedures	
2 Bricks delivered and placed on the nature strip	Correct training in manual handling techniques	1
3 Using hazardous substances (cement, lime)	Provide clear access and avoid difficult terrain	
4 Electrocution	Use barricades	
5 Sunburn	Tag leads, raise and check condition of leads and plugs	
6 Slips, trips and falls	Wear hat, sunscreen and protective clothing	

rewritten text in plain English, highlighted technical vocabulary and provided clear explanations. They have considered the use of white space, sub-headings, contents pages, and glossaries of terms. A teacher from the LSA Unit, Gilda Alavuk, has offered support with adapting some of the redesigned resources for use online.

... and check they're straight

As well as the tangible outcomes of redesigned resources and increased knowledge of the LLN tasks embedded in VET courses, this project aimed to create a model of authentic professional learning. Quite deliberately the workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions took place in the participants' workplace, establishing from the outset that this project was about promoting active learning in the context of work. Also, while the overall shape of this project was known at the beginning, the specific focus of the one-on-one mentoring was directed

by the participants. They determined how the support would look and proceed.

A good friend and colleague forwarded an article to me recently about the power and possibilities of authentic professional learning. In it, the writer Ann Webster-Wright suggests:

...while professional learning cannot be controlled, in that no one can make another person learn, professionals can be supported to continue to learn in their own authentic way while taking into account the expectations of their working contexts. Most professionals are enthusiastic learners who want to improve their practice. Let us listen to their experience and work to support, not hinder their learning. Rather than deny, seek to control, or standardize the complexity and diversity of professional learning experiences, let us accept, celebrate, and develop insights from these experiences and support professionals as they continue to learn (Webster-Wright, 2009, Reframing professional development through understanding authentic learning. In *Review of Educational Research* 79:702.)

The Unpacking the Package project aimed to create an opportunity for this kind of authentic professional learning. Participating teachers were encouraged to shape their own goals. The concerns and insights they shared were listened to, while the strength of the relationships that existed among us was a cornerstone to the project's success.

Tricia Bowen is a teacher, researcher and writer. She has worked in the area of language and literacy education for over twenty years. She is currently working within the Learning Skills and Assessment Unit at NMIT.

'How ya goin' mate?

By Elva Averill

Elva is a long-time volunteer tutor. Here she reflects on her experience.

Most of the people in this noisy, crowded kitchen area at the Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre think and feel that it is a happy and safe place, which is part of the ethos of the centre—that people who are escaping from their own countries for many and varied reasons should find in it a welcoming and helpful atmosphere. There are many struggles going on—learning a new language, learning to cope in a new and strange land, learning how

to live in an open society, finding accommodation—but there is still a sense of expectation.

Sometimes I wake on Wednesday mornings and think I'd like to stay home and take it easy, but I know that after three hours at the Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre I will come home feeling stimulated and enriched by the experience. This is the joy of tutoring. There are



some challenges too: learning new and sometimes difficult-to-pronounce names, being patient with those for whom English is so different and confusing, trying to understand what people are asking or telling me.

For the past eleven years I have been a classroom volunteer tutor. I've been in a variety of class levels with different highly skilled teachers. The last six years have been in an Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) class—Level 1 in the Certificate in Spoken and Written English. Currently we have students from Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Russia, Pakistan, India, Kuwait, Vietnam and China. They get along well together and are encouraged to take that spirit of co-operation into the community. At the end of each year every student is presented with a certificate, no matter what level they have achieved. It is important to mark every little milestone.

Students have come to Australia from different circumstances and in different ways: some have been in a UNHCR camp for seventeen years having fled persecution in their homeland; some have come by plane in an orthodox manner and with documents; some have escaped

from horrible experiences I cannot begin to comprehend; some have come by boat and are traumatised by their journey; some have come via several detention centres (Christmas Island, Darwin, Adelaide) before they arrived in Melbourne. Here they are at the mercy of unscrupulous landlords and have to move yet again as the rent goes up. Most are eager to work but finding any kind of job is difficult. It isn't any wonder that feeling settled takes time.

I am always learning new things and feel that I am making just a small contribution to the lives of newcomers to this country. One of the things I have learnt is that it is important to address people by their name, no matter how difficult it may be to remember or pronounce. Another is that food is indeed a universal language. The students love to bring some of *their* food to the end-of-term gathering and it is difficult to turn down their 'please to taste this' and try that; it is not possible to please them all.

Many of the students ask me how old I am. The answer at the moment is seventy-eight so I am considerably older than the students. It took me a little time to work out that my age is important because it sorts out how they should treat me. In my experience most students are respectful and immensely grateful for any help they are given. They are interested in my family and enjoy looking at my family photos. Family is important and most of the students have family members still in their country of origins as well as others scattered over the world as refugees.

Of course, there are differences in their approach—some are very eager to learn and diligent in their given tasks, others are more reluctant and see it as something to be done if they are to make a *go of it* in Australia. For those few who are illiterate in their own language English is a big hurdle. There is often laughter (but never at the expense of another person) and there is music and singing. There is learning alone, in pairs, in groups; there are activities to share; there is always pride in an outcome achieved or a difficulty solved.

One of my particular challenges is encouraging people of many different languages to talk with each other, and with me, in English during morning tea break. There is the natural tendency to gather in their own language groups but, as I see it, there are not many opportunities for the students to practise their English outside in the real world.

That brings me to a dilemma that troubles me. No matter how much people master the English language,

they are reluctant to speak it as they go about their daily life; they may be laughed at, not understood, treated with impatience and disrespect. I hope this situation is improving in our society but it seems to be a slow process.

I am also concerned that there do not seem to be many bridges between the end of language lessons and becoming part of the general community. I have been visiting some of the students who have finished their classes and I am overwhelmed by the welcome into their homes. They are isolated and often lonely. Usually their original language is spoken in the home and among wider family or group. One older couple have their family in Australia with them but they would really like to have some group in which they can learn to converse comfortably in English. Another

Confident communities

Conference report by Linno Rhodes

The Australasian Adult and Community Education (ACE) Conference 2013 jointly organised by Adult Learning Australia and ACE Aotearoa, was held in Wellington, NZ in June this year.

One of the first things that struck me about the conference was the professional diversity of conference goers—policy makers, politicians, CEOs, managers, teachers, volunteers and students—sat together. A second thing that impressed me was that each day started and ended with a gathering in the main conference room, where the microphone was handed around to those wishing to express an opinion or share some news about an event.

The conference began with a Maori welcome, Powhiri, which was beautiful singing and ceremony. The opening keynote address by Dame Iritana Tawhiwhirang, a Maori elder, is something I won't forget. At eighty-five years old, she spoke passionately about the need for more family based literacy and education programmes—and the need to support teachers by centralizing programmes through learning or community hubs.

This seemed to set the tone for the remainder of the conference with the main addresses focusing on the strength of family literacy programmes and the success of programmes that have taken the learning to the learners.

young mother is at home with two small children every day; her husband is working but there is limited finance, limited transport options and nowhere for her to practise her English. Some neighbours are helpful but others are not.

English as spoken in Australia is complicated. A simple illustration: one man told me that when he was quite new to this country someone said 'How ya goin' mate?' He replied 'By bus', but knew immediately that was not the correct or expected response! I might need to keep tutoring for a little bit longer!

Elva Averill has tutored at Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre for eleven years.

Emeritus Professor Michale Omolewa from Nigeria, spoke about a project where the local university made a literacy programme accessible to the local people by using text books in the local language and holding classes in the village. The students then became the teachers, and the programme continued.

Tony Driese, Kamilaroi man, is an independent Indigenous learning consultant from NSW. Tony also spoke of the need to address the learning needs of the community as a whole and for education to be accessible to all by shifting the organization of educational from a hierarchical to a network-based structure.

Cultural and community strength is key to learning: 'All of us are nothing if we don't have a place.' These powerful words resonated with me throughout the remainder of the conference.

My time at the conference was an opportunity to hear how others are thinking and working, a time to reflect and discuss ideas with people who are in the same field—maybe from *across the ditch* or maybe from across Punt Rd—nonetheless, all wonderful interactions that inspired me!

Linno Rhodes is the training and curriculum coordinator at Jesuit Community College.

Local Practices Global Contexts

By *Connie Ntentis*

In October this year the Australian Council for Adult Literacy held its national conference, Local Practices Global Contexts at the University of Technology, Sydney.

As a student, only just entering the world of adult literacy and numeracy, I was a little hesitant about attending. However, this conference opened my eyes to the possibilities within the adult education teaching profession. The varied speakers helped to place adult literacy and numeracy in its context, giving me insight into how the industry is made up and how different areas overlap and intersect.

Teachers, trainers, publishers, researchers, lecturers, government representatives, disability service representatives, industry skills council representatives as well as international guest speakers, came together to discuss the future of adult literacy and numeracy in Australia. The theme of this year's conference was Local Practices Global Contexts. This topic raised interesting ideas about the changing communicative practices that are now being used in our increasingly digital world. It also embodied the essence of Australia in its focus on bringing people and cultures together.

Adult education gives people the chance to change; it gives them the tools to function in our literate society, and opens up to them a world of possibilities. The conference seminars provided a glimpse into how and where literacy is being taught throughout the world.

In her session, 'A pilot literacy programme for the rehabilitation of corrections facility inmates', Tracey Ellery explained how she teaches literacy in a corrective institution in the Cook Islands. She promotes communication between the inmates and their families and teaches them about tolerance and acceptance.

In 'Garabara Indigenous music competition—Using Indigenous bands from triple J Unearthed to improve inmates' literacy', David Winch from the NSW Corrective Services describes a less direct approach. He designed a programme utilising triple j's Unearthed radio competition to promote literacy among the Indigenous inmates. In this programme, communication is encouraged and centred around the music produced by independent Indigenous bands. Both the music and the lyrics seem to resonate with the inmates, and communication with the bands involved in the competition helps to keep the inmates motivated.



It is not just in prisons that new approaches are being developed. There were many seminars about the different ways in which literacy and numeracy can be integrated into existing educational frameworks throughout the VET sector.

In spite of these inspiring programmes, trainers and teachers whisper about the TAFE job cuts and how new initiatives will change the industry. New initiatives emphasise employability skills rather than education for social purposes.

Entering the world of adult literacy and numeracy teaching (LLN), there seems to be a contradiction between the demand for teachers with literacy and numeracy teaching skills and the recent job cuts. It seems that the demand for LLN teachers reaches far beyond VET programmes, into secondary schools and TAFE programmes, into community centres, prisons and universities.

As a student, I enjoyed the ACAL conference and would recommend it to other students. While I felt a little out of my depth in some of the policy debates and jargon, overall I found the conference to be interesting and a worthwhile experience. Meeting other conference attendees and discussing how ideas could be used in the classroom was definitely a worthwhile experience.

To this year's ACAL organising committee, a big thank you for welcoming me with open arms into the wonderful world of adult literacy and numeracy, and I am in no doubt this is the world where I am supposed to be.

At the time of the conference Connie Ntentis was in the final semester of a Graduate Diploma of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Teaching at the University of Technology Sydney.



What's out there

***Everyday interactive tasks* by Theodora Lafkas and *Everyday numeracy* by Theodora Lafkas and Nicky Brookes**

Reviewed by Allison Pote

As a CGEA (Certificate of General Adult Education) teacher of both Initial and Introductory levels of literacy and numeracy, I am always searching for great resources to use in my classroom. The challenge is to find material that is accessible, meaningful and interesting for the students. The texts *Everyday interactive tasks* by Theodore Lafkas and *Everyday numeracy* by Theodore Lafkas and Nicky Brooke proved to be valuable additions to my CGEA classes. Both resources provided refreshingly comprehensive, interactive and accessible exercises that were warmly welcomed by students.

Although *Everyday interactive tasks* has a strong ESL focus, it is just as user friendly for lower level literacy students. Two of the real positive aspects of the text are its progressive nature and student focused tasks. Every exercise gradually builds onto the next using relevant, everyday information as found in real life situations. This progressive sequencing of tasks helps students consolidate new knowledge. Part of this consolidation process involves students practising on each other. The act of using each other for practice also develops questioning and social skills. The learning process becomes student centred as they learn about each other's addresses, phone numbers, places of birth, emails etc. Throughout the book students are continuously encouraged to survey each other as part of the learning process. The surveys are well set out with plenty of room to respond. They start from broader questions and become more specific. On completion of a set of surveys the students have conveniently gathered enough information to support them in writing a simple recount.

Furthermore, good literacy practise is encouraged with the students being reminded to spell correctly, 'How do you spell that?'

Everyday numeracy has had a positive impact in my numeracy programme. It is quite different to any other text I have previously used to date. With big bold text and lots of space to write, it is very user friendly. Even students with poor eyesight and those who don't have good control over their handwriting have no trouble using this resource. There is lots of opportunity for students to practise writing their numbers in words and figures through both traditional and creative means. One aspect my students really enjoy is completing the listening activities, which require them to circle correct numbers, postcodes, expiry dates or write in missing numbers from a mobile phone number. There are some lovely activities using number grids, days of the week, months of the year and filling in everyday forms. The book presents a selection of activities, which support the CGEA numeracy requirements.

Everyday interactive tasks and *Everyday numeracy* are published by Australian Postgraduate English Language Services and available through Bookery Education, info@bookery.com.au.

Allison Pote teaches at Olympic Adult Education in West Heidelberg, Melbourne.

Two Fact Sheets

Men's quick reference guide—Violence in the family, and *Women's quick reference guide—Violence in the family*. From the Information Access Group in conjunction with the City of Kingston.

Reviewed by Floyd Kermode

Domestic violence is a sensitive issue for many people, one that Australia has grappled with over a long time. It has been an issue for rights groups for years, with great effort going into changing the traditional image of violence in

the home as a private affair, to being a matter of grave community concern.



Domestic violence is a significant issue in CALD communities. In the countries where many of my ESL students come from, expectations about gender roles are different to those in the general Australian community. Also family members who are used to fixed roles can feel frustrated in a country where things are more fluid.

So the topic is important in general and particularly important for learners of English. It is great to have resources that can be used for reference to discussion, so out of a number of Easy Read fact sheets on offer to review I chose the two on family violence, one directed at men and the other at women.

The two fact sheets are simple and clearly laid out. They explain the law on family violence, the effects it can have on family members and actions that people can take to prevent it. The resources are presented in a clear manner and the main message that family violence is not acceptable, and anyone seeing it should do something, is loud and clear. The language is minimal and simplified to suit a general audience. The sheets have lots of images, which assist with comprehension. The two resources would be suitable for students from English speaking backgrounds who have low literacy, and students with a mild intellectual disability from English speaking backgrounds.

When using the materials with an ESL class the teacher may have to do some pre-teaching around legal language, police services and rights. It might also be a good idea

to categorise or group the places to go for help listed at the end of the resources, as many students might not be familiar with the services. The resources would provide useful reference material for preparing ESL learners for a guest speaker on family violence.

The two resources reviewed here can be accessed from the Information Access website or from the following links: http://www.informationaccessgroup.com/docs/PVAW_male.pdf and http://www.informationaccessgroup.com/docs/PVAW_female.pdf

The Information Access Group helps organisations meet the diverse literacy needs of the community. They specialise in producing communication materials that are easy to read and websites that are easy to use. They offer services in Easy English, plain language and general writing and editing for clients that include government departments and agencies, not-for-profit organisations and businesses that are using accessible communications to connect with their audience. For more information and Easy English resources, please visit www.informationaccessgroup.com and go to the 'Portfolio' tab.

Floyd Kermodé teaches ESL to migrants and asylum seekers at the Fitzroy Learning Network in Melbourne. He has been teaching since 1995. He is learning the Manx language, partly to increase empathy with his students and partly because his family comes from the Isle of Man.

***Say it again at work: Everyday conversations for workers in food production and services* by Lynda Achren, Lilliana Hajnci, Maggie Power**

Reviewed by Sarah Deasey

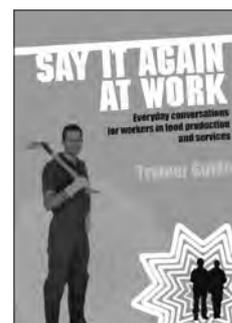
This resource was funded by the Workplace English Language and Literacy programme and published by a project team from AMES. Many members of the project team were longstanding members of the wonderful AMES Resourcing Learning and Innovation Unit, which was unfortunately disbanded at the end of 2012.

Here is the information from the publisher:

[This] is an audio resource focussing on developing workplace language and communication skills

through 157 short workplace conversations in everyday Australian English for listening and pronunciation practice.

Say it again at work is based on the original *Say it again* model, and consists primarily of dialogues with a suggested approach to using them and a range of classroom language activities to help learners develop the word bank, communication skills and cultural understanding necessary to successfully maintain or



gain entry level employment. The graphics and dialogues on data CD are for projection in the classroom, through datashow or interactive whiteboard. Suitable for adult and upper secondary ESL trainees preparing for practical placement and workers new to Australia who speak English as a second language.

The kit includes two audio CDs and a trainer guide, which includes a data CD to aid classroom delivery.

The language skills and cultural knowledge presented through the workplace dialogues are structured around six topics:

- starting a new job
- policies and procedures
- occupational health and safety
- working in teams
- workplace meetings
- small talk.

This is a practical resource in every way. The topics and dialogues are based on the real life day-to-day experiences of the workplace, with an emphasis on learning about

Australian workplace culture. The resource is built on a consistent and integrated intercultural approach. The intercultural approach is clearly set out in the essential trainer guide and recommends the following elements for each themed dialogue: establishing the context, awareness raising, skills development, reflection on cultural difference, extension activities.

Along with the intercultural awareness, English language skills development is meticulously planned and scaffolded with drills, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. The data CD contains the text of all the scripts in a reader friendly font, and all the graphics in colour. Teachers would be able to use all these in a coordinated approach to enhance each audio dialogue.

Say it again at work is based on food production and services but sections on more generic topics such as starting a new job and OHS would be useful for pre-vocational classes. It is suitable for CGEA I, CSWE I, CSWE II.

Sarah Deasey is the further education coordinator at Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre.

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Sally Hutchison is the manager of the Learning Skills and Assessment Unit at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.

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