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emancipatory learning and
justice By Vicky Duckworth

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environments for Aboriginal
learners By Melinda Eason

Ready for change By Karen
Manwaring

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difference By Shanti Wong
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Adult Education in
the Community

Editorial

One of the themes that jumped out at me while reading this edition of *Fine Print* was the notion of ‘trust’. Trust can be a transformative emotion. Increasingly, educators and students are caught in the middle of complex social negotiations around the delivery of effective, innovative and trustworthy education. Educators, and the local institutions they work in, are obviously essential to the process of students successfully developing literacy skills, yet to what extent is their professional authority trusted?

Students may also feel paralysed by personal experiences or social structures that make transformation seem virtually unattainable. How much trust can they place in the teacher-student relationship, when the ‘neoliberal managerialism’ of government funding seems premised upon distrust of both parties?

‘Neoliberal managerialism’ is the term Vicky Duckworth uses to characterise the discourse of doubt that undermines practitioners’ professionalism and learners’ cultural capital. In her UK-based study about teacher creation of ‘critical spaces’ in literacy education, Duckworth outlines how she applied a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to investigating how practitioners might challenge notions of what literacies are, whose purposes they should serve and their transformative influence on learners’ lives.

This reconfiguration of trust towards students and teachers is echoed in Melinda Eason’s article about the diverse vocational training needs of students from Aboriginal communities throughout Australia. Eason argues that training facilitators need to be supported by education managers to ‘work outside the box’ with Aboriginal students, as well as with their families and communities, so that they can create effective and trustworthy learning environments.

In four separate yet interrelated articles, Karen Manwaring, Shanti Wong and Jude Walker, and Josie Rose and Jan Aitcheson show how community organisations, such as Learn Locals, can be trusted to professionally and appropriately deliver innovative literacy programs that suit local needs. With their unique insights into client motivations, practitioner knowledge, and the trusting relationships developed between practitioners and clients, Learn Local Organisations are vital models of literacy education delivery in Victoria.

The feature articles in this edition of *Fine Print* posit a range of exciting responses to questions of who and what to trust in education. They draw on diverse perspectives and models. They articulate different methodologies and frameworks. Nevertheless, they all seem to point to a common proposition; that more trust in teachers, students and local organisations will enhance literacy education. This reassuring proposition is underlined by the creativity and commitment that shines through the words of all the contributions, which include heads up on great teaching ideas, conferences and reviews of scholarship underpinning the ideas mentioned above.

I’m sure that this edition of *Fine Print* will assure and motivate readers to know that adult literacy and basic education in Victoria is in safe, empathetic and committed hands. Freya Merrick dos Santos advises practitioners to “Trust your intuition and listen, listen, listen” which could be extended to “Trust *Fine Print* and read, read, read!”

Liz Gunn

Editor’s note: Thanks to Liz Gunn from the Fine Print Editorial Committee for volunteering to write the Editorial for this edition.

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.

Creating critical spaces for emancipatory learning and justice

By Vicky Duckworth



Introduction

It needs to be recognised that although my political standpoint begins with feminism, it is also deeply grounded in the notion of working class self-determination. In order to engage in a struggle for collective working class self-determination I embrace feminism, as that becomes the vehicle by which I position myself as a female into the centre of the struggle, which encompasses the intersection between gender and class. In this capacity, as a teacher and researcher, there is an understanding of domination with a critique of domination in all its forms.

And so it was my personal position as an 'insider' with 'insider knowledge' of marginalised communities that was a key driver to becoming an Adult Literacy teacher and undertaking the research. For example, my own life history, which includes being born and brought up in the same community as the learners, attending the local state school and being the first generation of my family to enter college and university. My subsequent trajectory has greatly influenced the commitment I have for finding opportunities to enable others to take agency and aspire to reach their potential.

My involvement and commitment to the study was also and importantly driven by my experience as a tutor and programme leader delivering literacy in a college of Further Education based in the north of England. With an increasing move towards performance via target setting, results and accountability, like many tutors I felt a great deal of my time and energy was beginning to be governed by a managerial driven system based on close scrutiny of my paperwork, rather than my practice in the classroom.

Within a disempowering, neoliberal managerialist discourse, where managers claim the right to manage and where professional judgements are under intense surveillance, notions of 'trust' can be something of an illusion. A blame culture can be the result of such approaches whereby accountability becomes a means by which the institution can call to account staff. In an age

of insecure employment and redundancies, the pressure to conform to a management agenda can work to erode a practitioner's autonomy and undermine their professionalism.

Within this context, the space I had for critical reflection and innovative practice was very limited. I felt angry, frustrated, hurt and sad that the reasons I had come into teaching—to inspire others (many of whom have been marginalised and oppressed for being poor) to have choices that enriched their lives and those around them—were being put on a conveyor belt whereby their 'achievement' was measured by the blunt instrument of tick boxes and prescriptive outcomes. I wanted to develop a learning community and resources that recognised their histories, embraced their way of being and empowered them.

Critical autonomy and deep forms of intrinsic motivation were essential in sustaining the research. My drive came from the knowledge that education can be truly life enhancing and transforming if appropriate mechanisms are put in place to push open spaces that create a meaningful enquiry into the learners' lives.

Participatory Action Research model

Participatory Action Research with its alignment to social action, enlightenment (see Habermas 113:1974) emancipation (see Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998, Duckworth 2013), adult education intervention, development and change within communities and groups (see Carr and Kemmis 1986; Kemmis 2001) fitted my purpose. PAR challenges the positivistic form of enquiry in its political approach and establishes a relationship between researcher and participant. It does this by facilitating the research group taking 'ownership' of the whole process from commencement to conclusion and sustaining an effective dialogue between researcher and respondent.

PAR also builds on critical pedagogy put forward by Freire (1993) as a response to the traditional formal models of education where the teacher takes the power and imparts information to the students that are passive empty vessels

waiting to be filled. This model fails to recognise the powerful knowledge learners bring into the classroom with them, such as socially situated knowledge (see Barton and Hamilton 1998). In this vein, the main goal of PAR, is for both researcher/practitioner and participant to work in egalitarian ways and develop effective dialogue and critical consciousness and, in the case of this study, a critical curriculum which facilitates this. It was very important that the learners were involved in the research (and curriculum design) process, which aligning to the goal of PAR is guided by being democratic, participatory, and giving a voice to the oppressed.

Research framework

My research approach is based on strategies which include participatory action research and feminist standpoint theory, whilst also drawing on life history, literacy studies and ethnographic approaches to exploring social practices. I was politically driven in my initiation of this study and in the choices I made regarding research methods.

The Further Education college in which I worked and the learners studied became a site for the study, in the former mill town of Oldham, Lancashire, Northern of England. Oldham is a tapestry of cultures and ethnic groups. Most of today's Muslim population arrived in England in the 1950s and 1960s in large numbers from the Indian sub-continent. Arriving in Oldham, they worked in the cotton mills where there was ample work and demand for labour was very high. These immigrants were willing to work long hours and undertake menial jobs for low pay. Many of the factories they worked in, now derelict, initially brought people to the area for work and helped cement the community. With the demise of Oldham's textile industry, since the mid-20th Century, the town has seen hard times for the indigenous, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Caribbean communities.

My participatory action research was based on an ethnographic and longitudinal approach which ran over seven years from 2004 and addressed transformative learning in the context of adult literacy (Duckworth, 2013). The study of sixteen adult literacy learners returning to Further Education, provided a critical space where the learners and the researcher could reflect and move towards a deepened consciousness in which they recognise that they are products of history. As such they were able to challenge the conditions of oppression (Freire 2004), changing the way they interpret their own

experience (Duckworth and Ade-Ojo 2016) which led to transformation, specifically in the realm of learning as transformation (Mezirow et al. 2000).

Underpinning theories

My ethnographic study drew on Bourdieu's (for example see, 1973, 93, 94) theories around identity and capital to show, through examples from my data, how these ideas can offer a useful framework for analysing adult literacy learners' narratives of their lives and encounters with education. It provided a framework to explore literacy as building cultural capital and literacy education as a site of production and reproduction of power positions, where certain literacy practices are considered more legitimate than others.

The study analysed inequality both in the public and private domains. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital was vital in exposing the transmission of wealth and power and incorporating ideas about how those in a position of power, who Puwar (2004) describes as 'insiders', reproduce and maintain their domination. Using Bourdieu's framework allowed links to be made between language use and power against both a contemporary and historical landscape. Indeed, through unfolding the literacy learners' narratives, the overarching aim was to recognise and understand their narratives against the backdrop of wider socioeconomic, political and historical contexts.

Bourdieu's fields of social, cultural and economic power overlap and feed into each other, singly and together offering a valuable framework for understanding the historical formation and reproduction of the research group in this study. It develops concepts sensitive to exploring the above, whilst examining how learners try to make sense of and deal with the challenges they face from their structural positioning as basic skills learners.

Transformative theory in adult education

Transformative Learning reflects a particular philosophy for adult education and a conceptual framework for how adults learn. The transformative model fits within a constructivist paradigm where individuals construct knowledge through their experiences in the world. Mezirow's work (1991) has led to a transformative learning movement in adult education.

Educational thinkers, including Thomas Kuhn, Paulo Freire and Jürgen Habermas, all influenced Mezirow in developing his transformative model. However, Mezirow's work (1991) has been criticized for a focus on the individual

learning, an over reliance on rationality, and a neglect of social, political, and cultural contexts. Adults with low literacy skills have been largely neglected in explorations of how transformative learning is fostered.

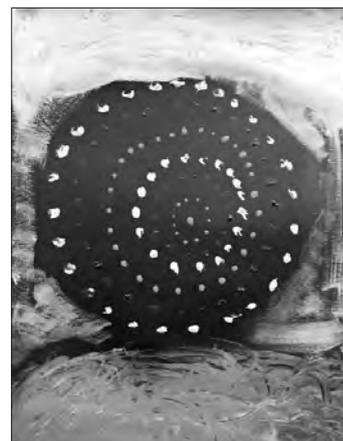
Critical pedagogy as a tool to challenge inequality

Challenging inequalities in learners' lives and communities, adult education should reflect a critical pedagogy and provide a curriculum that is culturally relevant, learner driven, and socially empowering (Auerbach, 1989; Freire, 1993; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Quigley, 1997; Shor, 1992, Giroux 1997; Duckworth 2013). Critical theorists (Bartolomé, 1996; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lankshear 1993; Shor 1992, 93, Ade-Ojo and Duckworth, 2015) have criticised many adult education courses for applying a prescriptive pre-set structure and curriculum that seldom take into account the background and needs of the individuals involved.

These non-critical courses place dominance on skills acquisition. Non-critical courses are criticised for ignoring the political, social, and economic factors that have conspired to marginalize people in the first place. Drawing on the Freire (1993) notion of the 'banking' model, students on these courses are positioned as empty receptacles ready to be the passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge. In challenging to the 'banking' model, Freire recommended a critical pedagogy model for teaching adult literacy.

Educationalist theorists have developed this approach (Giroux 1997; Lankshear and McClaren 1992; Lankshear 1993; Shor 1992, 93; Duckworth 2013, 14). They argue that critical literacy programs should be designed around the backgrounds, needs, and interests of students and should encourage a 'dialogic' (Freire, 1993) relationship between teachers and students. This contrasts with dominant models of delivering literacy education with a strong utilitarian function, selecting and distributing literacy in different ways to different social groups and in so doing, reproducing class inequalities which fail to address issues of power relations in the learners' lives (Duckworth, 2013). This market driven model often fails to recognise literacy as a tool for personal enlightenment. Gee (2004) argues that a way to address structural inequalities which disadvantage children is to:

fight the neo-liberal agenda and make schools sites for creativity, deep thinking, and the formation of whole people: sites in which all children can gain



Original artwork by Steevanee

portfolios for success defined in multiple ways, and gain the ability to critique and transform social formations in the service of creating better worlds for all.

More important, courses should establish a democratic setting where students are able to use their developing literacy skills to analyse society, understand how certain cultural assumptions and biases have placed them, their families and communities potentially at risk and ultimately, learn how to challenge the status quo. Critical adult education courses do not simply teach literacy and other basic skills, rather, they provide critical thinking tools and show students how they can use those skills to transform their lives and the society in which they live.

New Literacy (NLS) and critical approaches to education

NLS and critical approaches to education, offer a potential and rich space for transformation where learners can explore their narratives and society around them (Duckworth 2013). However, a key omission is that it does not address the real difficulties that learners may have with acquiring literacy. This can be explored by drawing on sociological frameworks. Sociology of education has played a part, often implicitly, in addressing processes and ways in which schooling and school knowledge contributed to reproducing sociocultural stratification along class, ethnicity and gender lines. Some of this work was predicated on the workings of language within the larger historical 'logic' of reproduction (Duckworth 2013, Ade-Ojo and Duckworth, 2016).

Changing perceptions of identity

The PAR led to the negotiation of the structure and content of the curriculum and was a key part of my drive as a research practitioner. There was an emphasis on facilitating the learners to view themselves as sharing power with myself where they felt confident enough to express themselves. A key driver of the curriculum design was to recognise the socially situated literacies the learners brought to the classroom. The PAR facilitated this, allowing us to explore our lives in the public as well as private domains. Moving from a deficit model, this legitimised the experiences and knowledge of the learners across the domains of their life.

The shift in the power position in relation to my role as teacher and researcher, allowed the learners to be co-investigators in the research and co-constructors of the curriculum. The pedagogy allowed critical discussions where we were able to unpack the themes of the research and see how this could be further expanded on and illuminated in the lesson.

One theme that came up was having the space to plan for the future and looking at the steps they needed to take. This involved developing activities that valued the learners' everyday practices within the classroom (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Barton et al. 2006). With the learners, we looked at different people's experiences and learning from each other and identified different steps which could be used to reach our goals.

This allowed us to reflect on the barriers we had experienced and how we could address them to move forward. The sharing of the barriers provided the opportunity to critically discuss the violence and trauma the learners had experienced in their lives. Issues related to addressing violence and trauma were then embedded into the lesson and are now part of a set of national resources. The resources are also embedded into the teacher education programme, offering trainee teachers examples of more critical approaches to curriculum design. These include opening up opportunities to address issues of violence which permeate through many learners' lives. Stories, poetry and images were used as foils to represent the generative themes in the lives of the learners. An example is Marie McNamara's easy-read auto-biography, *Getting Better*.

The book describes how, in her words, 'coming back to education was the hardest decision I have ever made'. Marie's



Getting Better cover

book looks at the motivation for returning to education and part of the resource looks at goal setting. The other themes that arose from Marie's narrative included exploring experiences of violence, poverty and illiteracy which many learners face. It also inspired learners to discuss how these problems exist and what could be done to address them.

The resources were designed to encourage learners to consider their own life situation and their hopes for the future. With the involvement of the teacher and other learners they aim to help them identify a series of actions they can take towards achieving their goals. The sharing of ideas and the dialogue between myself and the learners, led to a sharing of experiences which was framed within a social praxis that included reflection and action (Macedo 1994).

Literacy and creative expression

Poetry and art were used as ways to engage the learner in a critical dialogue. *Whispers*, a poem written by one of the students, became a valuable resource. A former literacy learner and cleaner at the college, Linda composed the poem in class when the race riots were active in Oldham. She delivered it to an ethnically diverse class where there continued to be tensions around race and gender. I used the poem as a discussion piece and for consciousness-raising. This facilitated the group to shape and reshape their assumptions about identity and racism. It also opened up a space to use poetry as a means for emotional expression.

Whispers

Chinese whispers, whispered throughout this town,
Reporters, crew members rushed to fill their empty
reels of film.
Descending from near and far,

With notepads in hand and cameras around
 their necks,
 They waited!
 Capturing evil as it passed through our lives
 —not theirs.
 The sun shone,
 As a calm but eerily cold feeling ran in and out of
 the rows of terraced houses,
 My head at the window,
 The battle about to begin,
 I watched as the men from the streets,
 Like gladiators,
 Chose a weapon,
 A stick, a brick, something to hurt—destroy
 All sides took part—skin colour the divide,
 As the men's faces flared in anger,
 Journalists and camera crews ran for the easy
 pickings of negative images,
 The evil masquerading as something new,
 But it's the same as what's crossed doorsteps across
 the land before.
 Whispers of hate threw out in despair,
 Torn lives for the world to see.

By Linda

One of the students, Carol, thought reading and writing poetry was for those with 'qualifications and y'know, good jobs'. She described how she felt scared of exploring the possibilities of language, believing it was 'not for someone like me'. However, after reading Linda's poem she seemed totally amazed that people who lived on the same streets as her had written such 'magic':

...if they can do it, who are just like me, so can I.

Her position in the classroom changed. She soaked up the lessons, even asking for more poetry. Inspired by, rather than running from words, she began to embrace language as something she had the right to use. She described how shaping sentences really helped her to:

...deal with those lousy feelings that have crammed my life too often like doubt, failure and fear.

Taking control of language empowered Carol with the belief that she could use words to express herself. She turned the symbolic violence she had initially experienced, into symbolic power. Carol's confidence developed together with her self-esteem. Writing poetry was very much linked with her view of self. She gained respectability

from writing her thoughts and feelings as this interaction with an interviewer illustrates:

When I read out my poems I feel like the class is really listening to me. That makes me proud.

(Interviewer) How does it do that?

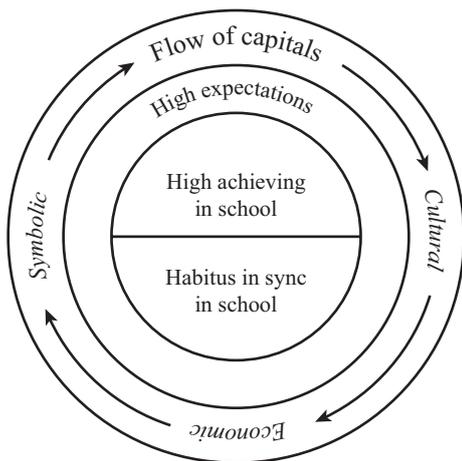
It's being able to share some painful memories rather than hiding them away. I've got the guts to do it now; I'm not frightened like I used to be.

What is valued and what is not

The learners in the PAR were able to be actively involved in decision making and dialogue with the positive outcome of a democratic environment and culture being co-constructed both inside and outside the classroom. For many of the learners, this inclusive approach to education and community action was the antithesis to what they had experienced previously. The PAR group facilitated the power of the collective over individual approaches. These bonds helped the learners to overcome the violence and trauma of school experiences, where they were judged by the dominant culture for being poor and not being successful within the educational system.

The study illustrated that the literacies the working class children brought to school, and adults brought to further education, afforded little symbolic value in that it could not be used in class to pass exams. For example, the domestic and caring literacies which have been traditionally carried out by girls and women, seldom enters the public domain and often remains invisible and unrecognised. The working class practices, which were often gendered, were not valued. Wrapped in notions of literacies, were domination and symbolic violence. Oral and written linguistic capabilities were not equally valued in schools (or the workplace), and even within the oral tradition, the codes of the upper classes were prioritised over the codes of working class and ethnically diverse learners (Bernstein 1971b; Labov 1972). This inevitably meant that learners who were not proficient in the linguistic skills required in schools and colleges were defined as failures or lacking in intelligence simply by virtue of the way they relate to and know the world. The wheel of symbolic power and violence as illustrated in Figure 1a & b, represents how many of the learners were positioned in the field of education and the accumulation of symbolic violence.

Wheel of symbolic power (a)

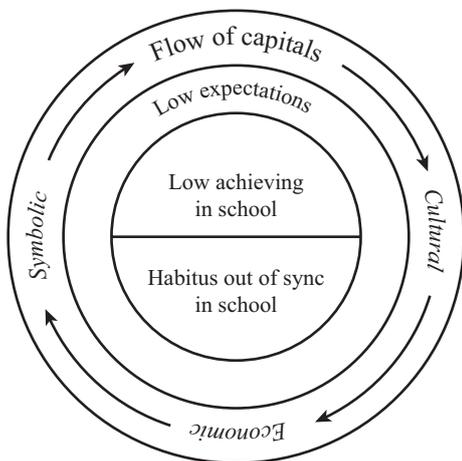


Flow of capital over time

<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Symbolic</i>
Qualifications	Professional/ well-paid jobs	Status/ leader

The wheel of symbolic power evolves over time, each capital feeding into the next and strengthening the symbolic power.

Wheel of symbolic violence (b)



Flow of capital over time

<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Symbolic</i>
Lack of qualifications	Unemployment/ unskilled/ low-paid job or social benefits	Lack of status

The wheel of symbolic violence evolves over time, each deprivation of capitals impacting the next and strengthening the symbolic violence.

Figure 1a & b, Wheels of symbolic power

Conclusion

This juxtaposition of being poor and having little social capital to support them to break out of their conditions, left many anxious, with low self-esteem and a belief they were stupid and failures. As they struggled with symbolic and physical violence in their navigation within and out of the field of education, they were aware the capitals they took to the classroom were not valued by the legitimate lens of symbolic representation of cultural domination.

The learners' narratives in my study have exposed the contradictions, complexities and ambivalences

they experience in their daily lives and how they try to make sense of them from their structural positioning as basic skills learners in a society based on inequality of opportunity and choice. Situations of transformation occur when there is no longer acceptance of the rules of the game and the goals proposed by the dominant class. So while some will seek to preserve the status quo, others will strive to challenge and transform existing hierarchies.

It is vital for practitioners to open up a space for critical reflection and dialogue which facilitates learners to

challenge notions of what literacies are and how they are used. Moving from a competence based model to a holistic approach (see Morrish et al. 2002) and care (see Feeley 2007, Duckworth 2013, 14; Duckworth and Ade-Ojo 2015) allowed me to fully explore the learners' motivations and barriers. Both the approach of the research and the lessons worked to encourage the learners to reflect. This was a tool for 'consciousness-raising' (Freire 1999) and praxis. The praxis was linked with social action, (Habermas 1974) and emancipation (Kemmis and Wilkinson 1998). The critical spaces which were provided in the research and within the class moved towards a deepened consciousness in which the learners recognised that they are products of history and as such challenged the structural conditions of oppression (Freire 1996) that for many had held them back from for so long.

This article draws on the keynote address that Vicky Duckworth delivered at the ACTA-ACAL Conference, *Diversity: exchanging ways of being*, April 2016, in Perth, Australia.

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Culturally safe learning environments for Aboriginal learners

By Melinda Eason

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which you are reading this article and pay my respects to all Aboriginal Elders.

Education has not always been linked to safety and positive experiences for many Aboriginal learners. Their Aboriginal identity has been ignored and for many, linked to abuse and ridicule. Understanding the ongoing impacts of colonisation in modern day classrooms is an integral part of developing authentic relationships that improve training and assessment outcomes for Indigenous learners in Vocational Education and Training (VET). Cultural safety in the classroom is the key to creating an environment where Aboriginal learners can feel empowered to reach their full potential.

‘You will feel uncomfortable for a very long time’ was the initial message I received from my first cultural awareness training. This was delivered in 2003 by an Indian man who had worked with the Aboriginal community for a number of years. Those words still ring true in my head at times, when I have a classroom full of Aboriginal students who may have mixed feelings about their educational journey with another ‘gubba’ teacher.

I prefer to use the term ‘facilitator’ instead of teacher, trainer or assessor. The role of a facilitator is to empower people to develop skills and knowledge, perform tasks, take action, and be recognised and acknowledged. A facilitator encourages students to share ideas, opinions, resources and provides an opportunity for students to value their own expertise and skills (Prendiville, 2008). Calling myself a facilitator helps to alleviate perceived power struggles of authority and power inequalities. As a facilitator, I can help to create a culturally safe learning environment for Aboriginal learners.

Aboriginal learners’ experiences of education

If you consider Australia’s shameful history of the treatment of Aboriginal people, a history of arbitrary and incredibly cruel punishment handed out by people in positions of authority and power, it is easy to understand



why Aboriginal people can be dubious of mainstream traditional educational institutions. I can recall a time when I naively asked a group of mature learners about a positive experience they could recall from their schooling. Not one hand went up. When I asked them about a negative experience of school, I was horrified to hear stories of belittling comments, physical abuse, nonexclusive practice and low expectations from their teachers. These stories were from suburban schools in and around Melbourne.

I knew then that I would never ask that question again. For this reason, I deliver VET courses in community and not in mainstream classrooms. Delivering classes in Aboriginal safe environments, such as Aboriginal controlled organisations, adds another layer of cultural safety for students. Aboriginal art mounted on the walls, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait flags in full view, and Aboriginal staff, indicates to students that their Aboriginal identity and culture will not be disputed or ignored, but instead regarded with respect.

The effects of racism are well and truly alive in the Aboriginal community. This is evidenced in over representation in the justice system, homelessness sector, suicide statistics and the seventeen-year gap in life expectancy. It is imperative that facilitators receive Aboriginal cultural awareness training to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence when working with Aboriginal students.

Although our classroom may be brimming with Aboriginal students who are resilient, intelligent, insightful, and with a strong desire to achieve so the lives of their families and communities can improve, the impacts of colonisation are still present. Those impacts are through transgenerational trauma which have manifested in feelings of shame, and are acted out in the form of lateral violence. Transgenerational or intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal people is five generations long and is linked to historical events such as massacres, starvation, removal of families to reserves or

missions and the removal of children, now known as the Stolen Generations.

Transgenerational trauma and lateral violence

Duran Duran (1995) suggests that historical trauma is entrenched in the cultural memory of people and passed on the same way culture is usually passed on, and therefore normalised. Transgenerational trauma results in a cycle of family violence, poor mental health, substance misuse and family breakdown. This entire article could be dedicated to the topic of transgenerational trauma because it is so complex, unresolved and continues to have a devastating effect on the Aboriginal community, and therefore Aboriginal students.

The word 'shame' is commonly used in the Aboriginal community. It is used when an Aboriginal person is singled out, even for reasons that appear positive to non-Aboriginal people. Singling out an Aboriginal person, even for praise, in the classroom can result in deep feelings of shame that can result in students not participating, or at worst leaving the course. Shame can be debilitating for Aboriginal students. Empathy is the cure for shame. This means facilitators must allow the time to build rapport and develop an authentic relationship with the learner so they can become comfortable with praise and positive feedback as the course progresses. Overcoming shame means empowering Aboriginal people to share and celebrate their culture. This can be done by nurturing a three-way respect between facilitator, the other students and the individual Aboriginal student.

Lateral violence is a product of colonisation that results in a spectrum of behaviours that includes bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family conflict, gossiping and other negative behaviours. It occurs when the oppressed and powerless turn in on the oppressed and powerless. In Aboriginal communities, this means they turn in on themselves as they are the most oppressed and powerless, there is nowhere further down the scale to turn to. The mental anguish caused by lateral violence is passed on through the generations and is yet another example of unresolved trauma.

Lateral violence comes from being told you are worthless and being treated as being worthless, over a long period of time. Lateral violence is an attempt to feel dominant in a powerless situation. This only perpetuates a cycle of oppression and can be expressed as the 'crab in the bucket'



VACSAL graduating students, Certificate III and IV in Community Services work, December 2015.

analogy of pulling each other down. It is important that facilitators are aware that students who are stepping up and attempting to change their situation might be experiencing lateral violence from their families, kinship and community.

Breaking the cycle of shame

Many Aboriginal people do not talk themselves up for fear of ridicule, so the facilitator will require patience and time to establish the student's many strengths. The relationship between the facilitator and the student is crucial in overcoming the possibility of the ostracising and shaming they may receive as a result of accessing an education. This may include being seen as thinking themselves better than others in the community, or even becoming 'whitewashed'.

Strategies that can assist Aboriginal students to feel culturally safe in the classroom include:

- working from a strength-based approach
- providing holistic support that considers all aspects of the student's life
- developing an authentic relationship that is disconnected from a perceived power imbalance.

This all takes time; the time many facilitators struggle to find amid competing demands. It takes the backing of managers and CEOs to allow facilitators to work outside the box. To nurture relationships with not only the Aboriginal student, but their families and their communities.

Current education systems want results in a timely fashion. This does not work for many Aboriginal students who have difficulties building trust and juggling so many transgenerational and psychological challenges. However, if one is allowed the time, the results are truly magnificent.

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Ready for change

By Karen Manwaring

Effective learner/teacher conversations are collaborative; learner-centred; focused on building rapport; grounded in a respectful stance; goal oriented and designed to strengthen an individual's motivation toward change by eliciting and exploring the person's own argument for change. (Ready for Change, p19)

Learn Local organisations fulfil a unique role as a first step for people wanting to engage with their community and with learning. While some prospective learners come to a Learn Local with a clear idea of their goals, many are not really sure of what their goals are or how they might achieve them. Many of these prospective learners also face multiple barriers to moving forward into education, training and employment.

The first meeting between a prospective learner and a learning centre is a crucial one. It is full of potential, both to inspire and to discourage a person who is thinking of returning to learning. It is also a time when vital information can be gained about what is motivating a person and what might stand in the way of that person's learning and engagement.

What goes on in this first meeting and the ways that it can set up the ensuing learner-practitioner relationship was the focus of 'Discover Yourself', an ACFE CAIF project. This project ran out of two Neighbourhood Centres: Port Melbourne and Elwood/St Kilda. The main outcome of this project was the *Ready for Change... using the Stages of Change model and A-Frame Learner Plan to work with adults facing multiple barriers to learning* resource for Learn Local practitioners to use in a range of settings.

Project overview

My role as project co-ordinator involved recruiting about twenty adult learners and working with them on a one-to-one basis. These learners were all disadvantaged and had experienced setbacks and disappointments in their attempts to come back to learning and participation in their community.

One of the valuable elements of this project was the establishment of a Community of Practice (CoP). It was made up of Learn Local practitioners and social workers who helped me to reflect on my meetings with the learners. They brought different perspectives and discipline backgrounds to our discussions and the development of the resource.



Karen Manwaring (left) and Rochelle, a participant in the Discover Yourself project.

At the start of the project, I focused on engaging the learners and forming a relaxed working relationship with each of them. Our conversations centred on their wish to re-engage with learning and the community. Inevitably, their fears (spoken and implied) about re-engagement were also part of these conversations.

Learners often have an initial 'Yes I can do that!' reaction to suggested next steps. However, they may not have had a chance to explore the barriers that arise for them. Without a considered conversation to look at the pros and cons of that next step, the reality may be too much for them.

Ready for Change, p3

Stages of change model

The project used the Stages of Change (SoC) model as a guide to establishing a learner's readiness for change. This model is widely used in the health and social work fields, but is only just being considered for its usefulness in education.

The SoC model proposes several stages that a learner may pass through when on a journey of change, in this case, a journey through learning:

1. Pre-contemplation—'I don't think I can' or 'I don't want to'
2. Contemplation—'I may try'
3. Preparation—'I will try'

4. Action—‘I’m learning’
5. Maintenance—‘I’ve learned’
6. Withdraw or plateau.

Ready for Change, p16

The SoC model helped me to become more aware of my role in conversations with learners. Increasingly, I considered that the questions I asked and the statements I made had a potent effect on the learner in relation to the choices they would make about their learning. Using the SoC model helped me to act more as a mentor. My aim became assisting the learner to uncover their own goals and fears, as well as the possible plans and pathways they could put in place. This approach is about learner empowerment, so that by using questioning and reflective listening techniques I was able to help learners express themselves more thoughtfully and gain awareness of their own motivations.

The SoC model suggests different conversational approaches depending on which ‘stage of change’ the learner is at. We found that the skills of Motivational Interviewing (MI) work hand in hand with the SoC approach:

Motivational Interviewing aims to purposefully create a conversation about change without attempting to convince the person of the need to change or instructing them about how to change.

Ready for Change, p19

The OARS guide

The skills of MI include what is known as the ‘OARS acronym’. This offers a guide to conversations about change that uses a sequence of strategies:

Open-ended questions

Encourage the learner to express their point of view: ‘What interests you about this course?’

Avoid closed questions that lead or push the learner toward a particular response and keep control of the conversation with the questioner.

Affirmations

Highlight the learner’s strengths, values, motivation and other positive qualities by reflecting them back to the learner: ‘Even though it’s been very difficult for you, you’ve still managed to keep attending classes’.

Reflective listening

A reflective statement will help the learner to explore more deeply rather than being defensive: ‘Your health is a real concern to you, however you seem really motivated to do this course’.

Summarising

By summarising what the learner has said, the teacher demonstrates an understanding of the learner’s perspective: ‘So let’s see if I’ve understood you. You would like to improve your writing skills by joining a class but you are nervous of being in a group’.

Project outcomes

One of the outcomes for this project was a resource for Learn Local practitioners that includes an Individual Learner Plan based on the project’s findings. Feedback from Learn Locals about the SoC model and the skills of Motivational Interviewing was very positive. However, when it came to ‘yet another’ learner plan, I was met with rolls of the eyes and blank stares. My ‘light bulb’ moment came when I suggested that the SoC model and the skills of MI could be used to inform the A-Frame Individual Learning Plan (ILP):

Time spent now (while completing the ILP) will lead to clearer communication, understanding and engagement at the individual, placement, class and completion levels.

Ready for Change, p 22

An approach to the A-Frame ILP using the techniques of Motivational Interviewing and an understanding of the SoC model was trialled with the learners from the Discover Yourself project, as well as with learners from a course that was just beginning at Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre.

Learner feedback about the experience was overwhelmingly positive, with learners saying that the focused time spent with a teacher or staff member, talking about their learning history, future goals and specific needs made them feel heard and connected with the course and the Learn Local. The observations and conclusions drawn from these meetings evolved into the development of the teacher resource *Ready for Change*. Underpinning the resource were considerations of what would best

assist adult education practitioners who work with learners who face multiple barriers to learning and employment.

The resource includes case studies based on the characteristics of learners at each stage within the SoC model and then goes on to show how this can be applied to the A-Frame ILP. There are references for further reading for those interested in learning more about Motivational Interviewing as a skill. We should all aim to ensure initial conversations and assessments have at their heart the needs of learners.

Ready for Change can be downloaded at: http://www.pmnc.org.au/images/Ready_for_Change_PMNC.pdf

... continued from page 12

There are so many talented and inspiring Aboriginal people who will shine if given the time and respect they so deserve. As facilitators of learning we should celebrate successes, recognise resilience and support empowerment.

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A bit more would make a difference

by Dr Shanti Wong and Dr Jude Walker



An ACFE funded research project investigated the education and employment needs of rural communities and recommended ways in which Learn Local Organisations could better support disadvantaged learners.

The small, rural Learn Local Organisations (LLOs) in the Grampians region play a vital role in reaching and supporting vulnerable learners. They help to provide a critical pathway to accredited training and future employment, however, they are under-resourced for both infrastructure and capacity building. We believe there is a pronounced opportunity to build the understanding of the local labour market and to develop service delivery models that support the most vulnerable learners and take thin markets into account. LLOs are the best placed organisations to do this and they must be more appropriately resourced and supported to ensure that vulnerable learners in rural communities have the best possible chance to engage with pre-accredited training and develop pathways to employment.

Project purpose

Our research, commissioned by the Grampians Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Regional Council, Department of Education and Training in Victoria, Australia, investigated the issues impacting on achieving strong employment outcomes for the most disadvantaged learners in rural locations. We reported our findings and made recommendations to support Learn Local Organisations (LLOs) located in regional and rural areas to strengthen the connections between LLOs and industry, and other potential partners, to ensure that they are able to support the most vulnerable learners in their communities.

The Grampians region is large and thinly populated, with a large proportion of residents clustered around its two regional cities of Horsham and Ballarat. It quickly became obvious to us that the constantly shifting funding environment resulted in rapid changes to service delivery to eligible clients (in already thin markets), and this placed additional pressure on technological infrastructure and pedagogy. The cost of compliance with vocational education regulations posed an additional burden, especially in small LLOs. We found that this meant some LLOs opted to de-register from accredited delivery, which in rural

communities only further limited the training options available for the most vulnerable learners.

We used a mixed method approach (Creswell and Plano Clark 2006) that included a literature review, desktop research of policies, case studies and existing practices in other locations statewide, nationally and internationally. We also conducted a detailed labour market analysis for a region which has the highest percentage of adults with incomplete schooling (44%) in Victoria (Teese et al. 2013).

This report was well received by the LLOs, providing them with comprehensive local labour market data which could be used to help them make informed decisions regarding the development of appropriate strategies to assist their vulnerable learners.

We don't need a lot of extra money, but a bit would make a difference.

Focus Group participant,
Horsham, October 2014

Expanding service delivery models

Those who work with vulnerable learners told us that it was important to have accessible pathways from pre-accredited training into accredited training, before learners enter the workforce. Too often, employees who enter employment directly from pre-accredited training have insufficiently developed employability skills—the soft skills employers value so highly in the workplace such as communication, team work, problem solving, initiative, planning, self-management and learning (Department of Education 2006).

The resulting breakdown of the experience is damaging from the perspective of both the employer and the employee. Ensuring learners have the opportunity to develop employability skills in further vocational training programs places the onus on the LLO to either become a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), as many have, or develop the necessary partnerships with RTOs and

TAFEs so that the pathways are relevant and seamless for the learner to navigate.

Where potential learner numbers are limited, we found that they could be successfully supported individually, or in small groups, by the delivery of blended learning (DEECD 2012:5). This included, but was not limited to, on-line support achieved through partnerships with agencies, such as health and wellbeing services. Services such as Headspace offer individual support for eligible clients. Another effective strategy is to recruit and train local mentors.

The learners who participate in LLO classes are often challenging, coming from disadvantaged and disengaged backgrounds. No allowance in the funding structures is made for the LLO to provide the support that is needed by people from these backgrounds to successfully engage in education.

We find many young people from low SES really struggle to remain engaged in education.

We (hear) of cases of young indigenous workers who are being ostracised by other workers.

Focus Group participants,
Horsham, October 2014

The Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative and Axis Worx in Horsham found mentoring and post-placement support in the workforce to be effective strategies for retaining people in employment who are otherwise vulnerable in the labour market. However, too often, we were told, the support that is currently available through incentives and program funding is not sufficiently long-term to ensure that people who face multiple barriers to successful engagement are successfully integrated into the workforce.

Routinely, thirteen weeks is available through support provided by a service such as Job Active, the Federal Government's publicly funded employment system. We were told that even six months may not be enough for some of the most disadvantaged people to develop the necessary employability skills to be able to maintain their employment independently.

Nevertheless, where long-term support is available, it has been shown to be very effective. Goolum Goolum collaborates with the Wimmera Hub to deliver pre-accredited training and pathways into accredited training and employment.



Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative

Goolum Goolum has shown that long-term, culturally appropriate support, provided on-the-job for as long as it takes (which may be a year or even longer), has excellent outcomes. Similarly, Axis Worx provides long-term support in the workplace with good results for people with disabilities. However, resources are stretched and the service is unable to support all its clients in the way in which it would like.

Provision of support

The literature review and consultations showed us that a range of intensive supports are clearly required to support the most vulnerable learners to address multiple barriers and access pathways to employment. These supports should be culturally appropriate and include:

- consistent learner advice; guidance and support (that includes health, mental health and wellbeing support)
- literacy and numeracy and English language acquisition
- individualised and locally accessible learning settings
- individualised managed pathway support
- post-placement supports in the workforce that are not time limited

Davies et al. 2001

These supports have been delivered effectively through the flexible application of pre-accredited training using resources such as digital literacy programs, work preparation programs, programs in self-esteem and confidence building, communication skills and careers advice.

The Wimmera Hub is such a great community organisation. It's a great opportunity for people to get a sense of achievement.

Focus Group participant,
Horsham, October 2014

These supports, however, are highly dependent on effective technology. It is clear that technology infrastructure is

problematic, especially in the Wimmera Southern Mallee sub-region, but clearly an enabler in larger centres such as Ballarat.

Blended programs that successfully integrate technologies into their training model can be appealing, especially to disengaged young people. Blended learning is not only good practice in learning delivery, being student-centred and flexible, it is also a method of providing personalised training in sparsely populated communities where achieving sufficient numbers to conduct viable face-to-face classes is unlikely.

We recommended increasing the capacity and effectiveness of blended learning underpinned by technology in the more rural Grampians LLOs. This includes developing a focussed strategy to strengthen the expertise of LLO staff in the development and delivery of blended learning as a means of addressing service delivery in thin markets. Such a strategy should include mentoring, support and professional development for LLOs in developing blended learning, finding new learners and new learner markets.

It will be important for the National Broadband Network to ensure that the more remote areas are serviced as early as possible. Additional assistance will also be needed for older learners who are likely to be less capable and confident in the use of technology.

Partnerships

Not surprisingly, we found a high level of engagement in partnerships by LLOs and they demonstrated good partnership skills. However, we found the partnerships tended to be project-based rather than strategic and capacity building. Our labour market analysis suggested that there are a range of opportunities for LLOs to increase their strategic penetration into training in growth industries. For example, there was no LLO training in the region in the growth industry of Transport and Logistics. We also found that the health sector is now the largest employer in the region and provides a wide range of employment opportunities which would be suitable for LLO clients.

We found that the resources available through the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) are often under-recognised and under-used. The Ballarat Next Steps Work and Learning Centre (The Centre) was set up as part of the \$4.6 million Work and Learning Centre initiative, with four other centres across Victoria. They are each located close to public

housing estates and assist people to access education and employment opportunities.

It costs more ... 'to keep people on income support over a lifetime versus the cheaper cost of an upfront investment to ensure they (find) proper pathways and real jobs.'

McClure 2014

It is an excellent example of resources being gathered through partnerships that are not limited or constrained by eligibility criteria determining who the learners might be or what the outcomes must be. The performance indicators of The Centre are developed through business planning with the partners, which include DHHS, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Commerce Ballarat, rather than prescribed by government funding guidelines.

The Centre employs Work and Learning Advisors who develop highly individualised programs. These include any required supports for each learner, when and where they are required, resulting in very effective employment and further training outcomes for very disadvantaged learners. Work and Learning Centre participants commented, 'I feel confident to (enter the workforce) now' and 'Knowing that I'm not alone—that helps.'

Shifting sands

Embedding pathways, mentoring, work placement, transition and post-program support into programs creates valuable connections between the program and the wider community. Unfortunately, the funding for such long-term support has ceased, or is diminishing. Since this research, the government has been reviewing some of the workplace support programs and how these services might be delivered in the future.

The situation on the ground remains unpredictable and subject to rapid change. However, our focus groups for this project introduced some community agencies to each other for the first time and showed that there is potential for new cross-sectoral partnerships that may build capacity in this area. The post-placement supports in the workplace, for example, may only need to be available on an 'as needs' basis or scaled back to visits by the mentor every two or three weeks. The ability to provide timely interventions where necessary and to provide ongoing support for employee and employer is more cost-effective and socially responsible than seeing a person return to unemployment and disengagement.

Consequently, we recommended further development of the existing Communities of Practice for LLO Executive Officers and staff, so that they provide them with ongoing relevant professional development and stronger networking capability. Many LLO staff work in isolated communities and may only work part-time. If we are going to expect them to change the ways in which they work to better support their vulnerable learners, then the government needs to fund that ongoing connectedness and professional development.

In addition, strong governance is critical to ensure LLOs are well equipped to navigate the ever changing external environment and we found that there was much room for improvement in this regard. Attracting suitable LLO Board members is an issue across the region, but is exacerbated in small communities. Competent governance is critical to ensure organisational viability. Continuous changes in funding arrangements are one of the key difficulties identified by Grampians LLOs. The lack of predictability for organisations that operate on knife-edge margins often makes their position seem precarious.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that all the Grampians region LLOs have a vital role to play in delivering the wider benefits of learning in areas such as health, employment, social relationships and volunteering. LLOs do face significant challenges including reduced public funding; balancing the need to provide quality services to learners, while at the same time meeting the costs of compliance; keeping up-to-date with technology changes and ensuring their teaching staff have sound pedagogical knowledge and skills.

LLOs are well used to leveraging resources using a partnership approach that is in line with international research. However, it appears that some baseline funding to subsidise services may be necessary, especially for those providers dealing with the hardest to reach learners, and those located in rural and regional areas. It is pleasing to note that since this and other research has been conducted, ACFE has moved to make adjustments to the funding arrangements that will assist in addressing the education and training needs of those learners who are the most vulnerable in our communities.

Decent training for decent work, the Report and Literature Review and accompanying video, have been published on the Pascal International Observatory website at: [http://pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow/blogentry/strengthening-](http://pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow/blogentry/strengthening-employment-outcomes-adult-and-community-education-rural-western-vi)

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Dr Jude Walker is a demographer, labour market analyst and futurist whose work involves identifying how the education/training, employment and economic sectors might work more effectively together to contribute towards better social and economic outcomes for regional populations.

Practical Matters

Vox Pops: sharing ideas for classroom activities

Have you been stuck for ideas lately? Here is a selection from teachers who have devised or modified activities to meet their learners' needs.

Put yourselves in order!

I enjoy using this simple group activity to get students up and moving around, especially on a cold morning. The activity enhances personal interactions, general speaking and listening skills, as well as vocabulary development.

Start with a 'measure' question against which the students will compare their responses with one another. Students then get into groups and exchange information on the topic within the group. They then move into a line according to order of criteria such as earliest to latest, lowest to highest. Here are some examples for a question:

- What time did you get up this morning?
- What time did you go to bed last night?
- What year did you come to Australia?
- What is your house number?
- What is your age in years and months?
- What is your height in centimetres?

This activity stimulates students to use the language of ordinals, numbers, location, and time markers. The students improve and enrich their responses each time they complete the activity. It allows for kinaesthetic learning as students have a visual representation of the data they are collecting. They are often amused with the results and delighted with the instant feedback. You could add the challenge of asking the students to generate the measure questions themselves.

Anne-Louise discovered this activity at the recent ACTA/ACAL Conference in Perth. She uses it regularly in class and the students really enjoy it.

Phonemic awareness through song

In my teaching, I see pronunciation, spelling and reading as all being interconnected. I use songs to focus on and practise many aspects of oral language: intonation in question and answer structures; connectedness of speech; the flow of natural language as distinct from teacher talk, and as a basis for the study of words and sounds.

Many sounds are very hard for students to differentiate, for example 'i' in hit and 'ea' in heat. My main aim is to



familiarize students with the patterns in words we locate in text and songs. I then help them to see that there are some common sounds and spelling patterns that will help them in their oral and written language.

We use the excellent Urban Lyrebirds *Sing with Me* series of books. A typical activity focus will be:

- Sing a song from *Sing with Me* and talk about the topic and related language.
- Sing, read, check vocabulary and repeat song in various combinations such as half the class sing one line and the other half the next line.
- Use a song for language study with a focus: 'She has Long Black Hair'—the sound 'z'; 'I like a busy weekend'—short 'i' sound in busy/is and long 'i' in bite, the different letters for same sound, busy/is; 'My name is Sue'—the sounds 'sh', 's' and 'z'.

It is important to encourage the students to learn the songs. You can draw on the vocabulary and sounds for regular learning activities, such as finding rhyming words and creating word lists that relate to sounds and spelling and consonant clusters within words.

Through using songs in the classroom, I am more aware of the problems students have with not hearing their errors. The repetition that comes from regular singing gives the students the chance to listen and reinforce their understanding in a unique way.

Singing is fun and students don't mind the repetition, in fact they enjoy it. Often when eliciting word lists, I am surprised

at the wide vocabulary of some students. It can lead to good interactions as well. This is often the time when words arise that have caused confusion for individual students. We look closely at the words in the songs and can compare the sounds and spelling and clarify the different meanings of very similar sounding words.

Toni sings in a choir and regularly incorporates songs into her classes. The students respond positively and tell her that they now sing at home too.

Who you gonna call?

I have been working with my students on the topic of health and wellbeing. I designed this activity to elicit language and to have the students move about the room and interact with each other.

To begin with I wrote the names of health practitioners on coloured cards. I kept it simple: GP, dentist, physiotherapist, podiatrist, nurse. We had spent time in previous sessions focusing on different areas of health so the names were familiar to them.

Next I gave the students coloured cards with different ailments or conditions written on them. They discussed these and then moved around the room to match the ailment to the health practitioners who they thought could help them. For example: sore tooth—dentist; twisted ankle—physiotherapist. They then reported back to the whole group composing a sentence to explain their condition and why they had chosen the medical practitioner.

As with all card activities, there are many other ways of continuing to use them for other exercises or adapting the activity for investigating other themes. The students gained confidence in using the language to interact with health professionals.

Linno is always keen to incorporate real life contexts and include challenging activities in her classes.

An excursion to the Islamic Museum of Australia

Many people will argue that one of the things you should never discuss in polite conversation is religion. It seems a shame that such a fundamental aspect of many people's lives is considered to be a taboo subject. Especially in the context of literacy, when so much literacy development has been facilitated by different religions over the centuries.

Recently, I took a group of literacy students of mixed religious backgrounds to the Islamic Museum of Australia in Thornbury, Victoria. It is an impressive building with Arabic calligraphy inscribed on the front of the museum translated thus: 'So narrate to them the stories so that upon them they may reflect'.

The task I set for the students was to find a museum exhibit that they particularly liked or found interesting; take a photograph of it; write a short description of the exhibit that they would later share with the whole group.

The students were very excited by many of the exhibits they saw in the museum. They remarked on how the exhibits were of extremely high quality and of relevance to their past and present lives. Either they had visited the places mentioned in the museum exhibits or they had studied aspects of the history, geography, art or religion at some stage in their life.

Later, back in the classroom, an exhibit that stirred memorable discussion was a film outlining the story of how, during the Dark Ages in Europe, in other parts of the world Islam generated a period of enlightenment, technological expansion and cultural renaissance. Another remarkable exhibit was of Abbas ibn Firnas, an Andalusian inventor of the 9th century, who was arguably the world's first aviator. These were just two of many exhibits that sparked discussions. We found the Islamic Museum of Australia to be a quiet haven for exploring multiple literacies and alternative narratives amidst our busy secular lives.

Liz is passionate about all aspects of language learning and the many cultural influences that can be brought into focus with her students.

Ourselves in our environment

Another successful literacy learning activity I heard about recently comes from a colleague in far north Western Australia, Debbie Johnson. I caught up with Debbie on the phone the other night and, as usual, she was full of great, resourceful ideas. This activity focuses on speaking, identity and nature, and Debbie attributed it to a school camp activity she participated in as a teenager!

Learners go outside the classroom to explore their natural environment and look for things in nature that they think reflect themselves in some way. Once they have found an object, they bring it back to the classroom.



Debbie models the discussion using a fern frond to represent herself. She tells students that the unfurled part of the frond reflects the part of her life that is yet to be completely

revealed, while the leaves that have already spread out represent the many facets of her life she has developed so far.

Debbie told me that the activity has inspired students to consider many positive traits about themselves such as dependability (a rock) and outer toughness protecting inner softness (a Jacaranda seed pod). Like many good class activities, this is the sort of activity that teachers won't mind testing out beforehand. It is a good way to trigger creativity and mindfulness in connection to ourselves and our environment.

Liz is a regular Vox Pops contributor and enthusiast in getting other teachers to share activities that work in the classroom and beyond.

An integrated approach to improving pronunciation

By Margaret Corrigan and Elizabeth Keenan

At the heart of a person's identity is being able to speak and be understood. For EAL learners, being able to communicate effectively is a major factor in determining their ability to succeed in their new community.

Background

Carringbush Adult Education acknowledges the value of effective communication and is striving to achieve improved oral language outcomes for all learners. Through a combination of strategies and funding opportunities, an organisation wide approach is being implemented in which pronunciation is an integral part of the teaching of all the macro skills of language learning.

Since 1984, Carringbush Adult Education, a Not-For-Profit Registered Training Organisation has been delivering EAL and literacy programs, including Skills for Education and Employment (SEE), Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Skills Victoria Training System and pre-



accredited ACFE programs with a work-readiness focus. Carringbush also offers a Get Ready for Work program and employment mentoring for asylum seekers who are ineligible for Government funded programs.

The learners who come to Carringbush are predominantly Vietnamese, with others from China, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia and East Timor. The majority of learners reside in the Richmond or Collingwood public housing estates and range from new arrivals to long term residents. The focus of programs is on learners who are at the beginning of their learning journey, with the majority of learners at ACSF pre level one.

The teachers are an experienced and cohesive group that comprises twelve part-time teachers, a Community Development officer, and a Volunteer coordinator. The volunteer program provides in-class tutor support and mentoring around work experience and employment.

How to better meet learner needs

Over several years, learners who completed programs and left Carringbush to participate in employment or further training or work experience, were reporting back that they felt disenchanted because people had difficulty understanding them. There seemed to be a pattern, in that they were unable to fully utilise opportunities because of the barriers presented by issues with their oral language skills. This was in spite of the fact that teachers were working hard and being creative in their English language instruction. There was concern that despite the best efforts, there were no salient gains in the learners' oral language skills.

In order to find out what could be done to better meet learners' needs, and establish what needed to be addressed, it was necessary to analyse and document the language features that interfered with learners' intelligibility. Intelligibility refers to the ability to be understood comfortably. The aim is not necessarily for native-like speaking, rather increased clarity and fluency.

Interferences that were noted among the learners included:

- inability to produce clear vowel sounds in the stressed syllable
- incorrect placement of stress in words and in sentences
- omission of grammar markers which indicate tense and plurals
- inability to pronounce consonant clusters
- inability to use the features of connected speech.

The consequences of these interferences can be socially inhibiting and damaging to a learner's ability to cope effectively in an Australian environment. Pronunciation is an integral part of not only speaking and listening, but also reading and writing. After some research, it was decided that the pronunciation aspect of oral language should be addressed firstly, with the focus on individual sounds as a starting point.

A different approach to teaching pronunciation

The Carringbush teachers had all been trained in the Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills

(THRASS) literacy method. This had not adequately addressed the range of pronunciation areas required by the learners. Three teachers attended a session presented by Adrian Underhill at the English Australia conference in Melbourne (2014). He is a teacher-trainer based in the UK, who has developed an approach to teaching pronunciation. This approach moves from sounds, to words, to connected speech, always keeping in mind that pronunciation is a physical and muscular activity. Recent research supports the veracity of this approach.

After a follow-up meeting with Adrian Underhill and on the strength of his compelling approach, in July 2015, two staff members travelled to the UK. They attended an intensive two-week course on pronunciation teaching delivered by him at Cambridge University. Whilst all this was happening, Elizabeth Keenan applied for, and was granted a Higher Education Skills Group Overseas Fellowship, through the International Specialised Skills Institute in Melbourne. The focus of the fellowship was to observe world's best practice pronunciation teaching and to disseminate learnings to interested stakeholders.

Further to this, she went to a pronunciation conference in Dallas, Texas in 2015. She has been mentored by several leading pronunciation academics from overseas and Australia. She returned to the US in June 2016 to continue information gathering and observation of the excellent delivery of pronunciation instruction in community settings, both in explicit and integrated teaching contexts. It was an opportunity to investigate the range of curricula, the online resources available through intranets and to make contact with leading researchers in the field of pronunciation teaching and learning. All this information and skills gathering will be shared to inform Carringbush teaching practices.

Teacher skill development

To ascertain teachers' confidence, knowledge and skills in teaching pronunciation, a series of interviews and surveys were conducted. It was discovered that teachers weren't confident in teaching pronunciation because they didn't know what to teach, or how to teach it and despite being adequately qualified with post-graduate qualifications in TESOL, most employed only the 'listen and repeat' strategy. These survey findings of teacher inadequacy were supported by the 2002 research findings of Shem MacDonald at La Trobe University in his study *Pronunciation—views and practices of reluctant teachers*. Interestingly, learner survey results revealed that what

most learners wanted was to learn how to speak and be understood.

Growing pre-accredited courses ACFE funds became available and Carringbush was successful in applying for a new Pronunciation Research class, which provided the opportunity to test and trial a variety of pronunciation strategies and techniques. The level of engagement in this class of often passive learners was very encouraging, highlighting the learners' acknowledgement of their skill deficits and their willingness to embrace practical tools for improving their pronunciation. Each lesson was structured to allow skill development in the areas of phonemic awareness, word level pronunciation and use of features of connected speech, including assimilation, linking, elision, intonation and rhythm.

The class has continued in 2016 with regular ACFE Student Contact Hours (SCH) funding. At the same time, teachers were provided with an opportunity to learn about what was covered in the Cambridge course, through regular Professional Development (PD) sessions. This provided a vehicle to move towards an organisation-wide approach to pronunciation teaching, so that all Carringbush students benefitted from explicit pronunciation teaching.

Whilst the dedicated pronunciation class is held on a Friday, these strategies and techniques are incorporated into the teaching of other beginner-level learners with greater challenges. Pronunciation is being taught explicitly, but most importantly, also incidentally throughout the day: in introducing new vocabulary, in reading, in writing, in spelling as well as in speaking and listening.

Adrian Underhill's approach encourages opportunities for non-verbal feedback through the use of gestures and mime and with reference to the International Phonemic (IP) chart as a valuable visual tool. As one student commented, with regard to the phonemic chart, 'I didn't know that sounds had a picture!'

The IP chart allows learners to understand that there are 44 sounds that make up the English language. It also helps them to distinguish between the sounds, with awareness of the physicality involved in the production of the sound. Learners have become aware of the articulators of the

vocal tract, including, tongue, lips, teeth, jaw and breath. With an awareness of the physicality of sound production, learners are better able to successfully produce a sound, thus striving for comfortable intelligibility.

Action research

An application was made for an ACFE Capacity and Innovation Fund grant to upskill teachers with the input of experts and built-in remuneration for teachers for planning, trialling, reflecting on and reporting new strategies. It can be a challenge to implement changes to teaching practices within an existing group of experienced teaching staff. All of the teachers have valuable experience, but minimal confidence and expertise in teaching pronunciation.

It was decided that for effective change to occur, teachers would need to feel well supported throughout the whole process. The project has a time frame of eighteen months, with Dr Shem MacDonald from LaTrobe University, and a number of experts in the field of pronunciation teaching and learning, collaborating with Carringbush.

As an organisation, the goal is to have pronunciation taught as an integral part of all aspects of classes, so that it becomes the unconscious competence of teachers. The benefit of which will be improved oral communication outcomes for learners. The project aims to upskill the teachers through intensive PD and to develop a resource for current teachers, as well as for teachers who join Carringbush in the future. This unique Carringbush journey has highlighted the need for explicit instruction to improve pronunciation. It has become apparent that merely providing opportunities for conversation is not enough to bring about improvement in pronunciation for EAL learners at all levels.

Margaret Corrigan, manager at Carringbush Adult Education, Richmond, is passionate about providing the best educational opportunities for CALD learners and works with teachers to implement innovative practices in oral language pedagogy.

Elizabeth Keenan, EAL teacher and teacher mentor, is a HESG Fellow and is currently investigating world's best practice in pronunciation teaching.

Technology Matters

From 'chaos to calm'

By Manalini Kane

Technological advancements to date have revolutionised the education sector worldwide, almost to the extent that the plethora of digital technology at our fingertips seems complex, challenging and mind-boggling. This article aims to offer some relief as well as some practical tips. The journey from 'chaos to calm', while focusing on the teaching of language and literacy skills integrating digital literacy, can be achieved through the effective use of iPads.

This article will focus mainly on developing literacy with the use of iPads and apps, not to be taught as an add-on skill, but integrated in the teaching and learning journey. The use of an iPad offers a way of teaching with touch technology, added to which is portability and accessibility. However, iPads are not to replace face to face teaching. They can simply drive change, if used carefully and thoughtfully, offering a wide range of applications.

The majority of adult educational institutions in Victoria commonly provide access to desktop computers. Increasingly, this is shifting to students using their own devices or sets of iPads being provided to students in the classroom. The integration of digital technology is encouraged in most courses. Adults may face difficulty in unlearning skills they have already learned with the use of desktop or laptop computers.

My beliefs and practices as an educator are influenced by a constructivist approach, enhanced by Knowles' (1980) Andragogy, the theory of adult learning and Mezirow's (1997) theory of Transformative Learning. In my career journey, I have pursued courses in desktop publishing and web design, working in those areas while also teaching mainstream English in the secondary sector and TESOL in the adult community and TAFE sectors. In my post graduate studies, as an off campus, part-time student, I experienced blended learning modes using Blackboard and Moodle as asynchronous e-learning platforms.

I have been using an iPad since 2013 and iPhone from 2014. I have experienced the chaos of the new and the advantages of these devices through adopting new applications. My personal and professional experiences

underpin my observations and insights about teaching with digital devices. I propose that the following two well-researched models for developing cognitive skills of learners may be relevant for many adult literacy and language educators.



A holistic conceptual model

Eshet (2012) in his longitudinal studies referred to digital literacy as a 'survival skill' of the 21st Century. With his research he extended a holistic conceptual model that he had introduced with Alkalai in 2004. The participants of this study were divided into two groups for research: school children and older adults, between the ages of 30 and 40 years. The six cognitive digital skills that he presented included the following:

Photo-visual skills

Increasingly, we have to move from a text-based syntactic model to a more graphic-based semantic environment. Through using symbols, icons, emoticons and so forth, we have to use vision to think. The results of the research indicated that the educators could teach language and literacy with photo-visual stimuli that every age group can find motivating and engaging. As the learners gain confidence, educators can provide photo-visually challenging tasks at progressive levels.

Reproduction skills

With the vast range of open and free information online, educators have to train learners of all ages about plagiarism and how to avoid it. One way to overcome this problem can be to teach how to assign a new meaning to text paragraphs by re-arranging the words and sentences in them. Teaching about open source and creative commons attributions is also critical.

Branching skills

Hypermedia technology tends to embed a large number of hyperlinks in the text, especially in digital textbooks. Adult learners can find it difficult to navigate, so covering topics with mental models, concept maps or web-like structure right at the start of a topic can be helpful. This way, the

adult learners can develop non-linear navigation skills for acquiring new knowledge.

Information skills

The large volumes of digital information available can challenge learners to make educated and critical assessments. Adult learners need specific instructions that can help them identify false, irrelevant, or biased information that can bombard them. Educators have an added responsibility to develop learners' critical thinking skills by always questioning the veracity and authenticity of information.

Socio-emotional skills

Mass communication through knowledge sharing groups, chat rooms or social networking (Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook etc.), provide new opportunities. But they can pose many challenges too. Teaching net etiquette; boundaries around what to share, what not to share; additional to personal security, are of paramount importance. Every educator needs to be aware of this, and be capable of instilling these skills in their learners.

Real-time thinking skills

Each new generation of computers and ubiquitous 'anytime, anywhere' gadgets offer multimedia environments and devices that can process and present information in real-time at high speed. Hence real-time thinking has become a critical skill. It demands quick responses where learners have to think on their feet and respond, as in games, quizzes, or surveys. Therefore, including language related games in the day-to-day planning of the lessons on the iPads should be encouraged right from the basic level. The just-in-time audio or visual feedback that one gets from these games and quizzes can promote learning from one's own mistakes.

Results of Eshet's research on the above skills clearly indicated that the younger participants performed better than the older ones with photo-visual and branching literacy tasks, whereas the older participants performed better in the reproduction and information literacy tasks. The message for educators here is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the learners in the classroom and provide tasks that can develop and enhance their digital literacy skills.

SAMR model

Dr Ruben Puentedura (2010) originally introduced the SAMR model for K-12 learners. It was intended as a guide for educators to evaluate technology and decide how to use it in a classroom. SAMR is an acronym

for Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition. The SAMR model has been integrated with Bloom's Digital Taxonomy to help teachers better integrate technology in their teaching. (<http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2014/03/a-new-fantastic-blooms-taxonomy-wheel.html>)

Substitution

Puentedura indicates that teachers have to change their mindset in order to substitute what they are already teaching well with paper-based technology or desktop computers or use iPads instead. For example, printed books can be directly substituted with technology but may offer no functional improvement.

Augmentation

An iPad at our fingertips can offer scope to enhance or extend teaching and learning with many added functionalities. Many teachers still tend to carry the thick but handy chronicle for maintaining student records, day to day planning of the aims and objectives of each lesson, or formative assessments. For additional functionality, a teacher can use the TeacherKit app. It offers additional functions like noting student behavior, seating plan or online assessment of formal or informal learning activities.

Modification

Teachers can use various apps to redesign tasks, collaborate, communicate and get feedback or responses from others. For example, social networking apps, like WhatsApp or a private group on Facebook. A teacher can set up a WhatsApp group with their learners and provide a very short text, video clip or a photo encouraging responses from every learner that may include picture, photo, audio, video, or text.

Redefinition

Teachers can use iPads to create new content or new tasks which was not possible before. It encourages creativity of teachers as well as learners. The SeeTouchLearn app helps teachers to create mini-lessons using images, text, or voice recordings and to make highly tailored and interesting learning content.

Using apps and ipads for learning

There are many free apps you can download for the iPad like TeacherKit and for a nominal subscription, Visual Thesaurus. You can order under Apple's Volume Purchase Program for more than one license for other staff and

students to use. Figure 1 contains a list that may be useful when planning classroom activities.

Challenges

Using iPads in a classroom can pose some challenges, however there are many advantages. The following are some factors to consider when planning programs:

- Learner access to iPads in the classroom, at home or at designated times at the learning centre: put in place loan and security arrangements.
- Limitations of the small screen of an iPad may pose challenges for older adult learners: apply a time limit for use or utilise the zoom facility or retina display.
- Additional language and learning support in the classroom for variations in pace of learning: use volunteers or peer assistance.
- Use of iPads with printing facility and a keyboard for word processing: learners can perform tasks and email to the teacher for paperless record of progress and achievements.

Despite these challenges, there are benefits in the effective use of iPads. It is important that as educators we continue to trial and test new apps and assess their educational value, ability to engage and user friendliness. Through integration of iPads and apps into course design and classroom practices, our learners' progressive abilities to proceed with minimal assistance for collaborative learning will continue to evolve.

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App	Function
Acrostic	Learn and create poems
Dragon Dictation	Voice to text
Aloud	Text to voice
Educreations	Interactive, recordable whiteboard that applies to Bloom's Taxonomy
Endnote	Research/bibliography
Google Maps information	Navigation with audio-visual
Google Compass	Navigation
Grammar up	
Trading Cards	
Timeline	
Venn Diagram	Grammar related games
Hangman	Interactive, guess a word
iBrainstorm	Multi-device collaboration
Missing Link	Word puzzle game
Missing word	Word game
NPR news	Select articles from various topics
Phrasal Verbs Machine	Active learning of phrases
Prezi	Presentations
Flowvella	
Quizlet	Create or use flashcards for interactive learning
Scannable	Scan and share documents
SimpleMind+	Mind mapping
Tweetbot	Social networking
Voice Memos	Voice record and share
Wordflex	Visual dictionary
Wordmania	Word search game
Wordwit	Vocabulary extension and confusing words
Writer's studio	Create interactive story
Zoom	Online video conferencing with up to 50 participants

Figure 1: some useful apps

Puentedura, R. (2010) <http://www.hippasus.com/>

Manalini Kane has a wide experience of teaching English language and literacy. This includes nine years of teaching adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy in the adult community and TAFE sectors and sixteen years of teaching mainstream English up to VCE/IB in the secondary sector. Currently she works as the manager of Tribhashi Consultant in Melbourne. She is a member of the Fine Print editorial committee and VicTESOL Professional Learning committee.

Open Forum

This is the second in our 2016 series of articles that reflect on the past decade in the adult community and vocational education fields. Change is a constant and the resilience of LLN practitioners in evidence as they continue to maintain the focus on the needs of their students.

Where have all the hours gone? LLN support in an era of restrictions

By Rhonda Pelletier

In reviewing the provision of Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) support in TAFEs over the last ten years, my thoughts immediately ran to the impact of the restructuring of TAFES in 2012, changes to the list of the Foundation Qualifications and the introduction of new eligibility rules, most notably the ‘two-course’ rule. However, when I spoke to teachers who have worked in LLN support for many years, they brought the needs of the students to the ‘front and centre’.

One teacher commented on a student who had won an institute award for his learning. In his awards speech, he noted that he felt quite able to do the study when he started, but that, in fact, he didn’t know what he needed to know. LLN support was the answer to his needs. It seems paradoxical that everyone is talking about the poor LLN skills of students, and the need for improvement, and at the same time the need to improve teachers’ and trainers’ skills in LLN. Despite this, funding restrictions squeeze the fuel out of the structures that could provide the services to support LLN skills across the board.

Many people lay the blame for the decline of TAFES and vocational education at the feet of ‘contestable funding’ introduced by the Brumby government in 2006. Others say it would not have been so bad if there had been suitable and sufficient oversight by government monitoring bodies, such as the VRQA. There is also the point that the voices that are listened to in development of LLN policy by state and federal governments are too often focussed on the employment and industry productivity outcomes. This at the cost of core student needs that extend beyond the basic human capital returns of an educated labour force.

All of these points have some value in working out how we got to where we are today. However, for teachers and trainers, mulling over the bones of past battles and changes

is not helping them to work for students now and into the future.



Navigating the curriculum

LLN support teachers have several curricula to draw from: English as an Additional Language (EAL) Framework of adult EAL certificates; Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA); and the more recent Foundation Skills Training package (FSK). There is also the LLN Support collection of units from the FSK and CGEA that can be imported into other qualifications. Access to these is available to students who demonstrate a need for LLN skills, whether they are newly arrived students or students for whom compulsory education has not succeeded, or people returning to study after a long break.

However, there is an eligibility requirement that restricts use and access. In Victoria you can receive state government subsidised training for two qualifications in one year. The Foundation Qualifications are included in this count, but you can only receive funding if you do not have a Diploma. Thereafter you must pay for additional assistance or rely upon the assistance your institute/RTO can provide free of charge. This is often a help desk in the library or designated staff who can spend small amounts of time assisting in the mainstream class. Where departments offer their apprentices additional training to augment their skills—such as, confined spaces for plumbers—institutions cannot offer a funded support program.

Similarly, students will often seek to do a Diploma after completing a Certificate III or IV, taking up the two qualifications in a year. Institutions must find ways to support their students by drawing on corporate funds for the LLN support department, provide access to online assistance from specialist tutors, such as MyTutor, provide extensive online guides or short consultations with a skilled tutor.

It is a complex situation, but it is not new. With the introduction of contestable funding in 2006, institutes had to start looking at how they might continue to deliver LLN support effectively, as well as achieving cost effectiveness. And this raises the question about how to interpret effective delivery. The criteria for providing it, including compliance, places the focus on just 'staying alive', that is keeping some provision going until the rules change again.

Keeping up with the paperwork

Changes to funding have been just one aspect to deal with. The curriculum to draw on has changed. The requirement that a pre-training LLN review must be completed for each course has added administrative complexity to provision. For approved Foundation Skills providers, the need to report and record skills gains against the ACSF has added another level of reporting complexity. The hidden impact of this is the amount of administrative work sessional teachers are required to carry out that has little to do with being responsive to student needs. The majority of teachers working today are sessional so that there is a great deal of goodwill relied upon to keep up with the paperwork.

Change is not always experienced as a negative. One teacher noted that the LLN support role involves providing a 'just in time and just enough' program that is negotiated with teachers, students and program managers. This provides support for a particular group of students. In her words, the programs they 'cobble together...become effective because of being able to tailor them to suit'. Changes are survived by taking the good parts of previous practice and finding ways of making them work in a newly constituted and funded world.

However, as another teacher noted, with the advent of the two course rule, staff have a feeling of being under threat. Funding for their work is uncertain. Where there is no direct enrolment for their work, LLN support teachers feel they are regarded as a 'deficit' for their institutes. In-class support is still offered but it requires institute backing and careful consultation with students to inform them of the two course rule. The number of students who can be enrolled has dropped enough to make the provision of LLN support questionable.

That was then, this is now

The most significant change LLN support practitioners recall is the introduction of the two-course rule in 2013. Until that point, it was possible to use Foundation Qualifications

to support students who needed more help for LLN skills than their mainstream course could provide. Support was provided in a number of different ways: in-class team teaching; one-to-one consultation in a library; specialist classes conducted by the LLN teacher on key skills identified by the host department; and collaborative planning and reworking of learning materials to incorporate LLN learning principles and strategies into mainstream activities.

In 2012, the Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills (CAVSS) was removed from the Foundation Qualifications list. CAVSS enabled students to be enrolled into a course that allowed for their work to be aligned to the CAVSS modules. These were simple in contrast to the more elaborate units in the EAL Framework and the CGEA. Take up of the new FSK has been slow and complicated by its unique character of having more 'orphaned' units than certificates. This feature, which is quite handy if you can embed the units into the mainstream qualification, means that it is not easy to use in a cost effective manner as a separate source of skills support.

The lived experience of providing LLN support for students is one of trying to comply in a manner that will leave the teacher with time to engage with each student's need. It places managers in the invidious position of bargaining for contact time in a manner that will enable teachers to deliver and report. It places teachers in a vice between aligning activities to the ACSF and units of competency, while maintaining a complex reporting and recording regime that leaves little or no time to develop new materials or make alterations to support individual needs.

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Rhonda Pelletier is a sessional teacher with experience of language and literacy in a number of classroom and workplace contexts. In previous roles she has been a senior educator and manager of programs, and ran her own business for some years.

Thanks also to Chris Tully, Learning Skills Co-ordinator, Melbourne Polytechnic and Belinda Bold, Language and Learning Skills Advisor, RMIT for their contributions to this article.

Celebrating good practice in Gippsland

By Josie Rose

The *Excellently Local in Gippsland* conference hosted by the Gippsland East Learn Local Alliance (GELLA) was held in Lakes Entrance in February, as part of an ACFE Capacity and Innovation Fund (CAIF 6) grant. The aim of the conference was to celebrate good practice in pre-accredited delivery in Gippsland and provide an opportunity for teachers and managers to network, learn and have some valuable time to explore opportunities and gather ideas to take back to their respective Learn Local centres.

GELLA was formed in 2014, and is, a partnership between Noweyung, Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre, Buchan Neighbourhood House, Within Australia (previously SNAP) and Orbost Education Centre. These Learn Local and related organisations have entered into a business alliance to co-market and deliver government funded and fee-for-service short courses designed for learners to gain confidence and skills to forge pathways to nationally accredited training or employment. The closure of the Community College in 2012 left a training gap in the Bairnsdale area. Through the work of the GELLA, the provision of training is now more comprehensive and responsive to community needs.

The conference was attended by 55 individuals from 27 Learn Locals Learn Locals and invited guests from stakeholders such as East Gippsland Shire, Federation Training, ACFEB, Smith Family and Latrobe Community Health. The pre-conference online survey highlighted the need for very specific professional development. Sessions were designed around writing submissions for grants, developing budgets and mentoring. There were also sessions based on family learning, social enterprises and cultural awareness with newly arrived migrants. People are always keen to hear about blended learning and innovative ideas for programs so there were a number of sessions included.



Local work in the spotlight

The conference showcased other CAIF grants developed by the GELLA partners. Buchan Neighbourhood house presented on how to use Moodle for course content, information and reporting purposes in pre-accredited teaching. Delivering and reporting pre-accredited training can mean documents and forms shared by numerous staff members making it difficult to coordinate and control. The team developed a model using the Moodle Learner Management System where all course content, reporting and statistical information can be stored in one place and accessed by all resulting in more efficient and sustainable workplace practices and organisational management.

Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre reported on the work they are doing in their Your Next Step program, focusing on the premise that people learn best if they can associate learning with practical skills for tangible outcomes. Learners develop new skills and the course benefits community causes and the community at large. The Biggest Morning Tea and the Learn Local Adult Learners week events form the basis for developing these work based skills in areas of marketing, promotions, planning, team work and a wide range of IT skills which are all necessary components to deliver such events.

The conference was conducted over two days with an afternoon session devoted to a review of the CAIF 1–7 funding rounds and the progression of ideas and interests reflected in the various rounds. Round 1 for example was very much focused on back of house, student management systems and processes. While the Round 7 projects had a much more outward looking focus with pre-accredited programs and learners positioned front and center.

The overview was then followed up by a comprehensive Q&A session with project managers from five organizations across Gippsland spanning all the funding rounds. The participants were very interested in both present and past projects and how they made a difference to learners and their organisations. The feedback indicates that even more in-depth discussion and examination of some of the projects would be of greater value to managers and coordinators. There was also a presentation of a comprehensive report on the Gippsland Regional Council projects as well as an opportunity for participants to workshop aspects of the new Regional Council project entitled Supporting Pathways for Learners in Gippsland.

Featuere speakers

The keynote speaker, Professor Allie Clemons from Monash University, provided an insightful analysis of the history of employability skills in the national training agenda. Her session entitled, *Learning to be employable—what counts?* presented a perspective on how effective Learning Frameworks, such as Employability Skills, have been a way to support the employability of young people in Australia. Such frameworks are part of the broader policy approach taken to learning and employment in Australia. They have tended to assume an unproblematic and positive link between learning and employability which is not always borne out in peoples' learning and employment transitions. Allie presented us with some fascinating insights into where learning frameworks sit in supporting a journey toward employment and livelihood. She challenged us to think about what we might need to consider as educators to strengthen learners' prospects to engage with such options.

Karen Manwaring from Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre spoke about their CAIF project and publication entitled *Ready for Change: using the Stages of Change model and A-Frame Learner Plan to work with adults facing multiple barriers to learning*. The highly interactive and engaging session focused on the opportunities that LLO practitioners have to engage with their learners,

particularly in initial interviews. Through the use of Motivational Interviewing and the Stages of Change model, participants were invited to bring greater awareness and direction to these initial conversations and to reflect the outcomes in the A-Frame Learner plan.

Evaluation: What would you like to see more of?

All the conference attendees appreciated the opportunity to come together and share ideas and information. We agreed that there was a good basis for thinking of doing it again for Gippsland Learn Locals. The fact that the conference attracted speakers from the Department of Education, Monash University and two Learn Local centres who are doing great work in the greater south east region, demonstrated that we are succeeding in lifting the level of conversation around pre-accredited delivery in Gippsland. Other Learn Locals were keen to share their suggestions for other similar events to include participatory workshops; practical project ideas such as how innovative programming is applied; and time to work in small groups to discuss issues with a facilitator.

The general consensus was that it was a great conference with a comprehensive program that flowed very well from one topic to another.

Coming together to discuss diverse projects and ideas—wonderful! I have learned a great deal from peers, made links in my head and with people. Great to have the opportunity to come away; gives me time to think!

This conference has provided great exposure for GELLA, both with other LLOs but also the other stakeholders who attended: East Gippsland Shire, La Trobe Community Health, Federation Training, GELLEN and the Lakes Entrance Schools and Community Hub. If we can continue to capitalise on the links made at the conference and through this project, we are looking at a more sustainable future for us all. As one participant put it:

A fantastic conference that gave me a greater understanding of Learn Local and future partnership possibilities. We need to help each other with pathways for our organisations so we all have a chance of moving forward.

Josie Rose is the Business Development Manager of GELLA.

Exchanging ways of being

By Liz Gunn

Conferences inspire a wide range of emotions in me; excitement, anticipation, curiosity and self-doubt, to name but a few. These emotions are amplified further by the prospect of presenting a paper, a seemingly innocent, but actually quite terrifying task. The environs of ballrooms and podiums feel intimidating and the keynote speakers always exude such abundant confidence.

However, attending the Diversity: Exchanging ways of being, ACAL-ACTA Conference in Perth, my presenter anxieties were cushioned and diminished. The conference setting was humanised when Western Australia Adult Literacy Council connected me to Tanya Turner, Manager of South Metropolitan Youth Link (SMYL) Community Services in Fremantle. Tanya opened her home to me during the conference.

But much more than helping with my expenses, the time spent with Tanya and her colleague, Debra Johnson, also from SMYL in Karratha, inspired me. It helped me to reconnect with past experiences of working in outback Australia, travelling around Europe, doing and seeing things differently in various jobs. My eyes and ears were reopened to Australian perspectives beyond the all-consuming confines of urban Melbourne.

On the first day of the conference, I texted Tanya around lunchtime, sending her a selfie and mentioning my bright pink socks so she could pick me out amongst the throng of delegates. It turned out Tanya was sitting right behind me in Androula Yiakoumetti's keynote, Utilising Linguistic Variation for Better Education, that was about utilizing students' multilingual repertoires in dominant language education contexts. Prior to this in the opening address, Exchanging Ways of Being—an Aboriginal Perspective, Carol Garlett shared penetrating insights into the linguistic manoeuvres she performed as a Whadjuk-Balladong Nyoongar woman having to conform to Australia's monolingual mainstream. There was a nice synergy between the two keynotes. Yiakoumetti cast broader global and theoretical perspectives on the issues of language rights and diversity in education that had been raised by Garlett.

The conference program offered a wide range of choices for sessions across the day that were both stimulating and

exhausting. Later that night, we ate Korean food in a restaurant in Fremantle and compared our conference day observations. Tanya then told me about her own work in trying to reverse the disadvantage that accrues when teachers or employers are ignorant or dismissive of the fact that Aboriginal people are often proficient in many languages. Aboriginal English (AE) may be one of a few languages an Aboriginal person uses every day, while they are still mastering Standard Australian English (SAE). The SMYL are working with the Bunuba Aboriginal Community and Kimberly Diamond Mine with encouraging outcomes in language education and training. In a report to a senate committee inquiry, Tanya wrote that

Some of the mine staff expressed surprise when they heard some of the Indigenous trainees conversing in another language. After being told that, yes they have their own language, a couple of the mine workers have started to learn the local language.

On Saturday Debra and I were up with the early morning birds, their calls strange to my ears. We decided to head over to Perth for breakfast, rather than disturbing Tanya who was having a welcome rest. As we travelled into town, I was able to find out more about Debra's job with SMYL Community Services in Karatha. She told me about her ability to create learning materials from very little, and her different roles in the job. She was not only a trainer, but also an advocate and, sometimes taxi driver for students outside class times. Initially I was appalled at the amount of work she seemed to be doing outside teaching, but she assured me she valued these opportunities to get to know the students and their families and communities. She had earned their trust and confidence through her willingness to engage outside class times.

I realised that I, and many of my colleagues, have often done exactly the same things with our students. Hours spent developing personal connections with students outside the classroom usually go unaccounted for, not only in administrative audits but also in teachers'



reckoning of their own professional work. Debra certainly recognised the importance of personal connections and intended to use her knowledge of the local community to expand students' opportunities for future economic and community participation.

Her strategy was supported later in Saturday's opening address, *Dis-entangling Literacy from neoliberal fusion: creating critical spaces for emancipatory learning and justice*, when Vicky Duckworth talked about her own personal connections with women in Oldham, near Manchester. She spoke of how her engagement in the local community, outside the confines of the classroom, revealed the inherent strengths that students possessed and could draw on to become more confident writers.

My presentation, *The literacy and numeracy of apps: student and teacher practices* seemed to be over too quickly. In the session, I explored some of the differences and similarities in the ways that students and teachers perceive and use the apps that are installed on their mobile devices. I explained about how an ethnographic approach to understanding people's use of digital technology leads to a spirit of exchange between teachers and students. This can provide opportunities to develop insights about the meaning and purpose of digital literacy in the age of ubiquitous mobile phone usage. Some of what I experienced personally at the conference helped me to feel



Illustration by Bianca Raffin

more confident and to think about how I might prepare for my next conference presentation.

My only regret about the conference was that I couldn't stay longer in Fremantle. On Saturday night I headed back to Melbourne on the 'red-eye' that leaves Perth at ten to midnight and arrives in Melbourne at 5.30 am. I crept into my home, collapsed into bed and was soon dreaming about the brief, yet profound exchange of being I had experienced meeting Tanya and Debra in Perth.

Liz Gunn has taught across a range of settings to a diverse mix of students from indigenous and international backgrounds. She is a member of the VALBEC executive and Fine Print Editorial committees.

Foreign Correspondence

CamTESOL conference

By Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff

The 12th Annual CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching was held on 20-21 February, 2016 at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia. Urban Lyrebirds, Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff travelled there to present two workshops. They also had the opportunity to experience some of the beauty and vibrancy of Cambodia and its people. This is an account of highlights of their trip that left a lasting impression.

We arrived in Cambodia a few days early to acclimatise ourselves and take in the culture, the weather and the mosquitoes! First on our itinerary were visits to the bustling market in the old quarter, the land mine museum of Aki Ray and the stunning ancient temples near Siem Reap, including Angkor Wat, the Women's Temple and the Bayan.

We saw firsthand the effect that wide scale tourism has had on the town of Siem Reap. It was apparent to us that employment prospects in the tourist industry are slim for people without English language skills. However, with the upsurge of large numbers of Chinese tourists, many people working in tourism are studying Mandarin.

At the Foreign Correspondents Club, we were entertained by US/Khmer band *Dengue Fever*. We enjoyed their songs, many of which were covers of 1960s Cambodian rock tunes. Siem Reap is quite a scene for young people. We watched the cosmopolitan gathering of young Cambodians and hipster expats dancing and drinking the night away under the coconut palms.

A six-hour bus trip from Siem Reap took us south to Phnom Penh. Although it was a rather long trip we did get to see the countryside, villages and small towns along the highway. We arrived in Phnom Penh the day before the conference and joined a cycle tour to visit the Royal Palace, golden temples and experience the traffic jams. That evening we gathered on a deck overlooking the majestic Mekong River where we mingled with other teachers and presenters for a very special Khmer smorgasbord dinner.

The CamTESOL conference is organised by IDP Education and partly sponsored by the Australian and US Governments. The 2016 conference theme was 'Promoting autonomy in language teaching and learning'. There were approximately 1700 delegates from over 34 countries, in particular, South East Asia. Overseas



teachers were encouraged to sponsor a local teacher with their registration. Cambodian teachers work in difficult conditions, often with few resources and low salaries. Since 2005, more than 4000 teachers have been able to attend the conference through this sponsorship scheme.

The stage for the grand opening was main conference hall of the Institute of Technology of Cambodia. Addresses were given by the US ambassador, the Australian Charge d'Affaires and the Cambodian Minister for Education, Youth and Sport, who spoke of his own experiences. He encouraged the audience by saying that, as ESL teachers we can change the lives of individuals, particularly given that English is the official language of ASEAN countries.

In the past, English was traditionally taught from Year 7 at schools across Cambodia. English language lessons are now starting in Grade 4 and teachers are often learning together with the children. Some schools are working with an NGO to introduce learning by radio. This enables the students and teachers to learn English through listening and repeating together.

The conference consisted of thirty minute papers and workshops throughout the day with over thirty-five scheduled at any one time. An incredible feat of organisation! There was so much choice and many

interesting topics on offer. These ranged from papers on methods for online learning; culturally responsive teaching; learner autonomy; learning to disagree, criticise and give advice in English; and developing a new approach for a new country.

Professor Rebecca Oxford from The University of Maryland, USA, spoke of the importance of students' autonomy and how it included capacity, willingness and action. She emphasised that students need to have opportunities to play with language. The inclusion of movement, gestures and other creative strategies in class enables the students to perform more effectively. Urban Lyrebirds' ears pricked up at this!

She encouraged us to ask students about the problems they were having with English and to employ a range of strategies to help them. One such strategy is for teachers to conduct their own narrative studies to understand and assist students. Learners' narratives reveal some of the strategies of autonomous language learners.

We were interested in a paper on multilingual education in the Mekong Region, which offered insights on how to produce students who are 'multilingual, multiliterate and multicultural'. This is a real challenge for teachers in SE Asia as there is a widely held concept that 'English conquers the world'.

The two workshops we presented were *Teaching language through song with a focus on grammar* and *Teaching language through song with a focus on pronunciation*. We all got a buzz from the singing and learning that took place on a large scale! We got some great feedback, including the following comments: Wonderful, the singing was engaging; Brilliant workshop; I've gained so much through it; It was awesome!

Some teachers came up to us after the workshop and during afternoon tea and started singing spontaneously and, of course insisted on a photo with us.

In the open areas there were interesting displays and book stalls. We had a poster session for our newly formed ESL-SPIN group of independent Australian publishers with Claire Harris from The Book Next Door in Perth. We spoke to teachers about creating resources and self-publishing and received very positive responses.

At the closing ceremony we heard from Phil Benson, Professor of Applied Linguistics at Macquarie University. His presentation was about research on teachers' beliefs about autonomy and innovations that were implemented to promote autonomy and independent learning in pre-university English language courses.

On the final evening at the conference dinner, we enjoyed a beautiful display of traditional Cambodian dancing. This art form is now flourishing after being almost wiped out during the Khmer Rouge regime. Overall the CamTESOL conference was fabulous, incredibly well organised with many friendly and helpful volunteers. If you ever get the chance to go, you are guaranteed of a great experience!

Urban Lyrebirds, Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff are well known and highly regarded for their work over many years in music, performance and EAL education.



Beside the Whiteboard

Be brave and listen more than you talk

An interview with Freya Merrick dos Santos by Lynne Matheson

Freya Merrick dos Santos was recognised for her creative and innovative teaching at the Yarraville Community Centre, when she won the Excellence in Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice Award at the 2014 Australian Training Awards. Since that time, she has continued to engage her students in experiential learning, at the same time contributing to their community.



Freya teaches in the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program that focuses on transition to work or further vocational study. We met over coffee on a Friday afternoon at The Art of Cycling, around the corner from Yarraville Community Centre. Freya reflected on her teaching, her students and changes she has observed.

How did you first become involved in teaching in adult community education?

My interest in teaching in adult community education developed from my experiences working for a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in East Timor. My background is in community development and as part of my work there, I was involved in establishing a social enterprise. I was teaching Small Business, Conflict Resolution and Employability skills and was hooked by the inherent pleasure of engaging students in education.

After a few years in East Timor, I came back with a desire to retrain as a teacher. I studied secondary education at La Trobe University with a focus on adult education. The lecturers were very supportive of me doing a practical placement in the TAFE sector. I was able to work in community development and youth programs at Victoria University and gained much from the experience, especially from the teachers.

What has influenced you in developing your teaching philosophy and practices?

I have always had a strong motivation toward educational inclusion for refugees and older migrants. My teaching practices have evolved so that now I prefer to work on integrated projects that challenge students to take on roles and responsibilities and work together to solve real life problems in authentic contexts. From my training in community development, I carry a belief in a student's capacity to contribute to their community, which in turn underpins my teaching philosophy.

I love to see students challenging themselves and achieving good outcomes with either work or further study, or simply building their self-confidence. I have had so many fun experiences working on projects and connecting with some great people. Getting students engaged in their learning, building their self-belief and having fun are key ingredients for successful outcomes.

I believe that it is important to listen. As teachers we tend to do too much talking. I have learned so much by taking the time to really listen to my students.

What are some of the factors that impact on learner cohorts you work with?

For the past six years, I have been teaching in the SEE program at Yarraville Community Centre. The students in this program come mostly from Vietnam and other parts of south-east Asia, with some from the Horn of Africa and Middle East. Many of them are migrants who have lived in the area for thirty or more years. They have qualifications in all kinds of professions, however because of their language skills they have worked in manufacturing or low skilled jobs.

Being out of the workforce for long periods, plus the impact of injuries or health problems, are factors that affect our students. For many, they now feel shut out and excluded from the workforce. They have internalized the belief that they are not employable and have nothing to contribute. Increasing digital literacy needs can also be a factor and lack of access may lead to further feelings of isolation.

For the teacher, it is often hard to maintain energy and motivation when students hold concepts about economic exclusion and feelings that their skills and knowledge are not valued by society. The challenge is finding ways to bridge this gap and turn around the learner's sense of identity that is intrinsic to having skills and knowledge validated and celebrated.

What have been some of your best teaching experiences?

As part of community engagement activities, I have enjoyed taking students to meet their local councillor to discuss matters of concern to them. We have had terrific responses from students who do volunteer work at the local Foodbank, Footscray Arts Centre and the Women's Circus. Through their volunteer experiences the students have become more engaged in learning and value making a contribution to their community.

The students participate in the annual Wesley Mission food appeal and other fund-raising events throughout the year. They gain so much from helping others. We recently held a film day which the students organized. Instead of selling tickets they asked people to bring an item for the food appeal that proved to be a great initiative.

How do you ensure your teaching relates to real-life contexts and learner needs?

Whenever we decide on a project we are conscious of integrating a range of skills and learning outcomes. Budget calculations, composing letters to ask for donations and speaking to local business people can all be aligned to the EAL Frameworks curriculum.

As part of the project, the students develop their technology skills. We try to incorporate some higher level digital literacy skills with online forms from real-life contexts such as Centrelink. I use email to communicate and send work to the students. They all use their smartphones and we tend to share new apps and teach each other ways of engaging with digital technologies.

What strategies do you use to encourage students to practise employability skills in real life situations?

The students gain skills through completing work experience, event organisation and excursions. We have a process for setting in place projects and use simulations for problem solving, teamwork and communication skills. I can see great potential in setting up social enterprises as a training context. The impetus to work together and motivation increases with integrated, authentic use of communication skills.

What are some of the changes in LLN teaching that you have seen over the years?

I have observed that in many instances compliance requirements are closing down opportunities to integrate competencies for innovative delivery. It has become harder to individualise assessment to be contextually relevant to all

students. There are more private and profit driven providers in the sector, so that it can be bewildering for students seeking vocational pathways. It has become increasingly complex to navigate and at times courses appear to be of questionable quality.

Changes to assessment practices and requirements over time have become more problematic with the pressure to standardise rather than focus on individual progression. Curriculum can be manipulated to be more open to allow for projects, problem solving, self-expression and self-actualisation. There are more innovative ways to deliver curriculum if we just listen to our students.

What are some of the challenges working in the LLN field?

Competency based training in many ways compromises teaching and learning, in particular at the foundation skills level. Compliance requirements for standardised assessments can lead to standardised teaching. The challenge is to meet the compliance requirements while making the teaching and learning relevant and meaningful.

There needs to be a clear pathway into Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses, with better integration and continuity. You don't learn in LLN then stop, then move into VET. There is still much work to be done in overcoming exclusion and marginalization of students in Foundation skills programs and providing support in VET.

At the Australian Training Awards ceremony, I was very conscious of the disconnect between Adult Community Education and the wider VET sector. Foundation skills does not seem to be a visible part of the VET sector. Winning the award provided me with opportunities to talk to people about what we do. I could tell them the reasons why I love teaching in the SEE program and how fabulous the students are.

What advice do you have for someone starting out in LLN teaching?

Be brave and follow your ideas. Stop worrying and stand by your work and ability to carry through a project focused on student needs. Throw away the textbooks and use the world around the students. Develop authentic opportunities to engage students. Listen to them and get to know them. Listen more than you talk, be prepared to carry your ideas to fruition. Trust your intuition and listen, listen, listen.

What's Out There

***Beyond Economic Interests: Critical perspectives on adult literacy and numeracy in a globalised world* by Keiko Yasukawa and Stephen Black (Eds)**

Reviewed by Sandra Wolfe

The dominance of an economic approach to policy making is the driving force behind the editors' responses to the writers in this collection. This direction in policy making is underpinned by an individualistic skills-based approach to literacy and numeracy development. It has been utilised by many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries to gain a competitive advantage in building a literate and numerate workforce.

While this in itself is not considered problematic, Yasukawa and Black contend that it has been at the expense of workers and members of the wider population who would benefit from inclusion in a broader approach to lifting literacy and numeracy standards. Furthermore, Yasukawa and Black raise concerns about the manner in which policies have been developed, testing interpreted, comparisons made and the consequent ramifications of such a singular minded approach.

Through the series of three volumes, the perspectives of various authors are explored. Volume one explores the effects of globalisation, the role of the OECD and the powerful international surveys. Volume two examines the role of others outside the economic arena that have contributed to the discussion about delivery of literacy and numeracy teaching. This volume emphasises the importance of context in delivery and recognises the societal value in educational settings, other than for economic gain. Volume three represents practitioner-based groups and other individuals who, through research and sustained effort, attempt to address and improve literacy outcomes for the wider community.

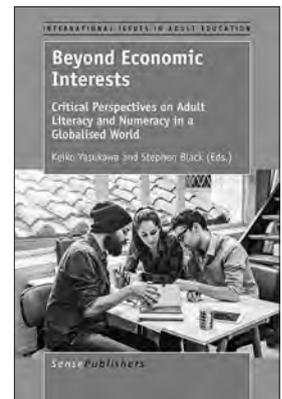
While this book is distinctly academic in style, it has been only by reading it through that the true purpose has been revealed to me. Yasukawa and Black offer many

perspectives from practitioners in the adult literacy arena and offer an explanation of the difference between campaigns and programs. Perhaps the most valuable message occurs in the last couple of chapters, where Duckworth and Hamilton present an account of how practitioner reflection and research improves literacy practices and informs policy, if supported by government initiatives.

McCormack adds to the picture by providing an overview of the history and development of those who were instrumental in the development of the four literacies and the Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA). Interestingly, the implementation of the CGEA 25 years ago was intended to offer a non-work-based literacy program that would be an alternative to other work-based initiatives.

Against the recent emergence of the Foundation Skills Strategy and its work-based focus, the authors in this collection remind us that a one dimensional approach only addresses part of the problem. Literacy and numeracy issues are not confined to the workplace, but are part of the social fabric that we all, regardless of background and opportunity, must navigate. Yasukawa and Black challenge us to consider that by broadening the scope of our efforts we lift all, not a few. However, changes of magnitude require a brave vision and difficult decisions. This book is a timely reminder for us to continue our efforts to include all on the journey towards better literacy and numeracy outcomes, irrespective of economic objectives.

Sandra Wolfe is Operations Manager VCE at Box Hill Institute and Centre for Adult Education (CAE).



Learning trajectories, violence and empowerment amongst adult basic skills learners by Vicky Duckworth

Review by Linno Rhodes

Standing on the inside looking in

Throughout my working life I have been interested in the impacts on learning of class, gender and systemic and institutional violence. These interests form part of my motivation for working in the world of adult literacy education. I was excited to read this book, as here was a book written by someone who was an 'insider' and her research contained stories of working-class people who had experienced trauma and transformation.

I dipped in and out of the text, and marveled at the research and range of stories Duckworth had collected. These stories were from people who had lived in the same town, whose parents worked together, or who had attended the same school as Duckworth. As she states in the overview, her personal position as an insider with insider knowledge of marginalised communities, was a key motivation for her becoming a basic skills tutor and practitioner researcher.

Being an insider adds a dimension to Duckworth's work that acts to legitimise her experiences, research and her findings. She engages in Participatory Action Research (PAR), which results in the creation of a critical space for emancipatory learning and a platform for social justice.

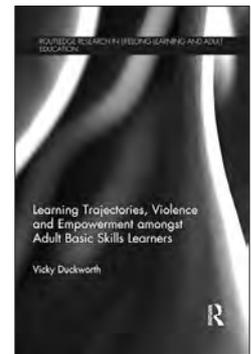
Duckworth uses the theoretical framework of theorist and sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, to inform her work. She applies his notion of habitus: that the 'combination of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital constitutes a habitus'. Duckworth's longitudinal study spans six years and explores the extent to which learners have resisted

or embraced different habitus. She uses the accounts of sixteen learners who have allowed her access to their lives: the past, present and future, to frame her research.

The book explores themes of class and gender and the impact violence and trauma has had on the lives of the learners. While the accounts from the learners are raw, we see how they have moved forward in their lives and left their tormentors behind. The transformative power of 'agency' and 'resistance capital' that the learners engage in, offers them hope and a way out of the limitations placed on them through gender and class. Their participation in adult education classes supports them to make choices and to embrace opportunities for change.

This book is engaging, informative and inspiring. Adult literacy practitioners seeking to understand the experiences that working-class students may have had as children, are recommended to read this text. That the subjects interviewed are from another country with a notoriously unforgiving class system is not really relevant. In this instance, capitals, be they economic, social, cultural or symbolic supplant nations.

Linno Rhodes has been working in adult literacy education for several decades as a teacher, curriculum developer and program coordinator. Linno is VALBEC co-president and a member of the Fine Print Editorial committee.



Ready For Change: Using the Stages of Change model and A-Frame Learner Plan to work with adults facing multiple barriers to learning by Karen Manwaring

Reviewed by Warren Duncan

As a new teacher I have become a regular reader of the teacher resource *Ready For Change: using the Stages of Change model and A-Frame Learner Plan to work with adults facing multiple barriers to learning*. It is a welcome

addition to my bookshelf for many reasons. It has been written and structured well so that it is accessible and easy to follow. I appreciate the practicality of the approach that I can relate to and readily understand.

There are many challenges for new learners in Learn Local community settings, perhaps more so than in vocational education settings. These challenges can range from personal issues such as long term unemployment; self doubts as a learner; hoping but doubting one's capacity to be able to return to work after a long time; anxiety or mental health conditions; exclusion from community or even poor previous teaching or educational experiences.

I found that as a new ESL teacher I was not sufficiently aware of these challenges to be able to always deliver good teaching outcomes. Discussions with colleagues can help, but in my case, I was the only teacher so had to learn by trial and error. This is not the best way to approach any form of teaching, so finding useful and appropriate teaching resources is critical.

At the start of each term, an ESL student needs to consider and complete a Learning Plan. This should inform the teacher about the learner's capacity and learning needs. If left to their own resources, most learners will just 'tick the boxes' and the result is a plan that lacks real meaning.

The objectives may not be clearly articulated so the outcomes for that student may become difficult to achieve. 'Improving

my English' and 'being able to speak better' have little real meaning without context or applicability. This is why I found *Ready For Change* so useful. I now have conversations with all my learners as they write their Learning Plans. By guiding them and helping them to explain what they really want, I am able to better understand them and to prepare lesson plans that better reflect real needs and will deliver real outcomes.

For instance, some learners explained to me that they didn't want to learn English just so that they could engage in the community more. They wanted better language skills for more advanced learning. They wanted to be able to read texts more quickly or have improved comprehension during lectures or other group learning situations.

This publication hits the mark for me in that it connects with learning from the students' perspective and informs how a teacher can better respond to each individual learner. More time spent with a learner before the course begins and before a Learner Plan is finalized will shape better teaching and better outcomes for the learner.

Warren Duncan is the training coordinator and ESL teacher at Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House.