2017 vol:40 # 2

this issue:

Utilising research in everyday practice: a rationale and guideline for practitioners
By John Benseman

Learn Local expertise: building social capital By Lynda Achren and Marj Sjostrom

Read-Along Dads
By Denise Jepson

fine print

Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre Inc.

a journal of adult english language and literacy education

fine print

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Publication Details

Fine Print is published by the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council Inc. (VALBEC). The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Fine Print editorial group or VALBEC.

Fine Print is the registered journal of VALBEC:
ISSN No: 0519-3978

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Cover image: Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre staff and students, supplied by PMNC.

Editor: Lynne Matheson

Fine Print Editorial Group: Sarah Deasey, Linno Rhodes, Elizabeth Gunn, Manalini Kane, Lynda Achren.

Layout: Sarah Tuke

Printing: Melbourne Polytechnic Printroom

Editorial, advertising and subscription enquiries: info@valbec.org.au

VALBEC acknowledges the financial support of the ACFE Board

Adult Education in the Community

Editorial

> Self-confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings.
>
> Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

Who doesn't recall the feelings of trepidation when you were first called upon to speak in public? Whether it was at school, facing the class or the assembly; at a family gathering, for a happy, or perhaps a sad occasion; on your first day of teaching with all the preparation done but those first terrifying moments of actually being the teacher in front of a class. How do we overcome our fears and reach our true potential? Confidence is a foundation stone for so many endeavours and building self-confidence in others a shining jewel in the education galaxy.

Establishing trust and building confidence is a strong thread running through the articles in this edition. John Benseman reflects on the practitioner being confident in knowing that the methods used in teaching are grounded in evidence-based research and experience. Lynda Achren and Marj Sjostrom provide examples that show that pre-accredited programs being delivered in Learn Local centres have at their core the support that builds confidence in learners. The Speaking Out program shows how building confidence can encourage learners to follow pathways to further education, community connection and employment, either volunteer or paid.

Particularly heartfelt is Denise Jepson's account of parents in prison learning to read storybooks for their children to keep them connected and at the same time help to build literacy and improve wellbeing. They may be prevented from being physically present, but their voices remind the children that their dad or mum still cares for them.

Whether it is joining in singing football songs in class or popular songs at the start of a conference, learners can find singing to be a catalyst for change. For so many of our learners, finding a voice to speak of life experiences and advocate for others is an integral part of building social capital and forging pathways to overcome disadvantage.

I trust you will find reading this edition provides you with a spark of inspiration to try out your voice in new ways.

Lynne Matheson
Editor

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.

Utilising research in everyday practice: a rationale and guideline for practitioners

By John Benseman

Challenging practitioners to reflect on their own learning and teaching methods was the key theme for the 2017 VALBEC conference. John Benseman presented a thought-provoking keynote address and this article further encourages practitioners to embrace research informed teaching approaches.

Introduction

My daughter once asked me to review one of her nursing assignments. She was required to outline a care plan for a patient with a particular condition. For everything that she included in her plan, she was also required to demonstrate that she had reviewed all the relevant research available about that aspect of care (such as treating wounds), before finalising her care plan.

This experience prompted me to reflect on a comparable exercise for adult literacy and numeracy (LN) teachers. How well would LN teachers or managers complete a comparable exercise about their practice? More importantly, how many ever actually go through this process when considering aspects of either their current or planned practice?

When we go to our general practitioner or medical specialist, we expect that any diagnosis, treatment or prescription they offer will be based on their familiarity with the latest relevant research. We expect that the doctor will act professionally, making informed judgements based on their knowledge of current best practice and also have the skills to apply it. A doctor who relies on their initial professional training (often from the mists of time) supplemented by titbits and hearsay picked up since then is not one to inspire confidence in us as patients. Along the same lines, when we enter any modern building we expect that the architects and engineers who designed and built it to have been fully informed by relevant research about the technical information required to maintain physical safety for the occupants. We take these assumptions as normal and integral to how these professionals work. In exceptional cases, where these assumptions are proved to be wanting, substantial legal consequences are expected to occur in many professions.

Professional practice based on relevant research is now the norm for most professional groups in modern society. It is interesting therefore to ask why educators have been so slow to adopt a research-informed approach to our practice. In this article, I want to review the argument for adopting a research-informed approach, not only to how we teach our learners, but also how we plan and implement whole programmes and operational innovations in our organisations.

I will first look at how we actually teach and develop programmes and what influences how we do it. Then look at how research can inform our educational practice, including some of the challenges we face in adopting this approach. Next, I will review what has happened in relation to adult literacy and numeracy research over recent years and the ways that research findings can be more readily utilised in practice. The article concludes with some examples of these resources and some suggestions about how to achieve a research-informed approach in our sector.

How do we teach?

Before we consider the role of research in our practice, it is important to have a realistic idea of how LN teachers actually teach. The best way to understand what happens between teachers and learners is to review observational research studies where researchers document in full detail what teachers actually do when they are in the classroom. Despite the centrality of teaching in LN education, there are remarkably few observational studies of LN teaching (Benseman, Lander and Sutton, 2005).

The first point to be taken from the observation studies that are available is that there is often a discrepancy between what teachers say they do in the classroom and what actually happens. For example, in Beder and

Medina's study (2001) of 20 American LN teachers, most claimed that they were learner-centred, but the researchers' observations clearly showed that their instruction was highly teacher-directed. Getting teachers to watch videos of their own teaching is a useful strategy to help teachers become more critically aware of their own teaching practices.

The second point from observation studies of LN teachers is that many of their practices do not match either commonly-accepted educational ideals or research studies of effective teaching. A study of fifteen LN teachers in Auckland (Benseman et al., 2005) that I was involved in, came up with a number of findings that include:

- The dominance of generic teaching practices, rather than LN-specific.
- Few 'deliberate acts of teaching' that are focused on learners' diagnosed learning needs.
- Wide variation in interaction patterns between teachers and learners (for example, in one group of three learners, one generated >70% of responses, one <20% and one <10%).
- Teachers talked 50–65% of all talk; teachers generated 4 lines of transcribed text, learners less than one – so who is doing the work?
- Most questions that teachers asked required simple yes/no answers.
- Very short wait time with questions and answers rarely used as a basis for teaching points.
- Little use of 'teaching moments'.
- Teachers chose adult-appropriate content, but learners were rarely able to choose content themselves.
- The predominant strategy for teaching reading was learners reading a piece of text (either silently or aloud) and the teacher asking questions about the content (usually about vocabulary rather than broader comprehension) or supplying additional information about the subject content.
- Little explicit teaching of alphabetics, comprehension or reading fluency.
- Few of the teachers could name their teaching methods/origins.

John Benseman speaking at the 2017 VALBEC conference

Influences on our teaching

It is useful to identify what influences the way that we teach. In the compulsory education sectors, the usual assumption is that initial teacher training is the predominant influence, supplemented by ongoing professional development programmes. In the LN sector, not all our practitioners will have been through formal qualification programmes (especially LN-specific ones), although this expectation has increasingly become the norm over recent years. I suspect that most people would still expect formal teacher training programmes (either in the LN or other sectors) to be the dominant influence, followed by less formal factors.

However, in my experience of running workshops (including the recent VALBEC conference), when I ask participants to identify their greatest influences, they invariably point to less formal influences: mentors, colleagues, observation and refinements of personal journeys – cumulative experience, 'gut feeling' and common sense. Formal training programmes, professional development programmes and assessment-based feedback usually come well down the list. Educational theorists, researchers and policy documents rarely rate a mention.

There are not many research studies on this topic, but McGuirk's (2001) study of 252 Australian LN administrators and teachers found that few of the respondents had any familiarity with major thinkers, writers or researchers in the field.

> The results are somewhat disturbing as they reveal that many supposedly well-known authors and researchers are unknown or have had little impact on many respondents. Many respondents ticked 'Not known' to the entire list [of LN theorists, writers and researchers]. (p. 59)

Moving to research-informed LN practice

There is certainly a compelling argument for further research to explore how LN teachers work with their learners, what influences their teaching behaviour and

understanding how we can work with teachers to improve their practice. In this article, I am arguing that we should be working toward becoming research-informed practitioners, where we look to high quality research to shape what we do rather than rely on an array of ad hoc influences that have little substance to underpin their validity.

Before proceeding further, it is useful to clarify some of the terminology used by some writers in this area (Krokfors et al., 2011):

- *Research-led:* curriculum content is based on the research interests of teachers.
- *Research-oriented:* the process of learning content is seen as important as the content itself and hence there is an emphasis on learning inquiry skills to acquire the content.
- *Research-based:* curriculum is based on inquiry-based activities rather than acquisition of content.

Research-informed teaching (RIT) however draws on systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process itself. RIT is also known sometimes as *evidence-based* teaching. The central aim is to base what we do as teachers and programme managers on the best available research about our practice. In some cases, there may not be any research available, it may be of poor quality or there may be a limited number of studies. Often in these cases, use can be made of research in other sectors such as schooling, albeit with a recognition of its limitations of relevance to the adult LN sector.

It is also important to note that not all educational writing is based on original research studies. Many writers who have written books about adult teaching, such as Stephen Brookfield and Jane Vella, base their content on their personal experience or philosophical stance. They argue convincingly what adult teaching should be, but it is rarely based on any original research studies that demonstrate greater impact over other approaches. Readers need to be vigilant for details of samples and methodology before making any judgements about the value of one approach above another.

Andragogy vs. pedagogy

An example of this can be seen in the work of Malcolm Knowles (1973, 1980) who was renowned in the 1960s and 70s for revolutionising adult teaching principles based on the concept of *andragogy*. Knowles pioneered andragogy following his experience of teaching adults at a YWCA in Chicago. He developed a set of principles that he felt

Teachers at the 2017 VALBEC conference

matched the experience and status of adult learners in contrast to child learners, who he argued should be taught pedagogically because of their limited life experience.

This more democratic and consultative form of teaching adult learners had wide philosophical appeal among the increasing numbers of teachers of adults. It helped challenge the more traditional 'sage from the stage' didactic way to teach adults that was the norm in the US schooling sector and formal tertiary education at that time.

But is andragogy a more effective way to teach adults than pedagogy? While learners may feel more comfortable and accepted by their teacher, do they learn better than when they are taught in a more traditional, top-down way? Interestingly, despite his huge influence on adult teachers internationally, there has been very little original, rigorous research exploring andragogy's effectiveness compared with pedagogy.

John Rachal's (2002) review of research on andragogy's effectiveness found only eighteen studies that compared the results of the two teaching approaches. Most of the studies found no differences between the outcomes of the two approaches and in two studies, the 'traditional' group of learners being taught pedagogically performed better. Rachal concluded that 'the trend of the available empirical literature runs counter to many of the anecdotal claims for andragogy superiority over pedagogical methods' (p. 226). Other research reviews on topics such as learning styles (Coffield et al., 2004) and dyslexia (Rice and Brooks, 2004) that challenge many long-held beliefs held as sacred by many within the LN sector may also be of interest to LN practitioners.

Research and everyday practice

Few would disagree that there is a large gap between the world of research and everyday educational practices. The gap between research and practice is long-standing and not restricted to the LN sector. 'Education has long struggled with the gap between the methods that are best supported by systematic research and those that are most widely used' (Spencer, Detrich, & Slocum, 2012, p. 127).

Researchers often have their own agendas and ensuring that the implications of their work are spelt out, let alone carried through into actual practice often come well down their list of priorities. Researchers argue that practitioners are not aware of research findings or don't understand them. Similarly, research funders are usually more interested in policy implications than transfer into practice. On the other hand, practitioners often retort that researchers don't understand their everyday realities or that their findings are not readily available and when they are, are cloaked in mystique and obtuseness.

The move to RIT

Over recent years, there has been a significant move in the schooling sectors to become research-informed. One of the prime influences in this change internationally has been John Hattie (2009, 2012), formerly of the University of Auckland and now the Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne. John's work has involved the synthesis of more than 800 meta-analyses (note, not just individual studies) involving more than 50,000 research studies and more than 250 million children. From this huge pool of research findings from the schooling sector, he has assessed the relative impact of a wide range of educational interventions in raising student achievement. For example, he rates formative teacher evaluation very highly, computer-assisted instruction as middling and retention as a negative influence.

It is important to note that a research-informed approach has considerably more merit than other contenders, some caveats need to be sounded. All research is subject to a range of factors that impede proving absolute causality – that factor X irrefutably causes outcome Y. Even in areas that are seen as having the best controlled conditions such as laboratories, there are always impediments or complicating factors that make it difficult if not impossible to identify causation with full confidence.

Although there has been a considerable body of research on smoking for example, absolute causation is still not claimed, but there is clearly a strong correlation between smoking and cancer. In medicine, which is most often associated with the largest and most rigorous body of research, there are also considerable difficulties, for example in sampling, drug company sponsorship and the exclusion of non-conforming results (Goldacre, 2012).

Ideally, we look for strong, cumulative correlational evidence that is usually identified in terms of 'stronger vs. weaker findings'. In their review of research on adult literacy Kruidenier, MacArthur and Wrigley (2010) identify findings in terms of 'principles' (where there are two or more experimental studies on the topic), 'trends' (less than two experimental studies), 'ideas' (where there are strong findings from K-12 research) and 'comments' (less conclusive research from K-12 research). In many cases with adult LN, there may be no research at all, rather than positive or negative findings. Many factors have an impact on learning, but some have much more than others.

The key point about RIT is that its value is based on the generalisability of findings that emerge from a growing body of research. Stanovich and Stanovich (2003) state:

> Science progresses by convergence upon conclusions. The outcomes of one study can only be interpreted in the context of the present state of the convergence on the particular issue in question (p. 18).
>
> Hence, greater notice is taken of experimental and quasi-experimental and correlational studies (with or without controls) than case studies which have limited generalisability. At first glance, this hierarchy appears to discount qualitative research, but most writers in this area argue that it has a significant role in the mix of findings to identify effective practice – especially in the early exploration of topics and understanding why interventions do or don't work and how they are best implemented (Maxwell, 2012).

Research-informed literacy and numeracy resources

While much of the impetus has disappeared, or diminished over more recent years (mainly due to governments cutting funding), adult LN went through a somewhat golden period of about 20 years in relation to LN research. This occurred following the release of the OECD-sponsored national incidence studies that took place in many Western countries in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Although the LN sector has only a small fraction of the

research available compared with the schooling sector, this period saw a growing body of studies that can be used in developing RIT.

Adult LN research positively blossomed in both quantity and quality with the establishment of national research and development bodies during this period. Research bodies such as the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) in Britain, the National Centre for the Study of Adult Literacy and Learning (NCSALL) in the US, the Center for Literacy in Canada, the National Adult Literacy Agency in Ireland, the National Centre for Vocational and Educational Research (NCVER) in Australia and VOX in Norway. In addition, a number of national policy bodies such as the Ministry of Education in New Zealand also sponsored unprecedented amounts of research in the sector.

These bodies commissioned a wide range of research about adult LN that has provided the sector with a considerable stockpile of high quality studies to inform about effective practice that was not available previously. The studies include many individual studies, but also substantial meta-analyses of topics. In addition, most of these bodies put considerable effort into disseminating their findings in readily-digestible formats for practitioners. The reports from the NRDC for example were exemplary and most of these bodies' work is still available on internet sites even though the organisations themselves may no longer exist or live on in a lesser form.

The point here is that busy practitioners do not have to access and interpret individual studies with a view to being able to draw implications for their practice. In many cases, this has already been done by expert researchers and the findings are available in user-friendly formats. Below is a brief list of some examples of these resources:

- Reading: Brooks et al. (2007), Kruidenier et al. (2010), McShane (2005)
- ESOL: Baynham et al. (2005)
- Writing: Grief et al. (2007), Kelly (2004), Nielson (20015)
- Numeracy: Coben et al. (2007)
- Workplace programmes: Benseman (2016), Salamon (2009)
- Formative assessment: Looney (2008), Derrick and Ecclestone (2008)
- Comprehensive LN reviews: Benseman et al. (2005), Brooks et al. (2001).

Moving to research-informed practice

Once a decision is made to move to becoming research-informed practitioners, several options are open. It can be done at an individual level, among a group of colleagues (within or across institutions) or as a whole organisation. It is an ideal focus for professional development programmes where participants can choose an element of their practice they wish to improve, review the research available on that element and then plan to introduce changes based on these findings into their practice. Meeting periodically in a group to review progress and plan modifications can help maintain momentum as well as ride out some of the bumps encountered in the process. Mutual observation of each other's practice will help add a critical component to reviewing.

Moving to being research-informed can be used to both inform current practice as well as introduce new aspects into programmes. Finally, it is useful to remember that these changes in practice can be done incrementally - you don't have to have a perfect repertoire of strategies in order to become a RIT practitioner.

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After a brief stint as a primary school teacher, Dr John Benseman has worked in adult education and literacy for all of his professional career as a teacher, programme developer, researcher and evaluator. After working with an adult education research group in Sweden, he then worked in a range of New Zealand adult education areas including continuing medical education for general practitioners, community education with the Auckland Workers Education Association (WEA), academic teaching at The University of Auckland and UNITEC, as well many years as a self-employed researcher and evaluator. John has also worked in literacy research projects for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). For five years, he ran the national Upskilling workplace literacy, language and numeracy research project for the Department of Labour, which is the largest study of its type internationally. Currently he is the evaluator of an innovative community development project in Auckland's Mt Roskill area and working as a workplace literacy teacher.

Learn Local expertise: building social capital

By Lynda Achren and Marj Sjostrom

For many practitioners, a broader perspective on LL programs and the impact on learners and the community gets lost in the everyday busy-ness of work. This article provides insights into the foundations of the many positive outcomes of adult learning.

> The insights you get from actually visiting other organisations and talking to people about their work are so valuable. It's really interesting to compare what others are doing with what we do – it's a great way to validate what we do and it's also given me new ideas I want to try out. (Marj Sjostrom)

Overview of the project

The Word for Word Project conducted by Keysborough Learning Centre (KLC) was commissioned by the Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR) of ACFE to investigate the range and quality of pre-accredited language and literacy provision in the SMR. The research aimed to identify best practice through a review of the relevant literature and the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information.

The quantitative phase involved a survey sent to all Learn Local (LL) managers in the region. The high response rate provided a wealth of information which can be read in detail in the Word for Word Project report (Achren 2016) which is available on the ACFE website. It showed that the type of pre-accredited language and literacy provision offered in the SMR was predominantly stand-alone literacy classes or stand-alone English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes. The third largest category was literacy classes for mixed groups of EAL and native speakers (NS) of English.

A number of organisations offered various types of programs in which the language and literacy was embedded in something else (such as their children's schooling or cooking) and some offered different types of language and literacy support for VET programs, as shown in the graph of program types (Figure1). Amongst the program types, nine of the 34 organisations were providing language and literacy classes for people with a disability, and one provided EAL for people with a mental illness.

During the qualitative research phase, we visited ten LL organisations in the SMR to conduct separate in-depth interviews with the manager of each and with a teacher delivering a target program. We were able to gain the perspectives of 65 learners by observing and recording discussions conducted by the classroom teacher around a set of specific questions. The learners' voices made a valuable contribution to the overall picture and were instrumental in the formation of a number of recommendations to enhance provision.

The research confirmed the considerable expertise in LL organisations in building the social capital of disadvantaged learners in pre-accredited language and literacy classes. Significantly, the research demonstrated that for such learners the development of social capital underpins the subsequent development of language and literacy skills and movement along a pathway to greater social and economic participation. This contrasts with the common assertion that, at least for more mainstream learners, increased human capital (skills) leads to increases in social capital (networks).

Most significantly, our research revealed how skilled teachers and managers build social capital. Through the research, we were able to document aspects of the whole-of-organisation approach that most effectively contributes to its development. It is not possible in this short article to provide a full account of all we found. Instead, drawing on the Word for Word Project report (Achren 2016) and the subsequent series of best practice guides and resources (Achren and Sjostrom 2016), we will focus specifically on key aspects of program delivery. Firstly, we will briefly unpack social capital in relation to language and literacy provision and adult learners.

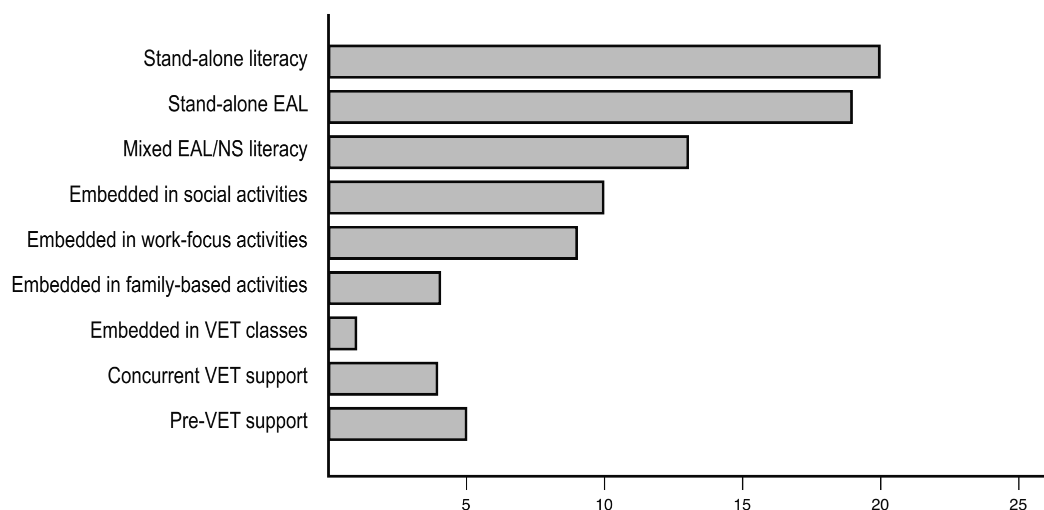

Figure 1: Number of organisations offering each SMR program type

Language, literacy and social capital

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines social capital as 'the networks together with the shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation with or amongst groups' (ABS 2017 p.2). A prominent Australian researcher in the field, Ian Falk, has defined it as the 'social values (norms), networks and trust that facilitate a group's purposeful action' and he goes on to describe shared norms as the 'tacitly agreed-to social rules we all usually abide by, such as language, dress and manner codes' (Falk 2000 p.1).

As LL practitioners know, many learners accessing pre-accredited language and literacy programs need assistance in understanding and internalising the norms of the wider society. This is perhaps particularly apparent in those learners studying English as an additional language (EAL), who, being from another culture, may find the sociocultural rules underpinning communication in Australia confusing and even confronting – a social norm in one culture may be perceived as rude in another.

It is also true of many learners accessing literacy classes, be they longer-term migrants or people who have grown up in Australia, who, as a teacher in the Word for Word research commented, 'find themselves stuck in low paid jobs, and may need to be exposed to other, more appropriate ways of saying things to help them achieve their goal of a better job'.

As asserted by Falk, 'social capital results from effective communication' (Falk 2000 p.1). Falk and his colleagues go on to state that:

> … socioeconomic impacts tend to result from a combination of both social capital and human capital outcomes, such as increased literacy and numeracy skills; interpersonal and intrapersonal skills; and attributes such as self-confidence (Balatti, Black and Falk 2006, p. 7).

In the adult literacy context, increased social capital has been described as encompassing 'bonding ties' (increased classroom networks) 'bridging ties' (increased links to new and broader community networks) and 'linking ties' (new connections between individuals and institutions, systems and organisations) (Balatti, Black and Falk 2007, 2009; NCVER 2010). These new or strengthened learner networks 'offer contacts, services, knowledge, and other social, economic and cultural resources that the learner had not previously enjoyed' (Balatti, Black and Falk 2009, p. 35).

The Word for Word research found skilled teachers of pre-accredited language and literacy classes were essentially taking this approach. Not that they used the term social capital; rather they talked about building 'trust' 'confidence' and 'connections'. In the following sections of this article, we will look more closely at how they do this.

The key to success: confidence

For an adult in a highly literate society such as ours, not being able to communicate effectively because of limited literacy skills or limited English language skills, can have a profound impact on self-esteem, motivation, attitudes to

learning and ability to look after the family and otherwise participate fully in the community. When we asked LL managers and pre-accredited language and literacy teachers what they considered to be the key to success of programs, the answer was invariably 'confidence' as reflected in the following quotes:

> Confidence is everything. A hundred per cent of the time they are initially lacking in confidence – they may be ashamed by their lack of skills (Manager).

> Lack of confidence is the major obstacle they need to overcome in order to make progress (Teacher).

> After coming to this class, I changed my thinking about what work I can do. Before I only thought of the factory but now I want to keep learning and get a qualification (EAL learner).

The frequency of responses such as these demonstrated unequivocally that confidence is the foundation stone on which all other learning and pathways to greater social and economic participation are built as illustrated in the diagram (Figure 2).

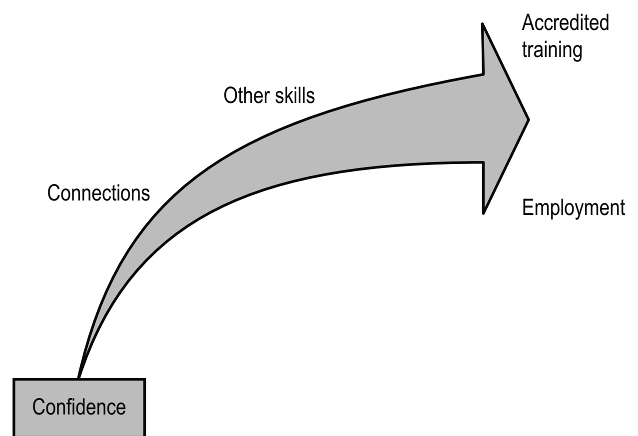

Figure 2: Learner pathways

Classroom connections

For many, the classroom can seem intimidating. Consequently, the building of trust between the teacher and learners is a crucial first step in allaying anxieties. This is exemplified in this teacher's description of her approach:

> The key to success is the relationship between the teacher and the students – one of mutual respect. We have to break down the barriers so the students come to see the teacher as someone they can trust, feel comfortable with, safe with, that there are no boundaries on what they can ask. It takes time to establish that the whole group is a safe and comfortable place, that no question is stupid. I say, 'Please ask because there will also be someone else who wants the same things'. I constantly acknowledge the validity of questions so they don't go back into their shell (Teacher).

One of her learners affirmed this by saying: 'I love this class because my teacher understands me. I feel comfortable to ask and to talk to her'.

The building of connections between learners, of group cohesion, is also crucial to the establishment of a safe and effective learning environment:

> I work hard to make a friendly environment – it makes a huge difference. I tell them about my life to encourage them to talk to each other about their weekend, their life. They build relationships. Now they share everything – they give each other confidence and support. They become like a family (Teacher).

The learners take up this theme in their comments:

> We feel very comfortable. We know each other. We can say anything – we are friends. We understand each other and know more about each other's cultures.

> There's a great atmosphere in the class. No one makes you feel silly. Our teacher encourages us to try new things and not be shy.

Skilled teachers plan activities that specifically build confidence and help learners to get to know each other. Warmers in which learners mingle with each other are valuable for facilitating connections between learners. They also help to promote an effective learning environment in which learners learn from each other and listen to each other. They are valuable for allaying anxieties because they allow plenty of opportunity for experimentation and practice of skills, thus making a fun and safe learning environment in which no one is 'on show'. (For examples of warmers see 'Resources to support best practice' on www.klckeys.com.au).

Group work is another way of building a safe learning environment in which learners can contribute at their own level and also learn from each other. To build and

Students practising their skills

maintain confidence, the tasks set by teachers need to be achievable – success builds confidence. In their planning, skilled teachers carefully select and sequence activities so that they build towards the end goal, with new skills building on and consolidating previously introduced skills. With plenty of practice and recycling opportunities each step along the way, learning is scaffolded so that each step is manageable and learners experience success in the task.

Connections beyond the classroom

The approach of skilled teachers reflects their understanding that the most efficient and effective learning takes place when classroom activities are embedded in themes or topics reflecting the practical real-life tasks and contexts learners need outside the classroom. We found that skilled teachers use the Learner Plan within the A-Frame curriculum document (ACFE 2013) not only to determine initial needs but also as an active document throughout the program.

For them it is a valuable planning tool into which other needs can then be integrated as they arise and as learners become more adept at identifying, and confident in articulating, their needs. Teachers told us such things as:

> We review the Learner Plans all the time. Our students have no qualms saying what they want. Better classes come from what they want.
>
> You have to dig down beyond I want to read. You have to find out what they want to read; what they need to read in their daily lives to achieve their goals.
>
> When they gain confidence, the students start saying 'Now I need work' and I incorporate that into my planning'.
>
> Being prepared to listen and not rush is essential to how the course develops, how it gets fine-tuned.
>
> I encourage openness and communication so they can tell me what they want.

This is exemplified in the words of one learner who told us:

> Some things I hear I don't understand so I ask my teacher. If people don't understand us, we can come to class and discuss that. Now I know how to stop a conversation I don't want to have – maybe about politics. I know to say, 'Sorry, I have to go … '. And now I know how to call elderly people – in my culture we say 'Aunty' 'Grandma' … but not here.

The approach of skilled teachers focuses on learners putting newly developed or developing spoken and/or written communication skills into practice outside the classroom. Many of those accessing Learn Local language and literacy programs have limited connections with the local community and the broader society. Skilled teachers bridge the gap between the classroom and outside so that learners have the confidence to engage with people and organisations in the wider community.

Websites are one such bridge linking learners to the wider community and organisations. We found skilled teachers using local websites associated with a theme/topic (e.g. the local library or council websites) as a language and literacy development tool that also enhances learners' knowledge of the community and ability to access services.

Guest speakers in an area relevant to the theme or topic being studied are another useful bridge to the wider community. So that learners can more confidently interact with the speaker, they are well prepared through previous class language and literacy development activities. So that learners are not overwhelmed, skilled teachers provide valuable support by giving each learner a specific task to do, such as a particular piece of information to listen for or a specific question to ask.

Theme or topic-related excursions are an ideal way of putting newly strengthened spoken and/or written communication skills into practice in the wider community. Again, for successful outcomes that boost confidence, learners need to be well prepared beforehand, with specific tasks to complete.

All of these bridging activities give the learner the opportunity to put skills practised in the supportive environment of the class group into practice in a more uncertain context. Successful completion of a specific task will help to build confidence in interacting with someone from the wider community, or within an organisation in the wider community. Providing the information to the class during follow-up activities gives individual learners the satisfaction of being able to contribute to a group purpose.

Acknowledging progress

Progress can be seen in tangible and intangible ways as expressed by a LL Manager:

> For some of our learners, a measure of success is that now they can come in the door with a smile on their faces, their heads lifted up, making eye contact and greeting people they see. Some people don't realise how big an achievement that is. I think it should be recognised.

One teacher told us that one of the ways that she continually builds learners' confidence is by acknowledging improvements being made: 'I say things like, "Wow, A few months ago you could not have done that". I need to let them know, to remind them'.

Making a note in the reflection section of the session plan helps to make sure important progress is not overlooked or forgotten. These notes are based on the teacher's observations (for example, for some learners' increasing trust and confidence is shown when they begin to ask questions in class). The notes are also based on things learners or others tell them of their out-of-class activities. For example, in a program started at a primary school because a group of migrant parents did not participate much in school life, the teacher told us: 'Now the principal says she sees them having conversations with other parents before and after class. Before they were isolated'.

Asking learners to complete (orally or in writing) the sentence 'I can now … ' also provides a valuable record of progress. Learners were asked to do this during the Word for Word project. Their responses reflect increased ability to engage in the literacy practices of the wider community, increased community connections and new links to institutions. They told us such things as:

> I can talk to my neighbours – before I used to stay inside the house but now I can go out and talk to them.
>
> At my work, my boss sends me to get things from the storeroom now. I can read the box and bring back the right one.
>
> I take my children to the library now.
>
> I can read a short story – I can read to my children.
>
> The first time I went to a parent-teacher interview, I went with my husband, but the next time I felt comfortable to go by myself.
>
> I can book a hard waste collection online.

This activity helps learners reflect on their own learning and provides a sense of achievement that boosts confidence. If filed somewhere for easy access, it also provides (with no extra work for the teacher) a valuable record for managers to refer to when informing agencies, such as Centrelink, of individual progress.

Conclusion: Promoting and sharing expertise

The words of learners taking part in the Word for Word project show that they now have new and strengthened connections to others and to institutions as a result of their participation in pre-accredited language and literacy classes. These connections (networks) offer them, as described by Ballati, Black and Falk, 'contacts, services, knowledge, and other social, economic and cultural resources that the learner had not previously enjoyed' (2009, p. 35).

The significant achievements demonstrated in the words of the learners were underpinned by the skills and attributes their teachers brought to the tasks of developing the bonding, bridging and linking ties described by social capital theorists (Balatti, Black and Falk 2007, 2009). These skilled classroom teachers used strategies specifically aimed at developing the confidence of their learners, at facilitating connections within the classroom and beyond, at providing opportunities to contribute to 'a group's purposeful action' (Falk 2000 p.1), and equipping their learners with the skills and understanding of how to communicate effectively with the people and institutions with whom they have connections.

Such teachers are adept at determining learners' real-life needs, and at selecting and sequencing activities that build towards end goals related to those needs. These real-life tasks act as supportive bridges between the classroom and the outside world so that learners are helped to develop links with a broader range of institutions and services.

As we hope to have shown in this article, albeit briefly, the role of skilled teachers in helping learners develop their social capital is complex and multifaceted. We believe that this role needs to be promoted and celebrated, and that teachers need opportunities to share their strategies and develop new ones.

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Read-Along Dads

By Denise Jepson

To celebrate the International Year of Reading in 2012, Friends of Castlemaine Library (FOCAL) set up the Read-Along Dads (RAD) project at Loddon prison near Castlemaine, Victoria. This project has developed and continues to grow and build participants' literacy skills, as well as family connections.

The RAD project began with the aim of helping dads in prison to keep in touch with their children. It was seen as being important for them to be able to show, that despite rarely seeing their children, they still cared about them. FOCAL contracted an experienced literacy facilitator to help the dads record audio books suitable for their children. These were posted to the children along with a copy of the book. The project had the double benefit of helping the dads and the children with their literacy, as well as enhancing their emotional wellbeing.

The project was so well received by both the dads and the prison staff, that after only a few months, FOCAL realised that the project needed to continue and grow. It was initially funded by a grant of $1,800 from the Maldon Community Bank. Over time, more grants were applied for (and almost all were successful), including from the Community Fund for Central Victoria, Australia Post and Mount Alexander Shire Council. In late 2015, FOCAL launched a crowdfunding campaign and raised $22,000. Publicity from this helped with attracting two larger grants from the Victorian Department of Justice and Victorian Legal Services Board. The project is set on firm ground for a further three years.

More than 450 prisoners have participated in the program to date. The RAD program has expanded to the women's prison, Tarrengower near Maldon, and to the new men's prison, Middleton, an addition on the site of Loddon prison which doubled the capacity to 700 inmates. The literacy facilitator has widened the focus of the program: Read-Along Dads (and Mums) is still the core but book groups, creative writing, craft and events were added. The craft activities centred on making CD covers and bookmarks for the RAD program and events were mainly focused on visitor days when families could come together for a puppet show or story time. The book groups and creative writing appealed mostly to those prisoners who have a reasonable level of literacy.

Changing attitudes to reading

After the program had been running for a few years, the prison officers noticed that the RAD program seemed to help develop confidence in many of the participants. Those with low literacy levels became more willing to be involved in TAFE literacy programs in the prison. The RAD program was regarded as a real stepping-off point for further education. It is worth noting here that the facilitator included in the program men who could not read at all. She assisted these men by reading each sentence slowly, and they then repeated the sentence onto the recording. Her voice was edited out before the recording was transferred to CD. Many of the dads had never read to their children before, and many have said that they will do this when they are released.

It is acknowledged that prisoners have often experienced serious disadvantage and hardship in their lives. In the recent Victorian Ombudsman's report (2015), it was observed that homelessness, unemployment and not completing high school were significant factors in the backgrounds of many prisoners. Low literacy and numeracy levels are widespread in the prison system and correlations may be drawn to rates of re-offending. Engaging prisoners in reading activities appeared to have a flow-on effect that hopefully would continue.

Interestingly, the literacy levels observed in the women's prison seemed higher. The women could usually record an audio book in less time than the men, with less errors and less stops and starts. It cost less to produce the CDs for the women because less facilitator time was necessary for each recording.

Positive feedback and outcomes

Until recently, evaluation of the program involved recording participant numbers and qualitative comments on the value of the program from prisoners. Overseas experience of similar programs such as in the UK, (Storybook Dads http://www.storybookdads.org.uk/

Image used in the crowdfunding video

impact.html) has shown that RAD type programs where the prisoner keeps in touch with their children, has reduced recidivism for those prisoners. Reducing recidivism is a large task but one that authorities and the community in general seek to address.

In the initial phase of this program, there was no claim that reducing recidivism could be a result. As more became known about overseas experiences and after discussions with the Department of Justice, it was decided to build into the program an evaluation that included correlating the prisoners who participated in the program with those who reoffended within two years of being released. This means keeping more detailed records of the participants in the program and then having access to system records at a later stage.

It could be suggested that the prisoners who participate in the RAD program are a self-selecting group, the ones more likely not to re-offend when released, as at least they still have some connection with their families. This may be true, but many other factors no doubt affect individual outcomes. As many prisoners record multiple books for their children it can at least be assumed that the children's literacy is being helped, as many of the children are known to play each book over and over. The feedback received indicates this and that the families feel that it is a very positive experience.

The feedback from the prisoners about their own literacy has been very positive as well, with many saying that they think they have improved through involvement in the program. One 'star' participant, whose heavily tattooed arms and hands holding a copy of a Charlie and Lola book appeared in the crowdfunding video, recorded 18 books during the first three years of the program. He was also interviewed by WIN television and when asked what he had gained from the program, said very emphatically that his reading had greatly improved, as well as loving the connection he was able to have with his children.

Looking to the future

The emotional benefits, as well as the literacy benefits of the RAD program were a key desirable outcome right from the start. It was thought that helping prisoners stay in touch with their children would certainly help their emotional wellbeing. Additionally, their children's emotional wellbeing could also be helped, as many young children may feel abandoned by their father who is away from them for long periods of time.

Recently, choir singing in both prisons has been funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board. It was thought that singing might also help with emotional wellbeing and self-esteem issues, as well as being a fun thing to do. Recordings were made of the singing and sent to families. These programs have been a remarkable success with all involved (including prison officers) wanting more. Fortunately, another grant from the Yulgilbar Foundation combined with funding from the prisons will enable the program to continue.

Without wishing to claim too much for these programs, it can at least be said that the prisoners are kept in touch with their families more than they would have been otherwise, and that this might be a step towards possible rehabilitation. Along the way their literacy often improves as well, another possible step towards a change in outlook and reducing re-offending.

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Denise Jepson has been a librarian and a plant nursery operator. Now retired she devotes her time to voluntary activities in Castlemaine, Victoria, including U3A and Friends of Castlemaine Library (FOCAL) and a little gardening.

Practical Matters

Diving in at the deep end and feeling foolish ...

By Fiona Walsh

Singing has become more popular in the classroom with many benefits for learners, both tangible and intangible. Here are some ways to make singing feel natural and contagious.

Fiona (centre) and her students

My first few classroom experiments with singing were mostly performance oriented. The teacher I replaced had been preparing a singing performance for the end-of-year awards day and several members of this special needs class were keen to continue. I had little experience of this sort of learner cohort and was keen to get it right. So it was a matter of diving in at the deep end for me. I felt a bit foolish, but with the support of my coordinator at the time, we rehearsed and staged a hit performance of *These boots are made for walking*! While not every member of this group actually sings, they participate in their own way and all enjoy listening. Now we often finish a session with a sing-a-long with Elvis songs the most frequently requested. Luckily for me karaoke versions are easily found on YouTube.

With other slightly higher-level groups, however, (CGEA classes and mixed-level groups) I didn't think singing would work. I expected to be met with too much resistance, so I was reluctant to try. But for awards day 2016, I took up the challenge again to stage a modified version of *Cinderella* based on Roald Dahl's version in his book *Revolting Rhymes*. Embedded in this was a performance of *Rock Around the Clock* at the palace ball just before the clock strikes midnight. This enabled me to combine performances by different groups of learners who had classes on different days and seldom meet each other. The result was a bit chaotic but a lot of fun. Despite our nerves the audience's response was encouraging. I still felt hesitant, however, to attempt to include singing as part of our everyday learning.

Further inspiration for me came in the form of a classroom singing professional development session run by Chris Falk at Olympic Adult Education (OAE) in early 2017. The focus of this session was singing with EAL groups, but many of the ideas seemed adaptable to an ALBE cohort.

During the session I had a great time singing together with a group of teachers, and was introduced to some promising resources, including *Sing with Me!* (Urban Lyrebirds). I began to wonder if including singing among our regular classroom activities might work after all. The potential benefits seemed to outweigh the risks and I decided to be brave and give it a go.

Familiar and personally relevant texts

One of the things I struggled with as a beginning CGEA teacher was finding texts that were truly relevant to my learners. Many of my mostly older, adult learners viewed reading and writing as largely irrelevant to their lives as they had lived their entire lives so far without much literacy. I could see that acquiring new skills in the classroom was not going to instantly result in changing lifelong behaviour patterns of avoiding tasks involving literacy. I needed to create contexts within the classroom that were motivating and I needed to choose texts that would engage reluctant learners.

I discovered that my learners love football and are avid participants in our OAE footy tipping competition. Many spend their weekends watching football on TV. It dawned on me that AFL football club theme songs are familiar, personally relevant and, in many cases, beloved. The language of these songs is cheerful, positive and rousing. Many students can already sing a few lines here and there of the choruses, or will at least recognise the tunes. They understand the social context and meaning of these texts, and the knowledge of and ability to sing these words has real cultural value for them. I wasn't quite sure if they would be willing to sing the theme songs of rival teams, but so far this hasn't been an issue. These songs have been embraced with enthusiasm.

Why sing?

Songs are a highly accessible form of literature and of oral language cultural traditions. They can introduce the richness of poetic language and expand and extend vocabulary beyond the everyday. At the same time, songs can allow us to tap into the knowledge base of our learners. Songs are familiar and many of our learners have a vast repertoire of memorised lyrics, even if only in fragmented lines and verses.

Singing songs together can lift the spirits of both learners and the teacher. Singing and listening to songs can change the mood of a class, mix things up a bit, break out of a stale routine and give new structure to a lesson. Singing together is a bonding experience. The act of singing within a group has the power to enhance wellbeing, alleviate stress and anxiety, improve relationships, create a sense of belonging, and improve group cohesion and harmony. As we struggle with learner's low moods or poor group dynamics in the classroom, singing together can be a catalyst for positive change.

Songs as text type

Songs are full of repetition, which makes them perfect for students to have repeat exposure to new words and phrases, enabling consolidation of learning. Songs are also frequently based on rhyming couplets which makes them great for developing phonemic awareness and highlighting the spelling patterns in sets of rhyming words. Popular songs are often based on simple and familiar vocabulary and themes, making them more easily comprehensible with just the right amount of challenge.

Songs provide a fantastic opportunity for doing fill-the-gap listening exercises. The lyrics of a song can be treated just as you would any other text. Singing can be preceded by or followed up with comprehension questions, discussion, a word hunt, identifying and defining key terms, locating the rhyming words, reading aloud, highlighting specific grammar points, re-sequencing sentences or any other text-based activity.

Teaching tips

Here are some points to consider when you are introducing singing to your class:

Setting ground rules

Actual singing in class is always optional, although strongly encouraged. I find a useful phrase is 'join in when you are ready' as a way of bringing reluctant students on board. However, listening, reading and following the lines of text in the lyrics is not optional. You will find that most will end up joining in fairly quickly.

Normalising singing

This is a gradual process, and learners may need to warm up to it over time. The teacher needs to lead the way, and may also need some time for singing to feel natural. Having the lyrics printed as a well-spaced text in a large and simple font with an illustration (or footy team logo!) makes them more approachable and less threatening. We always sing along with a recording either on CD, MP3, YouTube on a projector, a laptop or even on a mobile phone or tablet. Not great for sound quality but better than nothing – we're not quite ready for *a cappella*!

Incidental singing

Once both teacher and learners have got into the habit of singing together, it starts to become more spontaneous. We often find that an idea, a word or a phrase will trigger someone's memory of a line in a song or song title. We find ourselves singing bits and pieces of all kinds of things, which will often lead to looking up the song on a phone and listening to it while we work.

Phoneme-based singing

While examining the long 'a' sound and its various spellings, we found ourselves singing *The Rain in Spain* and *Singing in the Rain.* There are many songs to explore for teaching points and include in your class activities.

Topic-based singing

A song is a great way to finish up a serious topic on a lighter note. While studying a unit on Fire Safety, it led us to singing *Ring of Fire* by Johnny Cash, which was a lot of fun. It could just as easily lead to *Disco Inferno* by The Trammps, *Burning Down the House* by Talking Heads, *Light My Fire* by Jose Feliciano or other songs related to fire that are familiar to your learners.

I am continually finding that the options are endless for singing in the adult literacy classroom. Keep in mind that the goal should be enjoyment rather than mastery. If you have never sung with your class, I hope you will give it a go and have fun singing together.

Fiona Walsh is a language and literacy teacher at Olympic Adult Education. She works with learners with multiple and complex needs.

A five-year measure of learning

By Sarah Deasey

This is the story of Dean* and Kaye, his volunteer tutor, and their learning journey together. They have been meeting regularly, as part of the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre (CNLC) one to one volunteer literacy tutoring program.

Dean has made significant progress in the five years he has been working with Kaye. Over that time, he has gained confidence and is now an independent learner with his sights set on further study. When he came to CNLC at the age of twenty-two, in his words:

> I knew nothing … I could not write a sentence … I would have a go at the first two letters in the words … I was like a baby.

Dean did not have schooling beyond grade three level due to traumatic family circumstances. His experiences of learning in the early years of primary school were negative and as a result he was not able to read, or make sense of numbers. He could not read or write his address. Dean wanted to change all this and … '[I] wanted to be someone else'.

He was motivated to learn and had attempted a few classes at TAFE. As with many native English speakers looking for foundation skills, he found that the class content focused on English language learners and so was not what he needed. His previous negative experiences of classroom learning also had an impact. Health issues made it hard for him to get to morning classes. With the help of his sister, he found the Reading and Writing Hotline and through that service was referred to the CNLC one to one tutoring program.

Finding the right tutor

For over three decades, CNLC has run the one to one volunteer literacy tutoring program using ACFE pre-accredited funding to train, support and manage up to twelve volunteer tutors and their students, at any one time. Over the years, extra funding has been used to develop training materials to keep the course relevant and suitable for changing cohorts of students, and tutors. The most recent project, to create an online resource hub for teachers and one to one tutors, came from an ACFE Capacity Building grant (http://cnlchub.org.au).

The students who enrol in the one to one tutoring program tend to be unique in their needs and often have had negative prior learning experiences. The one to one approach allows the tutor to focus on those needs in a way that would not be possible in a group or classroom setting. Tutors and students meet on a weekly basis, often out of hours, and review their progress term by term. By its voluntary nature, it requires a firm commitment and preparedness to be flexible.

Dean rang CNLC and made a time for an interview. However, like many prospective adult literacy learners he says he panicked after the interview, and did not take up the tutoring offered. A year went by and Dean came back. This time he was able to keep the appointment to meet his prospective tutor, Kaye. They connected and agreed on a suitable time to meet and begin learning together.

At that time, Kaye had recently retired from many years teaching adults at the Centre of Adult Education (CAE). She obtained a Certificate IV in Fitness instruction and now works at a number of local community leisure centres. Kaye lives locally and allocates a regular time slot in her busy week to meet with Dean. CNLC is lucky to have a volunteer tutor with her skills and experience.

Building skills

Kaye started out working with Dean on his handwriting. In some ways handwriting provided a safe pathway into the demands of the reading and writing process. It can still be a challenge both physically and mentally, as Dean reflected:

> I could hardly hold a pencil … I would press so hard the pencil would go through the paper … In each lesson I learned a little bit more.

Together they worked on the formation of single letters and patterns and then moved on to cursive script. Gradually Dean could manage the weight of the pencil and to lighten the pressure on the paper. He bought

handwriting exercise books from the supermarket and practised at home. Confidence with handwriting helped to lay the foundations for him to venture into reading and writing skills development.

Kaye and Dean settled into a regular, but flexible weekly meeting time. Things like car trouble, family commitments and health issues arose often. However, continuity was never in doubt. This was underpinned by Dean's commitment to complete homework with take home activities from the session and supplemented by purchases of spelling and other activity books. As Dean's confidence increased the sessions became shaped by a balance of skills development with basic numeracy, again using extra supermarket exercise books, spelling, vocabulary work, word finds, speedwriting and crosswords.

Making progress

Dean marks an early point in the tutoring when he knew he'd made progress: he was able to confidently sign in at the RSL club without pretending! With time, the sessions kept a basic format and relevant content. As Dean's skills and confidence increased, so have the complexity and challenges of the tasks. Kaye now enriches the crossword activity with a few extra layers. She writes the answers in a jumbled list below the clues. Dean has to look through the clues, select the answers, and then write them into the correct spot.

Another key activity is reading a carefully chosen news or current affairs article with comprehension questions. Kaye chooses the article and prepares some questions and Dean works on these at home. This is another measure of progress. Dean now has an interest in the world and news, something that he never had before. Current affairs and the articles he and Kaye read have become a central part of his learning. As he said, 'I knew nothing'. Now, in the words of Freire and Macedo (1987), Dean can 'read the word and read the world'.

Kaye works with Dean on his homework answers to a crossword or an article. She listens first and they discuss the work. In so doing, Dean can pick up if something doesn't make sense then correct it. The key to their success is that Kaye has given as much control as possible to Dean, at the same time she has used her considerable skills to manage the learning process from 'the backseat'. In Kaye's words:

> I think my role has been to stage the process and build in success. For example, in the beginning when I gave Dean a news article for homework I would give shorter articles and much more obvious questions, and pre-teach some vocabulary or content. Now it's just give him the article. But I wouldn't give him an article that was dense, unfamiliar subject matter, or too politically complex.

Looking to the future

Over the years he has been working with Kaye, Dean has set up his own study at home. He has gradually acquired all the essentials for home scholarship. As well as having his own dedicated work space, he will now go to Google or Youtube to work out how to solve a problem or answer a question. Kaye observes that:

> … taking on his own learning has been a key to Dean's success, not just his progress in writing and reading but his general sense of enquiry, book buying, internet researching, online maths lessons, setting up a desk, buying stationery and a bookshelf on eBay, none of which he had done before. I think this has all come from Dean himself. He seemed to need a kick start and then he was off.

Dean would like to move on with his learning. His goal is to do VCE. He has spent a lot of time trying to find a blended, flexibly delivered adult literacy course, which would prepare him for VCE. There are not many easily accessible options in Victoria. CNLC is assisting him to find something suitable. He was keen to do secondary distance education but the Victorian Department of Education is no longer taking adults in this program. In Dean's words, 'I am ready to accelerate!'

*The name of our learner has been changed at his request.

Check out the CNLC adult literacy resource hub: http://cnlchub.org.au

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Sarah Deasey is the Further Education coordinator at CNLC. She oversees the coordination, recruitment and training for the one to one volunteer tutor program.

Numeracy Matters

Have you used a net in your lesson?

By Pam Mahlis

Learners can explore an extensive array of nets and mathematical concepts that go with them. Throughout this article are teaching ideas with examples of nets, resources and websites that Pam has used with her students.

Introducing nets

A net is a flat shape (two dimensional) which can be folded up into a three-dimensional solid. Nets can be used in many different ways in the numeracy class, and equally can be used in other subject areas with an integrated or applied learning approach.

Nets are a great way for students to learn about three dimensional shapes and their properties in a hands-on and constructive way. In my numeracy classes I use nets when I am teaching measurement, shape and direction.

I start by posing the question to students: If a cube was made out of paper or cardboard what would it look like when it is opened out flat? From here students are given a net to make a cube. Once students have made the solid, they are then asked to find the other ten different nets which can fold up to make a cube. It is important for students to be able to go from a three-dimensional to a two-dimensional shape and vice versa.

Having students do this is in pairs can be beneficial. Students will need to use mathematical instruments to measure the sides of the given shape. They then have to know how long the lines on their net need to be so it can accurately fit together when it is assembled. Here students not only use their spatial awareness but also need to visualise how the net is to be folded to form the solid and make sure that all the sides fit together properly.

The characteristics of the cube can then be discussed involving the terms vertex (vertices), faces and edges. Students note the numbers of each of these characteristics and learn the mathematical vocabulary that is used when dealing with shapes. Students can visualise the three dimensions, length, width, height once they have put the cube together.

Exploring other shapes

These geometric nets can be linked to other questions such as: What would a net of your classroom or your home look like? Students can be given a two-dimensional floor plan whereby they create a three-dimensional house using shapes that they are familiar with. Other nets of solids that students can be introduced to are: prism, pyramid, cylinder and cone. Here the net itself will allow students to identify what shapes make up the solid. For example, a cylinder is made up of a rectangle and two circles.

Mathematical concepts can be introduced here such as radius, diameter, π, circumference and area. The concept of using nets is very useful for the understanding of volume and surface area. Students may be asked how much sand would the shape hold and how much area would you have to paint to cover the entire outside surface of the shape.

One of the most interesting net activities that my students enjoyed the most, is when they made a truncated icosahedron – that is a soccer ball.

These two websites are useful resources:

- https://www.math-drills.com/search.php?s=net+for+a+soccer+ball&page=1
- www.greatmathsteachingideas.com

Creating a 3D neighbourhood town

This activity engages students in assembling a three-dimensional building, whereby they then make decisions as a class where each of their buildings is to be placed on the printed map. This activity can be used to teach how to give, and how to follow directions. Compass directions and how to use scales on a map can also be taught. The nets required for this activity can be downloaded from http://www.parents-choice.org/article.cfm?art_id=254.

After I used this activity in one of my classes and saw how much they enjoyed it, I adapted it by creating a map of our local area. The students made their own nets for all the local landmarks and placed them on the map. Students also created their own scale for the local area. Students added vehicles to their local area map that they assembled from nets found on this website: http://www.papercars.net/cars.html.

Polyhedral Maps

My students find the maths involved in maps very interesting and engaging as they relate to their own area. The maths skills involved range from longitude, latitude lines, time lines, coordinate systems and map projection. My students were fascinated by the fact that no matter what type of shape of the world map they assembled all countries were accurately represented. Students could assemble a world map in the shape of a cuboctahedron, tetrahedron and a rhombicuboctahedron, to name a few.

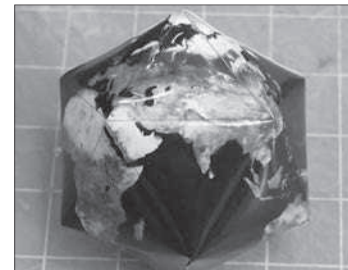
The nets required for this activity can be downloaded from http://www.progonos.com/furuti/MapProj/Normal/ProjPoly/Foldout/foldout.html

Using nets in your classroom can be a fun and educational experience for your students. You can integrate different subject areas and they make a terrific display for the students to explain and show others. The sky is the limit!

Pam Mahlis teaches CGEA numeracy at Olympic Adult Education (OAE).

3D town

Truncated icosahedron



Polyhedral map

A measured approach

By Tina Berghella and Dave Tout

Workplace numeracy skills need to be practised in context. With more than half (55%) of Australian adults and 48% of employed adults assessed as lacking the numeracy skills needed to cope with everyday life and work (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013), this article promotes a focused approach.

Measurement skills are a subset of numeracy skills and adult numeracy skills are a key economic driver influencing both labour force participation and wage levels. Every workplace depends on accurate and reliable measurements. For example, a building contractor depends on the new window fitting in the space allowed and a supermarket relies on the freezer keeping frozen products safely chilled. When it comes to measurement skills, like all numeracy skills, context is critical. Measurement skills in the workplace context are very different from measurement skills in a personal and community context or an education and training context.

Transferability

In the report *No More Excuses* (Industry Skills Councils 2011), Manufacturing Skills Australia gives an example of measuring length in two different contexts, the community and the workplace. In the community, length is commonly measured in centimetres using a tape measure marked in centimetres. In the workplace, length is commonly measured in millimetres using a tape measure marked in millimetres.

The task of measuring the same property (length) of the same object using the same measuring instrument (tape measure) has significantly different skill demands in relation to the mathematical information that must be read and understood, the scales used, and the mathematical information that must be represented and communicated. Therefore, the transfer of measurement skills between the two contexts of community versus workplace cannot be assumed.

Complexity

Measurement skills that may be considered basic in a personal and community context or a training and education context are not basic in a workplace where they are embedded in workplace tasks. For example, consider the measurement skills needed to read and record a digital temperature readout. In a learning environment, this is a straightforward reading and recording task. In the workplace, the task is made more complex by the context and may include task time demands (e.g. read and record every 30 minutes), safety requirements (e.g. equipment surfaces are over 200 °C), internal customer demands (e.g. records are used by a supervisor to make important workplace decisions), process monitoring demands (e.g. result is checked against process specification), quality implications (e.g. action is taken to quarantine product if result is outside specification), and productivity targets (e.g. quarantined product leads to under-production, disrupted workflow and unmet customer orders).

Overtness

In the workplace, measurement skills demands are often hidden in job tasks, concealed by processes and technology, and only revealed when something goes wrong. For example, an outdoor recreation worker uses a GPS to lead a hiking group. If the GPS breaks down or loses signal, the worker may need skills to use a topographical map and a hand-held compass.

Workplace measurement and the ACSF

Measurement skills include all three numeracy indicators, often in combination. Many small business owners keep a vehicle log book. The measurement skills needed by the worker include being able to:

- Identify and interpret what measurements are needed (ACSF numeracy indicator .09)
- Use a diary, watch and odometer to read dates, times and mileage, add and subtract numbers and reflect on whether the readings and calculations are reasonable (ACSF numeracy indicator .10)
- Record the measurements in the vehicle log book and talk about the results, how they were produced and what they mean (ACSF numeracy indicator .11).

Table 1: Instructions to record a temperature

Task requirement	Indicator	Focus area
Identify and interpret the mathematical information in the instruction	.09	Explicitness of mathematical information Complexity of mathematical information
Select an appropriate method for taking a temperature	.10	Mathematical methods and use of tools Mathematical knowledge and skills: measurement and geometry
Estimate the result	.10	Problem solving processes, including estimating and reflecting Mathematical knowledge and skills: measurement and geometry
Use a thermometer	.10	Mathematical methods and use of tools Mathematical knowledge and skills: measurement and geometry
Read the thermometer scale	.09	Explicitness of mathematical information Complexity of mathematical information
	.10	Mathematical knowledge and skills: measurement and geometry
Check that the result is reasonable	.10	Problem solving processes, including estimating and reflecting Mathematical knowledge and skills: measurement and geometry
Record the result	.11	Written mathematical language Complexity of mathematical symbolism, representation and conventions
Use mathematical language to discuss the result	.11	Oral mathematical language Complexity of mathematical symbolism, representation and conventions

Although only one numeracy focus area explicitly refers to measurement, multiple focus areas are needed to describe the skills needed to complete a measurement task. Consider the example of a worker following an instruction to take and record a temperature is shown in Table 1.

A retail assistant in a shoe store needs to be able to measure feet and use a conversion chart to determine a customer's correct shoe size. A specialised foot measuring device illustrates the types of measurement information involved. The ability to interpret measurements using the specialised foot measuring device is needed to complete this task.

Along with the use of the Brannock specialist foot measuring device or equivalent to measure feet, the job task also requires knowledge and understanding of Australian shoe sizes in relation to shoe sizes in other countries. The relationships between the four common shoe sizes for men and women: Australian (Au), United States (US), United Kingdom (UK) and European (Eu) is shown in Table 2.

In this job task, the understanding and use of linear dimensions underpins the process of fitting the correct shoe size. Misunderstanding of foot measurements and shoe specifications could lead to poorly fitted shoes and customer dissatisfaction and complaints. To undertake the whole task of measuring feet and fitting shoes requires the understanding and application of a range of measures and measurement activities relating to linear dimensions and numbers. Individually some of the components of the task are at level 1: reading whole numbers related to shoe sizes. However, as the job task demands a combination of a range of measurement skills and mathematical skills and their application, it requires using higher level skills aligned to ACSF numeracy level 2.

Supporting learners to build their measurement skills

The following strategies are examples of good practice adult numeracy teaching as applied to building measurement skills in the workplace.

- Encourage the learner to talk about measuring. Ask them to talk about the objects they must measure

including what measurements are used for and why they are important, how they are used, and how and where the measurements are reported.
- What measurement tools are used?
- What units of measurement are used?
- What conversions need to be undertaken?
- Check this information against workplace requirements and identify what the learner needs. They may need support in one or more of the numeracy indicators, they may be suffering from maths anxiety or they may lack the complementary vocational skills needed to perform the task, such as correct understanding of the workplace procedures for using rates.
- Draw on what the learner already knows and challenge them by sequencing the training according to the learner's individual needs. They may be skilled in reading a ruler but need support with metric conversions. As appropriate to the workplace, incorporate a range of different measurements and tools and workplace conditions. This may include examples of different objects to measure using different measuring instruments in the workplace.
- Ask questions to extend the learner, such as 'What if you had to explain to someone else how to take a measurement?' or 'What if accuracy was not important?' Mix up questions that do and do not require metric conversions for an additional challenge.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for practise without fear of failure and with time for reflection. During training support, this might involve working with measuring the length of objects gathered from the workplace and discussing the results. It should also include developing the skills to estimate measures by guessing the measurement value of the object before taking the actual measurements. Outside training support, this may involve removing avoidance strategies, such as relying on another team member to take the measurements and pairing with a buddy or mentor.
- Ask the learner to reflect on what they have learnt, the challenges encountered and how they were overcome.

Build your workplace measurement skills

You can build your own measurement skills and understanding in several ways. Identify as many examples you can find of typical measurements and instruments found in the workplace. Take a tour of a workplace and talk to people about measurements, including questions such as:

Brannock foot measuring device

Table 2: Shoe size conversion

Women's shoe size scale		
AU/US	Eu	Length (cm)
5	35	21.6
5.5		22.2
6	36	22.5
6.5	37	23.0
7	38	23.5
7.5		23.8
8	39	24.1
8.5		24.6
9	40	25.1
9.5	41	25.4
10		25.8
11	42	26.5

Men's shoe size scale			
AU/UK	Eu	US	Length (cm)
6	39	7	24.6
6.5	40	7.5	24.8
7	41	8	25.4
7.5		8.5	25.7
8	42	9	25.8
8.5	43	9.5	26.7
9		10	27.0
9.5	44	10.5	27.3
10		11	27.8
10.5	45	11.5	28.3
11		12	28.6
11.5	46	12.5	29.0
12		13	29.4
12.5	47	14	30.2
13			31.1

Measurement skills in the home

- How do they measure?
- What are the measurements used for?
- How accurate do the measurements need to be?
- Why are measurements important?
- Who uses measurements?
- How are measurements used?
- How and where are measurements reported and recorded?

You can also find examples of typical measurements outside of the workplace. In the home, many measurements exist, such as a person's height and weight, the dimensions of a window and the area of a room or a garden bed. Volumes of common household products can be analysed, such as food containers, cleaning and garden products, and household water usage.

Next time you go shopping, look at how all the products are measured. What units are used? When is weight used compared to volume?

Practise taking measurements with different measuring instruments found in the workplace or home, and check your answers with others. You can always ask a trusted peer or mentor to challenge you to extend your skills and introduce you to new measures and how they are measured, and in what units.

You can use the internet, or friends and colleagues, to research questions about measurement such as:

- What is the difference between mass and weight?
- What is the difference between volume and capacity?
- What is the SI system of units?
- What are derived units of measures?
- What imperial units of measure are still used in Australia? Are there any still used in your workplace?

There are ongoing challenges to effectively teach measurement skills in both workplace and community settings. Keeping the learner focused on the context of the task and being able to practise in a safe and supported environment are crucial to success.

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Tina Berghella is the secretary of the Australian Workplace Practitioner's Network and a former member of the National Foundation Skills Strategy Project's Community of Practice. She has developed numeracy test items for the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool (FSAT) and delivered workplace literacy and numeracy training programs. Tina has conducted NCVER funded research exploring the numeracy skills of the VET workforce and is the author of a suite of professional development resources designed to build the workplace numeracy awareness and skills of VET practitioners.

Dave Tout is a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Council for Educational Research. He is an experienced numeracy and mathematics educator who is particularly interested in making mathematics relevant, interesting and fun for all students especially those students who are disengaged from mathematics. He has worked in a range of teaching programs in schools, TAFEs, community providers, teacher education at universities and industry. He has written many numeracy teaching, curriculum, assessment and professional development materials and resources. Dave worked on the numeracy domain of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), was also involved in the development of the numeracy components of the CGEA and the VCAL, and has worked on international numeracy assessments for the OECD.

Open Forum

Conference reboot

By Linno Rhodes

Each year there are a range of adult education conferences on offer, both locally and nationally. Linno reflects on two conferences she has attended in recent months and the valuable professional learning they both provided.

Reflecting on practice

The 2017 VALBEC conference, Teaching Learning Reflecting on Practice, was held in Melbourne on the 19th May. Around 100 teachers, managers and staff of Learn Locals, RTOs and other adult literacy and language providers attended the day. In her roles as VALBEC co-president and conference convenor, Meg Cotter did an amazing job pulling it all together with the input and support of the committee and Don McDowall, VALBEC's trusty administration and events manager, always there to tie the bow at the end.

The day began with thirty minutes of welcoming music and singing provided by the *Sussex Skylarks*. They are a community based, all-abilities singing group led by Phil Hudson and based at the Sussex Neighbourhood House. They have a repertoire that spans world music, popular and gospel songs. I personally love community singing groups. They're not too formal and if you're not very confident with your singing abilities it doesn't matter, you're still made to feel welcome. I think it is so important for VALBEC to showcase all aspects of what our community learning centres bring to our learners and find a space for everyone to shine.

John Benseman, the first keynote speaker, engaged the audience in his quest to challenge practitioners to examine their own teaching practices and the role of research informing andragogy. He posited that perhaps there are fewer of us than we think who actually do engage in learner-centred teaching. By using research to scaffold our teaching methodology, it would do us well to get back to the place of being learner-centred teachers. He also argued for a professional development program that would enable teachers to learn more about focusing on learners needs through integrating research into their teaching practice.

The selection of workshop topics in the program were indeed about becoming more learner-centred with topics that ranged across: Enhancing student engagement and retention; Engaging Numeracy Students; Best Practice Models of Professional Development and Engaging Learners, Engaging Teachers, Engaging Community. The 'reflecting on practice' theme of the conference was certainly embraced and evident in the conversations over delicious food at each break, and demonstrated that participants were fully engaged in their own professional learning. An extra activity this year was the Lunchtime Chats, where people were invited to sit with a person new to them and choose some random questions out of the box to engage in a chat about their work and their philosophies on learning and teaching.

The second keynote speaker, Karen Charman from the Public Pedagogies Institute, reminded us about the transformative practice of learning outside the classroom and what other disciplines can tell us about this space. It was a great reminder that learning is life-long and life-wide. Learning does not all have to take place in the classroom. It can be just as authentic, important and engaging in all

Lunchtime chatters

VALBEC conference participants

its forms and settings. At the end of the day, it was great to see so many people stay on for refreshments and to continue their informal conversations about a wide range of topics raised at the conference.

I think that one of the reasons the VALBEC committee receives such positive feedback year after year about the conference is that there is always a real and tangible focus on making education for adult learners more engaging, more relevant, and based on their needs. This can be achieved while still juggling the ever-increasing demands of working in the VET space and meeting the demands of a compliance-driven funding model.

I am excited to be a part of the planning committee for the 2018 ACAL conference hosted by VALBEC in Melbourne. It promises to address all the wonderful aspects of belonging to this sector that sustains our imaginations and inspires us to continue working in Adult Education.

Exploring possibilities – changing lives

I was fortunate to attend the 54th Adult Learning Australia (ALA) conference in partnership with LINC Tasmania, held in Hobart on the 13th and 14th of June. The conference theme was 'Exploring possibilities – changing lives', and the sessions reflected the diverse ways we access learning and how learning shapes our lives. There were several keynote speakers over the two days, with each of them bringing their own area of expertise and experience to share with conference participants.

Dr Trace Ollis from Deakin University, whose interest is in the types of formal, and equally important, informal learning, that takes place in Neighbourhood Houses used poetry and case studies to illustrate the transformative power of learning. Dr Peggy Brown, CEO of the Mental Health Commission, shared her thoughts about the enormous challenges people living with mental health issues (and their support people) contend with every day. The statistics around youth and Indigenous suicide are truly alarming and should be a call to action for us all. Dr Tony Brown from University of Canberra, and also the editor or ALA's journal, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, took us through an overview of the historical and political landscape of adult learning.

We also heard from creative artists like Marcia Howard (from the talented Howard family and ex-Goanna band) and spoken word artist, Abe Nouk, who were both entertaining, political and thought-provoking. There was a selection of workshops on topics ranging from working with incarcerated people, addressing rural issues, building communit(ies)y, and the complex issues and specific needs of asylum seekers and Indigenous learners. There were three tours offered for the last session, each showcasing a different learning centre and an area of Hobart. This gave participants an opportunity to see first-hand the great work of the 26TEN program successfully addressing the needs of adult learners which has been embraced by state literacy organisations.

As the conference was in Tasmania, it was well represented by LINC Tasmania, the central agency for adult education, library and archive services and public access to digital technology. They host the innovative 26TEN program developed in response to the needs of the one in four adults in Tasmania without the required functional literacy and numeracy skills. Tasmania is one of my favourite places in Australia, so to be able to visit there for a conference made it doubly exciting. Thanks to VALBEC and to Olympic Adult Education for their assistance in sending me along.

Linno Rhodes works at Olympic Adult Education in Heidelberg West. She is VALBEC co-president and a member of the Fine Print editorial committee.

Road testing the FSPS Framework

By Louise Wignall

How do you describe the professional knowledge, skills and attributes of an LLN practitioner? This is the challenge that was set back in 2013 as part of the National Foundation Skills Strategy (NFSS). After extensive consultation, the Foundation Skills Professional Standards (FSPS) Framework has been developed and launched.

The FSPS Framework describes the capabilities of the diverse field of practitioners who teach, train, assess and support foundation skills service provision in a variety of environments. It provides a consistent, shared language for talking about the capabilities required in foundation skills service provision.

The ability to communicate with greater consistency and specificity about capabilities in this field has the potential to strengthen understandings of professional knowledge and skills, and professional development needs. The Framework makes it possible to identify and describe gaps in the availability of professional development options, and to more clearly articulate and differentiate the extent of specialist capability.

Putting the framework to the test

The 2017 VALBEC conference provided participants with the opportunity to come together for a day of rich discussion about what it takes to be a practitioner working in what can be broadly described as the 'foundation skills space'. Formal sessions about engaging learners, teachers and community; practical numeracy activities; the use of technology in the classroom, job expos and the role for professional development combined with the informal catch ups during breaks and over lunch resulted in a day of dynamic engagement and reflection.

The keynote speaker, John Benseman started the day with a series of challenging questions that included: How do we really know what works in practice? Are we sure that our teaching makes a difference? These provocative questions set a tone of professional engagement and enquiry for the day.

We ran an afternoon session entitled:, Maximising conference benefits What informs practitioner decision making about their own learning? The session was based on the premise that the choices we make about what sessions to attend at a conference can sometimes be rather 'hit and miss'. Do we just go to what seems familiar and comfortable, or do we go to the sessions that deliberately take us out of our comfort zone? Do we go to sessions to have our own practice validated or to learn new things? Would it be useful to have a common schema to talk about professional practice?

With all of this in mind, we used the draft Framework as a starting point to discuss what each session choice at the conference had provided for participants and how it had served their professional development needs.

In the session, participants used an Overview of the Framework diagram (Figure 1) to identify the main themes in sessions they had attended and map the capabilities according to the three domains. This was shared and prompted discussion of the value of having a common language to describe the outcomes from professional development.

An example of the mapping exercise applied to the keynote address (Table 1) demonstrates how the activity, content and individual responses could be recorded in a meaningful way. As is often the way with conference sessions, time was up all too quickly. However, there was consensus that there was value in using a tool such as the Framework to reflect on the choices that had been made and to formalise the outcomes of those choices.

Continuing the conversation

Explaining the structure of the Framework was a catalyst for some robust discussion about the need for a range of professional development opportunities for practitioners at differing points in their careers. Some participants concentrated on the way in which the sessions had helped them engage with others on areas of common interest, while others were more focused on identifying the new learnings that they could take away from the conference and apply in their own work or classroom setting.

A couple of co-presenters used their discussion about the Framework to debrief about the concepts they individually thought they had covered in their session. This could then guide further refinement of their presentation. One

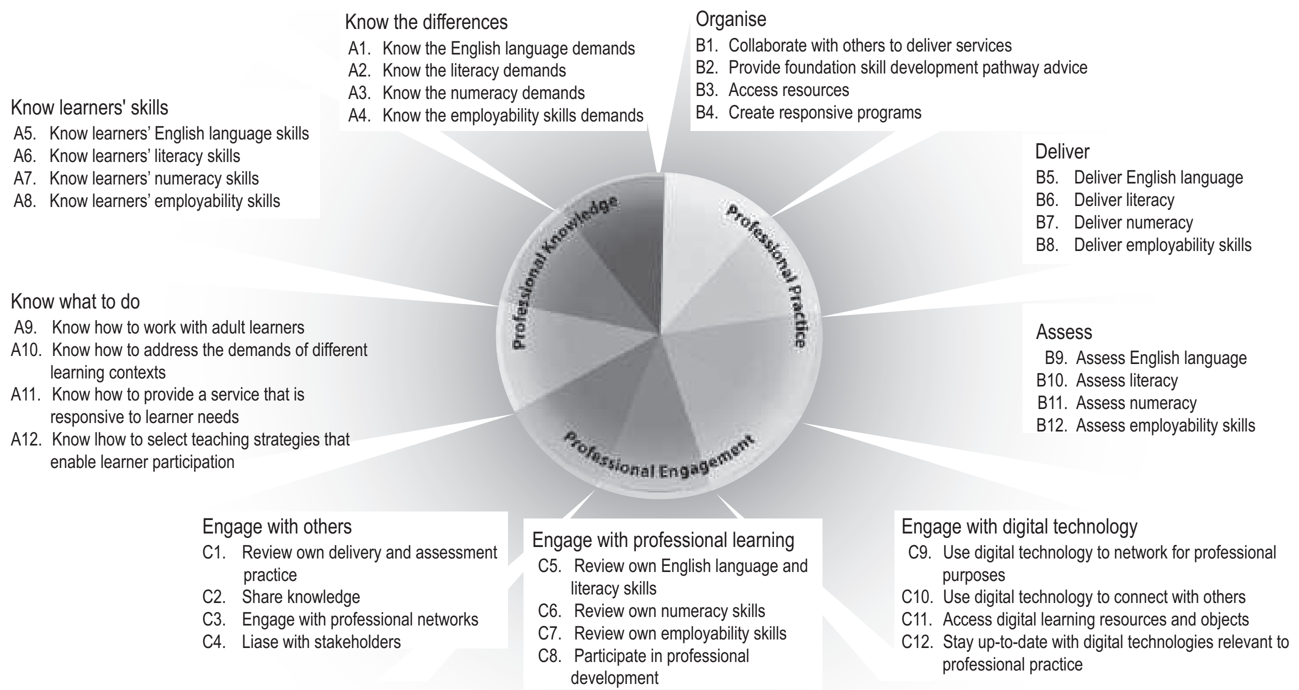

Figure 1: Overview of the Framework

participant was interested in using the mapping process as a way of documenting her conference session choices to take back and discuss with her manager . This could then be used in further discussions and use in planning for future professional learning activities.

The complexity and diversity of foundation skills provision make it necessary for practitioners to continually reflect on their practice and build their repertoire of skills and knowledge. The Framework gives practitioners a new way of reflecting on their own capabilities, articulate their own foundation skills expertise and identify areas to target for further professional development. It can also be used by managers or team leaders to think about capabilities required in the workforce and to underpin professional development planning at an individual and whole of organisation level.

Table 1: Mapping exercise example

Title	Domain	Stream	Capability
Teaching and Research: Bridging the Abyss for effective practice Dr. John Benseman	Professional Knowledge	Know the demands	A1-A4
		Know what to do	A9-A12
	Professional Engagement	Engage with others	C1, C2, C3
		Engage with professional learning	C5, C8

The main aim of the Framework is to support individual and workforce capability building. The Framework is not compulsory, nor is it a compliance tool. It is not a benchmark that people have to measure up against. It provides a language for talking about practitioner capability (similar to the way the ACSF provides a language for talking about LLN skill). The Framework gives people the words to help them have new and useful conversations that strengthen and diversify the foundation skills practitioner field, which was a principal priority four goal of the NFSS.

The Foundation Skills Professional Standards Framework is supported by a suite of resources produced through project activities under the NFSS. They reflect stakeholder feedback on the need for resources to support interpretation of the Framework's capability descriptors and its use in different contexts and can be accessed at http://statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/skills/national-foundation-skills-strategy-project)

We invite practitioners and organisations to take up the Framework and use it as part of ongoing professional development and workforce capability building.

Louise Wignall has contributed to strategic projects focused on the importance of foundation skills in VET over the last 25 years.

Foreign Correspondence

Boundaries unblocked

By Manalini Kane

An opportunity to teach in her hometown, Pune, was too good to turn up when Manalini visited in February this year. She found that some of the boundaries she had raised in her teaching practice in Melbourne, became unblocked in the vastly different classroom setting.

Pune, of Maharashtra State, on the western side of India used to be called Poona when I grew up, studied and worked there. Back then and still, it is known as the 'Oxford of the East' due to the presence of several well-known educational institutions. The Ahilyadevi Girls High School is one such institution and I was hoping to visit and exchange ideas on the teaching of English as an Additional Language (EAL) with the English teachers there.

When I entered the Head Mistress' (Principal's) office, she mentioned that many teachers had been allocated to the state election duties, so conducting a session with the teachers was not possible. In addition, the State Board final examinations for year ten students were also approaching soon so they were on the study break. She asked me if I would like to teach English to year eight and nine classes on the 11th of February. She was more than happy to organise that for me and I immediately took up her offer with a smile.

Ahilyadevi Girls High School is a Government funded public school, which offers free high school education for girls in a semi English medium of instruction. The girls study English language as a subject right from their grade one and now they are studying in the semi English medium courses at year eight and nine level. Semi English medium classes include Mathematics and Science with instruction in English, with English language as a compulsory subject. However, Marathi is the language of communication throughout the school, so the girls' oral/aural communication skills need enhancement.

A different system of education

This opportunity to teach offered a different kind of challenge for me. While teaching in Melbourne for over thirty years, class sizes generally comprised a maximum of 28 students in the secondary or adult sector. We hardly ever had the textbook approach to curriculum. Assessment was mainly formative and ongoing, especially in the adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) sector.

In the main cities of India, it is common to have more than 60 students in one class. Education in many Indian high schools is provided with the prescribed textbooks at each year level for each subject and the assessment based on the final three hours examination at the end of March/April. After around 45 days of summer break, the schools in Maharashtra state reopen in the first week of June for a new academic year.

The education system, the society and parents' attitudes to education have fortunately changed with the times in many parts of India. English language has gained prominence as a compulsory subject in the majority of schools all over India. It is taught in addition to the native language of the region and Hindi as the national language at every level of schooling. So effectively, the girls in this school are studying a minimum of three languages, Marathi, English and Hindi and some girls choose to study Sanskrit as well.

School education for boys and girls is free throughout India, up to year 12. However, at times, anything that is provided for free may be less appreciated or valued and at times considered burdensome. I was assured that it did not apply to the students of this school.

With a large population in Pune, many public schools like Ahilyadevi offer two shifts, six days a week: one in the morning from 7.30 am to 12 and the other in the afternoon from 12.30 to 5.30 pm. Classes have around 64 girls in each class and they often share a bench between two girls.

I experienced nostalgia here because we used to do the same during my high school years in Poona (Pune). However, we used to have a maximum of 40 girls in a classroom, as I recall. The teams of Ahilyadevi High school used to be our school's competitors. So, this school, the year levels I was to

A different classroom

teach, the allocated time for each class and the chalk and talk approach to teaching was well away from my comfort zone.

Following Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, I decided to provide directed and guided interactions that foster deeper knowledge construction. I also decided to request of the girls to write on the blackboard mainly because I knew they would happily do it and in fact enjoy active participation.

I could draw on my approaches to teaching adult ESL or CGEA classes at level two and three, or year eight and nine in the secondary sector. The ice breaking activities I used to incorporate in my teaching came in very handy. Getting to know students' strengths and weaknesses as individuals followed by casual conversations around their day-to-day life experiences was a key to set a lighter tone. This certainly helped me in planning and implementing the activities suitable for the age group of these teenage girls. A few teachers were also going to attend the sessions to observe how an interactive classroom was going to work with my teaching approach.

A crisp morning class

The day arrived for me to teach and I set off in the crisp morning air of 18 degrees, typical winter weather in Pune. The cheerful faces of the 60 students of the year eight class and five teachers awaited me. Looking at the bare walls of the classroom I was a little bit dismayed because I am used to our classroom with charts, visual instructions, students' work or many other handy resources displayed all around the walls. Of course, that did not prevent me from starting my session with full enthusiasm.

About ten girls were withdrawn within the first five minutes to practise for an interschool folk dance competition. As soon as they left, I wrote on the board: If I were a dancer, I would have choreographed the best dance. This led to a language game that would instill the correct use of, 'If I were … '.

The class was divided into two groups and each pair within those groups was assigned to write half of the sentence starting with, 'If I were'. The other group was to write in pairs 'then I would do such and such'. When the 30 second time limit was up, one member of the pair of the first group read out her part, followed randomly by the member from the other group.

The best and most hilarious sentences we enjoyed were, 'If I were to cook, then everybody will go to Pizza hut', and 'If Sachin Tendulkar visited our school then I will cook up stories'. The lighter mood set with this activity seemed to put everyone at ease, so I used the same activity with the year nine class. The year nine girls' sentences included, 'If I were to marry Shahrukh Khan (famous Bollywood actor) then I would dance day and night', 'If I were to study hard then I would prefer to chat online', and 'If I were to have a holiday of my choice then I would prefer to stay put.'

Classroom challenges

The next activity was dictation and the girls worked in pairs to write with the proper punctuation the piece that I read to them. One girl volunteered to rewrite it on the chalkboard and the class gave her input. A class discussion on the use of informal, colloquial, semi-formal and formal language then took place.

The year nine dictation was a parody of a well-known nursery rhyme, 'Twinkle twinkle little star.' No problem, everyone was familiar with the original one. But when I recited the next part I came across blank faces. I requested the girls to listen carefully to my recitation of the following:

> Twinkle twinkle little star,
> Daddy drives a junkyard car,
> Pushes the button, pulls the choke,
> Daddy drives in a cloud of smoke.

The girls were naturally unfamiliar with this and the meaning of the words: junkyard car and choke. After the clarification of those words using charades, I introduced them to the word 'parody'. When I observed the blank faces again I asked them if they knew a Marathi word 'Vidamban'. They immediately understood it and gave an illustration too. (An advantage of my bilingual skills!)

For broadening their vocabulary, I mentioned www.visualthesaurus.com as a valuable resource for proper pronunciations, added with synonyms, antonyms, and the phrases that start with the original word. I referred them to the free resources for proper pronunciations, http://www.macmillandictionary.com/british-and-american-pronunciation.html.

Vocabulary extensions

I started an activity by pointing out the overuse of 'nice' as a descriptive word in both the classes. With examples, they used such as 'Those glasses look nice on you', 'Your uniform is really nice' and 'That's a nice iphone cover!' Then I asked the class, whether nice was an appropriate adjective in every context. The answer was 'we think so'.

I picked up that thread and got down to the discussion of 'nice is not enough', a study of adjectives that cover the five senses: namely smell, taste, sight, sound and touch. We had five columns on the blackboard and I asked five girls to come up to the blackboard one after another, to write the adjectives that the class came up with. I added a few that seemed to have an unfamiliar pronunciation or totally new words/phrases for them. I explained the meaning, the pronunciation or the use of some of the less familiar words with examples from their day to day life, at times using some Marathi words or phrases as required. The lists were quite extensive and I found it challenging to explain words like 'balmy' and 'pungent'.

More than 90 adjectives were collected on the board in a thirty minute class discussion. I realised that the vocabulary of these girls is quite good for their level but they were too shy, or find it difficult to articulate their thoughts freely. Extending their vocabulary in a playful manner using charades, when required, worked very well.

Expect the unexpected

An unexpected disruption caused a stir in the classroom before recess. With a soft knock on the door, three girls entered the classroom with boxes of free healthy Laddoos (a well-known Indian dessert) provided by the school for everyone. Ten minutes of my class time was taken up, but while we were enjoying the Laddoos I gave out a pen as my token gift to every girl in the class.

Another unexpected disruption stirred the classroom of year nine girls before the end of the morning shift. The bell rang and the whole school stood up and joined in the chanting of an Om mantra followed by singing of the national anthem. The girls then rushed towards the door, but not before I gave out a pen to each of them before they left the classroom. Inside me a memory of a little girl in a school uniform flashed by, as I too left the classroom.

Overall, this was an amazing experience. The girls extended their understanding of the use of 'If I were' and 'nice', proper punctuations for spoken words, and pronunciations of unfamiliar words. In addition, they could extend vocabulary and to top it all off, had a good time while learning something new. Those blurring boundaries of my home and having lived away, gave me valuable and memorable moments as a teacher. Scaffolding students' learning suitable to their age group and social context, added with the occasional help of my knowledge of bilingual words and use of charades helped in breaking down boundaries to learning.

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Manalini Kane teaches online English, English literature and EAL to local as well as international students. She has delivered workshops at VATE/VALBEC and Asia Education Foundation's statewide conferences and has recently provided workshops on intercultural communication. Manalini now works as a consultant and NAATI accredited translator/interpreter.

Provider Profile

A model of engagement and wraparound services

An interview with Kate Kelly and Robyn Szechtman by Lynne Matheson

Despite the wintery conditions, there were still a few seagulls floating around the street outside on the day I visited the Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre (PMNC) to meet with Kate Kelly, PMNC manager and Robyn Szechtman, project manager of the Voices of the South Side program. Just off busy Bay street, the PMNC provides a warm and welcoming place for the many people who come to the centre each week. We spoke to the reception staff, Jason and Rochelle, with supervisor Carla. As graduates of the successful Applied Reception Customer Service (ARCS) course, they are advocates for the opportunities they have had to pathway through the literacy program. They spoke favourably of the training that has led to volunteer and employment options through the ARCS and Voices of the South Side (VoSS) programs.

After a quick tour of the centre and a potted history of the heritage-listed buildings, we crossed the road to the Project hub that is housed in the old Fire Station. PMNC has over 40 programs and around 450 participants. Kate and her team have worked with the council to find additional classroom and office spaces now they have outgrown the centre. The centre has one multi-purpose classroom, a comfortable lounge area, disabled access kitchen and a computer room with shared use of the hall. Around half the PMNC programs are run off site and currently the *Speaking Out* program is running in St Kilda.

With a view across to the city, we sat upstairs in the Project hub where Kate and Robyn spoke about the people who make PMNC work so well and achievements, including 2016 Learn Local Outstanding Pathways award.

Can you tell us about the background of Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre?

For thirty years PMNC has provided a broad range of accessible social, lifelong learning and community development programs including: English, literacy, art, information technology, parenting, work and life skills, all to a diverse community. These programs help participants manage daily life, deal with disability, overcome disadvantage and social isolation while moving towards employment, education, and social inclusion. As a result, many give back to the community and some become involved in volunteering, committees, or decision-making activities in the broader neighbourhood. These PMNC initiatives and programs facilitate an active citizenship and a stronger, resilient and more inclusive community.

Kate Kelly

We have always had a focus on social inclusion and skills development for those who are disadvantaged, including many in social housing. At the same time we have also had a focus on innovative and arts-based programs and wellbeing programs to engage and inspire learners and participants.

What sets your organisation apart from other providers in your region?

Our focus is on successfully engaging with disadvantaged learners, providing pathways and opportunities for them to participate in community leadership, skilled volunteer training and work-ready programs. We have a range of programs that focus on all stages of a participant's engagement, from the early stages of connection, through to skills development and on to leadership programs.

Engaging the most disadvantaged and disengaged takes a great deal of resourcing and our staff bring experience and skills in health, welfare, social work, psychology and education, as well as extensive community networks. Wraparound services are part of the structure of the welfare sector where an interdisciplinary team will work together to ensure extra services are in place for people with complex needs.

Wraparound services and support is becoming more widely appreciated as a model in adult education. It underpins the design and delivery of programs that succeed in engaging and empowering learners to become independent and achieve employment and/or volunteer roles that enrich the individual and the community. At PMNC we work with a wraparound services model by providing support and connections to meet the range of needs of each participant.

How have the education needs of your community changed over time?

Due to rapid gentrification of our formerly working-class neighbourhood, there has been a movement away from traditional industries to more service-based industries. The 2008 Skills Reform agenda in Victoria encouraged us to develop different ways as competition with private providers and the demands of compliance put further demands on programs. Although we have many new socio-economically advantaged residents, we still have significant pockets of disadvantage in Port Melbourne and South Melbourne, many of whom face many barriers including literacy, poverty, low levels of education, disability, unemployment and social isolation.

I think these needs for adult education have always been there. When you consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the welfare sector tends to work from a crisis management perspective to firstly manage housing and health. The reality we see is that the higher-level needs of identity and purposeful engagement in learning need to be incorporated to provide pathways out of disadvantage, as demonstrated by programs like Voices of the South Side.

How did the Speaking Out course come into being?

The Speaking Out course has evolved from the Our Voices program which was previously based at the Port Phillip Community Group and dates back to 2012. Its broad aim is to target people who live in social and public housing in the City of Port Phillip and deliver training courses, mentoring and group activities that build the confidence of vulnerable people to increase their participation in community life. The program has been operating in various forms for over four years which has provided continuity for our students and the opportunity to develop and assess a variety of pathway courses. This is built on a strong knowledge of the volunteer sector and networks that help facilitate opportunities for our students.

At the core of VoSS is the Speaking Out course which took nearly nine years to perfect. It is a 10-week course,

PMNC reception staff Jason, Carla and Rochelle

developed and first delivered in 2015, in which people are taught to speak in public, develop advocacy and communication skills and how to behave in meetings. It inspires people to gain confidence in their own abilities and supports them to make new connections with the community. This may be through doing additional courses, volunteer work or employment. The key to this course is creating a supportive learning environment, which encourages people to see the best in themselves and others.

Two facilitators run this course and positive behaviours are modelled. One of the facilitators is Deb McIntosh, a case worker who works at Inner South Community Health (ISCH) which provides access to a diverse range of services and can help students overcome barriers such as dental care, insecure housing or problems with Centrelink.

Participants are also referred to counselling services to help deal with mental health issues and lifestyle challenges. This practical support in combination with a nurturing learning environment provides the foundation to begin the long journey of change. This case management aspect of the program plays a vital part in its success.

How does PMNC provide learner pathways?

The Speaking Out course connects students to a larger community of graduates that builds friendships and social networks. Once they have completed this core course, they are able to enrol in other courses where they can continue to learn with the same group of students or previous graduates they share common values with.

Through newfound confidence and finding their own voice, for many it is their first taste of achievement. They come to recognise just what empowerment feels like. They are able to pursue pathways through identifying interests that can form the basis for pre-accredited programs hours

PMNC teacher and learner

being utilised. They can keep learning by taking on things like film-making or music. For some they are just hungry for 'any activity any time'.

Participants can learn to be community researchers where they are taught survey and interview skills or go onto more arts orientated courses such as writing, film-editing and performance. Some graduates go into employment orientated courses that are offered at PMNC such as the ARCS course. This provides customer service skills and starts to connect them into volunteer work at PMNC reception or at other local organisations.

Graduates are also offered the opportunity for paid casual work doing community research for organisations that helps to build up their job readiness in a supportive environment. They are also supported to become consumer representatives for other organisations and learn to use their experiences in a way that educates others and has a positive impact on organisational policies. A small number of graduates also become facilitators in training courses for professional workers to help them reflect on and improve their practice with marginalised clients.

What are some of the highlights associated with winning the Learn Local award?

The most valuable aspect of applying for the Learn Local Award was that the process encourages organisations to reflect on a course and what it achieves for their students. It was a constructive task to gather all the information requested and put it together as a coherent whole. It was also really useful for future funding applications, publications and internal reviews.

One of the wonderful outcomes for the facilitators was it validated our approach and was a powerful morale booster. The innovative engagement model, the course structure and wraparound services and support provided, demonstrate an excellent model for engagement and pathways for disadvantaged participants. It gave us a strong sense of professional recognition and has spurred us on to create new courses using the same educational underpinnings of the Speaking Out course, but with greater confidence.

Transforming lives

Voices of the South Side (VoSS) that people shorten to just Voices, has been the subject of a 40-minute documentary, recently screened to an audience of 100 people. The film-maker spent two years documenting the learning journey of three participants in the VoSS program. The film provides tangible evidence of the success of the program, along with celebrating people like Bill, who is an ARCS ambassador. When he came to the program he was silent, uncomfortable around people, with a background of drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Through the program he has gained in confidence and does a mix of paid and volunteer roles that include facilitation, training, consumer groups, gardening and reception, as well as being a photographer featured in two exhibitions. He is an enthusiastic and articulate speaker keen to demonstrate the possibilities to others, showing that even with a background like his, he has been able to transform his life.

The ARCS course was designed specifically to train skilled volunteers with an applied learning methodology and has been developed into a training package complete with a pack of online resources. It will soon be rolled out at the Myrtleford Neighbourhood Centre. The training package contains lesson plans, workbooks, procedures that can be customised and housed in 'the cloud' for ease of access. It is an exciting development and the enormous number of hours that has gone into development will certainly reap rewards for individuals and communities.

I think pre-accredited learning can offer flexible learning models and methods that can engage, suit, and provide the first step to reconnecting to learning for disadvantaged and disengaged learners. Increasing costs and the demands of compliance, place pressures on the LL sector. However, we are starting to see a recognition of the need for additional resources for engagement and wraparound services for disadvantaged learners. We are fortunate at PMNC to have the right people in place for a strong team who bring extra skills from other disciplines, with wellbeing woven into all the programs for both staff and learners.

What's Out There

Spineless Wonders

Reviewed by Rhonda Pelletier

I first encountered *Spineless Wonders* as the result of my search for short story material for my Certificate II Adult Education class. After working through a highly scaffolded first topic to encourage them to write, I wanted to offer them something that would give them some independence and motivation with the possibility of online publication as a real outcome for their work.

My criteria for a suitable online publishing site were: Australian content, easily accessible and not too expensive. *Spineless Wonders* is devoted to publishing short works by Australian authors and offering them in a range of modes. The name *spineless* referring to the method of delivery to readers via smart phones and laptops. However, they also publish in hard copy, *with spines*, to readers who prefer to hold a book in their hands.

I found the most attractive features of the *Spineless Wonders* site to be that the home page provides links to texts, options for submissions, opportunities (awards) and a blog. The publications list takes you to individual stories or anthologies. This might repeat some titles but gives quick access to a range of texts: prose, poems, micro-fiction.

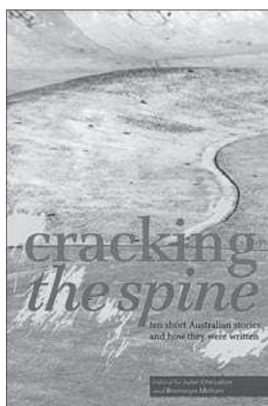
The Column Blog includes interviews with the published authors who discuss how they wrote the stories that are featured on the site. Questions include the significance of the story to them, their inspiration and even their writing space, which are some of the simple topics that intrigue new writers. The Opportunities and Submissions pages list awards, upcoming events and where writers can submit their work. *Spineless Wonders* is interested in submissions of written text, video and audio.

When I approached *Spineless Wonders* for access to the site, I was not confident that my request would be answered. After all, they are a business, but I couldn't have been more wrong. Bronwyn Mehan, the director, curator and publisher of *Spineless Wonders* has a background as a TESOL teacher in high schools and in TAFE NSW. She was more than happy to give my students access to download a story from the site.

It took some working out with the complexities of the site but, in the end, we were able to download stories for a much-reduced price. The access code was time limited for the course and this, unintentionally, worked as a motivator for the students. They spent an hour and half exploring the site. The students referred to a worksheet to locate the different features of the website and then read the abstracts of the stories to select one from the Digital Singles page.

With very little effort, readers can explore writing from the published end-result to the writers' reflections on their craft. Reading the blog enabled students to see that even successful writers struggle at times and have methods of working that are not dissimilar to their own: drafting and discarding, as well as their feelings of uncertainty. This is the greatest advantage of this site, showing how writers work and how they explain their craft with all of the ups and downs involved in writing a story.

There are two books on writing offered on the site. One attracted me in particular, as it is an anthology with short essays by the writers. Entitled *Cracking the spine: ten short Australian stories and how they were written,* it is edited by Julie Chevalier and Bronwyn Mehan (2014). The stories are not too long and offer some variety in style. They all have a clear beginning, middle and end, something that I feel helps new writers. Most of the stories have dialogue. Some have chapters, indicated with an asterisk. And each is followed by a short essay by the writer discussing how they find motivation for a story, how they came to write the story and the struggles or decisions they had to make along the way.



Cracking the spine

Michael Giacometti writes of his method:

> … I write for the line, for the words and the sounds, and not for the overall structure. Structure comes later. … The disjointed chunks of text are the inadequate pieces of the jigsaw. Pieces are moved around at will.

He then says that his story, *my abbr.d life*, is not written in his usual manner. He wrote the story in one sitting.

Andy Kissane noted in his essay about writing, *Good Rubbish*, that he didn't believe in ' … the mantra that you should write "what you know" . … It strikes me as both misguided and pointless.' These clear voices of experience demonstrate that the rule, even your own rule, is not always right and thus would appeal to students.

In the evaluation of the short story topic, a student commented to me that he had never thought there could be so much impact in just a few words. We were discussing whether he should provide a lot of description in his own story or just a few well-chosen sentences and let the reader do the rest. In another student's evaluation, this rather formal piece of feedback was given: 'Online access was a way of expanding knowledge about writing and strategies to write a better story.'

Unfortunately, there was not enough time to introduce *Cracking the spine* to the class. In a longer program, this book would have provided students with exemplars of how to reflect on their own work method and to discuss others' work. Having access to the online books enabled the students to get a bit excited about their work. When the topic concluded, three recidivist non-attenders were attending and had completed their stories within the timeline. The students had written a story – stretching the concept of a story perhaps, but it was their imagination, fascination and energy that was most rewarding.

I wish I had had *Cracking the spine* when we started the topic. Some of the writers' reflections on their writing processes mirrored the students' experiences. Jennifer Mills wrote *Architecture*, a story about a young Australia architect who is hired by a Chinese developer to continue the design of an empty city in China. Mills says of her writing process:

> After I'd written the ending and figured out the ideas in it, then I went back and started to tidy and structure the story around those ideas. Form follows content, for me. I need to write the story to figure out what it's about, and then rewrite it with that in mind.

For one student, this was his experience and he explained to me why he had hated writing in secondary school so much. Always being asked for a plan before he had a clear idea about what he wanted to write was a block to creativity. His story was a diary entry written by a Viking warrior on his way to pillage English villages. The Viking's main problem was the tension between his hatred of the boats and the sea, and his need to be seen to be a good Viking.

The students may or may not become published writers. But at least the idea of writing and what writers do is more accessible to them and, with the inspiration and generosity of *Spineless Wonders*, more welcoming than it might have seemed in the past.

For more information about *Spineless Wonders*: https://shortaustralianstories.com.au/

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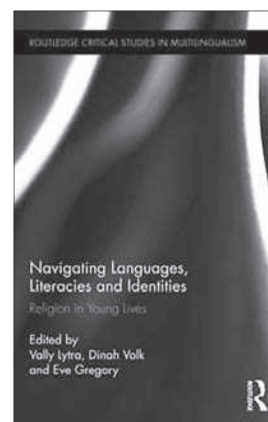
Navigating Languages, Literacies and Identities: Religion in Young Lives

Edited by Vally Lytra, Dinah Volk, & Eve Gregory
Series Editors: Marilyn Martin-Jones & Joan Pujolar

Reviewed by Elizabeth Gunn



> Knowing one's students is key to working effectively with them [and] it is particularly important for teachers who work with English language learners to know about the educational and literacy backgrounds of students and their family members.
>
> Leslie C. Moore (Chapter 7, p. 127)

Last year I moved with my family to a new home. One of the things I love about our new area is the sound of different church bells pealing, mostly on Sunday mornings, but also intermittently at other times of the week, beckoning people to come together for religious practice and prayer. Religious practices evoke many senses. Symbolic foods and clothing, ritual enactments, memorisation and recitations of sacred texts. Many different religious practices and artefacts create and shape meaning for different communities.

Lytra, Volk and Gregory's collection of articles delves deep into the interlocking literacy activities of home and community, madrassah or temple, covering a multitude of senses and processes that members engage in to become literate within the context of their religions. The studies in this volume relate to adult literacy education in three ways. Firstly, they sensitise educators to the role of faith and family in developing the literacy resources of people from diverse communities outside secular educational contexts; secondly, they showcase innovative research methods for understanding literacy practices beyond the classroom; and thirdly, they affirm the value of classroom practices that emphasise experiential learning within socially relevant frameworks. This review focuses on five of the chapters in the volume that illuminate the ways religion and secularism intersect to inform adult literacy education.

The volume's focus on religion in young lives may seem to lie outside the remit of adult literacy education. However, it is easy to see how adult literacy practices are integral to young lives, and youth literacy practices integral to adult lives, especially in out-of-school contexts. In the first chapter, for example, researcher Dinah Volk traces the home literacy practices of Puerto Rican grandmother, Sra. Santos, and her six-year-old grandson Benny, as they read the Bible together in Spanish, in their home in the US. Benny is an accomplished reader of English, and the Spanish reading he does at home with his grandmother seems to support his English reading achievements at school.

Volk finds that Sra. Santos' work with her grandson at home and church reveals her sophisticated understanding of the panoply of processes and resources that teachers and learners bring to the task of developing literacy in different languages. Sra. Santos engages in contrastive analysis and translation, and explores pronunciation, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, all of which enhance Benny's school-based learning. Volk's findings debunk popular accounts of Latino home literacy practices being detrimental to students' textual comprehension, instead highlighting resources informed by religious and secular educational practices.

The home literacy practices of Sra. Santos are likely replicated in many households across Australia as parents help their children learn to read and write the texts that undergird their faith practices. It is time-consuming work that requires careful management and understanding of early childhood literacy and language acquisition.

From a distance, this type of 'home work' may seem unrelated to the important world of employability skills and vocational competencies. However, these intimate activities reflect family member's determination to maintain transnational identities within the constraints of English-dominated societies, and I would suggest that such transnationalism is likely to enhance the competitiveness of globally-focused workforces in economies like Australia's in the future.

Not that it's all about employability skills and vocational competence. Literacy education often takes many different forms, as do the religious practices highlighted in this collection. Some religious practices may be embodied overtly and enmeshed in cultural contexts that contrast dramatically from the dominant society, like the Amish case outlined by Rumsey in chapter 3, or Fader's example of Hasidic literacy in chapter 10. In these cases, the religious ideologies guiding literacy practices work to intentionally separate community members from mainstream life.

However, this is not the case in three of the studies focusing on the literacy practices of Muslim communities. What is fascinating about these three studies is the extent to which the children are encouraged to participate in secular, as well as religious education, and how they are assisted by the adults around them to synthesise the different values they encounter in these diverse worlds.

In two separate chapters, Rosowsky and Moore look at the benefits of double schooling for Muslim youths in Yorkshire, UK, and Ohio, USA, respectively. They find that through the liturgical practices of Qur'anic learning, students develop increased metalinguistic and multiple literacy awareness, knowledge of different reading, writing and performance processes, and ability to integrate approaches from different languages and literacies. They also developed positive learner identities, which Moore suggests should be more readily recognised by non-Muslim educators.

In Mauritius, Owodally creates an autoethnographic account of her daughter's navigation of school, madrassah and home spaces, to investigate how the young girl shapes her social identity through engagement and use of multimodal literacy resources. Owodally's autoethnography could well be a prism for anticipating the ways that an immigrant parent may view their child's learning and development in new and different social spaces, as accentuated by focal events such as participating in an English school performance, reciting the Qur'an without error, making connections between prophets of different religious traditions around the breakfast table. These events mark certain turning points in the development of new skills and identities. Opening up discussions about these landmarks in family members' lives could generate valuable material for consideration in adult EAL classes.

As I mentioned, the research methodologies outlined in this volume are likely to inspire practitioners who are interested in ethnography and multimodality. Data is gathered via participant-created scrapbooks, video and audio recordings, photographs, mind maps and interviews. Field narratives, interwoven throughout the chapters, syncretise colours, movements, shapes, sounds and textures in such a way that readers can sense the atmosphere of each research site. These evocative descriptions make the volume a feast for the senses, reminding us that learning is a practice involving the whole person, beyond mere print and pen, within vivid social contexts.

Reciting the Koran

The collection looks at how literacy works at home across generations, in community religious settings, and in the nexus between school, home and community. Its layering of diverse contexts and practices reflects the pluralistic nature of multicultural societies where literacy educators work. The editors recognise that our times are characterised by immense flows of people, goods, services and ideas across international borders. Their aim, therefore, is for this edited collection to open a space for dialogue between practitioners in different learning contexts to share resources and practices that can be used to enhance literacy outcomes in and for future generations.

Navigating Languages, Literacies and Identities: Religion in Young Lives. Edited by Vally Lytra, Dinah Volk, & Eve Gregory. Series Editors: Marilyn Martin-Jones & Joan Pujolar. (2016). Available in hard copy or as an e-book from www.routledge.com.

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