DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 425 276 CE 077 453

AUTHOR	Macrae, Helen, Ed.; Hazel, Valerie, Ed.
TITLE	Speaking Back Again. Report of the 1997 ACFE Research Forum.
INSTITUTION	Adult, Community, and Further Education Board, Melbourne (Australia).
ISBN	ISBN-0-7311-1801-4
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	52p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Adult Education Resource and Information Service, Language Australia, GPO Box 372F, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Access to Education; *Adult Education; Art Education; Articulation (Education); *Community Education; Community Programs; Corporate Education; Delivery Systems; Education Work Relationship; Educational Administration; Educational Needs; Educational Practices; *Educational Research; Foreign Countries; Literacy Education; Mental Disorders; Older Adults; Outcomes of Education; Postsecondary Education; Rural Areas; Rural Education; Speech Communication; *Theory Practice Relationship; Unemployment; Vocational Education; Womens Education; Youth Employment; Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia

ABSTRACT

This document contains 15 papers from a research forum on adult, community, and further education (ACFE) in Australia. The following papers are included: "The Prioress, the Wife of Bath and the ACFE Researcher" (Kaye Schofield); "Learning Communities, Researching Communities" (Martin Yarnit); "Young Unemployed People in Adult Community Education Project" (Sue Chamberlain, Ian Hughes); "Older People with Special Needs" (Judith Elsworth); "Working with Adult Learners with Psychiatric Disabilities" (Laurence Kerr); "Not So Naive: The Multi-skilling of Women through Naive Art" (Linden Dean); "Employee Development Programs" (Matt Seeary); "Best Practices for Delivery of ACE [Adult Community Education] Programs to the Koorie Community" (Linda Wilkinson); "Impact Study of Language and Literacy Skills" (Nadia Casarotto, Pam Dickinson); "Rural Workers: Accessing Training and Further Education" (Ann Cliff); "Oracy in a Community Setting" (Elizabeth Taylor, Andrea Murray); "Pathways between ACE and VET [Vocational Education and Training]: Creating Illusions and Shattering Myths" (Allie Clemans, Peter Rushbrook); "Listening from the Heart: Can Research Have Soul?" (John Bottomley); "Good, Better, Best Management Practices in ACE" (Pauline Bennet); and "Getting the ACFE Research Question Right" (Helen Praetz). (MN)

Adult, Community and
Further Education Board

Speaking Back Again

Report of the 1997 ACFE Research Forum

SPEAKING BACK AGAIN

Report of the 1997 ACFE Research Forum

People increasingly feel a need for security, relationships, meaning, recognition, belonging, affiliation and they want a strengthened sense of citizenship with the rights, duties and obligations and entitlements that accompany it. This is where adult, community and further education has its greatest contribution to make, and it must make it. We need to conceptualise research which explores the relationship between the social need for active citizenship in this complex and fast changing society of ours and the capacity of adult education to provide a place where skills for active citizenship can be developed, to build the capacity of society and communities to drive the economy rather than the reverse and where conflicting views about the future can be reconciled.

Kaye Schofield

The ACE sector is well placed to engage in strategic research because it has a clear and persuasive idea of its own identity and of the values that animate it. These are very robust and enduring values and they centre around three key ideas or cornerstones - the student, the programs, and the community. Focussing on these three areas will generate the right research questions, the strategic research questions which have the capacity to advance adult education in the community.

Helen Praetz

SPEAKING BACK AGAIN

The Victorian Adult, Community and Further Education Board's 1997 Research Forum.

ISBN 0 7311 1801 4

This report has been compiled from documentation provided by presenters at the 1997 ACFE Board's Research Forum.

Edited by Helen Macrae and Valerie Hazel

ACFE Board 1998

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Introduction

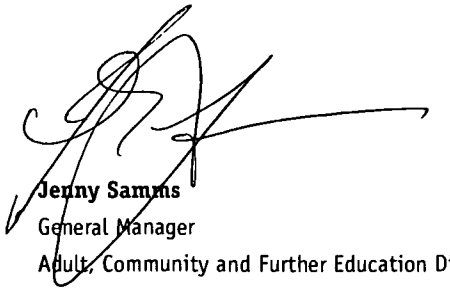
Speaking Back Again was the second research forum of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board. It marked a major advance in the Board's efforts to build a research culture for ACFE, which commenced in the previous year at the first research conference.

Held as part of the Adult Learners Week celebrations in 1997, Speaking Back Again focussed clearly on learners - embracing their diversity and their differing needs. As such, it demonstrated the fundamental values of adult education in the community - centring on the learner and education, reflecting community interest and ownership, valuing diversity and supporting adaptive, responsive and innovative learning opportunities.

This report gives an indication not only of the dynamic and thought provoking approaches to research in adult and community education but also of its richness. It shows the ways in which research can be woven into the fabric of everyday adult education, integrated with practice, and related to real questions and the experiences of learners and practitioners.

Research of this kind provides the basis of understanding which is necessary for the realisation of values and a vision for adult education in the community through policy and work practices.

Just like The Canterbury Tales on which the keynote address was based, this report takes us on an interesting journey, arriving ultimately back at the beginning with consideration of the questions to which we seek answers through our research.



Jenny Samms
General Manager
Adult, Community and Further Education Division

Opening Address

The Prioress, the Wife of Bath and the ACFE Researcher

Kaye Schofield

Introduction

For those of you who are not intimate with Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, let me explain the title. The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories set within a framing story about a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral where Saint Thomas à Becket is buried. The group of around 25 pilgrims which assembled outside London for the journey to Canterbury was a microcosm of 14th century society, with a Knight, a Prioress, a Plowman, a Miller, a Physician, a Parson and a Carpenter among their number. A story-telling contest amongst the pilgrims helps pass the time.

While feminism is not an historically portable term, and we should not impose 20th century views of the world on the world of the 14th century, nevertheless, the rise of new, innovative, gendered approaches to research have allowed us to read the Prioress's Tale and, the Tale of the Wife of Bath in different ways, as satirical feminist statements about sexual double standards and the position of women in 14th century England. That's what good research can do. It can allow us to see new things, important things, even in the old and familiar.

For me, all research is like a pilgrimage, and those of us who contribute in any way to research in adult, community and further education are research pilgrims. But today, my pilgrims, unlike those of Chaucer, are not a microcosm of late 20th century Australian society, they are simply some dimensions of our society and the adult, community and further education community.

And with those words, let us ride forth on our way;
And the pilgrims began to speak, with right good cheer,
Their tales anon, as they are written here.

The First Student's Tale

I am luckier than a lot of my friends. I have a job. It doesn't pay terribly well but enough for us to get by. The children are now in high school and need me less. I go off to work, do my job, and go home. I do that five days a week, forty eight weeks a year. I want more than that out of life, I want a richer inner life. I want to be an active citizen in my community. I want to explore ideas, to be allowed space to think and speculate and imagine all sorts of possibilities and I can do that though enrolling in ACFE courses. My family thinks I am a bit weird doing courses like philosophy but it is the only way I can learn new and interesting things, things that satisfy my curiosity, my hunger to know more.

In the courses I do, I read about basic research which stimulates curiosity, which speculates about or proposes hypotheses and I think that sort of research should be supported in all areas of society, including adult education. Why should universities be the only places which are given social permission to do basic research while all the rest of research in lots of different fields are supposed to do applied research? For example, I would really like to know what would happen if there were no adult and community education sector. I would like to know why more women than men enrol in adult education overall. I would like to know whether life-long learning is just a new-fangled idea to try and dress up adult education in new clothing. I would also like to know why politicians pay lip-service to adult education but really think it is all a bit irrelevant.

The real problem I have with adult, community and further education research that I see is that it seems more interested in getting short-term data to support pre-determined conclusions, rather than a genuine attempt to speculate about the future, and help us develop a point of view about the future.

The Second Student's Tale

I can't afford university and, even if I could, I probably wouldn't get in. The local TAFE Institute quietly tries to discourage wheelchair users from enrolling, re-directing us to the local Neighbourhood Centre and that's what happened to me. My parents worry about me constantly, and I want to become more independent from them and to do that I need a job that pays enough for me to support myself. What I need right now is useful skills and my goal is a job as a result.

I am not an interesting welfare case, I am a person who wants a job. I am sick to death of being researched. Every time I turn around, some agency or another wants me or my parents to complete a questionnaire, to participate in a focus group, to do interviews and so on and frankly I am jack of it. How much research has to be done on how a paraplegic can use technology in the workplace before you actually see wheelchair users in the workplace. I want funds to go to services for people with disabilities, to getting job placements, not being thrown

at professional people who want to do yet more research that no-one ever reads or takes any notice of but which politicians love to launch as a photo opportunity.

The First Tutor's Tale

Sorry to sound so frustrated. I have been a practitioner in a remote area for ten years and for the past twelve months have been able to do research in the field. What the research confirms is that people everywhere have been saying the same things, some things are even reflected in policy but nothing changes on the ground. The issue is how to effect change, not so much what to recommend.

The Second Tutor's Tale

Frankly, I have enough to do trying to help my students, completing the increasingly onerous administrative tasks, filling out evaluation sheets for all the different funding bodies and so on. I want to make a difference with my students, I want them to learn and have fun doing it. The research that I only occasionally see is not able to help tutors like me much with that. It all seems to be focused on influencing policy and funding decisions. The questions I have don't get on the research agendas. I want to know how could I do a better job of planning and developing my course. Which teaching methods work better with which students and why? If I try to use new learning technologies, will that undermine the interpersonal and interactive relationships in adult, community and further education that I really value? These are the questions I want to know about and research programs decided in the centre seem deaf to my concerns. I guess the only way to get the research I want done is to do it myself. But I don't feel really confident about becoming a researcher and, anyway, I have enough to do as it is.

The Academic's Tale

I realise that research itself is under threat in our university, or rather publicly funded research and basic research as distinct from so-called applied research. Applied research is becoming code for commercial research with a specific practical application in mind from a specific funding source.

Despite all the rhetoric from the Commonwealth that universities should do research as well as teach and contribute to the cultural life of Australia, the only concern is about funding. The only vision for higher education is a bulging cash register and the exploitation of international students in the name of the trade deficit. Higher education is being swamped by corporate managerialism. I know I am viewed by the managerialists as a left-over from the seventies, an academic who has not been able to move on into the nineties and beyond. But I know I am right. I know our society is increasingly impoverished by the lack of intellectual debate and the constructive community ferment that arises from informed views about how the world works.

It remains a real struggle for adult, community and further education to be accepted in this university. The humanities generally, and education in particular don't have a high priority in the current research climate, and where they do, the only interest is in whether they can generate revenue from commercial sources. Increasingly, I am presented with quite traumatic ethical dilemmas. I must keep faith with the core values of adult education, but management pressures to cut corners is enormous. This is especially hard when I am doing commercial research for funding bodies who expect me to deliver the results they want, rather than the results from the research.

What the university and the government really wants to know is how a wind-back of publicly funded education can be effected and how responsibility for funding adult education can be transferred from the public purse to individual citizens and to communities.

I want to teach but I also want to do my own research on issues raised by my students and I want to do collaborative research. I want to work with colleagues around Australia and internationally. Australia is a pretty limited gene pool. I want to do big research, not micro-scale projects that shed a tiny light on one aspect of a big problem. We need to think beyond state and national boundaries in our research thinking. The university likes the general idea of collaborative research but only if it helps us win the research dollar. Today, we collaborate so we can be competitive in the research market. In the bad old days, we used to collaborate because it led to better research.

I don't want to do any more research on VET in ACE, but that's the only place where there are research funds these days. So that's what I do. And teach. And worry.

The Politician's Tale: On-the-Record

Adult, community & further education plays a vital role in society, in communities and in post-school education and training. Therefore, like schools, VET and Higher education, it is important for us to understand how this sector works and how it could work better. We know that the sector is able to reach individuals and groups that other sectors find it hard to reach. We know that the

sector makes a significant contribution not only to the lives of thousands of Australians, but to communities throughout the country. My commitment to life-long learning is unshaken. But to make this a reality, we need research. We need practical research. We need research which informs our policies. We need to understand about the needs of women in our community and the role adult education does and can play in their lives and their communities. We need research into the learning needs of disadvantaged groups so that we can serve them better. This is the research my government will support.

The Palitician's Tale: Off-the-Record

Frankly, irrespective of what I think about the adult, community and further education sector, and about the role of research in the sector, I have a snowflake's chance in hell of getting my parliamentary colleagues interested in this matter. Apart from the general fact that education, despite its enormous claim on the state and national budget, is not glamorous, it's not where the top end of town plays. Tourism and arts are the fun portfolios, police and corrections the vote-winners and the economic portfolios are the ones which give greatest prestige. That's not a politician's doing, it's the community's perceptions about what matters.

In the education portfolio itself, higher education is what counts at national level and schooling is what counts at state level. VET and adult and community education are not politically sensitive areas so politicians don't really fuss too much about them, although it is easier to make a photo-story out of VET and attract budget funding than out of adult education, which is full of women doing community type things.

I am sure that research is important in education, especially in schooling , but frankly its not half as important to me as polling. Polling tells us what the community thinks and we tailor our policies accordingly. We don't build policy on research. So, while some money directed to funding research in adult education won't do any harm, and will probably appease the adult education lobby, it's not really likely, of itself, to result in new policies for adult education, except where the results fit with what we wanted to do anyway.

The Policy-Maker's Tale

I am constantly pulled in different directions and find it challenging but terribly wearing.

If I am to do my job properly and support the development of adult and community education, I need to convince government and funding agencies of the value of adult education - never an easy task at the best of times and increasingly difficult in these times where economists rule the western world. So I need to support research which can help me justify funding to the sector, that can help me to get government to appreciate the value of adult education. I have tried social justice rationales and they don't seem to cut much ice. I have tried instrumental rationales about multi-skilled work forces and vocational education. These work a bit. I have tried rationales provided by economists about the responsibilities of the individual and the cost-effectiveness of the adult education sector. These seem to carry some weight.

We need research for lots of different reasons. We need to know about teaching and learning in the sector. We need to know more about differences within the sector, not just treating it as a homogenous entity.

But every time I mount these arguments I feel sick. I feel I am helping to distort the fundamental principles and values which should guide adult education. Principles about life-long learning, about community development, about democratic participation, about racial diversity and cultural harmony.

These dilemmas play themselves out when I have to work out how to handle research in adult education. I know research is essential for the future of adult education. We need research for lots of different reasons. We need to know about teaching and learning in the sector. We need to know more about differences within the sector, not just treating it as a homogenous entity. We need to understand about funding models, what model is more likely to support the development of the sector. We need to know more about governance and structures which best facilitate good governance. I know that governments are sceptical about the value of research in and about adult and community education, and I know that any research we support has to appear practical and directly linked to policy formulation. But equally I know that there are many basic research issues that need to be addressed, not just the pragmatic policy and practice issues.

The sort of research program we need is hard to define because of the different stakeholders involved and the different research questions they want to pose. My

challenge is to find a way forward with research which keeps faith with the sector but does not seem too esoteric or off the planet to politicians and funding bodies.

The Navigator's Tale

All very well, says the Navigator. All my fellow pilgrim's who have told their tale so far, have explained what they want from ACFE research. But Chaucer's pilgrims all knew their destination and why they were going there. Do we all know where we are going, are we all going to the same place, and do we know why we are going there.

As the Navigator, I am supposed to help pilgrims to a destination, not decide the destination for them. I cannot make pilgrims go anywhere, they have to want to go there themselves, and they have to decide whether they want to go there together or go individually.

All I can do is tell you a tale about where I would go if I had to choose a destination, and why I would want to go there.

Adult, community and further education can travel to places that other educational sectors cannot go. It is still freer from government control and influence than any other sector and needs to use its freedom wisely. Much of public VET is locked into narrow policies based on instrumentalist premises which may eventually strangle the sector. Higher education is locked into its own internal power struggles and struggles with the government about funding and government intervention so that intellectual freedom is endangered and intellectual leadership from Australian universities is fast receding. Schools are trying to work out if their job is to do anything else but ensure we can all read and write and prepare job applications.

Research about adult, community and further education needs to meet four fundamental challenges.

First, it needs to make a difference to practice. It needs to inform teaching and learning in ways which are helpful to teachers and learners. It needs to inform policy-makers at all levels, to improve the governance of adult education. To do this, a new, innovative and systematic approach to undertaking and disseminating research findings is needed.

Second, it needs to keep the confidence of governments who, by and large, will have to continue to fund research in the sector. The confidence of government grows not simply from big quantitative studies full of tables proving the value of adult education, nor from detailed analyses of funding arrangements, although both of these are important. But confidence can also be developed by strengthening the ability of communities to speak directly to government, through good, creative, ethical and long-term research. Governments need to truly understand how angry, resentful and unhappy middle Australia is about politicians and governments and their handling of educational policies and programs, and what they want from them not as consumers or purchasers but as citizens.

Third, it needs to keep the confidence of communities, so that they see value in investing in research. It needs to locate local research within a wider research framework to avoid parochialism, while retaining strong links to the communities which generate the knowledge. Communities rapidly become disillusioned with being a research laboratory, especially when they see that research does not lead to any significant change or does not make any difference to what happens in adult, community and further education or how it happens.

Fourth, the times are right for adult education research to make a conscious assault on the narrow economism which eats at the heart of our humanism, without looking like we want to return to some glorious past. Economism is an insidious disease rampant in Australia today. It supports Margaret Thatcher's view that there is no such thing as society, just an economy. This means that questions about values (apart from the terribly misused phrase ëfamily-values'), have been pushed off the agenda by economic statistics. So many of our opinion-leaders, if they have the courage to speak out against Pauline Hanson at all, do so in terms of the effect of racism on our trade with Asia, not in terms of dearly held values about a fair go for all Australians. Questions about ethics in education become distorted into the ethics of educational export.

Adult, community and further education can travel to places that other educational sectors cannot go. It is still freer from government control and influence than any other sector and needs to use its freedom wisely.

More and more, social commentators are highlighting the mood out there in communities all around Australia. People increasingly feel a need for security, relationships, meaning, recognition, belonging, affiliation and

they want a strengthened sense of citizenship with the rights, duties and obligations and entitlements that accompany it. This is where adult, community and further education has its greatest contribution to make, and it must make it. We need to conceptualise research which explores the relationship between the social need for active citizenship in this complex and fast changing society of ours and the capacity of adult education to provide a place where skills for active citizenship can be developed, to build the capacity of society and communities to drive the economy rather than the reverse and where conflicting views about the future can be reconciled. After all, research tells us that

...if the cultural contexts for ordinary daily decisions about such things as work, schooling and personal 'investment' are too strongly eroded, anxiety and moral panic will fill the vacuum and spill over into social conflicts and scapegoating.

I could have taken you a different and perhaps neater route today. I could have given you a scenic tour of Everyperson's research strategy, thrown in a few research priorities, stressed the importance of qualitative research and offered a couple of tried and true research recipes to take away. But our social fabric, like the ozone layer, has got holes in it and I think adult education can, with the help of creative and rigorous research, help mend some of them.

Finally

Being a research pilgrim means travelling to unknown places. Travelling with different people, even strangers. Taking risks. Seeing new things, not trying to fit them into existing ways of seeing but, rather, trying to find new ways of seeing things and seeing more. Being clear about how much there is to learn along the way. Being clear how we learn from each other as we go. The challenge is an intellectual one to which all pilgrims can make a contribution. The issues facing research pilgrims are political and cultural not economic. Research in adult, community and further education needs to help each and all of us find our pilgrim soul.

Here ends my tale. Thank you for accompanying me.

For me, all research is like a pilgrimage, and those of us who contribute in any way to research in adult, community and further education are research pilgrims. But today, my pilgrims, unlike those of Chaucer, are not a microcosm of late 20th century Australian society, they are simply some dimensions of our society and the adult, community and further education community.

1. Learning Communities, Researching Communities

Martin Yarnit

[The following is an edited transcript of Martin Yarnit's presentation to the Forum]

Yesterday was the launch of Adult Learners' Week in Canberra. It was a rather exciting and bizarre event. This morning we heard the Minister wonder whether he could be an exciting speaker; well the Commonwealth Minister of Education was pretty exciting because he entered the arena on a camel. I think there was a fear that with the contending news items unless he did enter on a camel then Adult Learners' Week wouldn't make it onto the news.

This morning I am going to discuss a piece of research that we're about to do in the United Kingdom on the effectiveness of learning cities, learning towns, learning communities as a way of promoting education, learning, and dare I say it, enlightenment as well.

Ignorance in numeracy and literacy is a tremendous drag on society. It threatens us with social breakdown but it also holds back the development of the economy and society and it has enormous social costs.

These are exciting times for us in England as far as education is concerned; the Prime Minister Tony Blair said that for him the top three priorities of his government were going to be Education, Education, and Education. Every one of us who works in education agrees with that statement, although we might disagree about the order of priorities. What we need to get clear is the relationship between the different parts of the education system, and particularly the relationship between school and post-school education.

We have seen a welter of educational initiatives since the government came to power and indeed a lot of people think that the government hasn't slept since the 1st of May. We've had already a White Paper on Schools, we'll have a White Paper on Lifelong Learning in the beginning of November, and we've also had two major reports on Further Education and Higher Education. The report on Further Education, the Cinderella sector in the UK, has been produced by Helena Kennedy, an eminent lawyer who was commissioned to produce a report on widening participation in Further Education. Her report produces some intelligent and sharp recommendations, but also addresses the social issues connected with education. It considers the future of our society, the role that education can play in creating a saner society, and the creation of a society which people feel they have a meaningful part.

The notion of the learning city arose out of the wreckage of economic and social policy in Britain in the 10-15 years. It is a notion which you wouldn't have heard at all in the early 90s. It has arisen relatively recently because of two things that have been going on. The first is that economic change has been speeding up and is producing a clear dislocation in our society. There is a growing degree of social exclusion expressed in terms of poverty, family breakdown and unemployment. The second thing which has been happening at the same time is that as society and the economy has moved on, and there has been a growing sense that our learning system as a whole has not been keeping pace, but is becoming increasingly obsolete.

One of the problems we face in the UK is that we have an elitist education system. We have one of the smaller proportions of young people going into higher education of the major OECD countries, and, at the other end of the scale, we have one of the highest levels of school failure.

Let me give you an example from Sheffield, my current home town, a town in the industrial midlands. In recent years we've seen 10% of 16 year olds leaving school without any qualification at all. Ten percent. And that number has been increasing. Every year something like 600-650 young people, the majority of them boys, are coming out of school without one single qualification.

Not only do we have a large proportion of our people leaving school without qualifications, but those people on the whole don't go back to formal education after they've left school. I'm sure this is a situation which is very familiar to you. We have some important groups of non-participants, and we have been struggling to find ways of relating more effectively to those groups: unemployed people, under-qualified people, single parents (predominantly women), black people, people with disabilities and so on. Low paid workers are also an important group of non-participants.

Ignorance in numeracy and literacy is a tremendous drag on society. It threatens us with social breakdown but it

also holds back the development of the economy and society and it has enormous social costs. In our country we spend the equivalent of $40,000 per year keeping someone in prison. We are increasingly resorting to prison ships to keep them in prison. We haven't yet got to the point which California has, where its prison and corrective budget is just about to overtake in size its higher education budget. California, by the way, has one of the best university systems anywhere in the world.

These are dramatic developments. One of the responses to these has been the notion of the learning city. I can best explain what the idea means if I talk a little about how the idea arose in Sheffield.

Sheffield is an industrial city, traditionally, although rather less so now. We actually make more cutlery and we make more specialist steel than we ever did, but of course there are 30,000 fewer people making it than there were 10 years ago. The city must increasingly be seen not as an industrial city in the traditional sense, but as a city which is dominated by two different industries: one of them is health, the biggest single employer in the city, and the other is education. When we took stock of our position early in the 1990s, we came to the view that education was perhaps our best bet for the future. We have two big universities, oversubscribed universities, 10 potential students for every place in the University of Sheffield, and we have what is regarded as perhaps the biggest college for post-16 work anywhere in Europe. This is an important and growing sector of our local economy and it obviously has an important contribution to make to our local society as well. We decided that we have to focus on education, we have to see it as an industrial sector in its own right, and we have to think very clearly about the ways in which that sector could contribute to the overall social and economic development of the city.

This is the nub of the idea of the learning city.

A learning city, as well as having a concentration on the way in which education and training can contribute to overall economic and social development in the city, is also about an entitlement to learning and education and training. It is about setting out very clearly what people's entitlements are, how they get into the system and how they're supported through it. But it is also more broadly a commitment to promoting community involvement and building the capacities of communities to develop their own interests and their own concerns, their own projects. Above all, it is about promoting the ability of communities to control the way in which education and training, is delivered to them, so that they begin to shape it rather than have it imposed upon them.

A number of cities and smaller communities in the UK have seen the learning city as a way forward, not just for educational development but more generally for the development of the society as a whole. We recently created a network of learning cities which currently has 12 affiliates and perhaps another 10 cities which are in the process of moving into membership. These are cities which range in size: Birmingham, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Sheffield, Derby, as well as some smaller communities. One of our key issues for the coming year is to find out whether the idea and the apparatus of the learning city makes any difference. Does it actually contribute to economic and social development? Does it contribute to tackling the problem of large numbers of young people leaving school without qualifications. Does it contribute to creating ways of resolving some of the social and economic problems of our society, by enlightening people. Does it create a saner society?

A learning city is about promoting the ability of communities to control the way in which education and training, is delivered to them, so that they begin to shape it rather than have it imposed upon them.

These research issues could be tackled on the one hand by quantitative methods - we can very easily see whether fewer people are leaving school without qualifications at all. But how do you tackle the problem of seeing whether a learning city makes any difference to the sense of involvement of its most disadvantaged communities.

The relationship between social and economic development underpins our approach. We spend a lot of time in educational, social and economic policy talking about the downward spiral, the vicious circle of events, and one of those vicious circles is the way in which people are leaving school without qualifications. Those are the kinds of people who will have children who leave school without qualifications, and so on. But is there an opposite direction of development? Is there a virtuous circle which leads us upwards?

There is still a tendency to talk about life-long learning as if really it is about learning after school, but we need to look at the education system as a whole, at learning

as a whole, from cradle to grave, and for that reason we have started to talk rather less about adult education and more about life-long learning. Adult education is part of the compartmentalisation of learning which we have in most education systems, and one of the key ideas of the learning city is that we need to break down that compartmentalisation. One of the things which holds back non-participants is their sheer bewilderment at the way in which education is organised and presented to them. People who have dropped out of school and are thinking of coming back into education later on in life are not particularly interested to know whether education is organised by an authority which is responsible for vocational education and training, or whether it is responsible for adult and community education. What they want is a seamless and easy progression into and through education with the optimum amount of support. So we don't talk in the UK about Adult Education Week, we talk about Adult Learners' Week, and I suspect if we were launching it now we might even call it Lifelong Learning Week.

One of the most effective ways of encouraging people back into learning, either for the first time or sometimes for the second time, is when people who have been through that path themselves are involved.

There are two or three themes on which our research will focus. In her report, Helena Kennedy puts forward two key recommendations. The first one is that every city and in every locality must focus on strategic partnership. This is the coalition of education and training providers. Adult Learners' Week is one of the forums which has provided an incentive for people to come together, to develop common programs of activity, and to mount neutral, impartial programs of guidance for potential students as well.

Yesterday in a very interesting seminar in Canberra, we were told about the way in which four Colleges have decided to share their resources and to put forward a common offer of education and training in their part of Canberra, and they told us about some of the benefits. One of the benefits is clearly that students find it much easier to go to any one of those centres, see the same course profile and have to fill in just one form to attend any of the courses at any of the Colleges. From the point of view of the Colleges, they've seen the sheer cost of producing their brochures come down by 40 percent. That's a perfect example of the way in which Adult Learners' Week has provided very good reasons for providers to come together and to think more clearly about the ways in which they can streamline and coordinate their activities. That's the idea of the strategic partnership.

The second idea that Helena Kennedy puts forward is the idea of pathways to learning. This idea will be immediately obvious to all of us who have tried to advise potential students, returnees to learning, how to get through the system. I understand that the current Australian government has been thinking about modeling its qualification system on the British qualification system. This would be a disaster to say the least. Our qualification system is a mixture of the incomprehensible and the undesirable. It is incomprehensible because we have so many piecemeal developments which have grown up over time and which have never been sorted out. And it is undesirable because so much of it is based on a form of competency assessment which relegates thinking and enlightenment to a very low status.

The notion of pathways through learning is a very important one because it is about encouraging us as providers and as people close to students to think about the best ways in which we can promote local education and training systems so that people who are unfamiliar to, unfamiliar with and frightened of education and learning, can find their way through.

One of the things that a research project about learning cities has got to do is to see whether it is true that a strategic partnership actually offers any added value. Does it make any difference? Does coordinating and channelling our resources in a common direction make any difference? Are we more effective in bringing people back to education who would otherwise have lost out on it? Similarly questions can be asked of pathways to learning. Is there any evidence that sorting out the pathways, making them clearer, devising simpler maps of ways through the education system, is there any evidence that this makes any difference to traditional non-participants? Do we actually have larger numbers of people coming into and staying in education than we did before?

One of the most effective ways of encouraging people back into learning, either for the first time or sometimes for the second time, is when people who have been

through that path themselves are involved, employed in doing that kind of work. Increasingly we're looking towards developing local teams of community education workers who are themselves former non-participants. We want to see whether those community education workers can work alongside disadvantaged groups in the communities to help them to formulate their demands on the education and training system. We want to see whether in that way we can induce a degree of accountability into our education and training system that we currently don't have.

Our learning city research has the full support of the British Department for Education and Employment, which is very keen to see itself whether this is going to be an effective way forward. One of the first acts of the new government was to set up a national advisory group on life-long learning, and part of the remit of that group is to look at the future of learning cities and learning Communities. I expect within the next year learning cities will probably enter legislation for the first time.

We have said to the people currently tendering for this research project that what we want is a kind of tool kit. We are not looking for a kind of sophisticated research which only very well funded cities and communities are going to be able to afford. We're looking for a tool kit which could be used by relatively under-funded cities and communities, which would enable them in their own time and at their own pace, with no resources, to do some effective work.

I hope that if you invite me back in about a year's time, I'll be able to tell you what the results of this piece of work are, and to be able to give you some indication whether there is evidence that the learning city actually makes a difference. I'll be able to indicate whether it increases the numbers of people coming into education, and whether it enables cities and towns more effectively to use learning to resolve difficult and intractable problems

Thank you.

2. Young Unemployed People in Adult Community Education Project

Sue Chamberlain *PRACE*
Ian Hughes *Northern Metropolitan Region of ACFE*

Research Question

In partnership with the City of Darebin, Preston Reservoir Adult Community and Education (PRACE) undertook research into young unemployed people in Adult Community Education (ACE) as part of a state-wide project. This project involved using action based learning pilot projects in community based providers in order to develop recommendations for system wide implementation. The specific research undertaken by PRACE aimed to evaluate a Pilot Program for young unemployed people and to draw up recommendations for other practitioners and deliverers.

Issues that are particular to young people as adult learners need to be acknowledged if client driven focus is to be realistic.

Background

PRACE had been actively involved in programming for young people in the region since 1994 and has networked and collaborated with youth agencies to provide the following successful programs for young people:

Learner's Permit (Driver Education)
Textiles Arts Graphics and Screenprinting
Youth Landscape and Literacy
Young Women and Technology
Youth Retail Course

Dianne Millett and Sue Chamberlain job shared the project worker position for the duration of the Pilot Program. Both had either taught in and/or designed several of the courses mentioned above. Sue's experience in youth programming stems from a writing and community project management background dating back to the mid 1980s and Dianne came to this project from an arts teaching and retail trade background.

The Darebin Retail and Arts Project, as the pilot project became known, was conducted in the City of Darebin shop front training facility at Northland Shopping Centre between April and August 1997.

Pilot project statistics

Course Structure:	10 weeks x 3 days per week
Location:	Northland Shopping Centre (Retail) City of Darebin Youth Resource Centre (Arts)
Curriculum:	Jobskills Retail Community Arts Computers
Students Initially Referred:	22
Students who Actually Started	12
Average Weekly Attendance	7
Outcomes:	Referral to TAFE x 2 Still attempting to secure traineeships x 3 Casual employment x 1

The project provided an opportunity to build on existing knowledge of youth delivery. It gave PRACE an opportunity to address issues arising from previous programs, for example absenteeism, drop out rates, curriculum mix of generic and vocations skills (retail and arts). The project provided a structure to critically analyse PRACE's delivery of programs to youth. It provided the mechanism to share their experience of youth delivery with other ACE providers who may not have the experience they do in youth-specific delivery. PRACE was able to further explore and extend our regional networks, for example with retail traders, and was able to enhance meaningful pathways for this client group by linking labour market programs and broader adult learning streams.

Discussion

Several issues emerged as a direct consequence of researching a program that PRACE was also delivering. Having research elements embedded in the delivery created for those working on it a more complex, cumbersome and difficult structure than they had presumed entering into the program delivery phase of the project. It highlighted existing difficulties in their working relations with non ACE agencies in the delivery of programs to young unemployed people. For example, differences between the local Council's regional agenda and their own educational agenda within the region

raised ongoing issues surrounding priorities, ownership, and accountability processes and procedures for the duration of the project.

In testing and trialing different approaches and delivery models within a pilot framework they created a new set of difficulties. For example, to address issues of open access they constructed a rolling intake structure, only to find that they had not constructed a workable protocol for catching students up on material they had missed if they joined the course after the commencement date.

The project combined vocational and generic skills (retail and community arts). Some staff with vocational training experience had difficulty understanding the relevance of the community arts component and either intentionally or unintentionally undermined its value. This affected student confidence in the direction of the program.

Support for young persons needs to go beyond the course. This may mean building long term relationships with young people as they gain all the skills necessary to build a pathway to employment and sustain it. This means employing notions of pastoral care.

Although staff were professionals who brought to the program particular areas of expertise, they had not necessarily taught or constructed curriculum and assessment tasks in accordance with CGAE criteria.

Findings

- Here is a list of observations about the unemployed young people who have accessed our recent and previous programs:
- Issues that are particular to young people as adult learners need to be acknowledged if client driven focus is to be realistic;
- Classroom behaviours may be challenging. This does not necessarily reflect an unwillingness to learn but rather reflects strategies, habits and behaviours developed to disguise a lack of literacy and learning skills;
- Teachers may be seen as authority figures and resented. In the past, clients may have experienced teachers as disciplinarians rather than supporters of the learning process;
- If the client is an early school leaver, school failures may be a recent experience affecting self confidence and may contribute to preconceived expectations of failure;
- Literacy (particularly skills in reading and writing) may be seen as measures of intelligence rather than as a skill the participants has yet to reach competency in. Clients assume that "I must be dumb because I can't do this" rather than "I have not mastered this skill yet";
- Refugee and homeless students may not have parental influence out of training hours, which may adversely affect their punctuality, motivation, and their ability to see a long term future;
- Some students show a reluctance to attend at all and refuse to do activities, especially if the student participant feels they have been forced into education and training. Teachers need to explore strategies for dealing with clients who are in the classroom and only attending so that they don't lose their benefits;
- Even at the end of the course, participants may have no idea what they want to do for work;
- The majority of adult learners in ACE programs are there by choice. They often have other life experiences that can give confidence if their literacy skills are low. But young participants do not have as many life experiences to draw on, thereby increasing their sense of failure;
- Financial issues may mean that students do not have appropriate clothing for a vocational course with a work experience component;
- Lack of classroom skills is a literacy and basic education issue and does not necessarily reflect a participant who does not want to learn;
- Listening skills are often very low in this group, whereas adult learners can have highly developed listening skills (because of lack of literacy, they have accessed information that way for years);
- Literacy for youth encompasses learning skills, personal presentation, critical analysis of individual participation (am I achieving what I enrolled to achieve), self discipline, concentration, self esteem, organisational skills, and goal setting;

- There can be out of class issues affecting performance, commitment and attendance, for example homelessness, family breakdown, poverty, relationship issues;
- Support for young persons needs to go beyond the course. This may mean building long term relationships with young people as they gain all the skills necessary to build a pathway to employment and sustain it. This means employing notions of pastoral care;
- There are further relationship skills which affect classroom interaction which need consideration: racism, attitudes to disability, aggression, gender issues;
- Attitudes to learning and notions of discipline should focus on codes of conduct for participants which emphasise freedom of choice. Discipline should shift from "if you don't behave this way you are off the course" to "you are disrupting the learning process of others - take time out, regroup, and rejoin." Adult education is learning by choice, not by force or threat of discipline;
- Young people are individuals, not a group. Teachers must learn to relate to them as such, understanding the particular and specific issues facing each young person;
- Young unemployed people can be tertiary educated but may lack skills to secure employment; and
- Poverty and basic nutrition are sometimes important issues. Classroom concentration suffers if a young person comes to the course each day without any money to purchase food.

Currently PRACE is developing its next youth retail course, and the feedback, findings and issues emerging from this program have been incorporated into the design and delivery of our next retail course. For example in the last course a series of computer classes were offered to participants as an introduction to technology. They were poorly attended so this time they are going to embed computers into the jobskills component. This is a responsive move to coincide with the computerisation of job listings.

Feedback from private case managers indicated that they were happy to refer clients if they feel they are being show-cased to potential employers. Besides a two week work experience component in this course PRACE arranged a weekly industry tour and a retail trader provided weekly classroom visits to offer an employer perspective on a range of issues.

Comments from staff revealed how nervous and self conscious students were in the initial training sessions. Precious classroom time was lost making students feel relaxed. This time we incorporated an orientation day, including an informal lunch and gathering with staff, retail traders and students to address those issues.

Future programs need to acknowledge the diversity of skills, abilities, aspirations and goals of individual young people accessing ACE programs.

Some issues arising from this course are still under discussion. These include:

- one to one interviews prior to the commencement of the course to clarify the student's personal aims and to clarify protocols for acceptance onto the course;
- addressing concerns regarding selection criteria; and
- assessment of job readiness or commitment to completing the course.

It was also felt that

- a course coordinator may be preferable to a top heavy steering committee structure;
- a shorter work experience component with follow up classroom feedback in the final week may be preferable to a weekly work experience support session;
- a numeracy component should be included in retail training; and
- from the point of view of staff travelling time, a whole day session would be preferred to the current system of two tutors per day.

The following is an overview of issues concerning delivery of adult community education to unemployed young people. Future programs must take into consideration the need to:

- understand the differences between young adult learners and other adult learners;
- acknowledge the diversity of skills, abilities, aspirations and goals of individual young people accessing ACE programs;

- create local and regional industry networks to ensure vocational training programs reflect industry needs and create meaningful pathways to employment for unemployed young people;
- develop mechanisms and structures to ensure a long term commitment to unemployed young people at a state, regional and provider level;
- provide professional development and appropriate training for providers inexperienced in working with unemployed young people;
- incorporate life long learning philosophies for this particular client group, for example, medium and long term tracking of program participants to ensure further education and/or retraining needs can be identified and provided;
- establish mechanisms to ensure that the direction of provision to unemployed young people offers broad educational opportunities, with a mix of vocational and generic programming;
- develop working relationships with secondary schools regionally and locally to build alternative and meaningful educational and training pathways for early school leavers;
- further analyse the current funding structures and staffing issues inherent in short term programming. The current structure assumes a readily available pool of casual professionals and does not reflect the real hours involved in supporting unemployed young people during an intensive course; and
- initiate sector-wide debate in response to government initiatives such as work for the dole scheme.

The above issues are not presented as a definitive list but reflect some of the issues which are contained in the report of this project, Young and ACE (ACFE Board, February, 1998).

3. Older People With Special Needs

Judith Elsworth
Hawthorn Community Education Project (HCEP)

There was once a number of Cinderellas who lived close to each other, but didn't know each other very well. So they felt isolated, housebound and alone.

They knew a ball was in progress but they didn't go.

They thought they were a bit 'past it' really.

They couldn't afford it and wouldn't fit in or know what to do anyway.

Socially ... what would they have in common with the people there?

It would be difficult to walk into a room full of strangers, if there was no one to go with.

Anyway, they couldn't get there, as transport was always a problem.

So, when they each thought about it, it was easier not to go!

This was the situation for a number of older people living in the Ministry of Housing Flats in East Hawthorn in 1987. But since then they have become involved in a community education program designed to meet their particular needs.

Our Cinderellas have a ball of their own.

The Research Question

The Hawthorn Community Education research exercise was to document a model of best practice in community education conducted at the William Tresise Centre, located at the Ministry flats. Designed specifically to meet the needs of those older people, this program challenged the opinion that older people not taking part in education programs (such as those offered by University of the Third Age - U3A) were just not interested. The research exercise was to investigate the key elements of the success of the program.

What was it that encouraged the Cinderellas to got to the ball after all?

For some time, HCEP has developed expertise and specialised in programs for older people. For instance, Learning for the Less Mobile, a program for frail and housebound people, has been operating since 1982. And no-one who was present would forget the sense of excitement generated at the public meeting in 1994, under the auspices of HCEP at the Hawthorn Library, which heralded the beginning of the U3A movement.

HCEP's aims and objectives are based on the important philosophy that older people should be encouraged and supported to be actively involved in all aspects of their own educational programs. The Hawthorn community can boast of a substantial older component willing to assist as volunteers in new projects in education. Hawthorn Community Education Project and U3A Hawthorn work in harmony to bring education to a wide range of older local residents and to share expertise and experience with others in the field.

Methodology

Older volunteers were recruited to take part and we were privileged to have Ms Ros Hurworth from the Centre for Program Evaluation at the University of Melbourne to advise us throughout the project. She conducted a workshop for our team, firstly to explore interview techniques and then to design an interview schedule. Our team then interviewed program participants, tutors, HCEP program staff and City Council personnel associated with the program. We also had a considerable amount of documentation to analyse - archival information and substantiating material such as minutes of meeting, press cuttings and class files collected over the years.

Findings

From the interviews we learned much more about the background of the current participants. For the majority, education was previously only identified with 'school'. It was interesting to note however, that despite the fact that most left school at fourteen or fifteen, they stated firmly that they "loved school." Generally, their early experiences of education had been positive. But they explained about the hurdles of disadvantage that they had experienced in their lives, such as the social and economic reasons behind their early departure from formal education.

We also identified key elements which contributed to the acceptance of the program.

Education went to the group, not the other way around

Access to the program was easy because classes were conducted on-site, at a regular time on a set day, with the subjects and tutors changing each semester.

The group decided what they would learn

The curriculum was negotiated each year so that the subjects were relevant to the participants and they developed a sense of proprietorship and empowerment. In the initial period subjects were directly related to the specific concerns of the participants, such as health, well-being, safety, and nutrition. Later, wider interests were uncovered, staff suggestions were discussed, and new subjects like arts and ornithology introduced.

Considerable time and effort outside class time went into program development

Strategically it was important for staff to build rapport; gaining trust took time. The sense of partnership between stakeholders in the program was a strong feature: ie between the participants, the HCEP staff and Council recreation and aged services staff.

Staff qualities and roles were vital ingredients

Staff working on the program were chosen for their ability to relate to older people. They empathised with older people due to awareness and experience of aged issues, thus facilitating early program development. The community worker (Council employee) on-site one day each week assisted greatly as a link with participants, allowing the program coordinator and tutors more time for administration and course content aspects.

Complete cost recovery was not a consideration

Participants were not in a financial situation to pay full fees for services. A nominal membership fee, craft requisite costs or afternoon-tea costs were forthcoming. But for a quality program to meet participant requests, it was necessary to pay professional tutors and staff. In some cases, tutors were happy to work voluntarily, but it was found essential to attract funding support for this client group.

On-going issues raised as a result of the research

- Uncertainty of continuation of the cooperative model, between stakeholders, in light of changed directions in Council services for older people;
- Coping with change is an issue because of the above, but also the very nature of the client group. Bereavement and serious illness of participants and the effect of any staff changes must be addressed and worked through with sensitivity;
- Time and costs of briefing new tutors and other staff has to be built in to costing. Rapport and trust must be developed;
- Men are not generally involved. They are numerically in a minority at the flats.

The Key Elements to the program in summary:

ACCESS

RELEVANCE

SENSE OF OWNERSHIP/GROUP MEMBERSHIP

SUPPORT TO REACH OUTCOMES

Results

The outcomes of the program were identified as of benefit far beyond the immediate stakeholders. The participants became a reference group for a number of learning programs to meet special needs in the wider community. Their opinions and input were very important to the development of the "Cooking Small, Eating Well" program of nutrition and small quantity cooking. In addition, the Museum Outreach Program trialed new courses with the group and they were Older Health Ambassadors for the Self Help Health Program. All these programs had State-wide implications.

Within the group a new appreciation of learning developed, along with a sense of identity and community. Feelings of greater enjoyment, confidence and well-being spilled over into daily lives. Older people began doing things previously unheard of. Their community involvement included membership of such bodies as the local Senior Citizens' Week Committee, the aged services and disability advisory bodies. Some have been writing their life stories as part of a writing project. Recently a member of the group, chosen to represent them, drove off in a taxi to attend the reception at Government House for Senior Citizen's Week.

As they waved goodbye, they all knew how Cinderella felt.

4. Working With Adult Learners With Psychiatric Disabilities

Laurence Kerr

Research Questions

In 1996 Preston Neighbourhood House initiated research which would assist in the development of effective principles and practices for participants with a psychiatric disability. The research was focussed by the following questions:

- Do people with a psychiatric disability want to access adult community education programs?
- How can access to adult community education programs be increased for this group?
- Are there any models or examples of curriculum and management that increase access to programs for people with a psychiatric disability?
- What is the quality of delivery of adult community education programs for this group?
- What resourcing and management issues need further development to ensure successful provision for people with a psychiatric disability?

The project aimed to document and develop effective principles and practices for those working with learners with a psychiatric disability.

Methodology

The Project Officer, Laurence Kerr, used two semi-structured questionnaires to gather data on issues affecting the inclusion of the target group within Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) funded programs:

1. A questionnaire was distributed to all Adult, Community and Further Education providers in the Northern Metropolitan ACFE Region to ascertain the existing provision of services to the target group and to find out what enhances or detracts from providing a quality service for them; and
2. Learners in ACFE programs who were clients of Psychiatric Services were given a separate questionnaire to examine whether providers were effective in meeting their needs.

The questionnaire for providers requested responses on the type of psychiatric disability most often disclosed by participants. Listed in order of highest prevalence, these were:

1. schizophrenia
2. bi-polar
3. paranoia disorders
4. other - clinically diagnosed post-natal depression, agoraphobia, panic disorders.

Acute symptoms, listed in order of highest prevalence, were

1. depression
2. hallucinations
3. delusions

Residual symptoms, listed in order of highest prevalence, were

1. anxiety
2. poor concentration
3. fatigue

Findings

Common issues raised by practitioners:

- erratic attendance;
- lack of information on special needs of learners with a psychiatric disability. This sometimes resulted in inadequate preparation and inability to respond to specific learner needs;
- low threshold of frustration from learners with a psychiatric disability, leading to conflict with other learners and practitioners feeling they need to protect other learners;
- difficulty in group dynamics and in being able to deal with and implement effective ways to enhance learning; and
- other learners being unsure how to react to certain behaviour or conversations.

Common issues raised by program coordinators:

- extra time was often needed in order to deal with personal issues;
- lack of appropriate training to deal with complex personal issues;
- lack of knowledge about different sorts of psychiatric disabilities;
- difficulty in making appropriate placement in programs; and difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified staff.

Common issues raised by learners:

- providers declined to accept people into classes and gave no reason for their decision;
- lower incomes hinder participation;
- the perception of some practitioners, coordinators and volunteers that people with a psychiatric disability do not have the same educational aspirations as other community members;
- too much emphasis on social and communication skills. Participants would like more opportunity to increase their literacy, numeracy and technical skills and to increase their ability to manage finances and address employment issues;
- respondents would like to know that providers understand the practical implications of having a psychiatric disability; and
- participants often felt left out of the group..

Many of these issues require more action with providers, mental health services workers and clients. It may be appropriate to employ a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) within the region to address the important issues identified above.

Strategy guidelines

Curriculum and management strategies for practitioners

- aims of programs should be documented and out comes and pathways articulated;
- skills or competencies to be acquired should be clearly explained to the learner. The use of goal setting strategies pre, during and post program may assist in achieving successful outcomes;
- establish with all learners what behaviour is accept able to the whole group and allow participants to have control over their learning environment;
- work towards achieving a considerate environment that is non-threatening to all learners, for example by modelling desired behaviour;
- ensure that regular breaks or changes in activity and dialogue are structured into each session time;
- allow learners to remove themselves for a short break if needed, for example if a discussion topic or activity becomes too intense, or if a participant becomes agitated for any reason;
- develop strategies for extra support in case a crisis develops with a participant. Establish who is on hand to assist the tutor outside the classroom;
- timetable in regular consultation with the coordinator to discuss the progress of all learners and to highlight any issues the coordinator needs to follow up;
- make sure that a variety of appropriate teaching methods are used throughout program delivery;
- consider how different teaching styles may be required within the curriculum, for example collaborative, controlled, emotive;
- consider which extra teaching skills are required to enhance curriculum and learner outcomes;
- remember that socialisation is only one aspect of the program and even in a structured social program, conversation will need to be guided. If too much time is spent on general conversation, this may become a stressor for some learners; and
- give regular and concise feedback to learners and allow time for private discussions when appropriate. Plan that participants will have achieved one positive outcome to a task in each session.

Management strategies for Committees of Management and coordinators

Some management strategies to consider are:

- reaffirm access and equity policies to incorporate people with psychiatric disabilities;
- ensure that policies include implementation procedures;
- have Committees of Management endorse and support the special needs policy;
- provide up-to-date information to Management about psychiatric disabilities, including discussions of perceptions and misconceptions about psychiatric disabilities;
- give practitioners time to discuss curriculum development, learner outcomes, resource requirements and support networks;
- include strategies for inclusion in general programs to be the long term aim of the organisation. If funds for a segregated program are being sought, do they articulate policies and pathways and have support from a mental health service provider?;

- develop segregated programs with mental health services and local councils. Perhaps they could be based at a mental health service, articulating the pre requisites and sills required to participate in a standard ACFE program. In this way students can then be introduced to ACFE providers and programs as part of a transitional and pathway process;
- market your programs personally by making face-to face contact with mental health service workers (most agencies have weekly or fortnightly staff meetings and welcome providers to discuss their programs). Commence discussions around inclusive practice and how successful outcomes can be achieved;
- create a forum to discuss the role of support workers who may be involved in a program (whether short term or for the full duration of the program). If tutors and participants perceive their role as an observer, this creates problems for group cohesiveness. The support worker could support other students if the tutor needs to spend more time with a student who requires some one to one
- identify support networks for learners, coordinators, practitioners and, where appropriate, volunteers and administrative staff, with names and contact numbers kept on file;
- provide support workers with a written statement of their roles and responsibilities. These must be discussed prior to the participant commencing;
- in assessing a successful outcome consider previous attitudes to education, memory-retention, personal responsibility, motivation, concentration, group involvement, specific interests, and literacy, numeracy, oracy and technical skills; and
- when timetabling programs consider the time of day that will best suit participants. For example, does medication make early to mid morning programs unrealistic? Antipsychotic medication does have some adverse effects, such as (relevant listed only) blurred vision and tiredness or drowsiness which are dose related. In these situations it may be useful to suggest that the dosage be reviewed.

5. Not So Naïve: The Multiskilling Of Women Through Naïve Art

Linden Dean

Background

In 1992 Bairnsdale Adult Community Education offered a Naïve Art class. Participants joined the class to learn the Naïve Art style but they also came wanting relief from the intensity of looking after babies and small children, to find a new way to express themselves, for friendship, to extend existing painting skills, to experience the joy of being creative and making something personal.

The class continued and a growing number of people returned every term. As participants' skills in Naïve Art grew so too did a range of other skills: their ability to work together, to negotiate and organise. The group, all women, became well known locally and they started to generate income from their activities. They were developing vocational skills not just creative, social and personal ones.

Research Question

The central research issue of this project was the learner needs and learning outcomes in adult education with reference to the Naïve Art Group. Had the Naïve artists developed and/or extended vocational, social and personal skills by participating in the Naïve Art Group?

The following areas were examined:

- initial motivation of participants;
- skills developed by participants;
- transferability of skills developed; and
- identification of factors positively affecting the learning environment or group dynamics.

It was expected that a detailed investigation of this course would enable the factors which facilitated the skill acquisition and transfer to be identified, so that the findings could be applied to other course offerings.

Further to this, the project was to look at how this class sat in the ACFE and AVETMISS classification of Adult Education classes. A definition of the ACFE Board Course Categories and the AVETMISS Streams of Study was needed for this. This class was originally classified as a GAE class which means it is not currently funded because of the classifications of the above bodies. The project needed to determine if Naïve Art course participants skills could be considered Access or Vocational.

Methodology

It was decided participatory and action research would be the most appropriate for this project.

As the project worker and also as a member of the NaÔve Art class, I developed a list of preliminary skills that I thought would cover most of the areas of development the class had worked through. I gave this list to all the women who had been involved long term in the NaÔve Art group. They decided if the list was appropriate and made any changes or additions they thought necessary.

The participants assessed their own skill development in the following areas:

- Artistic skills;
- Organisational skills;
- Communication skills;
- Networking skills;
- Negotiation skills;
- Small business skills;
- Teaching skills;
- Interpersonal skills; and
- Personal skills.

The amended skills list was then used in individual questionnaires given to those who wanted to participate in the research project.

The questionnaire for each individual looked at

- the skills developed;
- the skills which were improved;
- the implications, vocationally, of the skills development;
- the importance of developing skills; and
- the participation roles of the individuals in the group.

The next step was to do an interview with each person. The interview aimed to

- clarify the questionnaire;
- look at the factors that determined skills acquisition;
- understand why the individuals acquired skills; and
- look at the group dynamics.

Following the individual interviews, a couple of informal group discussions were held to clarify any points that were still not determined, and to look for anecdotal information that might serve as examples for questions previously looked at in the questionnaire and the interview.

Results

The participants thought they had developed or extended quite a large array of skills. In most skills group areas, most of the women thought that development and/or extension of their skills were either important or very important and, in considering them important, also thought they were very useful.

The skills people thought they used/developed most were artistic, organisational, interpersonal and communication skills.

Almost all of the participants said they hadn't had all these skills before they joined Naïve Art. Most had developed new skills and extended other skills already acquired. Most also thought their skills were transferable to other situations in life.

Approximately half the artists believed that the general/specific skills they gained through involvement in the class had helped or could help in getting employment and could help in job security. Six of the group have had part time, casual or self employment through Naïve Art. Almost half have received income from teaching related to their art. Confidence building and networking were seen as the major skills that had led to the acquisition of these jobs.

The women believe that the dynamics of the group is a strong factor in its success.

They have remained with this class for a diverse set of reasons, which they identify as:

- increased confidence;
- getting out of a rut;
- being treated decently;
- achieving personal goals;
- having a creative outlet;
- intellectual stimulus;
- having a satisfying means of expressing oneself;
- creating own artwork for own walls;
- making friends with like minded people; and
- extending oneself beyond expectations.

The women valued the following characteristics of their learning environment:

- a positive facilitator/leader of the class;
- participants who had a common interest;
- time for the dynamics to develop;
- inspiration and motivation coming from the participants;
- an analysis of what the needs are;
- a goal or something to achieve;
- a balance of personalities;
- commitment;
- support;
- excitement and motivation; and
- communication.

The general consensus was that this type of class would benefit other women.

Discussion

How the course operates

For the majority of the time, the women applied themselves to their work individually, but there were many co-operative aspects to the group. Co-operative aspects involved supporting people within the group, discussing issues concerning the group and coming to a consensus, encouraging new thought and direction for individuals and sharing their knowledge and ideas.

Within the group there are no set leaders and there is no hierarchy. There is no competitiveness and no power base.

Individuals have worked in roles within the group that they feel comfortable with and through which they can contribute to the group. Everything is done in a voluntary capacity. Individuals feel that, within the group, they can "stretch their wings" and try things without censure or ridicule. One of the main characteristics of the group is that it has developed at its own pace, in its own direction and on its own terms.

Pathways

The course began as a General Adult Education course. Its members joined initially for recreation, leisure and/or as a hobby and it developed in ways that most of the women would not have foreseen.

If we look at the directions the class and its participants took, we could break their development down into a number of stages.

Stage 1 was when the ***tentative steps*** were taken.

The participants joined the class for a variety of reasons mostly related to their personal needs for enjoyment, social contact and variety in their lives. The idea of developing a particular skill was not paramount.

In Stage 2 the ***regular attenders*** of the course had their first exhibition organised for them and were becoming marketable. They were increasing in confidence both individually and as a group.

Stage 3 was when ***other variables*** came into play. As the commercial side of their art became apparent, the status of the class began to change and began moving towards Access or Vocational Education as individuals began to get a commercial return for what they had done. The way they considered their work changed, ie. instead of painting only for personal appreciation and satisfaction, they began to consider saleable topics, sizes of works, development of style, mediums used and price ranges.

Stage 4 was a stage of conscious ***development of an identity*** when the local community and people in general began to look at the Naïve artists differently. Skills developed within the class became more important and the work became more marketable as it took on a more commercial format. Various forms of presentation, other than boards and canvases, were tried - some of this was because of personal experimentation and some because it was marketable.

Stage 5 was one of more ***active involvement*** as the profile and acceptance of the Naïve artists increased. Different members within the class began initiating new thoughts and possible directions for the group. The artists met together to determine what direction the group would take and what roles certain people would take on. They decided to run their own exhibitions, chose their own venue for the exhibitions and developed more expertise in putting exhibitions together.

Stage 6 introduced ***commercial development*** when a set of six commercially produced cards of individual artists within the class were marketed widely in conjunction with Arts Network East Gippsland (ANEG). The group also developed a logo and produced a limited number of T-shirts for sale. The group ran raffles of their work as a revenue raising enterprise and sold, by tender, the Christmas tree they painted as a group project. In this stage value was added to the work the artists had produced. As a result personal and group self-esteem grew. New skills were developed as a basic market strategy had to be devised, the cards had to be distributed and a basic financial strategy had to be devised so the loan given to the Naïve artists by ANEG could be paid back within the required time.

Stage 7 ***extended individuals*** further. This was done through part time employment linked to the Art group as well as further education through workshops and self-study and applications for artists' grants and individual exhibitions.

This study shows that there are pathways which women can follow which begin at the hobby/leisure end of the ACFE spectrum and lead through to vocational outcomes. Although this study is partly based on the perception of individuals about their own skill development, there is also the objective evidence of their success in terms of employment and income earning outcomes.

In this instance the learning environment seems to have been the key determinant in fostering the commitment of the individuals to pursue goals which were beyond their original expectations and intentions. Good group dynamics in a learning context is often a matter of luck. However, some of the key characteristics which have made this group very successful and enterprising could be fostered in a range of areas by other adult education providers who wish to provide appropriate learning environments which nurture the embryonic skills, interests and energies of their participants.

The transformation of the group delineates a distinct pathway which has been followed by those who have remained in the group long term. Notwithstanding the classification of this education/training process as "general adult education", relevant vocational skills definitely were developed through the education/training process, and positive outcomes resulted.

6. Employee Development Programs

Matt Seeary

Background

Geelong Adult Training & Education (GATE) Inc. was contracted by ANTA and the ACFE Board to undertake a full pilot study into the concepts of Employee Development Programs. This followed a successful two month feasibility study which investigated the establishment of Employee Development Programs (EDPs) in the local area. The program officially commenced in March 1997.

Employee Development Programs (EDPs) are defined as

an employee driven means of providing the work-force with a range of learning opportunities that are not specifically related to their work situation, encouraging personal growth, confidence and self-esteem.

EDPs are not a new initiative. They began in the USA in 1989 as an initiative of the Ford Motor Company and were later introduced to the UK. Over a period of years they have become heavily supported by the UK Government, with upwards of 700 programs in operation today.

The project aims:

- to introduce Employee Development Programs (EDPs) to approximately three companies in the Geelong area;
- to produce a step by step guide to enable other interested parties to implement EDPs, drawing upon real experience in Geelong, Victoria. In this sense the project aims to have a significant impact on the national ACE sector as a whole;
- in particular, GATE has aimed to encourage the involvement of employees with lower levels of skill development and no previous history of participation in organised adult education;
- to encourage employees through Employee Development Programs to return to learning; and
- to attract "non-traditional learners" and people from disadvantaged groups in order that they may benefit from positive learning experiences and a learning culture.

The Research Questions

What methodologies/ protocols should be utilised in establishing such industry-based programs?

What impact does the provision of lifelong learning programs in industry have on:

- employee attitudes?
- participation in future learning programs?
- the "whole person"?

Methodology

The Geelong Adult Training & Education Inc (G.A.T.E.) is working to promote EDPs by:

1. trialing EDPs in approximately three companies in the local area;
2. developing industry support for the concept; and
3. producing a step by step guide to enable other interested parties to implement EDPs.

Currently we are working intensely with two local organisations - Pivot Ltd and the Geelong Hospital, as well as expanding the research base to include another organisation in the Melbourne metropolitan area. We have continuously presented information to the local business community, including the design and distribution of a complete industry information kit, industry information sessions, on-going discussions and negotiations with interested organisations and a full program launch in Geelong.

Stage One

- Action Groups formed at all sites; and
- Benchmarking completed.

Stage Two

- Initial training of Action Groups completed. Ongoing training will be provided as the groups take on increased responsibility for the program;
- Diverse learning programs developed for all sites to cater to "communities" of learners;
- All training staff involved in the program fully inducted into the program; and
- Delivery of learning activities will continue until February 1998.

Stage Three

- Each EDP learning activity evaluated by employees, Action Groups, teachers/trainers/tutors and GATE soon after it has been completed;
- Delivery of information and advice training continues to occur; and
- Final report and evaluation prepared.

Implementation Issues

The following is not an exhaustive list:

- Faultless/ Seamless implementation;
- Survey instruments needed;
- Awareness/ usage of evolutionary growth;
- Flexible funding agreements;
- Initial liaison with training department;
- Need to "empower" organisations;
- Involvement of partners;
- Need to dispel myths;
- Need access to strong base of Community Education programs;
- Tutor induction; and
- Publicity.

Results

Pivot Ltd. (Geelong Operation) has achieved the following results:

- An EDP working sub-committee has been set up. This Action Group has been actively involved with initial program development (including survey development, short-course selection and provision of mentoring services to other workers). This employee representative team has been responsible for even naming the program ñ choosing to call it a "Leisure Activities Program";
- Weekly/fortnightly meetings take place with de partment staff;
- Seven short-course training programs have been offered thus far. These have included Financial Planning, French, Golf, Introduction to Computers, Microwave Cooking, Photography, Worm Farming. This shows, even at this early stage, the diversity of programs requested by employees;
- Special repeat "Photography" sessions have been offered to an identified group of 5 shift-workers (non traditional learners) who were unable to attend other Photography classes. They have been "fast-tracked" through an introductory course and are now part of the existing group of Photography students, thus catering to their needs;
- An additional 6 programs are being offered in the current "round" of programs. These include Fishing, Massage(for Partners), Photography (field day), Self Defence, Tai Chi Qigong, Windows and Word Processing for Home ñ these course have been publicised in a variety of mediums including a two month training brochure (calendar of events for October-December). Four programs have been planned directly for February/March 1998 with more to come;
- Opportunities now include multiple sessions ñ eg. Tai Chi and Qigong (6 sessions), Windows and Word Processing for Home (4 sessions), French (3 sessions), Photography (3 sessions), Fishing (2 sessions), Golf (2 sessions), Massage (2 sessions), Self-Defence (2 sessions);
- Most courses are provided as "introduction" or "taster" courses, with the focus on finding future direction for potential "follow-on" classes;
- An average of 9 students attends each program;
- Approximately 50 workers have taken the opportunity to participate in a course (some have attended multiple courses). This shows the instant success of a program that can be shown to have no hidden agendas;
- 43 workers have undertaken programs and have been identified as non-traditional learners;
- Student satisfaction rates are positive (above 80%);
- No-fuss enrolment procedures have been developed;
- The program is extending into Pivot Head Office (Melbourne).
- Pivot management has given verbal confirmation that the program will be funded in the future because of its successes to date. This will follow when the initial funding ceases; and
- All programs have been managed to produce the greatest results from the most reasonable use of

dollars available. Where practicable, GATE has ensured that through workings with the Pivot Action Group, expenditure on programs is checked to ensure that the pool of funds is able to be used to develop the broadest range of offerings. This will therefore satisfy a greater number of employees.

Programs completed/ being undertaken in 1997, many as introduction or "taster" classes:

- Aromatherapy;
- Basic Car Maintenance;
- Computers:- Windows and Word Processing for Home;
- Financial Planning (Overview);
- Financial Planning Seminar Series;
  - Maximising Your Investments;
  - Investing in the Stock Market - offered at two sites;
  - Personal Finance Management;
- Fishing;
- French for Beginners;
- Golf for the Novice;
- Introduction to Computers;
- Introduction to the Internet;
- Massage (Introduction);
- Massage (for Partners);
- Microwave Cooking - Basic Introduction;
- Photography (introduction) - offered at two sites;
- Photography (practical) - field day and reflection;
- Self-Defence (Overview);
- Tai Chi - Qigong (18 postures) - offered at two sites;
- 10 Minute Head and Shoulder Massage;
- Wine Appreciation;
- Worm Farming; and
- Yoga.

Future programs may include:

- First Aid for Home;
- Floral Art;
- Home Decorating: Soft Furnishings/Curtain Making;
- Internet Introduction;
- Japanese (Introduction);
- Leadlighting;
- Speaking with Confidence;
- Study Skills: Learn How to Learn/ Memory Training; and
- Wine Making.

As originally noted, the level of satisfaction with the learning programs will be automatically recorded and monitored as part of GATE's quality assurance procedure. It was expected that between 70-80% would regard the learning process as "good" or "very good"

The results were:

- Participant Evaluations (99%) were returned with "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" as a rating of their educational experience
- Participant Evaluations (90%) were returned with "good" or "very good" as a rating of the overall program (the remaining evaluations were given a fair rating)

Particular efforts were made to attract non-tradition adult learners; which included employees from non-English speaking backgrounds, Koories, and employees with a disability. A particular aim of this project has been to assist employees to cross the learning threshold and to accrue the benefits of a learning culture.

Our results to date have included:

- 6 People out of 49 (12.24%) from a non-English speaking background; and
- 7 People out of 49 (14.28%) were deemed to be disadvantaged clients (Koories, CALDs, Disability)

Advantages of EDPs

Nationally, there is a growing belief and conviction that the future prosperity of Australia lies in the knowledge, skills, and motivations of the entire population. To retain the competitive edge in the global market, leading businesses are making projections and forecasts covering the next decade and beyond to anticipate the kinds of products, markets, technologies and demands which are likely to be faced by the workforce as Australia enters the 21st century. The following issues (which have an impact on the wider economic and social community) have necessitated a move to a work force that is educated, flexible, confident, and motivated:

- Increased Global Competition;
- Demand for Continuous Development of Products and Services;
- Rapid Technological Progress
- Emphasis on Quality; and
- Dramatic Changes in the Workplace.

The fundamental belief of Employee Development Programs is that the most important resource available is people and, for the companies to prosper in human and financial terms, that investment has to be made in creating a learning culture in the workplace.

EDPs have benefits for both employers and employees.

- For employers"
  - a work-force that is adaptable and eager to learn;
  - improved effectiveness of job related training;
  - lower labour turnover and absenteeism;
  - the creation of a learning culture;
  - improved performance/ better work attitude;
  - increased morale/ team working in the workplace - more positive attitude to work; and
  - better understanding of (and commitment to) the business by employees.
- For employees
  - improved confidence and self esteem;
  - exposure to a positive learning experience;
  - increased ability to cope with a changing environment;
  - personal development; and
  - reduced stress.

EDPs work for three main reasons: they make access to learning easy for employees; the learning process is owned by the learners; and individuals see how learning benefits themselves, the organisation, and the wider community.

7. Best Practice For Delivery Of ACE Programs To The Koorie Community

Linda Wilkinson

Research Questions

The initial premise of the research was that many Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers found it difficult to deliver programs to Koorie communities. Some ACE providers, however, had successfully delivered programs. What were the critical success factors that contributed to the delivery of programs?

Methodology

The research project initially reviewed the literature on best practice delivery of Koorie programs in all sectors. It was important in selecting literature that it applied to Koorie communities in south-east Australia, as many of the aspects of traditional communities do not apply in settled Australia.

Four case studies were selected to examine the elements of best practice and critical success factors in delivery of programs to Koorie communities.

The Literature Survey suggested that identifying best practice for the design and delivery of Koorie programs is not always straightforward. Many of the aspects of best practice are elements that are intangible and, generally, not measurable. Much of the literature places great emphasis on these intangibles.

> It is knowing someone's cousin, offering a cup of coffee and having a yarn, acknowledging people's reasons for absence and allowing time and space to catch up. (Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE Focus Paper pp. 13-14, in H. Bradshaw, 1996, p.3)

Bambrook (1994:84) talks about the secret ingredient of Koorie learning situations as the quality of relationships between students and teachers, administrators and Koorie community members and that humour, understanding and sincerity are the issues that impact on good practice.

Despite the fact that it is sometimes difficult to identify the tangible criteria for best practice, some attempts have been made to do this. The literature survey goes on to discuss a range of literature that attempts to do this.

Case studies

ACE providers have delivered some excellent programs for Koorie communities that have been successful and well attended. Four such programs are summarised here

Horticulture - Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust

Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust is a registered Adult, Community and Further Education provider and has delivered a number of funded adult programs. Lake Tyers is located in East Gippsland, on former mission land. The community is self managing and has title to the land that it occupies. The community operates a Community Development Employment Project with various crews involved in employment around the community.

Much of Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust land is bush, the remainder farmland. The community identified a need to learn about seed collection, the propagation of trees and the development of shelter belts around the farmland. A small grant was gained from the Gippsland Adult, Community and Further Education Regional Council to develop a literacy and numeracy program around these needs. The community chose the tutor they wanted - a local horticultural expert - who met with the key people from the community. The program the tutor designed was timed to fit into the work schedules of the crews.

The tangible outcomes of the program were the design and planning of a shelter belt, a design for a hot house for propagating trees and seedlings, and an increased knowledge of tree species and the care of tree plantations. The program also increased the sense of pride in the project, improved literacy and numeracy skills and saw the beginning of a new community project to grow their own trees.

Screen Printing - Albury/Wodonga Continuing Education Centre

The Koorie community in Albury/Wodonga was keen to set up a shop to sell the arts and crafts they were producing. The workplace coordinator at the Continuing Education Centre, who was well known and liked by the Koorie community, met with community members and helped them identify learning needs in relation to establishing a business. The needs identified were reading, writing and screen printing. An 80 hour program was set up and eleven participants learned screen printing and lino cuts to produce T shirts, tea towels, bed linen and wrapping paper. An indication of the power of word of mouth recommendations is that on the first day only four or five people attended, while by the next class there were fifteen.

The literacy, numeracy and business components were interwoven into the screen printing classes and involved culturally appropriate materials.

Basic education support - Bairnsdale Adult and Community Education Centre

Bairnsdale Adult and Community Education Centre (BACE) have delivered a number of Koorie programs. One aspect that they are developing is literacy and numeracy support for people undertaking other programs.

One example of this support occurred when literacy staff offered literacy and numeracy classes to support a welding program for Koories. The literacy and numeracy class was held for 1 Ω hours each morning prior to the welding classes and the tutor used the welding manual as a framework for the classes.

Yandina Earth - SCOPE Latrobe Valley Community Education Association

SCOPE is based in the Latrobe Valley and the Yandina Earth project operates from one of its centres.

The project has enabled a group of Koorie women to develop a ceramic arts business. Initially they undertook six months training which included first aid, numeracy (linked to business concepts) and communication skills. The group was also involved in designing, making and marketing pots, with finding a name and developing a business plan.

The project received funding from various sources which allowed the women to develop their skills and to receive wages. Although Yandina Earth still uses the facilities of SCOPE, it has moved from the auspices of SCOPE and is being run as a business by two participants.

Best practice guidelines

The elements of best practice were teased out from the literature and the case studies to produce a checklist that providers could use to develop good practice in the development and delivery of Koorie adult education programmes.

Consultation Checklist
You should:

- contact key people in the community through your local Aboriginal organisation and your Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG);
- conduct a consultation with the Koorie community; and
- identify the training and education needs of the community in consultation with the community.

Design of the program
You should:

- consider integrating literacy and numeracy into a program that meets the community or enterprise needs;
- ensure that the program has built in flexibility;
- ensure that the content is culturally appropriate;
- consider the modification of curriculum to ensure it meets the need of the learners;
- accommodate the learning styles of Koorie people; and
- design the program in consultation with the community.

Delivery of the program
You should:

- select appropriate staff;
- ensure that staff are culturally aware;
- consider conducting cultural awareness sessions for staff;
- choose the venue to suit the learners;
- timetable to suit the group;
- provide child care;
- consider any transport problems;
- deliver the program in a flexible way;
- use Koorie elders and experts as teachers where possible;
- ensure that delivery styles match the learning styles of the participants;
- break the program into manageable chunks; and
- encourage the involvement of family and other community members.

Adult education has the capacity to empower Aboriginal people and communities and ACE providers have a critical role to play.

The report *Best Practice Curriculum requirements for Koorie Programs and Participants: a research paper* is available from ARIS for borrowing or for purchase at $6.00 + postage.

8. Impact Study Of Language And Literacy Skills

Nadia Casarotto & Pam Dickinson

Background

There have been significant changes in the VET sector, driven by the retraining priorities of industry. Employees are now required to demonstrate competence in a number of areas eg. team collaboration, problem analysis record keeping and so on. There is a recognition that language and literacy skills underpin the successful demonstration of these competencies. It therefore becomes crucial to implement VET programs which reflect the development of these skills and produce successful outcomes for learners with language and literacy needs. It becomes even more crucial with the recognition that successful training outcomes require learners to manipulate a broad repertoire of language and literacy skills as part of the training process, including different text types and print based materials. Because these requirements are not made explicit by many VET programs, trainees with less developed language and literacy skills may find it more difficult to access VET programs and/or obtain successful learning outcomes.

Research Question

The brief of the Impact Study into Language and Literacy Skills is to identify and explore the variables which influence the successful outcomes of Language and Literacy Programs in the workplace.

Methodology

This research project has been divided into two stages. The first stage is to conduct a literature review to identify key issues; the second stage will develop a research methodology for the collection and analysis of data.

The project began in January, 1997. Stage 1 has been completed, and stage 2 is in progress.

Stage One: The Literature Review
The review aimed to:

- identify and critically analyse key research on the above questions;
- find substantive evidence of the links, if any, between language and literacy skills and successful training outcomes; and
- identify significant gaps in the above areas.

The literature review raised the following issues for consideration:

- what are the language and literacy needs of the workforce?
- is there a proven relationship between language and literacy skills and access to a successful completion of VET?
- to what degree do different delivery strategies facilitate successful outcomes?
- what other inputs are needed to support successful training outcomes for trainees with language and literacy needs? (eg curriculum design, learning resources); and
- what are some best practice models in facilitating successful outcomes?

Successful training outcomes require learners to manipulate a broad repertoire of language and literacy skills as part of the training process, including different text types and print based materials.

Findings of the literature review:

- most studies are anecdotal and based on perception rather than data based research;
- studies did not demonstrate explicit links between language and literacy skills and training outcomes. The exception was "More than Money can Say" (Pearson);
- many studies hypothesise that language and literacy skills become less of a constraint if inputs such as curriculum design and delivery strategies are taken into account;
- subjective evidence is used to review the effectiveness of some programs;
- there were no comparative studies of different delivery strategies available;
- the review identified studies which highlighted other factors which impact on access to and successful outcomes of VET. Language and literacy is one of a number of variables which impact on access to and successful outcomes.

Gaps in the Literature:

- there is a need for larger scale recording of the number of trainees who do or do not access VET and the reasons for this;
- there is a lack of information on the number of language and literacy participants who withdraw, do no achieve the competencies or do not articulate into further VET courses;
- more quantitative data is needed, with larger samples and attention to more specific measurable outcomes and the relationships of these with language and literacy skills;
- there is a lack of comparative studies to establish effectiveness of specific delivery strategies;
- more extended research should be done into the measurable impact of VET programs on the workplace eg improvement in work performance; and
- there is a need to systematically examine the perceived link (if any) between inputs such as curriculum design and learning resources in facilitating successful outcomes for trainees with language and literacy needs.

Stage Two

From the literature, the following questions were generated:

- Do the language and literacy skills of participants affect successful VET outcomes?
- If so, what is the contribution of inputs such as curriculum design delivery strategies and learning resources in facilitating successful outcomes for these participants?

The Literature identifies three perspectives with respect to the evaluation of the efficacy of VET outcomes: that of trainee/students, trainers/teachers, and workplace supervisors. It identifies the need for more data which reflects what each group sees as the facilitating and inhibiting factors in unsuccessful outcomes.

Methodology

The foremost consideration in developing an appropriate research methodology is the very sensitive nature of Literacy Skills. Gaining access to people with literacy needs (particularly those who are reluctant participants in VET programs) and enabling them to voice their experience and insights requires sensitivity and delicacy. The total population of people with language and literacy needs is widely dispersed and not readily identified.

Respondents who lack literacy skills present particular difficulties in data collection. They may not be able to complete written questionnaires and surveys, or may be reluctant to reveal what they perceive to be their inadequacies. They may not be familiar with terms used to describe delivery strategies and outcomes. Similarly, workplace supervisors may be keen observers of language behaviour without being familiar with matters of delivery and assessment. Lastly, trainers may vary from being workplace-centred to being formally qualified, tertiary educated teachers.

The range of literacy skills in potential respondents has prompted the design of three complementary data collection strategies to address the research questions: questionnaires, group interviews and individual interviews. Data will be drawn from three groups:

Gaining access to people with literacy needs (particularly those who are reluctant participants in VET programs) and enabling them to voice their experience and insights requires sensitivity and delicacy. The total population of people with language and literacy needs is widely dispersed and not readily identified.

1. Teachers/Trainers

The interview schedule will be formulated to elicit information about the following key issues:

- the impact of language and literacy skills on access to and successful completion of VET;
- the degree to which different delivery strategies have an effect on whether language and literacy is or becomes a constraint on outcomes;
- the most appropriate design of VET curriculum to eliminate or reduce the difficulty of participants with language and literacy needs progressing through the system; and
- the role that professional development plays in ensuring equitable outcomes for participants with language and literacy needs.

2. Workplace Supervisors

Information will be sought to determine whether training has had a positive impact on the workplace in terms of:

- improvement in individuals' job performance and flexibility;
- increased productivity and greater efficiency;
- ability to undertake a wider range of tasks;
- improved team effectiveness;
- enhanced communication skills; and
- participation in further VET.

3. Trainees/Students

Focus group interviews will be held with approximately 160 VET course participants. The interviews will identify trainees/students' perceptions regarding:

- level of difficulty of the course;
- relevance of the skills to workplace tasks/future employment;
- methods, activities and resources used to facilitate learning;
- teacher/trainer effectiveness;
- difficulties faced in undertaking the course; and
- factors which contributed to successful completion of the course/factors which contributed to withdrawal from the course.

Trainees/Students will be interviewed firstly in groups, then individually for the recording of sensitive and confidential information. Each group will consist of approximately eight participants, one facilitator and one recorder. There will be an interview schedule, and individual responses will be noted. Group interviews have the dual advantage of providing support for respondents, and enabling them to piggyback and expand comments; and of being a efficient method of data collection in the workplace where workers have to be withdrawn from the shop floor, and the success of the research depends on the goodwill and cooperation of the employers.

There are limitation to group interviews: some respondents may be reluctant to reveal some more sensitive information. This will be addressed by having some areas of the research addressed in individual interviews. Given that not all the research questions apply to all respondents (particularly those who have not completed or accessed VET programs), the combined approach of group and individual interview means that respondents do not feel that their time is being wasted.

9. Rural Workers: Accessing Training And Further Education

Ann Cliff

Background

The economy of rural Australia is vitally important to the whole country. To maintain economic viability, farmers and other rural workers need to keep abreast of new techniques. Many rural workers now acknowledge the need to undertake training and education to keep up with these techniques but lack the literacy and numeracy skills to do so.

Research Questions

1. What are the main motivators for rural workers to participate in ACFE programs?
2. What rural literacy/numeracy programs and/or research has been done and how can it be used in Gippsland?
3. What is the most appropriate mode of delivery of ALBE programs for rural workers?

The Fenwick report (Fenwick and Leatherhead, *Competence in Communication Survey Report*, 1994) found a low level of literacy among rural workers. Since the report was published the speed of change in rural industries has accelerated. People now realise the survival value of training and further education, both for workers and for small business operators. One example is the need to read farm chemical labels and measure and dilute toxic substances accurately, and to pass a test of competency to do so.

Methodology

- research the available literature;
- compile case studies of training and further education programs for farmers and farm workers in Gippsland (a large region in eastern Victoria); and
- undertake a survey of rural workers from the farming and timber industry. All workers were employed in the Gippsland region.

Case studies

Case studies which looked at program design and development based on client needs were compiled on farmers' training groups in Tanjil Valley and Mirboo North.

Tanjil Valley farmers' training group

The Gippsland Regional Adult, Community and Further Education Council made funding available to establish a training group for farmers in the Tanjil Valley. Tanjil Valley is an area of small farms, mainly dairy farms, with a strong community identity. A local member of the community was employed as a coordinator to establish and manage the training group. She began by asking farmers what type of training they needed. Based on their responses training on farm chemical use, first aid and farm safety, computers and forklift and front end loader driving was offered. There was little or no cost for the training, which was conducted at a local venue or on a local farm.

The response was immediate and positive. Attendance was excellent and where assessment was done, pass rates were high.

Those taking up the offer of training were a cross section of the population, with very different levels of education and literacy. In many cases, the group worked together and helped each other. People with low levels of literacy levels found the training difficult and two accepted the offer of a literacy tutor to assist them.

Mirboo North farmers' training group

Training provision, similar to that in the Tanjil Valley, was established for potato farmers in the Mirboo North area with funding from the Gippsland Regional Adult, Community and Further Education Council. A local member of the community was appointed coordinator of the training group and set up training in computer skills, a skill area the farmers were keen to develop. The courses on computer skills, which included literacy, were received enthusiastically and whetted the appetite of many for further training.

Survey of rural workers

A questionnaire was given to thirty six rural workers, twenty nine timber workers and seven farmers or farm workers.

Farmers: All were members of one of the farmers' training groups. Until they joined the farmers' training group all except one had no formal training since leaving school. Motivation for attending the farmers' training group included feeling left behind, wanting to improve employment prospects, wanting to improve business efficiency, and for mental stimulation.

Some felt literacy was a problem for their industry. They suggested literacy skills could be improved through the use of one-to-one volunteer tutors and the development of literacy skills through courses on such topics as business management and computing.

Timber workers: They were aware of the need to keep up with change and to comply with legal requirement such as operator's tickets for machinery. However, they had little knowledge of adult education. Low literacy levels of timber workers were seen to be a problem by some. One commented, "illiteracy is not uncommon but does not impede people from performing base grade jobs, but does impede further development".

Farmer preferences

Training/education with obvious practical benefits, eg.

- safety;
- legal requirements;
- production improvements; and
- save money.

Training at the right time

- not at harvest time;
- not on sale days or local feast days; and
- not at night if you can help it.

At the right place

- not in a formal learning institution - at first;
- in familiar surroundings, eg. tennis club rooms; and
- in a place with proper facilities.

Professional trainers with credibility;

Not expensive - preferably free!

Large print, easy manuals;

Mixed groups.

Results

The case studies and survey results suggested a number of strategies for improving rural access to training and further education:

- use flexible learning including teleconferencing;
- provide work related training such as computer use;
- allow adults to analyse their own needs, set their own agenda and work at their own pace;
- literacy help should be available as an accessory to work related programs;
- provide training at local venues and suitable times;
- plan carefully to avoid offering training at peak work periods;
- employing adult education teachers who do not patronise and who have been trained in helping people with literacy problems;
- employ a local coordinator, known to the community;
- recognise that hands on training such as first aid is relevant; and
- fund seeding grants to encourage group formation.

Some lessons to be learnt

Efforts in Gippsland to encourage training for rural workers have had some success and the training groups model could be adapted and used by other groups. However, the tentative nature of training was highlighted with the Tanjil Valley farmers' training group, where there has been little training of late. Declining produce prices and a drought have been a preoccupation of farmers who have found little time for adult education.

Increasing the literacy and numeracy levels of rural workers remains a problem. Those who attended the farmers' training group didn't see literacy as a training priority. It seems that it is up to the teachers to introduce it by stealth and as required. This has some benefits as the strategy of focusing on new technologies and work skills helped take the emphasis and stress off literacy provision and meant that literacy was taught in context.

10. Oracy In A Community Setting

Elizabeth Taylor

and

Andrea Murray

Background

Recent curriculum developments in adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) have necessitated a focus on the teaching and assessment of the spoken as well as the written language of learners who enrol in ALBE classes. These classes may include both English-speaking background (ESB) learners and language other than English background (LOTEB) learners (multi-ethnic classes). This study investigates the teaching of spoken language in multi-ethnic ALBE classrooms within the framework of the Oral Communication stream of the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA) in Victoria, Australia. It also examines roles for spoken language in the ALBE classroom beyond the spoken episodes described in the CGEA.

This project report presents the preliminary findings of what will eventually be a larger study. It arose out of:

- concerns about having to teach oracy to ESB learners;
- research (Sanguinetti); articles in professional journals (Suda);
- anecdotal evidence within the centre itself and from talking to other teachers; and
- concern about CGEA covering a limited range of spoken language, not all that actually occurs within a normal classroom. There may be other roles for spoken language in ALBE classes.

With the above issues in mind, we wanted to look closely at a multi-ethnic classroom to see what really happened in a community class.

Note: it has never been an issue as to whether LOTEB students need oracy, but a multi-ethnic class would enable comparisons to be drawn between ESBs and LOTEBs.

Research questions:

1. To what extent do the spoken episodes as described by the CGEA occur in the multi-ethnic adult literacy community classroom?
2. Do teachers integrate the teaching of oracy with the other streams or focus separately and explicitly on oracy?
3. What other roles are there for spoken language in these classrooms?

Methodology

As background information, the teachers in the community learning centre completed a questionnaire on their oracy teaching practice within the CGEA and indicated their views of the role of spoken language in ALBE classrooms. Teachers were found to be using the CGEA Oral Communication stream in their classes but largely in an integrated manner, not explicitly focusing on spoken language for teaching.

Class and setting

The primary focus was a case study of one teacher and her part-time multi-ethnic class in a community learning centre in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. The data was collected over a period of five weeks, with two classes per week. The teacher was using level one of the CGEA as a curriculum framework, but not assessing the students.

Data Collection

1. Survey
   All the literacy teachers at the community centre were asked to fill in a survey about their views and experiences with the Oral Communication stream.
2. Case study
   Two participant observers in the classroom used the following techniques:

- audio-taping of lessons;
- classroom observations and field notes;
- teacher's lesson plans and handouts; and
- two semi-structured teacher interviews.

Analysis

- collating of the survey responses;
- transcribing (using conversation analysis techniques) selected classroom extracts from audiotapes, and relating these to the framework of the CGEA; and
- using all data collected to examine patterns and trends.

Findings:

The survey

No firm conclusions could be drawn from the survey because of its size. However, it provides a background for the case study and adds to the evidence that teachers tend to prefer integrating the Oral Communication stream with other streams in their teaching and find assessment of oracy more problematic than its teaching.

The survey also indicated that teachers tend to deal with the domain of Self Expression first, possible because it deals with what is closest to the learners abilities and experiences. Knowledge ranked lowest (Knowledge has been collapsed into Practical Purposes in the new Oral Communication stream).

Overall the teachers surveyed felt the inclusion of the Oral Communication in the CGEA was useful in that it raised awareness of the importance of oral communication. The fact that students can be shown to be successful in oracy when their reading and writing skills are lower was also seen as a positive point.

The case study

The teacher in the case study, Mary, believed in integrating spoken language with reading and writing. Mary was reluctant to introduce spoken episodes that did not arise fairly naturally in the class and out of students' interests. She commented that Practical Purposes were the hardest to teach and assess because of the artificiality of setting up suitable situations. This sometimes led to difficulties in covering all the domains and she reported that she found Practical Purposes the hardest oracy domain to address.

There were very few social episodes (Self Expression) found in the data. This is not surprising since social episodes are unlikely to occur naturally in a classroom, however informal.

Speech episodes relating to the Knowledge and Public Debate domains tended to be relatively unstructured and there was little evidence of learners developing their ability to present information orally in a structured manner.

Examples of all episodes were found, with Knowledge a key focus and Practical Purposes occurring least.

In general, there was no explicit focus on oracy. The case study teacher integrated oracy with reading and writing. The remainder of the teachers said they occasionally isolated oracy, but tended towards an integrated approach.

Experienced teachers in Victoria have said that the talking that goes on around written texts in order to explore their meaning is a crucial role in the ALBE classroom. Translating written language into spoken language is a concept introduced by McIntyre in "Writing Our Practice", illustrated though activities done with long-term resident ESL literacy students. This was strongly in evidence in Mary's class. Both researchers were immediately struck by a particular reading aloud technique used by the teacher. This technique served two main functions, modelling reader-like behaviour and translating the written text into spoken language for the learners. This was linked to the teacher's personal philosophy of empowering students by keying them in to historical, social, cultural and political events in the world.

Questions arising:

- should the Oral Communication Stream include spoken language from the four domains (the Oral Communication Stream has been modified considerably in the reaccredited CGEA)?
- should the teaching of oracy be explicit, or should there be an integrated approach? and
- what are the oracy needs of learners from language other than English background (LOTEB) compared with English speaking background (ESB) learners in mulit ethnic classes?

The difference in the needs of LOTEB and ESB learners was highlighted by two vocal class members. One from an LOTE background was, at times, unable to express himself clearly because of gaps in his knowledge of English vocabulary, syntax and discourse and in pronunciation. The ESB speaker, on the other hand, tended to make assumptions about his listeners' background knowledge of the topic. These learners would need very different teaching approaches. However, all would benefit from watching examples on video of where communication succeeds or breaks down and in talking about what is appropriate in a particular social purpose and context.

Access to findings:

Electronic version

Taylor, E. and A. Murray (1997) *ORACY IN A COMMUNITY SETTING. Teaching within the Oral Communication stream of the Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA) in multi-ethnic adult literacy and basic education classes: a case study*. http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/LLAE/STAFF/liz_t.html

Journal article

Taylor, E. (1997) "A Close-up on Oracy: focus on talk in a multi-ethnic classroom," *Fine Print*, Vol. 20, no. 2.

11.Pathways Between ACE And VET: Creating Illusions And Shattering Myths

Allie Clemans and Peter Rushbrook

Background

The Forging Pathways: good practice in community-based adult education project was funded by the Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE) and Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) in order to extend and deepen pathways between Adult and Community Education (ACE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Implicit within the project title was the assertion that ACE providers who have done excellent work extending community-based further education provision would benefit from offering further vocational and accredited learning opportunities to learners as part of their commitment to lifelong learning.

Pathways has always been an elusive term in the ACE sector. It is often touted as a positive spin-off of community based provision, as it offers access to further learning opportunities. Concrete evidence of these opportunities is harder to pin down.

Research Question

This research aimed to identify the factors which facilitated the ACE to VET pathways in ACE providers. Our brief was to develop a set of case-studies on pathways in ACE providers, grounded in the work of a sample of providers who were considered by their Regional Council of ACFE as demonstrating characteristics, experiences and lessons which reflect the diversity at work in the ACE sector. The research was then to be used practically as the basis for the production of a professional development package. This package would be presented in regional workshops and exist as a stand alone resource to assist ACE providers to develop pathways in the current education and training context.

Methodology

Five ACE providers were selected and agreed to participate in the study. Within the Melbourne area, Merinda Park Community House (Cranbourne), Coonara Community House (Lower Ferntree Gully) and Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House were selected. Rural areas were represented by The Centre (Wangaratta) and the Apollo Bay Community Centre. Coordinators and managers shared their experiences with the project team and provided examples of how rural, urban and suburban providers, small, medium and large, have responded to forging pathways between ACE and VET. Their experiences, written in their own words, provide a useful and realistic starting point for raising issues and offering perspectives on pathways why they have been forged, the benefits they offer, the type of arrangements that exist, the risks they pose, and the drawbacks they bring.

Findings

A full report of our findings are detailed in the project report (Clemans and Rushbrook, 1977). In what follows, we discuss some of the implications of our findings for conventional thinking about the relationship between ACE providers and VET.

Convention: that ACE providers should seek to offer pathways to VET programs in TAFE as a means to complement the learning acquired through further education provision. That is, as learners develop a taste for learning, they should seek out VET and that such opportunities are to be found in TAFE Institutes. This perception generates a notion of pathways as an external journey, from an ACE provider to TAFE.

Our research found that providers constructed a series of pathways but that pathways arrangements contradicted conventional assumptions. Some of these providers had worked with their local TAFE Institute to construct pathways. The TAFE provided the accredited next step for their students and as such, the pathway between ACE and VET was an external one. In other instances, the TAFE supported the ACE provider to offer an accredited module of a larger VET program in their centre. However, as the ACE provider became more experienced with this delivery and applied for approval to deliver these accredited modules in their own right, their reliance on TAFE diminished. Similarly, these ACE providers offered vocational programs on an outreach basis to other ACE providers. Their maturity certainly resulted in a pathway between ACE and VET provision, but their maturity also determined the location of this pathway. It began externally but developed internally over time.

The case studies reinforced the interpretation that learners who choose to pursue community-based adult education see this environment as conducive to effective learning, rather than associating it with particular programs (for example ACE with general adult education and TAFE with Tourism and Hospitality). These ACE providers saw their provision of VET as a means of responding to their local communities.

Convention: that the notion of pathways between ACE and VET is a linear one.

All providers, large and small, offered opportunities for ACE and VET, through which students were able to weave an educational program. Students slipped in and out of courses, rather than pursuing a linear path from ACE to VET. More often than not, students worked internal pathways from non-accredited programs or workshops to accredited programs, before moving to forms of external provision. Students demonstrated a preference for remaining within a community provider because of its intimacy, quality of provision (in particular, child care), and proximity to home.

Convention: that pathways to VET threaten the community provider ethos.

This issue was raised throughout the project and generated a range of responses. Before entering into VET provision, some providers perceived that the availability of accredited VET programs would weaken traditional community generation of ëbottom-up' program ownership.

In practice, however, VET programs tended to become an extension of traditional community practice. Providers were adamant that they were not becoming ëjust another private provider' or ëmini-TAFE institute'. Indeed, in many cases providers reported that VET strengthened the community ethos through increased financial autonomy and enhanced standing within local communities. Other providers saw VET provision simply as an opportunity, with few or no potential threats, and offered programs with great and continuing success. Hearsay evidence about non-project providers avoiding VET provision suggests the existence of a widespread belief in permanent damage to community provision should VET programs be introduced. Further research is required to test this assumption.

Conclusion

Though it is difficult and perhaps even dangerous to draw comparisons from the project providers, some parallels are evident. Collectively they share a commitment to the provision of a wide range of pathways, both internal and external. This has led them to seek connections between community-based and formally credentialled VET programs while maintaining a strong community focus. In various ways they have made use of local TAFE Institutes as mentors and facilitators in order to familiarise themselves with the management and delivery of VET programs. After gaining confidence, familiarity and legitimacy, they have moved on to offer VET programs as stand-alone private providers.

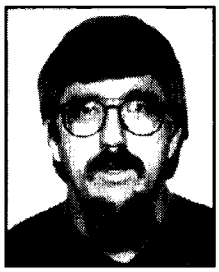
They also have in common the crafting of strong community networks which have enabled educationally productive links between employers, client groups, other providers and funding sources. Mostly informal and established through personal contacts and movement within community and business groups, these networks are powerful mechanisms for both responding to, and creating demand for, vocational programs. Finally, the project revealed the providers' management and staff as risk-takers who look ëoutside the square' for solutions to problems relating to program provision. Collectively they are exemplars of community education leadership, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial flair.

Reference

Clemans, Allie and Rushbrook, Peter (1997), Forging pathways: good practice in community-based adult education, OTFE, Melbourne.

12. Listening From The Heart: Can Research Have Soul?

John Bottomley



Research Question

This project aimed to research and develop strategies to increase participation in ACFE of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Stage One

The first stage involved a review of the literature and of demographic data. It identified and documented 10 model programs for non English speaking background people's participation, and designed and funded a pilot program.

Stage Two

The second stage involved seven community providers (CPs) in implementing 10 projects to test and evaluate new strategies. Their submissions and implementation of projects reveal an intuitive research practice that is characterised by the listening from the heart.

Through the question of whether research can have soul, I seek to deepen the sectors commitment to this intuitive research practice that is born of a spirit of justice and compassion.

Background

In 1987, our organisation prepared a report for the then Central Metropolitan Regional TAFE Board on "The Role of Ethnic Organisations as TAFE Community Providers." We found there were five ethnic organisations registered as TAFE CPs across Victoria (out of 244 - 2%). Of these, four were in the Central Metropolitan Region. We made a number of recommendations to the Regional TAFE Board to address the issue of increasing the role of ethic community organisations as community providers.

Ten years on we found there were now ten funded ethnic community organisations in the community education sector ñ out of 488 (ie. still 2%). The language for describing migrant people has changed, the policy formulations have changed, but the underlying reality hasn't really changed.

In 1987, I was also a consultant to the TAFE Board's Student Profile Survey (SPS 87). This was the TAFE system's first attempt to survey students across the system, and involved a huge allocation of resources at the Board, College, and CP level. By the time I wrote the last of five reports on this mass of student data, the TAFE Board had been abolished and the new State Training System was moving on. The SPS was not repeated in 1989 as planned, and the resources and energy built up eventually dissipated. In our literature review, we noted various state/national levels of the system are still fascinated with counting. Larger and larger samples of student participation are being reported, but the patterns of access and participation for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, apart from ESL, remain virtually unchanged over 10 years.

What is the value of this research? What value is it to have a research practice that seeks to describe so much, but explains so little? If research does not advance the spirit of justice and compassion that is at the core of human dignity, then is it self-serving research that actually perpetuates structures of injustice? It is lifeless. The issue this project raises for me is can research have soul? Is there a practice of research with people from CALD that brings forth a spirit of justice that brings about social change, which enriches all those engaged in the research process? What is the purpose of research if it is not to enhance the human dignity of researched and researchers?

The key to life-giving rather than lifeless research is seen in the work of those CPs funded to take part in this project, where there is a desire for an investigation of issues that brings about social change for justice. This commitment springs from listening with an open heart.

A Case Study

Two projects were funded in this pilot project that did not fit in to the initial guidelines we provided for submissions. One was from the Angliss Neighbourhood House, which is now funded to develop a music program for Vietnamese people as means of teaching ESL. This project arose when 2 ESL teachers introduced a social function each term to their Vietnamese class as a tool for socialising and language learning. After the function, the group stayed on to sing together.

The teachers saw the groups' enjoyment of singing in their own language, but they also noticed that their students were very good mimics of the teachers' singing in English. They noticed the students had clearer pronunciation of English when singing. So they began to introduce more singing into their ESL class. They noticed that the Vietnamese people could sound certain

consonants at the end of words more distinctly as they sang. There also seemed to be a cultural value associated with music and poetry that gave confidence and motivation to their students.

On the basis of these insights, the teachers approached a music therapist to help them interpret what they were learning, and to formulate a program to test their hunch about the link between music and language learning.

This is research shaped by listening from the heart. It is listening that enters into new experiences with an attitude of reverence and respect, that waits in an attitude of openness during a time of ambiguity, even mystery, and that hears a new voice speaking from a core of human dignity. This is a process of gathering information, reflecting on experience, and the discernment of new theories or new hunches that is at the centre of the sort of research CALD people need if ACFE is to deliver programs that meet their needs for access and participation.

Findings

This is a process of research for which many CP coordinators and teachers have an intuitive feel. Let me share briefly some of the things I have discovered with providers in this pilot program as they are engaged in listening from the heart.

First, the power relationship between teacher and student is transformed when the teacher willingly sacrifices her ego. Narre Neighbours Outreach is being funded to run ESL programs for 2 ethno-specific organisations. The teacher in the Arabic speaking group noted the group had a high level of confidence from the very beginning because they could walk in the door talking in their first language. She also noticed her own mixed feelings at not knowing what her students were talking about. Yet the teacher has strengthened the opportunities for students to speak together in their own language by arranging a tea-break in the middle of the class. Out of this acceptance, the teacher is more aware of the language structure of these Arabic speakers, and is able to offer a more subtle learning program that is more sensitive to this group's cultural and language needs. When the teacher willingly gives up some of her power in the classroom in this way, it forges a relationship of trust. And trust is the essential pre-condition for the disclosure of our deepest needs. This is a research process where teachers learn from their students what their students need to learn, and where teachers learn the context in which this will be most effective for their students.

Secondly, a listening heart is not bound by policies or conventional wisdom. ACFE policy has required ESL classes to be open to people of all backgrounds. The Coburg Education Collective (CEC) has had a Turkish Women's Group and a Lebanese Women's Group each meeting at one of their neighbourhood houses. The CEC knew that the Turkish women were not literate in their own language and so would not benefit from ESL. The Lebanese women wanted to learn English, but want to learn in the security and trust of their own group. Through this pilot project, the Turkish group is learning Turkish and the Lebanese women are an ethno-specific ESL class. Here, the CEC have not tried to adjust the students needs to fit existing policies. They have valued the trust they had, and so designed specific programs that test the reality they observed against the assumptions of existing policies.

Thirdly, a listening heart is blessed with imagination. Emma was learning Spanish and wanted to get together with a Spanish speaker for practice. A casual conversation with a person teaching English at a Spanish centre led her to wondering whether they could work together. Emma discussed her idea at the Fitzroy Learning Network (FLN) where she was a volunteer playing the piano. Though the FLN and the pilot project, Emma is now part time coordinator of Language Links, with almost 100 people in language learning pairs of English, Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese for people already doing language classes. Listening to these students has brought forth ideas for three new program initiatives, all being implemented with energetic contributions from participants. Because the personal is political, one heart speaks to another and in that exchange, ignites a creative spark that has transforming power.

Finally a listening heart is collaborative, celebrating community. Almost all of the pilot projects involve at least two organisations cooperating together. A number of the pilot projects have asked to meet together during this semester to share experiences. The Board has set aside funding to sponsor a forum next year for these providers to share their findings. The project will produce a series of reports and policy recommendations. But perhaps more importantly it will leave behind in the field a number of providers and students who are being changed and enlivened by their experience. A research process that affirms and nurtures such communities of the heart may be the central finding in advancing access and participation in ACFE for people from CALD backgrounds.

13. Good, Better, Best Management Practices in ACE

Pauline Bennet

Research Question

This project aimed to examine the business practices of community based adult education providers and other similar community based providers to benchmark best practice in management techniques and planning and evaluation processes.

Background

The project arose from a lack of information about business practices in ACE. The need for this project became apparent during the development of the Business Development Project currently underway in the Northern Metropolitan Region of ACFE. The five Providers involved were the Pilot group of Providers involved in the Business Development Project in the Region in 1996.

In the course of the project in 1996 many new practices and modifications of existing business practices were trialed and adapted in the Region, and this project provides the opportunity to initiate benchmarking and evaluation of some of these practices.

Best Practice

Best practice is not a fixed concept but a process whereby an organisation looks at how it is doing things now, and identifies how it could do better. Best practice as a concept has been used in the manufacturing industry for a number of years and according to the Australia Best Practice Demonstration Program (1994) is based on the following principles:

- shared vision;
- strategic planning;
- commitment to change;
- cooperative and participative industrial relations;
- a commitment to continuous improvement;
- innovative human resource policies;
- a focus on customers (both internal and external);
- the pursuit of innovation in technology, products and processes;
- benchmarking; and
- the establishment of external networks.

Best practice is a process whereby an organisation continuously strives to better its current good practice.

Benchmarking

MacNeil (Benchmarking Australia, 1994) defines benchmarking as a method of continuous improvement involving ongoing and systematic evaluation, and the incorporation of external products, services and processes recognised as representing best practice.

Benchmarking involves the following processes:

- establishing the strategic intent and strategic objectives of the organisation and identifying critical success factors;
- educating all members of the organisation, gaining their commitment to change, and assigning responsibility for benchmarking;
- analysing organisational processes and current performance and selecting processes for benchmarking according to strategic imperatives;
- identifying best practice sources and establishing necessary relationships;
- determining and standardising data collection methods;
- gathering data to determine current performance gaps and identifying improvement opportunities;
- communicating benchmark findings to employees at all levels;
- establishing functional goals and developing implementation plans;
- obtaining resources and implementing specific actions;
- monitoring, reporting, and assessing programs based on best practice goals;
- recalibrating benchmarks to incorporate upwards movement in best practice; and
- integrating benchmarking outcomes into strategic planning process.

Clearly classical benchmarking is based on very mechanistic industrial processes and does not readily translate into a meaningful process for the ACE sector. In this research project it was decided to modify the classical process in order to establish what current business management practices were being used in the sector and how well established these were.

A major challenge of this study therefore has been to demonstrate that a process like benchmarking can be modified and its language adapted to make it meaningful to the community education sector. The main task in this process has been the identification of management practices that are widely used in the sector and which have been identified as being important to the success of the agency.

Methodology

Stage One

- identify aspects of business management practices to investigate;
- interview the five key providers to identify:
  - aspects of business management practice they wished to improve;
  - aspects of business management they felt they were doing well; and
- develop an interview questionnaire for use at stage two

Stage Two

This involved interviewing the eleven agencies involved in the study. The interviews sought both qualitative and quantitative data. Specific information was sought on the agency's practices in the following areas:

- finance;
- program planning;
- Human Resources Management;
- strategic planning;
- marketing;
- program provision ; and
- management and administration.

Results

Case Study: Diamond Valley Living and Learning Centre - Program Planning and Development:

Program planning and development has been the key aspect to the success of this agency, ensuring that they provide their community with the programs they need and want, and allowing the centre to expand.

A formal process of program planning and development was implemented 10 years ago in response to threats of funding reductions. A member of staff engaged in a Masters degree looking at decision-making processes assisted in the agency review, out of which the current program planning and development process evolved. The current process has been in place for three years. The process takes place annually and is the basis of decision making regarding the agency's activities for the following years.

The process has contributed to improved programs which are more responsive and better able to meet the community's needs. There has also been an increased emphasis on professional development, leading to an improvement in staff skills. Staff and student numbers have increased and student satisfaction continues to be high, with students now completing higher level certificated courses.

Outcomes are measured in several ways, including achievement in certificated course outcomes, student outcomes and increased enrolments. Other outcome measures are increases in the number and diversity of courses, increased funding and increased income, as well as the establishment of a new building.

Case Study: Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House - Marketing

Thornbury has developed strong community networks which assist in its marketing process. By joining with others in a regional group of neighbourhood houses and community centres, Thornbury has been able to market itself better, and thereby expand its operations. There is a positive attitude to networking instilled in the agency, and the practice is well developed.

One of these networks consists of providers of adult community education and has resulted in a collaborative marketing and promotion via newsletters and brochures. Another outcome has been a joint funding submission that has funded a needs analysis. Apart from increased funding, other outcomes include: program development, integration of people with a disability, increased and improved agency profile, shared programs and resources, improved cooperation, support and learning.

Outcomes are measured by increases in funding and programs as well as increased participation in programs and other activities at the house. The agencies participating in these networks have enhanced their competitive advantage over agencies that are not involved, which is ultimately the best measure of the success of a marketing strategy.

Case Study: Preston Neighbourhood House - Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a key aspect of Preston's business management practice as it is establishing the foundation for the centre's future direction and development. In developing its strategic planning process, Preston became heavily involved in skills development for its committee and staff. Implementing their strategic plan will be facilitated by the team building and training that has accompanied its development.

While an annual planning cycle had operated for many years, changes in local needs and traditional funding sources made it necessary to further develop this process in order to make it better informed and more detailed. Assistance was sought through the involvement of the agency in the ACFE Business Development Project, which provided the agency with impetus, guidance and practical support in expanding its planning process and developing a strategic plan.

Key outcomes have been increased confidence and skills in the Committee of Management, improved decision making processes, increased opportunities for participants and increased participation rates in programs. Outcomes also include the more efficient management, measured by the time it now takes to make decisions. There is a greater sense of common purpose amongst all those involved in the agency, which is currently undertaking a progressive review of all documents and policies as part of its continuing planning process.

Discussion

Different agencies are at different points of development for different aspects of business management. Factors that contributed to relative advancement are:

- size of the agency;
- staffing;
- resources; and
- expertise and role of Committee of Management.

These factors often determined when an agency commenced the process of developing good business management practices and which practices were prioritised for development.

It is also apparent that there is a lack of documentation of processes that are in place and how these were developed. There exists an opportunity for "how to" manuals to be developed at either a regional level or by individual agencies.

The aspects of good business management practice that were investigated in this study were seen as appropriate to providers of adult community education. While most agencies responded that they had most aspects in place, it was beyond the scope of this study to provide an objective assessment of the effectiveness of any agency's individual practice.

Getting the ACFE Research Question Right

Helen Praetz

I want to discuss the general directions of adult education in Australia, and reflect on some of the items which were initially explored at last year's conference: Speaking Back: Building a Research Culture for ACFE. In particular, I am drawing on the themes discussed in the splendid issues paper, put out by the ACFE Board, called The Community in ACE. This outlines some of the challenges and the responses so far, and will itself in time become a subject of research, as will other seminal visionary documents which are transforming this sector.

I am speaking from the perspective of universities and the higher education sector, which have a great deal in common with adult education in the community. It is increasingly hard to separate education into sectors and say that this is school, and this is vocational education and training, and this is higher education and this is adult education. For one thing, everything is now mixed up and universities like my own offer schooling, TAFE, adult education, and higher education. Where does higher education stop and training begin? We are all now redesigning our courses and programs to fit together so that students can begin in VET and continue without hindrance into higher education. Students at school study VET programs and university degree subjects; university students are simultaneously enrolled in VET. And everyone turns to adult education in the community. The demarcations of the past are increasing anachronistic. In a very real sense, we are partners in education through a common focus on students and programs, and through a common desire to serve the community so as to build a more tolerant, equal and productive society. Years ago the Blackburn report described the outcome of education as knowledgeable, skilful, and caring citizens, and this still seems to me to be a good description. It is a matter of some pride to me that universities have had a role in shaping many of the teachers in the adult education in the community sector, teachers who are now contributing to the development of their students as both persons and workers and as participants in Australia's democratic institutions and public life.

Universities and adult educators also stand on common ground in terms of the challenges that face us. Getting the right research questions right, the topic I am addressing today, is one of those challenges, one that is common across the whole education sector.

Strategic Research

I want to turn now to the nature of the research that we are keen to encourage in adult education in the community sector and the kind of research culture that we are developing. I draw on the contribution made to this conference last year by Dr Don Edgar, when he said that research that has as its declared up-front goal to "have an impact on social policy" is doomed to fail. There is, of course, a great truth in that because, as we know, policy making is not a fully rational process. It is influenced by practicalities (especially timing), by values, and by political processes. The rest of Dr. Edgar's speech went on to explore the ways in which you can prepare the ground and influence political processes.

What is strategic research? Essentially, this type of research is based on the values that you hold and who you are. Its aim is to help you to get to where you want to be.

Nonetheless, research can and does have an impact on policy, sometimes a decisive one. An example is a study that examined the factors associated with high literacy levels measured in the 100 schools study. High levels of achievement of students were correlated strongly with energy and commitment from the teachers of these students, and that was strongly associated with professional development of a particular kind. As a result, researchers were in a very strong position to argue that supporting teachers' professional development was likely to pay off in improved scores. That research could and did influence policy and budgets because it identified factors that were policy amenable. It is more difficult to know what to do about other findings, such as the link between literacy and family income.

What I am suggesting here is that ACE research should be strategically focussed and that we should be engaging in, and supporting, strategic research.

What is strategic research? Essentially, this type of research is based on the values that you hold and who you are. Its aim is to help you to get to where you want to be. It is aimed at improving the sector and at moving us forward. For that reason, it is undertaken by reflective

practitioners, those who are within adult education, who understand and share its values, who build up adult education within the community and who are committed to its improvement. So our reasons for wanting to build an ACE research culture are to strengthen the sector and expand its scope and influence.

Now, the ACE sector is well placed to engage in this kind of research because it has a clear and persuasive idea of its own identity and of the values that animate it. These are very robust and enduring values and they centre around three key ideas or cornerstones - the student, the programs, and the community. Focussing on these three areas will generate the right research questions, the strategic research questions which have the capacity to advance adult education in the community.

ACE starts with an enormous advantage because of the clarity of vision and the understandings shared by both adult educators and communities. The right research questions arise out of the work itself and from active participation in community life. They arise out of the methods and educational approaches of adult education. They arise out of the nature of the students, the nature and scope of the curriculum, and the characteristics of the sector. These characteristics are described in the Issues Paper as cost efficient, flexible and innovative, responsive, accessible, confident and competitive, proudly even fiercely independent and strengtheners of the social fabric.

Students:

Let us begin by thinking about strategic research issues associated with the student. These include:

- broadening participation, particularly of previously uninvolved groups; and
- building and creating new markets among the young, the old and even older (4th agers), and the linguistically and culturally diverse.

There is an emerging interest in tapping commercial markets, especially small business, and the emerging VET possibilities. There are research questions associated with what people want and need and how they can get it, especially those whose past experiences of education have been less than positive and those who have special needs.

All of these are the right research questions.

The program

If we turn to the program or the curriculum of ACE, further research questions are identified. These include:

- the link to credentialled learning and the delivery of VET and schooling programs which can be recognised beyond the sector;
- the link of these programs to higher education;
- the programs and methods to be used in improving employability especially among younger people and people from disadvantaged groups;
- the means of improving literacy achievement including ESL and the link between improved achievement and employability;
- the role of preparatory studies and their connection, if any, with credentialled learning paths;
- issues associated with the breadth of offerings and the learning technologies and educational approaches which are most appropriate to improving learning; and
- issues of quality, including teacher quality and professional development.

The Community

The focus on the community also generates strategic research questions which will lead to the improvement and reach of adult education. These include:

- the scope and penetration of adult education and its links to decision-makers at local level and more widely;
- what has been the impact of competitive tendering, for example, on the idea of community-based education?
- what are the limits to growth of adult education, including population projections on various assumptions?
- questions about the management of community education;
- how is the social fabric strengthened through adult education in the community?
- what value is added to local communities and to the polity overall?
- how are the skills learned through participation in adult education and its management translated into action?
- are there patterns of influence and networks which owe their vitality to the experiences that participants had and skills they gained through adult education?

New Challenges

The pursuit of such a strategic research agenda is not going to be adequate as we approach the end of the century. There are some challenges emerging which affect all sectors of education and students, programs and the whole society. I refer of course to the significance of the new information and communication technologies which we ignore at our peril.

teaching and learning has become a global industry. Large media corporations are realising the potential of cable and satellite networks to attract subscribers interested in accessing a range of education services. Already an increasing number of corporations are using new technologies to mount their own programs.

This is a revolution we are talking about, akin to the invention of the printing press, with its consequences for the distribution of learning opportunities and providing the means to engage in sharing and shaping the ideas. There is already widespread use of computer-based information in the 40% of Australian homes that have computers. Whether we find such changes exciting or depressing, they cannot be ignored and won't go away.

Developments in communications technology are the answer to the long held dreams of distance educators. Using cheap and efficient technology, learning can be delivered to the workplace and home at any time. There is a move away from the constraints of time and space to the provision of learning environments, and a move away from completing all of the requirements of a course. Instead we are moving towards constructing learning packages which meet the needs that the student has identified.

As a result, teaching and learning has become a global industry. Large media corporations are realising the potential of cable and satellite networks to attract subscribers interested in accessing a range of education services. Already an increasing number of corporations are using new technologies to mount their own programs. The competition for higher education is not RMIT, Melbourne or La Trobe, but the World Learning Network, a collaboration between Enigma productions, the BBC, the British Council and the Open University or the Jones Education Company, which is owned and operated by the cable television company, Jones International Ltd. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs via cable television and the internet, in conjunction with established universities.

And what is the status of degrees offered through the activities of the "Baltic University", a Swedish-led consortium of all the countries on the Baltic Sea, which offers collaboratively developed subjects throughout the region via television and other media. These subjects can be credited towards the degree programs of participating universities. This is like Open Learning Australia or PAGE. But students have also sought a certification of this peculiarly international learning and the consortium has provided one. Perhaps the virtual university will offer a virtual degree.

A paradigm shift is in the wings. While information and communication technologies add to the power and reach of education, they render us vulnerable in new ways. They open up possibilities in knowledge development and distribution but they expose us to powerful global competition. A strategic research agenda would be raising a host of questions relating to the new context for learning and living. Using the same three cornerstones of students, curriculum and community, the following areas for research appear pressing:

Students: Many research questions have focussed on access to information technologies and the exclusion of certain groups (or countries)

- Do we hold back from any use of computers until everyone can afford one?
- What provision can be made for excluded groups and how?
- Who takes up computer assisted learning opportunities and under what conditions? Who is turned off and why?
- Have students become more critical and demanding as a result?
- How will the students' participation (its nature, frequency and scope) change when classes operate in real and virtual time and space? and
- How will we support students in using these technologies? How will we encourage independent learners?

Curriculum: Here also interesting and pressing research questions arise which are beginning to be considered in other sectors. These include:

- evaluation of student learning using new technologies;
- factors which encourage or retard learning;
- a host of questions relating to instructional design; and
- the mix of appropriate technologies and their impact on student learning.

The main challenge to educators comes from a greater awareness of quality in the curriculum. The role of the teacher will change, though probably more in higher education than in adult education, and move towards becoming a facilitator of learning and an enabler, coach and guide. This has often been the way in adult education. The skills of interpretation, synthesis and abstraction will be in higher demand and greater forms and levels of literacy, including computer competence, will be called for. How can these be fostered?

Community: The relationships between adult education and the community will also need to be reconfigured.

- Will the local community be valued more highly when the virtual community is available with a flick of a switch?
- How could these technologies be used to strengthen the fabric of the community?
- Under what conditions and how will education providers link to other sources of community information? What are the privacy issues?
- How will we choose, acquire and manage networked technology infrastructure and decide the best way of incorporating into learning centres?
- How will the educational use of information technologies for education be integrated into the related activities in both the home and the wider community?

It is possible that ACE has a very important role to play in the consideration of these issues through its determination to build up the social fabric.

Conclusion

I want to thank the organisers for the opportunities to discuss these issues and to be part of this great event. The emphasis on research is timely and engagement in strategic research is vital not just for the ACE sector but for education and the community generally. This is partly because the ACE sector is the prime upholder of many big and important values. For example, who else in our community is affirming the importance of education in strengthening the social fabric? Who else is so strongly promoting the importance of engaging collective action and joint work learnt through adult education and exercised for the public good?

Maintaining the vitality, sense of mission and ideals of the adult educator in the community sector is therefore vital for the public good. This requires engaging in the kind of strategic research which I have been discussing. I said earlier that such research should be undertaken by reflective practitioners, those who have commitment to, and understanding of the ACE agenda. This means building up a research culture which supports excellent research. There is little to be gained and much to be lost if research is amateurish and ultimately unusable. Like all other researchers, ACE researchers must answer the research questions using rigorous and defensible methods so that the findings can be widely applied. This requires knowledge of what has been done already and an awareness of research funding. I can only draw your attention to the wise counsel provided in the report of last year's ACE conference and urge researchers to consider the questions at the outset. Getting the research questions right and answering them is fundamental - but it is not easy!

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