

Classroom management strategies to address  
the needs of Sudanese refugee learners

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- ✧ *Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document—Advice to teachers*
- ✧ *Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document—Methodology and literature review*

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# Foreword

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This research was undertaken under the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Research Program, a national program managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). Funding has been provided under the Adult Literacy National Project by the Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Science and Training.

Since the end of the Second World War Australia's refugee program has seen about 12 000 refugees settle here annually. In recent years, there has been a significant intake of refugees from Africa, including Sudan. Sudanese refugees have similar settlement needs as other non-English speaking refugees, for example, work opportunities, education, financial management, and reorienting family structures, all of which impact upon the learner's ability to acquire and improve upon English language, literacy and numeracy. A point of difference, however, is that Sudanese refugees come from a highly 'oral' culture as opposed to a highly print-based culture as exists in Australia. This difference presents a great challenge in learning to read and write.

As a point of entry into education and training for many refugees, the quality of English language, literacy and numeracy programs is critical. This report highlights the specific needs and characteristics of adult Sudanese refugee learners and the impact these may have on their success with English language, literacy and numeracy. The report also examines the adequacy of classroom management practices.

This work will be of interest to teachers and training providers who want to improve the services they provide to refugee learners. It also makes some suggestions on how classroom management practices could be enhanced to better address the needs of Sudanese refugees in particular, as well as the needs of other refugee learners in general.

Readers interested in classroom management practices for refugee or migrant learners or professional development for adult language, literacy and numeracy practitioners may also be interested in:

- ✧ *Insights from research and practice: A handbook for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL practitioners*, eds. M Herrington and A Kendall (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester, 2005)
- ✧ *Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce*, by S Mackay et al. (NCVER, Adelaide, 2006)
- ✧ 'Oracy is more than the absence of literacy: Changing learner groups in ESL classrooms in highly literate societies', by H Nicholas and A Williams, in *The kaleidoscope of adult second language learning: Learner, teacher and researcher perspectives*, ed. G Wigglesworth, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Sydney, 2003, pp.29–52.

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Managing Director



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# Key messages

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This study examined the experiences of Sudanese refugees undertaking English language, literacy and numeracy classes. It also identified classroom management practices that are ‘working well’ and enabling teachers to address the needs of Sudanese adult learners.

- ✧ Sudanese settlers in Australia are culturally and linguistically diverse. Many have been denied access to formal education as a result of years of conflict and therefore are at a low starting point. Because they come from a highly oral cultural background, they have well-developed informal learning strategies that can be utilised as a ‘way in’ to English language learning.
- ✧ Programs requiring concurrent development of speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy and learning skills may constitute too great a learning burden for Sudanese learners. Greater flexibility in course content and outcomes to enable learners to concentrate initially on oral English language skills may provide a better strategy.
- ✧ Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the teaching of numeracy. Inadequate attention to numeracy may disadvantage learners when accessing work opportunities or entering vocational education and training.
- ✧ The teaching of Sudanese refugees would work better if:
  - ◆ registered training organisations provided teachers with relevant background information on the Sudanese students
  - ◆ class sizes were reduced from 15 to ten students per teacher for these learners
  - ◆ Sudanese learners could be taught separately from learners from other backgrounds.
- ✧ English language programs developed in consultation with the local Sudanese community and learners and linked to an immediate resettlement need or vocational purpose have been successful models of delivery for this learner population.

# Executive summary

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## Background

This study arose from the findings of a previous research project completed for the National Centre for Vocational Education research (NCVER) on the professional development needs of the English language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce in Australia (Mackay et al. 2006). That research indicated that many teachers were struggling to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of a new population of learners. These new learners were humanitarian refugees from African countries. As indicated by statistical data from government sources, Sudan was the main source country for humanitarian refugee arrivals in Australia between 2003 and 2005. Hence, while acknowledging a wide variety of individual variation, the focus of the present study was on the specific needs and characteristics of adult Sudanese refugee learners presenting for tuition in English language, literacy and numeracy classes. In particular, the study sought to identify teacher interventions that were successfully addressing these needs and characteristics; it also sought to highlight areas where needs were not being adequately met.

This study included participants from New South Wales and Western Australia and was supported by input from Victoria via the project's advisory group. To date, these three states have the highest intake of Sudanese refugee families in Australia. Data for this study were gathered from two types of participants: specialist English language, literacy and numeracy teachers currently teaching Sudanese refugee learners; and non-teaching experts in refugee rehabilitation and resettlement, including representatives from Sudanese community organisations. Teachers of Sudanese refugees provided data via an online survey and telephone interviews. Non-teaching experts provided data via telephone and face-to-face meetings.

## Findings

### The learners in the study

The consultations undertaken for this study highlighted the diversity of Sudanese refugee arrivals. The majority of recent arrivals in New South Wales and Western Australia, as for other states, are refugees from southern Sudan where the economy is based primarily on subsistence farming and pastoral activity. Their pre-migration experiences included armed conflict, and often years in refugee camps in other African countries. Years of prolonged conflict resulted in the disintegration of schools and other forms of government infrastructure. While there was a small but significant number of learners in this study with substantial schooling, the majority of Sudanese learners had little experience of formal learning.

Southern Sudanese refugees came from highly oral cultures in which all significant social transactions are conducted orally. They are mostly speakers of Dinka or Nuer languages—languages without written forms. The literature indicates that members of highly oral cultures

have highly developed strategies for the transfer and retention of information. Furthermore, our study confirmed that Sudanese adults from all parts of the country typically speak a minimum of two languages. The learners in this study have extensive experience of oral language learning, but many have no experience of using written forms of language. Those who do have some knowledge of reading and writing have used specialised forms of written language (mostly confined to replication of religious texts in Arabic). It would be fair to say that, on arrival in Australia, all Sudanese refugee learners are unfamiliar with ways of operating in a culture that places a high premium on the universal daily use of the written word.

Although many Sudanese refugees have high levels of learning needs, they also have the strength of survivors. Teachers in this study reported that their Sudanese refugee learners apply many positive attitudes to their learning.

## Findings relating to responses to learner needs and characteristics

### *The challenge of transition from Sudan to Australia*

Sudanese refugees face a complex range of resettlement challenges. The transitional challenges highlighted in consultations in this study were related to: learning English; work opportunities; educational aspirations; family; financial management; and system requirements. Sudanese learners face these challenges concurrently, and daily. The study indicated that registered training organisations were already responding to these challenges by providing information and assistance through interpreters. Teachers were also addressing these cultural concerns in their classroom management practices. Many of their teaching activities and the content of their lessons directly addressed issues relating to the learners' transition from their life experiences in Africa to their new life in Australia.

### *The effects of torture and trauma on the learning process*

The consultations undertaken (and substantiated by the literature) on this issue indicate that it is difficult to distinguish the effects of past sufferings from the effects of forced migration itself and the challenges of re-adjustment in a new country. There was general agreement among participants in this study that the effects of past torture or trauma were not explicitly nominated as barriers to learning. Support from the Sudanese community and support in the context of religious affiliation and church attendance were overwhelmingly cited as significant factors in assisting learners to deal with the stresses of past and present. Teachers in the study reported that, for the most part, their Sudanese learners preferred to resolve their problems amongst themselves without assistance from teachers or counsellors. Teachers indicated that some of the strategies implemented to address issues related to the refugee backgrounds of learners were equally relevant in addressing issues relating to their limited experience of formal education.

### *Introduction to formal learning in Australia*

This study indicated that teachers were successfully using classroom management strategies to introduce their Sudanese refugee learners to the processes of adult learning in Australia. Some arrangements requiring institutional support, namely, placing learners with those from similar backgrounds, and smaller class sizes, were recommended by participants in the research and supported by the literature, but were not always in place.

### *Teaching and learning English language, literacy and numeracy*

There was general agreement among participants in this study that learning to *read* and *write* presented the greatest learning challenge for Sudanese learners. However, there was no general agreement about the ease with which Sudanese learners were able to learn to *speak* English. There

was little evidence that teachers were aware of the literature on learners from highly oral cultures or of the need to develop oral language teaching strategies that do not rely on written prompts. This is especially relevant in teaching the many Sudanese learners at beginning stages of spoken and written English. The Sudanese community representatives in this study expressed concern that many learners were overwhelmed by the task of learning all the skill areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy concurrently. The community representatives recommended prioritising the teaching of oral skills before literacy skills are introduced; these recommendations are supported by the literature.

Teachers with learners at more advanced levels of spoken English also reported the need for extra time to enable these learners to learn the intricacies of writing with accuracy and in a style appropriate to an English audience.

The study indicated that not all teachers were explicitly addressing the teaching of numeracy. Those who did teach numeracy discovered that learners needed substantial tuition in learning the concepts and also the language of mathematical operations.

## Successful initiatives addressing the needs of Sudanese learners

This study identified a range of initiatives which successfully accommodate the needs of adult Sudanese and other African learners. Such initiatives link English language tuition to immediate settlement concerns, local employment opportunities, or practical skills. These initiatives were strongly promoted by the Sudanese community representatives participating in this study.

## Support for teachers

In relation to bilingual support, opportunities for sharing strategies, and availability of counsellors, this study indicated that teachers were receiving a high level of institutional support. The need for professional development, however, far outstripped supply. This study indicated the requirement for specific professional development to explore the teaching ramifications of learners with backgrounds in highly oral cultures; the study also highlighted the need for professional development to extend teacher skill in developing learners' numeracy.

## Implications

This study demonstrated that teachers succeeded in meeting the needs of their Sudanese learners generally where the needs of these learners coincided with those of other learners of a similar profile. Teachers were less successful in those areas requiring specific knowledge and understanding of their Sudanese learners' backgrounds in language learning and use. The ability of teachers to address these learners' needs also appeared to be compromised by: contractual obligations to funding bodies, whereby all language and literacy skills were required to be addressed concurrently; the placement of Sudanese learners with learners from other backgrounds with different needs, or different levels of the same needs; and large class sizes, inappropriate for learners with such a high level of need.

A number of key strategies to address the specific needs of Sudanese refugee learners emerged from the study. These included professional development for teachers in the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of new populations of learners (such as Sudanese refugees), particularly where their backgrounds had a direct bearing on teaching practice, and professional development in developing or extending teachers' classroom techniques to build on learner strengths. In addition to recommending greater flexibility in program content, the strategies also highlighted the importance of outcomes and methods of delivery to more adequately respond to the needs of Sudanese and other learners presenting with very limited spoken English, very little experience of literacy in any language, and very little experience of formal education. To implement these strategies, support from funding bodies and registered training organisations is necessary.

# Context

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## Research purpose

English language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers have been found to experience teaching challenges in the context of a changing learner profile in adult English language, literacy and numeracy provision (Mackay et al. 2006, p.26). There appears to be an increase in the number of refugee learners from the Sudan presenting with no (or minimal) formal education, no literacy in any language, very limited English language ability, and with behaviours that may be indicative of the effects of traumatic experiences. Teachers have requested support in understanding how sociocultural issues, such as survival of torture and trauma, compounded by a fractured or severely limited educational history, impact on Sudanese learners' capacity to learn; teachers have also indicated a need for assistance in identifying the interventions being used to maximise learner success.

This study explores cultural, social, historical and psychological considerations impacting on Sudanese refugees as learners and investigates the classroom management practices that enable teachers to address these considerations for this group of learners—and possibly other learner groups. In this study we define classroom management practices to be every action in a classroom/training site designed to ensure a positive learning environment (Youssef 2003, p.6). Classroom management practices will therefore include teacher strategies for behaviour management and for addressing learner needs, as well as teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy (as teachers). Classroom management also involves practices and interactions that occur as part of learning activity.

The study draws information from two Australian states with high numbers of Sudanese refugee arrivals, New South Wales and Western Australia. The participants in the study were specialist adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers currently teaching Sudanese learners, professionals with expertise in rehabilitation for refugees, and Sudanese community representatives. Informal contact was also made with Sudanese learners themselves.

## Key issues identified in the literature

A review of recent research both in Australia and overseas has highlighted the complexity and interrelatedness of factors impacting on refugees generally, and refugees from Sudan specifically, and their positioning as learners in their new country of resettlement.

## The refugee experience

### *Who is a refugee?*

The term 'refugee' is applied to people who satisfy the criteria specified in the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, p.16 cited in United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2001–06). According to the convention:

A refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

As described in Pittaway (2003, pp.5–6), migrants freely choose to come to a new country, basing their decision on at least some information. Refugees, however, are fleeing their country in fear for their lives, having often experienced war, civil conflict or sustained acts of violence, and are offered resettlement in a new country, which may be completely different from their home country in terms of language, culture, economy, geography and climate. Prior to resettlement in a new country, many refugees may also experience harsh conditions in camps in neighbouring countries with few resources to spare, sometimes for years.

To address the possible psychological damage caused by pre-migration experiences of upheaval and trauma, professionals in Western countries in the field of psychology and other disciplines related to mental health have developed strategies for dealing with symptoms of trauma. The central focus of these strategies is on sufferers communicating details about specific distressing events in the past through telling, drawing or acting out. However, the concept of trauma has come under criticism in the past few years (Eyber 2002, pp.9–10). The key criticisms are that trauma is a Western concept that cannot be applied to non-Western populations, and, consequently, interventions that aim to alleviate trauma are often inappropriate and ineffective. Eyber goes on to argue that communities have their own resources for coping with distress, and that these resources should be recognised and respected.

Similarly, Ingleby (2005), Newman (2005) and Eyber (2002) indicate that focusing too heavily on the helplessness and passivity of war-affected people is possibly counter-productive, as it draws attention away from people's strengths, and from their ability to survive. It also denies the complexity and individuality of responses. At the same time, emphasising resilience does not mean that people do not experience symptoms of distress, or that they do not need support. It does, however, take as a starting point people's abilities and capacities to deal with their experiences (Eyber 2002, p.12).

### *Resettlement*

Taylor and Stanovic (2005, p.5–6) make the point that, while refugees face some similar issues to other new migrants settling in Australia, refugees generally also have distinctive issues. These may include experiences of armed conflict and long periods in refugee camps, which, in turn, create lengthy disruptions to education and employment, and limited access to health care. These disruptions and possible diminution of physical and mental wellbeing may compromise the capacity of refugees to learn a new language, to develop vocational skills relevant to their new country, and hence to gain access to well-paid work. Uncertainty about permanent residency in Australia and the anxiety of having family still living in danger may be additional burdens for refugees. Considering these issues, it would be fair to say that, in general, building a new life in a new country often presents greater challenges for refugees than for other migrants.

## Sudanese refugees in Australia

Since the end of the Second World War over 620 000 refugees and displaced persons have been resettled in Australia, an intake of approximately 12 000 per year (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). In line with the regional priorities recommended by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 70% of the refugee intake for Australia in 2004–05 came from African countries, with 43% (5220) from Sudan in that year. The majority of Sudanese refugees are settling in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia. Most of the recent refugee arrivals in Australia from the Sudan are from the south and are in the 18 to 34-year age group.

In New South Wales most Sudanese refugee families were initially located in metropolitan suburbs within a 30-kilometre radius of the Sydney central business district. Regional settlement is concentrated in coastal towns such as Newcastle, Maitland, Coffs Harbour and Lismore to the north of Sydney, and Wollongong to the south. The only significant settlement location in inland New South Wales is Wagga Wagga.

In Western Australia, the great majority of Sudanese refugee families were initially located in metropolitan suburbs within a 20-kilometre radius of the Perth central business district. The highest concentration of these settlers (approximately two-thirds) is in the city of Stirling, about ten kilometres to the north of the city centre.

## Sudan

### *History*

Sudan, with a population of approximately 35 million people, is the largest country in Africa. (Hillier 2002; Williams 2003). Military dictatorships favouring an Islamic-oriented government, based in the north of the country, have dominated national politics in Sudan since it gained independence from British–Egyptian administration in 1956. Since independence, the people of Sudan have come to experience civil war and political turmoil as a permanent feature of life. Many people have been internally displaced, some more than once, while others have been forced to flee permanently from Sudan (Malual 2004, p.5).

The civil war has impacted on more than one generation of Sudanese and has undermined the provision of education and health services, particularly in the south. Drought and famine have exacerbated the stresses of prolonged warfare. Although reports from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2005) indicate that the conflict in Sudan ended officially with the establishment of a Government of National Unity in September 2005, peace is still a fragile concept.

### *Cultural considerations*

While Arabic is the official language of Sudan, there is a rich array of ethno-linguistic groups within the country. According to Cassity and Gow (2006, p.53), Sudan is generally classified into two broad social categories, along geographic, ethnic and religious lines. The north is generally Arabic-speaking, of Arabic ethnicity and with an Islamic belief system. The south generally has Indigenous languages (the largest language group being Dinka), African ethnicity and Christian and Indigenous belief systems. Given the linguistic diversity of Sudan, it cannot be assumed that there is a common language across refugee learners from the same geographical area, nor a common sense of identity.

Although the concept of culture is heterogeneous and dynamic, a key aspect of Sudanese culture, with implications for the Sudanese as learners in Australia, is its highly oral form of linguistic

socialisation. Many African cultures, including the cultures of Sudan, are highly oral, with rich traditions of poetry and storytelling, even in Arabic-speaking urban areas (Hutchinson 1996, p.6). Hutchinson indicates that oral cultures are cultures of great complexity where the core texts are oral rather than written. In these cultures, storytelling is a performance in which the storyteller and the audience share the same community history; each knows their part in the telling of a known story. The storyteller carries the narrative in word, movement and gesture, while the audience plays a choral role, singing, chanting, and repeating phrases to assist the transfer and recall of information.

The movement of Sudanese refugees from a highly oral culture to a highly literate (print-based) culture has important implications for their acquisition of both oral and written skills in English.

### *Education in Sudan*

Over the past 50 years, the Sudanese Government has not achieved universal primary schooling (Federal Ministry of Education 2004), and education at all levels has been chronically under-funded. Education effort has been focused on primary school education and, where schools were established at all, they were more likely to serve the northern areas close to the capital, Khartoum, despite the fact that the population was concentrated in the rural south (United States Library of Congress 1991). Until as recently as 2004, when education policy explicitly addressed the education of girls, school education was biased toward the education of boys (Federal Ministry of Education 2004). Primary schools were poorly resourced. As late as 1996, the Sudanese Ministry of General Education reported that text books, considered an essential tool of education, were in short supply, with the student-to-book ratio sometimes as high as three to one. Other instructional equipment such as radios, video players, and computers were non-existent in schools. Reports on primary school class size vary, but figures as high as 46, 57, and 86 are mentioned (Ministry of General Education 1996). In 2005, only about 10% of teachers in Sudan had the required teaching qualifications (Federal Ministry of Education 2004).

In relation to current educational provision in southern Sudan, Hillier (2002, p.3) notes that 'because of the war and government neglect, few schools remain open and two generations of southern Sudanese children have not received an education'.

### Teaching considerations

The literature review also sought information on the needs of refugees as learners and evidence of strategies that were being successfully applied to teaching refugees and migrant adults with limited formal education and backgrounds in highly oral cultures.

Nicholas and Williams (2003, p.32) identify key aspects of language use in oral cultures. In particular, they discuss the notions of shared text development between speaker and audience, and the performance of existing oral texts rather than original compositions. Some features that distinguish oral texts from written, as noted by Nicholas and Williams, include repetition, echoing earlier parts of the text, imagery, digression and elaboration, attention to sound, metaphors, and formulaic expressions. Achren and Williams (2006, p.1) suggest that adult learners from highly oral cultures such as Sudan therefore bring with them a set of well-developed informal strategies and textual forms for learning, which could be built upon in the English language and literacy classroom. These include opportunities for repetition and memorisation, rhythmic activities such as poetry and singing, and the use of stories and poetry as classroom texts.

McPherson (1997, p.4) refers to work done by Khoe and Kightley (1986) documenting their approach to developing a teaching program for Hmong refugees with no formal education and



no literacy in their first language. In the teachers' view, the program succeeded because it focused strongly on first developing oral language relating to events and actions within the learners' own personal experiences. Supporting their findings is the work done by Hood and Kightley (1991) in a longitudinal study of six learners over a period of approximately 18 months. At the end of their study, the researchers concluded that, for people with limited formal education and no literacy in their first language, it was essential that they be introduced to written texts in a context where there is a very close connection to familiar, concrete real-world events and phenomena. They also emphasised the importance of reading texts that are meaningful to the learners, and the need for teachers to make that meaning as accessible as possible through clarity of presentation and careful staging of teaching sequences. Of further relevance to this study, these researchers advise against introducing abstract notions, such as alphabet and decontextualised written words, as preliminary steps towards literacy in English and against the use of written worksheets to support oral language development for these learners. They also caution against the use of particular types of visual representation (such as line drawings), as they may not be meaningful for people who do not share Western conventions of visual perception (Hood & Kightley 1991, p.58).

For learners with little or no previous exposure to formal education or to any written system of writing, Gunn (2003, p.46) and Kalantzis (1987, pp.33–44) suggest strategies for the development of 'pre-literacy' skills such as pen-holding, letter formation, and basic writing conventions using roman script. Achren and Williams (2006, p.4) and Dodgson (2005) suggest computer-based technology as a useful learning tool. Useful advice is also provided by Yates (2003, p.72), who suggests some strategies to assist adult learners who are new to education in Australia. She advocates a two-way adjustment involving strategies for accommodation (teachers meeting learners' expectations) and re-socialisation (introducing learners to Australian teachers' expectations).

Achren and Williams (2006, p.6) and Parks (nd cited in McPherson 1997, p.13) suggest that, ideally, learners at this earliest phase of literacy development, who are also refugees rebuilding their lives, should be placed in small classes together. They argue that these conditions are essential for meeting the specific needs of these learners, especially as many are unused to a formal learning environment. Furthermore, they advise that learners who have never experienced formal learning need time and practice to develop an understanding of expectations about classroom patterns of interaction and the purpose and nature of learning tasks.

Many Sudanese refugees who have been exposed to formal education in English and who have well-developed oral English skills nonetheless need particular support in the development of writing skills. This is because, coming from a highly oral culture, their written texts often exhibit features of oral cultural texts (for example digression, repetition). In highly 'oral' cultures crucial meanings and texts are not original compositions, but are retellings of existing stories, myths and histories. Movement from a highly oral culture to a highly literate culture (as found in Western countries) requires a fundamental shift in understanding and using language. Specifically, using written texts as an important form of communication in every facet of life, and the requirement to compose original written texts present new challenges for Sudanese learners learning English. Not surprisingly, teachers have begun to make a connection between learners' background in a highly oral culture and their writing in English. Sangster (2002) and Slikas Barber (2003) both note that their Sudanese learners experience difficulty in constructing original written texts. Specifically, they note that Sudanese learners' texts are organised quite differently from those in English.

## Research questions

Within such a context for learners and teachers, we were interested in the following research questions:

- ✧ What are the background factors that adversely affect the ability of humanitarian settlers from the Sudan to learn in an Australian formal learning setting?
- ✧ What classroom management issues are teachers having difficulty in resolving in relation to humanitarian settlers in mixed adult literacy/numeracy and language-learning groups?
- ✧ How are these issues currently being addressed?
- ✧ What recommendations can be made regarding good-practice classroom management to enhance the participation of Sudanese (and other) humanitarian settlers in formal language, literacy and numeracy tuition and what recommendations can be made regarding classroom management practices that are inappropriate for Sudanese survivors of trauma and torture?

# Methodology

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## Participants in the study

There were two broad categories of participants in this study: specialist English language, literacy and numeracy teachers currently teaching Sudanese refugee learners; and people with expertise in refugee issues and rehabilitation or in community work with Sudanese and other African refugees. Western Australia and New South Wales were represented in both categories.

### Specialist English language, literacy and numeracy teachers

Thirty teachers were approached to participate in the study: 24 English language teachers (12 from each state) and six literacy and numeracy teachers (four from Western Australia and two from New South Wales). The majority (28) were working in capital cities and the remaining two were working in other major cities. Technical and further education (TAFE) institutes and the Adult Multicultural Education Service were the main employers of the teachers in the study. The majority of the teachers were working with learners in the Adult Migrant English Program or the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program. The teacher profile indicated a highly experienced pool of practitioners, with 21 of the 30 (or 70%) having more than 11 years of teaching experience. The majority of teachers had extensive experience in teaching refugees from a range of countries, and most claimed to have a substantial understanding of issues pertinent to their Sudanese refugee learners.

### Specialists (experts) in refugee issues and rehabilitation or in community work with Sudanese and other African refugees

The following six people were asked to comment on the educational and other issues facing Sudanese refugee learners:

- ✧ a Sudanese community worker employed by the statewide Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors in New South Wales
- ✧ a psychologist and counsellor working for a major provider of the Adult Migrant English Program in Western Australia
- ✧ the African Student Support Officer and Regional Multicultural Education Officer employed by a regional city provider of adult English language, literacy and numeracy tuition in New South Wales
- ✧ two representatives from the peak Sudanese associations in New South Wales.

## Approaches taken

An electronic survey aimed at specialist language and literacy practitioners was used to provide a snapshot of current provision for Sudanese learners in Western Australia and New South Wales. Specifically, it aimed to build an overview of teaching issues and solutions and to identify potential participants for in-depth telephone interviews. Semi-structured telephone interviews were then undertaken with 11 teachers to gain a deeper insight into the key issues raised in the surveys. In particular, the interviews sought to build a picture of the teacher interventions considered to be successfully addressing the specific needs of Sudanese learners. Consultations with people with expertise in issues relating to refugees from Sudan and in the rehabilitation of people who have experienced torture and trauma were undertaken to gain further insight into the educational challenges facing Sudanese people as settlers in Australia and the particular interventions that were considered potentially helpful.

## Issues of generalisation

Owing to the small sample size and the individual nature of people's experiences/backgrounds, it cannot be claimed that the findings reflect the experiences of all Sudanese adult learners or all of the professional people working with them. The specificity of the findings to Sudanese refugees is premised on the clustering of the variables of refugee status, oral cultural background, and differing world view associated with their life experiences prior to their arrival in Australia. There were variations in the learners' experiences of formal education and in their spoken and written English language proficiency on entry to tuition. However, the findings suggest that at least some of the advice applicable to Sudanese learners may also inform classroom management practices for learners who share some aspects of the Sudanese learners' profile.

Responses to the electronic survey and the telephone interviews were given by self-selecting participants. Therefore the data and its interpretation represent only their viewpoints.

The use of a 'snowballing' approach to identifying participants (via personnel with management responsibilities) can raise issues of gate-keeping bias. Indeed, it was the case that not all providers contacted were represented in the findings. It is not known if non-response was due to deliberate gate-keeping, oversight, or to increases in managerial workload. On the other hand, many personnel with management responsibilities were keen to be involved and actively encouraged participation and forwarded sealed, completed surveys via conventional mail for part-time personnel with limited access to email.

# Findings

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The findings of the study are presented below. The insights gained from the study indicate the interrelatedness of sociocultural considerations, educational history and refugee status of Sudanese learners. They also indicate that a range of successful classroom management practices are in place for these learners. The findings also suggest areas where learners' strengths may not be fully recognised by teachers and hence used as a starting point for teacher intervention. A full account of the research processes and findings for each data-gathering phase is included in the following support documents:

- ✧ *Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document—Advice to teachers*
- ✧ *Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document—Methodology and literature review*

These documents are available at the NCVER's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>.

## The learners in the study

Participants in this study drew on their experiences with a substantial number of Sudanese refugees in Australia, with the teachers in the study reporting on their experiences of teaching a total of 241 adult Sudanese refugees. Their refugee learners were mostly from southern Sudan and included approximately the same number of men and women, mostly in the 25 to 44-year age category. The non-teaching participants in the study, particularly the representatives of the Sudanese community, were able to draw on their experiences of their work with many more Sudanese refugee arrivals. The demographic information gathered on learner profiles for this study is consistent with statistical information from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (2005a, 2005b). The Sudanese community representatives in this study indicated that the pre-migration experiences for Sudanese refugees in general included armed conflict which affected more than one generation.

Prior to their experience of forced migration within Africa, the majority of the learners represented in this study lived in a subsistence pastoral economy in Sudan. They are speakers of Dinka or Nuer languages, the languages underpinning cultures with a highly oral form of linguistic socialisation.

Teachers in this study reported that the majority of Sudanese learners were entering English language and literacy provision with very limited English. In terms of the class in which learners were placed and the on-entry English language levels of the Sudanese learners, the data suggest that, for the most part, learners with similar proficiency were placed together and that the learners in a high number of these classes (ten out of 30 responses) had almost no English (International

Second Language Proficiency Ratings<sup>1</sup> 0 or 0+). A further eight classes were for learners with only a little more English, assessed as having between International Second Language Proficiency Ratings 1 and 1+. Only one class had Sudanese learners assessed at International Second Language Proficiency Ratings 3, the accepted entry point for language learners wishing to pursue academic studies. For the most part, Sudanese refugee learners were placed in classes with learners from other backgrounds with similar English language proficiency and with some other aspects of the profile of Sudanese learners. Dedicated classes, for Sudanese learners only, were the exception.

Predominantly, the learners represented in this study had very little experience of formal education, with almost 60% having two years or less (table 1).

**Table 1** Years of schooling of Sudanese learners

Years of schooling	Number of Sudanese learners	Percentage
No formal schooling	95	39.4
1–2 years of schooling	46	19.1
3–5 years of schooling	37	15.3
6+ years of schooling	63	26.2
<b>Total number of learners in this study</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The combination of low levels of formal education and low English language proficiency ratings would suggest that the majority of learners in this study need a substantial amount of time for the development of learning skills, of oral English language skills, and of initial reading and writing skills.

## Findings relating to teacher perceptions of learner strengths

Teachers in this study provided a very positive picture of the strengths of their Sudanese learners. They revealed a highly motivated learner population keen and able to learn spoken English. Their enthusiasm to build on existing social and community ties also featured strongly in teachers' comments. These findings were strongly supported by the Sudanese community leaders consulted for this study. For ease of presentation, responses to questions on this issue are shown in table 2. Where the same comment was made more than once, a number beside the individual comment indicates the number of times the comment was made.

Further discussion of the capacity of Sudanese learners to learn spoken English occurs later in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR) is a scale that describes the development of second or foreign language proficiency in adolescent and adult learners. The scale encompasses descriptors for the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing in the target language, from 0 (no ability to communicate in the target language) to 5 (indistinguishable from a native speaker of the same sociocultural background). The International Second Language Proficiency Ratings is widely accepted in Australia and is used primarily for assessing the proficiency of individual second language learners and for providing a framework for language curriculum development. Detailed information is available at <<http://www.gu.edu.au/centre/call/frameset4.html>>.

**Table 2 Teacher perceptions of Sudanese learners' strengths as learners**

Learning strategies	Learners' attitudinal strengths	Building relationships
Excellent strategies for learning oral skills (9)	Keeness and willingness to learn (11)	Ability to work in groups cooperatively with students of all language backgrounds (3)
Ability to ask for clarification	Positive attitude (4)	Keeness to maintain cohesive community links
Good at rote learning/memorising	Persistence in the face of many obstacles	
	Confident about their ability to learn	
	Learners work to their potential	
	Motivated to learn to get a better job to provide for their families; to access further vocational or university study; to help others in the community	
	Amiable disposition	
	Sense of humour, fun	
	Love of music	

## Findings relating to responses to learner needs and characteristics

The data collected for this study identified a range of issues facing Sudanese refugee learners. These issues were the starting points for an exploration of the classroom management strategies that teachers were using to address Sudanese learners' needs. The findings are presented under the following headings:

- ✧ the challenge of transition from Sudan to Australia
- ✧ the effects of torture and trauma on the learning process
- ✧ introduction to formal learning in Australia
- ✧ teaching and learning English language, literacy and numeracy.

### The challenge of transition from Sudan to Australia

Our study indicates that Sudanese refugees face a complex and interrelated array of resettlement challenges. These challenges result from the experiences associated with their transition from a world of pastoral living in Sudan, to armed conflict, to sometimes lengthy stays in refugee camps in Sudan or other African countries, and finally to a world of urban, industrialised living in Australia. Educational challenges and aspirations are inextricably bound up with the array of other resettlement issues. In the words of one teacher in the study:

Essential concepts are absent, to do with world knowledge ... Time and time again we've found that the language wasn't the problem. It was knowledge of the concept. We have to keep going right back to explaining what something is. For example, when we are teaching Sudanese learners how to use the telephone, we don't just have to make sure they can press the right numbers or listen to what the other person is saying. We also have to teach what a telephone is.

Our study clearly demonstrated that the challenges of a whole new way of living required enormous daily reserves of physical, emotional and mental energy. Furthermore, the findings indicated that many adult Sudanese refugees are struggling to manage their new lives with very little in the way of financial resources. The transitional challenges highlighted in the study were in the areas of work opportunities and related educational aspirations; family structure and dynamics; financial management; and system requirements. These challenges all impact on this

group's access to and progress in formal learning settings. A discussion of these challenges, and the ways that registered training organisations and teachers are responding to them, is presented below.

### *Work opportunities*

Irrespective of the language program the learners were in, teachers in this study most frequently cited the need to find work as the learners' number one reason for learning English. This finding was strongly supported by the non-teaching participants in the study. Employment was cited as the key which would enable Sudanese refugees to take responsibility for their own needs (rather than living off welfare payments), to participate in the community, and to earn surplus money to help support family members still in Africa. Our study indicated that Sudanese men seemed more anxious to gain employment than women, particularly middle-aged women who saw their main responsibility as caring for their children. It also indicated that younger women were keen to enter the workforce. Sudanese learners' priority for learning English in order to gain employment was most clearly expressed by the teacher who said:

Most are keen to get jobs ... even the brightest ones are ending up in chicken factories ... they really want jobs even though they know they would get more interesting jobs if they stayed and learned English. There's quite a lot of pride among [the Sudanese learners] that you don't find as universally amongst other groups of learners.

This finding was supported by research participants in a regional area of New South Wales. They reported the common practice of Sudanese men leaving their families to seek work in other regional centres, sometimes as far as 100 kilometres away. They confirmed that, owing to the refugees' lack of readily marketable skills, limited or no formal education, and lack of Australian work experience, the work in these distant locations, if accessed at all, was mostly low skilled, seasonal or casual, and low paid.

Another teacher in this study commented that in her experience the men's more urgent desire to obtain any kind of work seemed to subside as they realised that English was the key to obtaining anything other than unskilled work. However, work remained a priority. She added that:

if they could do an [English language] course which would lead to a job at the end, they would probably stick with the course, but the number one priority is to provide for their families.

Sudanese community leaders in this study supported this advice, and also suggested two helpful strategies for making stronger connections between employment opportunities and English language tuition. Their suggestions were for registered training organisations to:

- ✧ identify refugees' existing skills beyond English language proficiency at the initial assessment stage. The purpose of this broader assessment of skills would be to provide an acknowledgment of the full range of skills that Sudanese refugee learners bring with them on arrival. It might also suggest vocational areas to link to English language tuition or areas for further study.
- ✧ link English language, literacy and numeracy tuition with the development of informal practical skills, possibly building on the existing skills of southern Sudanese learners. Some providers are beginning to run trials along these lines, such as 'English for kitchen hands', 'English for computers', 'English in the garden', and 'English for child care'.

### *Educational aspirations*

In contrast to the dominant finding that, for the majority of Sudanese refugees, employment was the highest priority, some counter evidence also emerged in this study. Teachers reported that some learners with very little English language and limited or no schooling did not appear to



express interest in further education. Specifically, the teachers in the study who had predominantly Sudanese women in their classes reported that women with children expressed keenness to learn English to enable them to assist their children with schoolwork. Still others saw settlement for their family and language learning as initial priorities.

Teachers of learners with higher levels of education and higher levels of English reported that these learners wanted to further their education or upgrade their qualifications. However, several teachers reported a disjuncture between current capacity and aspirations among Sudanese learners with more advanced spoken English. They reported having difficulty in convincing these learners of the extent of study required for entry into professions such as teaching or medicine, especially as the study places such a strong emphasis on skills in reading and writing. One teacher said that she:

often runs sessions on pathways and what is required to achieve the end goals, but [she] does not think that southern Sudanese learners, particularly the men, really comprehend the level of English required and that such levels may not be achievable.

Sudanese community representatives supported this finding and noted that parents and guardians, who have little appreciation of the huge learning demands that their children face on entry into the Australian school or vocational education systems, often have unrealistic expectations of their children's academic progress. These expectations placed additional pressure on the children to succeed and additional stress on family relations. Truancy from school and withdrawal from vocational study were reported as troubling manifestations of these pressures.

The issue of personal pride (exhibited in this context by never asking for help) was also mentioned as something that may limit the chances of success of this group in vocational study. To make this point, one teacher in this study cited a positive example, where the learner actively sought all the help she needed:

One student wants to go to university to continue her nursing career that she began in Sudan. She has a very good chance of succeeding because she is very good at speaking up for herself. Of all the Sudanese learners I have taught, and that's quite a lot, she is the best at telling me what she doesn't understand. She'd never seen a computer before she came to Australia, but in the computer class she was smart at getting the support she needed because she was determined that that wasn't going to hold her back, and she had really good learning strategies in place. She was the exception to the rule that you never asked for help, so you would not admit to others that you were not succeeding.

### *Family*

'Family' for Sudanese refugees refers not only to the immediate family such as grandparents, parents, and children. It refers also to other groupings of people who share responsibility for one another's wellbeing and safety, such as guardians and unrelated children, and more distant family members, including aunts, uncles, and cousins. Significant sources of tension and worry for Sudanese refugees, reported by participants in this study, arose from the reconfiguration of traditional family roles and authority after arrival in Australia.

The Sudanese community representatives and counsellors consulted in this study reported that many southern Sudanese families have sole mothers (typically widows) or aunts, or older siblings as the head of the household. It was not uncommon for these women to have responsibility for up to eight children. This departure from the traditional family structure (with the father as head of the family) created tensions between the women and the older children/young people, and presented difficulties for the women in finding effective ways of disciplining their children. In some two-parent households, where the mother had paid employment and the father was unemployed, Sudanese men were expected to help with the care of children, traditionally the sole responsibility of women in Sudan. This erosion of men's authority and self-image often lay at the

heart of family disharmony, which sometimes found expression in alcohol and drug abuse or in episodes of domestic violence.

Furthermore, the community representatives and counsellors reported that, for women with sole responsibility for many children, social isolation was common. Their learning and work opportunities, and hence their access to key sites for extending their knowledge and skills for integrating into the broader community, were limited.

### *Financial management*

Our study indicated that managing money was a significant problem for newly arrived Sudanese refugees. With a background in an essentially subsistence pastoral economy followed by life in refugee camps, financial management is a new experience and a major cultural challenge for this group of refugees. Teachers and other experts in the study provided an array of evidence to support this finding. For example, in terms of financial obligation, the study found that remittances to family overseas often took precedence over paying other bills. Given their previous life experiences, it is not surprising that many Sudanese refugee arrivals were unfamiliar with the need to attend to financial obligations, such as paying rental bonds, rent, or paying for services such as the telephone or electricity. Several of the experts provided anecdotal evidence of Sudanese refugee families running up enormous phone or electricity bills which, on Centrelink benefits, they had no hope of repaying. Furthermore, failure to attend to rental obligations frequently led to moves from one rental accommodation to another. Linked to the issue of financial management was the issue of written lease agreements that the refugees did not understand. They were often unaware of the lease expiry date, so finding new accommodation commonly presented as an emergency.

### *System requirements*

On arrival, all newcomers to Australia, including Sudanese refugees, encounter a range of Australian systems related to welfare, employment, education, health, and the law, among others. This study indicated that, because of their limited spoken English, minimal (or no) literacy in English, coupled with their lack of experience of how government systems may operate, many southern Sudanese refugees experience difficulties in accessing and comprehending information on Australian system requirements. Government agencies in Australia conduct most of their business via forms and letters. Coming from a highly oral culture where important business is conducted orally, Sudanese refugees are not immediately aware that these forms and letters refer to important business, such as the need to attend interviews and case management appointments, or to issues related to variations in welfare payments.

### *Responses to learner challenges of transition from Sudan to Australia*

Teachers in this study commented on the current stresses on their learners. These were considerable. They ranged from dealing with many new elements of Australian culture (for example, using basic household items); understanding their entitlements and obligations to support services such as Centrelink; placing and keeping their children at school; and simple homesickness. As mentioned earlier, many families were experiencing stresses concerned with changing family dynamics in a new culture. Some teachers in the study suggested that the English language class itself was an important forum for Sudanese adults to get together to exchange news and help one another. One teacher of a class of Sudanese women said:

A lot of class time is spent with learners talking in Dinka. The learners don't let me into their Dinka discussion. They discuss their problems ... When I or one of the others [non-Sudanese people] try to step in they say 'don't worry'. They want to sort their problems out themselves and not have us involved.

This study found that many organisations with responsibility for the resettlement of new arrivals are already responding to these challenges by providing information and assistance via interpreters. These organisations included registered training organisations with growing populations of Sudanese and other African refugees. Ongoing programs of information sessions and other useful interventions are already in place, and many encompass classroom management strategies. These interventions are presented in table 3.

**Table 3 Interventions currently being implemented by organisations in response to resettlement challenges for Sudanese learners**

Possible considerations	Suitable interventions
Many material aspects of Western society, e.g. household furniture, the telephone, computers and household appliances, are new to learners.	Actively seek to understand learners' current knowledge and skills. Be ready to explain anything the learners do not know. Incorporate regular and systematic vocabulary-development activities into the teaching program. Provide opportunities for hands-on learning to use new appliances.
Australian social services and systems are new to learners.	Seek institutional support to arrange information sessions (with interpreters if necessary) provided by other professionals on settlement issues such as financial management (need to pay for rent, electricity); health (nutrition, men's health, women's health); and law and order (driving, drugs and alcohol, domestic violence). Incorporate settlement information into the content of the language, literacy and numeracy learning program. Have up-to-date information on services/support available to refugees in the local area.
The Australian school system and vocational learning opportunities available to adults are new to learners.	Incorporate information about Australian education, including school education, into the language, literacy and numeracy learning program. This is particularly important for parents with children of school age, many of whom have expressed eagerness to help their children with their schooling. Provide information on educational pathways for adults, especially within the teacher's own institution, using interpreters if needed.
Learners have a background in a highly oral culture and are entering a culture which places a high value on the written word.	Actively seek to understand how people successfully operate in a highly oral culture. Develop teaching strategies that tap into the learning strategies that people from highly oral cultures use to learn language. Stage literacy learning activities appropriate to learners' skills and knowledge.
Learners' cultural values and practices are different from Western cultural practices (e.g. notions of punctuality, and making and keeping appointments).	Provide opportunities to make cultural expectations explicit, especially those relating to the learning setting.
Learners able to attend class only intermittently, or need to attend appointments in class time (due to obligations regarding work or other settlement issues).	Provide many opportunities for repetition and recycling of material. Accommodate learner absence/lateness due to other responsibilities and commitments. This can be done by asking other learners to recap earlier activities or by repeating the most recent activity. Accept that other professionals may be better placed (than themselves) to provide settlement advice to learners. Ensure that learners can visit counsellors during class time if necessary.

## The effects of torture and trauma on the learning process

The outcome of the investigation into this issue was that it is very difficult to distinguish the effects of past suffering from the effects of forced migration itself and from the challenges of re-adjustment in a new country. Furthermore, there was general agreement among participants in this study that the effects of past torture or trauma did not seem to be a paramount or frequently articulated issue for Sudanese learners. Several participants made comments to the effect that

‘overwhelmingly, Sudanese people see trauma as a part of life’. The literature supports this finding. The non-teaching experts consulted in this study were generally in agreement that individuals who were more seriously affected by the effects of torture and trauma came forward for counselling or resolved issues within their community. It may be that the more highly traumatised individuals were not yet accessing English language tuition.

In this study, teachers were asked to indicate whether behaviours commonly recognised as symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder applied to their Sudanese learners. Most respondents indicated only that Sudanese learners came late to class or missed class a lot, and one cited learners’ lack of concentration. Further exploration of this issue was inconclusive. Teachers were cautious about making a direct connection between particular learner behaviours and past trauma, several noting that lateness and absence from class and lack of concentration are not unique to Sudanese learners, and that there is a multitude of possible explanations for these behaviours. Practical matters, such as getting children to school or finding suitable accommodation, were frequently offered as equally likely explanations. Similarly, teachers in this study were cautious about linking poor retention of learning observed in some Sudanese learners to the effects of trauma. They suggested that physical health problems or simply unreadiness to learn may be implicated.

While all of the teacher participants in this study were aware of their Sudanese learners’ backgrounds, more than half of them said that the trauma their learners had experienced in the past did not appear to affect their classroom behaviour or their ability to learn. When asked to comment on their learners’ ability to cope with trauma, respondents mentioned their positive attitudes, their resilience, and the development of informal support systems (such as the mentoring of younger men by older men). Most frequently, participants in the research suggested that support from the Sudanese community was a key factor in assisting learners to deal with the stresses of the past and present. Community was mentioned by several teacher participants in the context of religious affiliation and church attendance:

Their strength is community. Unlike the refugees from the Yugoslav countries where opposing sides from the war were often in the classroom together with fresh memories and aggressive feelings, the Sudanese refugees are all on the same side and welcome each other warmly. Very quickly they know what the other students are doing and they can say that X won’t be here today because they have this or that problem to solve. The Sudanese community here is huge. There is a thriving congregation at our church and there are growing congregations in two neighbouring suburbs.

The availability of support from religious organisations and from within the community may also partly explain why Sudanese learners did not appear to seek the help of college counsellors. Where counsellors were available, teachers appeared to use their expertise (mostly for professional development purposes) rather than the learners. Another teacher in the study simply said ‘I don’t know how [Sudanese] learners are dealing with past trauma. I don’t know whether coming late or any of the learners’ classroom behaviours (none of which is alien) have anything to do with past trauma’.

There was, however, some evidence of the effects of traumatic events on this group of learners. Two teachers in this study recounted incidents in which a seemingly innocuous class activity (for example, an excursion to the beach) triggered distressing flashbacks of life-threatening events. Other ‘one-off’ incidents of behaviour that may have related to past trauma were also reported. These incidents were effectively resolved by either the learners themselves or by the teachers.

Most teachers in this study reported that they took care to avoid lesson content that could be distressing to refugee learners. However, in one instance, explicit classroom talk about learners’ past trauma seemed to have a cathartic effect. In this instance, the teacher reported on the extraordinary relief that learners appeared to feel when they had the opportunity to tell their

stories of war and escape. On the day before the Anzac Day holiday, the teacher told the class the story of her father's role in the Second World War. In response to her story, the learners' stories tumbled out.

### *Classroom management strategies for managing learners' physical and psychological issues*

Given the inconclusiveness of the data, it is not possible to make any direct connections between particular learner behaviours and past traumas. Comments relating to the management of psychological stress are therefore general, rather than specifically relating to psychological issues of torture and/or trauma. However, many teachers in this study confirmed the importance of creating a warm and welcoming teaching environment, establishing predictable routines, and devising learning tasks geared to delivering a high degree of learner success. They also offered a range of classroom management strategies which had proved successful when learners exhibited signs of stress. Two strategies in particular were implemented by the majority of teachers, with both being considered successful. These were 'try to assist learners by using different activities, different approaches and/or timetabling of activities' and 'personally discuss with the student (out of class) any issues they might be experiencing that are impacting on their class attendance/participation'. Two additional strategies were implemented by just over half the teachers. These were 'ask a counsellor to talk to learner/s' and 'take a more authoritarian approach to classroom management, which may be more consistent with learner expectations of the classroom environment'. This latter strategy for re-socialisation was recommended by Yates (2003).

Additional strategies mentioned in this context were:

- ✧ using activities that involve the students moving around
- ✧ teaching songs
- ✧ making lessons fun
- ✧ using humour and interactive activities to build cooperation
- ✧ providing lots of opportunities for repetition and recycling of learned material
- ✧ maintaining a fast pace of activities to keep learners' attention.

Many of these interventions would be appropriate for all learners, not only Sudanese learners. Furthermore, many of these interventions assist in familiarising these learners with the processes of formal learning, as discussed below.

## Introduction to formal learning in Australia

As mentioned earlier, many Sudanese learners had very little experience of formal education, and the study sought insights into the ways in which teachers' classroom practice took account of this aspect of their learner profile. Teachers were asked to comment on learner groupings, selection of lesson content, and assessment methods. They also commented more generally on strategies they used to familiarise their Sudanese learners with the processes of formal learning. In many respects, their practices are supported by the literature. In particular, there is substantial evidence of strategies of accommodation and re-socialisation, as discussed in Yates (2003).

### *Learner groupings*

Teachers in this study indicated that they used all of the following learner groupings with their Sudanese learners: teacher-directed whole-class instruction; pair work with teacher monitoring; small group work with teacher monitoring; and individual learner work with teacher monitoring. These are commonly used groupings for language, literacy and numeracy tuition for learners of all

backgrounds. The data indicated that teachers most frequently used the first three of these strategies. The available literature on education in Sudan suggests that the most common teacher–learner grouping is teacher-directed whole-class instruction. This finding regarding learner groupings in the present study would therefore suggest that teachers are accommodating learner preference for teacher-directed whole-class instruction, while introducing them to the less familiar learner-to-learner groupings. The lower, but still substantial selection of ‘individual learner work with teacher monitoring’ may relate to the small number of classes of Sudanese learners with advanced levels of English proficiency. While it was not possible to draw definitive conclusions regarding ‘best’ learner groupings for Sudanese learners, the data indicated that teachers were successfully using a range of classroom groupings. They also indicated that there were no classroom groupings used known by teachers to be distasteful to the learners.

### *Content of teaching/ learning material*

Teachers in this study were asked to nominate, from five broad areas, the main sources of content for their language, literacy and numeracy teaching program. These content areas and the number of times teachers nominated them as first or second choice are listed below.

- ✧ learners’ life stories (11)
- ✧ newspaper and other media articles about learners’ country (0)
- ✧ Information about living in Australia (26)
- ✧ real problems, situations that learners are concerned about (20)
- ✧ vocational content of interest to the learners (for example, horticulture or childcare) (2).

Their responses are supported by the literature vis-à-vis appropriate material for refugee learners with a history of torture and trauma. Teachers indicated a clear preference for focusing learners’ attention on the present and the future, and for assisting with learners’ resettlement in a new country. The relatively high frequency of the first item—learners’ life stories—may be because it included (as it clearly was in at least one instance) giving learners practice in saying and spelling names and addresses. No teachers selected ‘newspaper and other media articles about learners’ country’ as their first or second choices. This would indicate that, in general, teachers in this study were not drawing the attention of the learners to potentially distressing content relating to their past in Sudan or to what is happening there now. It is also possible that the language of media stories may have been beyond the reading capacity of many of the learners.

In giving reasons for their choice of content, most teachers in this study indicated their reasons as ‘learners need to know/share this information’ (22 responses) and as ‘learners are particularly interested in this content’ (15 responses). One respondent commented that choice of content was influenced by the need to give learners opportunities to do the same things many times over. Asking learners to ask and write about one another provided a ready source of repetitive practice.

Perhaps the very low selection rate for ‘vocational content of interest to the learners’ was attributable to the perception that it was ‘early days’ yet for mainstream vocational content, especially as many learners were presenting with very limited English proficiency. However, recent initiatives in New South Wales and Western Australia, where a particular subject area (gardening and childcare, respectively) was the main source of content for English language instruction, suggest that levels of English language may not be a barrier to vocational learning. The linking of English language and literacy tuition to a practical skill area was strongly recommended by the Sudanese community representatives consulted in this study.

### *Assessment processes*

Teachers in this study were also asked to comment on their perceptions of the assessment processes that gave their Sudanese learners the best sense of progress in their learning. These processes and the number of times they were cited are presented below, ranked in order of frequency of citation.

- ✧ teacher comments/error correction (29)
- ✧ tests (17)
- ✧ self-assessment using technology (for example, computer, audio tape, video) (10)
- ✧ individual performance in formal assessment (10)
- ✧ tasks/performance in group projects (8)
- ✧ peer assessment (3)
- ✧ other (for example, individual performance in informal assessment) (2).

Again, the range of assessment methods used suggests the processes of accommodation and re-socialisation recommended in the literature. The methods selected most often, ‘teacher comments/error correction’ and ‘tests’, are consistent with the assessment processes used in the learning culture with which Sudanese learners would be familiar, either directly or indirectly (primary school in Sudan). Of particular interest in these findings is the relatively low rating given to ‘individual performance in formal assessment’, especially in light of the current focus on outcomes of competency-based training, and hence on formal assessment as the teachers’ key mechanism for making judgements on learner progress. It would appear from this finding that teachers and learners are at odds when it comes to placing trust in assessment processes.

Rating lowest were ‘performance in group projects’ and ‘peer assessment’, possibly because they would not be deemed by learners as good indicators of progress, but possibly also because they were not frequently used by language, literacy and numeracy teachers working with learners at very low levels.

### *Other classroom management strategies to develop formal learning skills*

In the context of many Sudanese refugee learners having had very limited or no experience of formal learning, this study gathered data on teacher interventions that were being successfully used to assist Sudanese refugee learners to develop formal learning skills. Many of these interventions are not new and would also benefit other learners. However, teachers in the study noted that, for Sudanese learners, some interventions were particularly effective and were needed more frequently than for other learners. These interventions are summarised below.

As mentioned earlier, teachers cited the need to establish a calm and welcoming classroom environment with predictable routines and clear expectations about teacher and learner roles. Staging a variety of short activities, some involving movement around the classroom, was suggested as a way of successfully accommodating learners unused to long periods of sitting at a desk. Teachers indicated the need, for learners at all levels, for greater care and explicitness in conducting language-learning activities, many of which would be unfamiliar to Sudanese learners. Explicit attention to teaching the language related to the use of classroom furniture, stationery, audiovisual equipment and other learning resources was also recommended. Furthermore, teachers noted that particular care should be taken when using audiovisual teaching aids. Context-rich media such as photographs, videos and DVDs proved to be much more meaningful and hence more successful as teaching tools than line drawings or audio cassettes. Teachers were also unanimous in confirming the need for learners to practise learned language, and emphasised the importance of providing many opportunities for repetition and recycling of material, especially

for learners at beginner levels. Even at these levels, but more importantly at higher levels, teachers advised that they devoted regular class time to teaching learners strategies for organising their learning materials.

In terms of placing learners into classes, teachers in the study indicated that Sudanese learners were sometimes in classes with those whose needs were significantly different. Where other learners' literacy development was more advanced, there was concern that the Sudanese learners would fall behind. Teachers indicated the need for institutional support to ensure that Sudanese learners were placed in classes with learners with similar needs and at an equivalent stage of literacy development. Considering the levels of need of many Sudanese refugees in relation to language and literacy learning, teachers also indicated the desirability of reducing class sizes from 15 learners to ten learners per teacher. This recommendation is supported by the literature.

## Teaching and learning English language, literacy and numeracy

This study also sought information about the ways in which teachers were adapting their classroom management practices for assisting Sudanese learners to develop skills in spoken and written English, and in numeracy. In general, teachers were taking a communicative approach to teaching all language skills. All were working to accredited curricula. Findings regarding these learning areas are presented below.

### *Teaching and learning spoken English*

Despite an indication from teachers that Sudanese learners had excellent strategies for learning oral language (see table 2) and the many observations by teachers that their Sudanese learners were all able to speak at least two languages, further investigation of this issue proved inconclusive. There was no general agreement on the ease with which Sudanese learners were able to learn spoken English. Some teachers in this study were quite emphatic that one of the key strengths of Sudanese as learners was their ability to develop oral skills. In support of their claims they referred to their 'good ear' for the nuances of spoken language, their ability to memorise language they had heard, and their ability to learn the forms and pronunciation of English easily. Several teachers in the study mentioned the broad equivalence of the sounds of the learners' first language (Dinka or Nuba) and English by way of explaining their Sudanese learners' ability to hear and replicate English sounds. In contrast, others said that poor pronunciation was an issue.

One teacher in the study commented that, although some Sudanese learners demonstrated facility with spoken English, it was a mixed blessing, as their written language skills lagged far behind their spoken language skills. This disparity of skills made placing these learners in an appropriate class difficult. Another supported this point with the comment:

The issue of pride is very important and it is often difficult to persuade Sudanese learners to go into what the teacher perceives to be the appropriate class. They always want to go into the higher class.

Other teachers in the study were equally emphatic about the difficulties their Sudanese learners experienced learning oral skills. They reported that, in their experience of teaching Sudanese learners with almost no English, development of oral skills appeared to be no easier than the development of other language skills.

Two teachers in the study noted that, in their experience, the listening skills of Sudanese learners were not as well developed as their speaking skills. One was puzzled by the difficulty her learners had following spoken instructions. This perception may relate to the greater level of explicit instructions, associated with the processes of language-learning activities, that Sudanese learners seem to need. The other teacher commented that Sudanese learners were confident of their



ability to develop speaking skills. However, this confidence was shaken when the Sudanese learners were made aware that they had not heard nuances in the speech of others.

The study clearly indicated that, where Sudanese learners were in dedicated classes or constituted the majority in the class, teachers were responding well to their requirements. This was evident in the time teachers spent during class explaining unfamiliar material items and concepts; teaching vocabulary and pronunciation; and repeating, recycling and re-teaching learned material as needed.

One teacher teaching an advanced English class said that, while she had not needed to change her general teaching approach, she did need to explain learning tasks much more explicitly. This was particularly relevant to speaking tasks requiring the expression of opinion, as it emerged that the Sudanese learners were not accustomed to being asked to express their ideas. She gave an example of outlining the stages of a debate in some detail, noting that, although the Sudanese were not the only learners to benefit from the explicitness of this instruction, they tended to need clarification of the task more frequently than other learners.

In general, teachers in this study did not seem to be aware of the background of their learners as coming from a highly oral culture and most did not seem to be aware of the available literature on this topic or of the specific implications that such a background might have for teaching spoken English. Although some teachers in this study reported teaching songs and used mnemonic devices such as rhymes and chants in their teaching of oral skills, there was no strong evidence that teachers based their use of these techniques on knowledge of a new learner population. Sudanese and other African learners have learned their first language and additional languages through oral learning processes only. One implication is that, because these learners had no previous need for written script and hence have no knowledge of writing in English, teachers need to develop a repertoire of oral language teaching techniques which do not rely on written English. That would present a challenge for many teachers, since many widely used techniques and materials for teaching spoken skills involve written prompts. Teachers are trying to teach writing and reading English to people who have only a fragile grasp of speaking it. This approach, dismissed in the literature as unsound, is found in this study to be frustrating for teachers and learners alike.

To be fair, the research, notably by Nicholas and Williams (2003) and Achren and Williams (2006), says more about the features of language use in highly oral cultures, and less about the language-learning processes that might be in play. However, the literature presents a starting point for explorations of how teachers may tap into oral learning strategies familiar to their learners.

The Sudanese community representatives consulted in this study expressed some of the concerns being voiced by Sudanese learners about the language and literacy tuition they were receiving. These concerns were that, for learners at beginning stages of English language learning, and particularly for learners presenting with very limited, or no reading and writing skills in any language, the task of learning speaking, listening, reading, writing, and numeracy concurrently creates an overwhelming learning burden. They reported that learners were frustrated at the end of their tuition because they did not feel they had a confident grasp of any one of these. They proposed by way of a solution to these issues that registered training organisations offer, for beginning learners, the option of classes which place emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills. This recommendation is supported by the literature, notably in the study of Hmong learners referred to in McPherson (1997). Furthermore, the community representatives advocated linking the development of English language skills to practical skills or work-related skills that the learners already had, or were keen to learn.

### *Teaching and learning written English*

The frequency with which reading and writing were nominated as areas of greatest difficulty was not surprising, given that most of the learners in the research sample were from southern Sudan where indigenous languages have no written form. Hence, many of the Sudanese adults represented in this study were at the beginning stages of literacy development. These learners face the task of learning in just a few hours what other Australians learn over years. Sudanese community representatives in the study proposed that 'pre-literacy' tuition, for example pen-holding, letter formation, and the concept of sound/letter relationship, could be provided by bilingual southern Sudanese refugees (proficient in English) who were formerly teachers in southern Sudan. This approach would maximise the learners' Adult Migrant English Program hours of funded provision and would provide meaningful work for the teacher refugees.

Several teachers in the study commented on the poor retention that Sudanese learners have in relation to the sound/letter relationships in English. One also commented on their difficulties transferring the learned spelling of words to the spelling of the same words when they occurred in dictation. Another commented that her Sudanese learners think spelling doesn't matter. A third teacher explained Sudanese learners' fragile grasp of the connection between sounds and letters this way:

Coming from a culture where they survived without relying on any script at all, and never having to associate sounds with meanings in written script, they haven't been 'sold' on the value of script. It's a completely foreign concept and perhaps an unnecessary one.

He went on to comment that his learners seemed to have a better retention of whole words. Considering that many Sudanese adults come from a background where knowing how to read and write is reserved for the educated few, it may take time for them to understand the importance of written English as a vital form of social intercourse for everyone in English-speaking countries. These observations from this study are supported by the findings of the study by Hood and Kightley (1991) and by the other studies referred to in McPherson (1997).

A number of the teachers in this study who had learners at both advanced and beginner levels reported that the curriculum they were using, requiring coverage of all language skills, prevented them from adequately addressing the needs of their Sudanese learners, particularly their need to develop reading and writing skills. A comment frequently made was that there was insufficient class time to work on the development of literacy skills. Working to prescribed assessment tasks for learners at higher levels was also mentioned as an obstacle to teachers fully addressing learners' needs. One solution proposed, and in some cases already in place for more advanced learners, was additional small-group tuition, which allowed teachers and learners to concentrate on particular reading and writing skills.

For learners with more advanced spoken than written English skills, the issue of appropriate class placement arose. One teacher in the study suggested that these Sudanese learners should be encouraged to enrol in a class that corresponds to their written English.

There they will have a better chance of picking up good writing habits such as paying attention to sentence structure, grammar and spelling. Teachers teaching classes at higher levels assume these basics are already in place, and if they are not, students tend to write gobbledygook.

However, as noted earlier, teachers had difficulty in making this case to learners, as they 'always want to go into the higher class'.

The variety of Sudanese learners' aspirations, interests and capacities, and the learning effort required to learn English indicates that there may be a need for registered training organisations to rethink language program options. Options such as tuition with an emphasis on oral skills, as

mentioned above, tuition with an emphasis on written skills, and tuition in oral and written skills relating to immediate and practical skill development were all advocated by participants in this research as potentially useful strategies for addressing the needs of Sudanese and other African learners.

### *Teaching and learning numeracy*

From the data gathered, it appeared that not all teachers in this study were specifically teaching numeracy. Consequently, relatively little information was gained about this area of teaching and learning. Similarly, there is very little in the current literature on the teaching of numeracy to this new learner population and on any issues they may be facing as learners.

Two teachers in this study commented on their teaching of numeracy, and both were unsure whether the difficulties that Sudanese learners had with numeracy were conceptual or linguistic. They both reported that Sudanese learners did not seem familiar with the four mathematical operations:

They have no concepts of numeracy such as adding up or multiplication, they don't know the signs for addition, division etc, and they don't know how to 'carry' or the multiplication tables.

One teacher noted that reading texts such as a bus timetable presented two new culturally specific concepts to Sudanese learners. These texts require culturally specific spatial concepts (the format of the timetable). They also involve the culturally specific concept that buses are expected to run to a timetable. Her learners did not appear to make the connection between the bus, the times and the destinations.

Both teachers in the study reported spending a great deal of teaching effort on teaching the time using different clocks. They reported that the Sudanese learners had no more difficulty than other learners in learning these concepts, but the importance of being punctual did not seem to be connected with the ability to tell the time: 'Students wear watches, but as jewellery, not to tell the time'.

In view of the importance of numeracy in every day life, including the world of work, and the importance of mathematics in many fields of vocational and higher educational study, these findings are of some concern. By not explicitly addressing the teaching of numeracy, teachers may be disadvantaging their Sudanese learners.

## Successful initiatives addressing the needs of Sudanese learners

This study identified a number of successful initiatives adopted by registered training organisations in response to the needs of the growing number of Sudanese and other African refugees in their student populations. A brief summary of these initiatives is presented below and a full account is provided in the document, *Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document — Advice to teachers*, at the NCVET website.

### *English for Child Care*

This initiative was modelled on Canadian English playgroups observed by the educator. The program was aimed at African women with young children who could not access English language provision owing to lack of child care places. The idea was to provide English tuition to mothers, while their children were looked after by students undertaking a Certificate III in Child Care at a local VET provider.

The content for the English language program focused on parenting, children's play, health (for example, teeth cleaning), and healthy diets for children. The women found this program extremely beneficial as it gave them the skills and the language associated with caring for their babies. Specifically, they learned how to interact with children, how to talk to them, and new ways of playing with them. They also learned the developmental benefits of these activities for the children. Unforeseen benefits of the program were the social contact among the women from different backgrounds and the practical support the more established residents could give to new arrivals.

### *English in the Garden*

This initiative had its beginning in the project leader's belief that, for some English language learners, the most effective way of learning is through 'doing'. Her proposal to run classes under the banner 'English in the Garden' was premised on the assumption that building and maintaining a community garden within the college grounds could provide the focus for English language instruction for learners at different levels of English language proficiency. It provided opportunities for in-class and outside-the-classroom learning, which are especially relevant to learners such as Sudanese refugees, who have little experience of formal learning. The language-learning content of the project followed the development of the garden from soil preparation (including the principles of the no-dig garden, setting up the beds, and planting) to shopping for worms for a worm farm, setting up the glasshouse, and observing and maintaining the garden (weeding, watering, controlling pests, planting out, and sharing the harvest). Teachers of different classes involved in the project devised language-learning activities appropriate to their learners' language proficiency and learning focus.

In the six months from the beginning of the project, the garden had trebled in size to approximately 40 square metres, and gardeners now include three teachers and their students, many of whom are Sudanese refugees. Due to its success as a site of learning, the project continues to attract funding, positive attention, and collegiate support.

### *English for Childbirth*

Another teacher in the study mentioned that her staff teaching an all-female class of Sudanese and other African women developed a teaching sequence on birthing. This was a particularly successful class as the women all had small children and some were pregnant at the time. The teaching was followed up with a visit to the birthing centre at the local hospital. The same registered training organisation was pursuing other options linking English language tuition to local employment opportunities content. These options included 'English for kitchen hands', 'English for cleaning (in hospitals)', and 'English for hairdressing'.

### *The employment of an African support officer*

One registered training organisation in regional New South Wales had employed an 'African support officer' to assist in identifying and addressing the specific needs of African learners. In particular, his role was to assist African learners with regard to their further studies, and to inform them of the counselling and other services available to learners at the college and in the community. His role also included providing professional development to the staff at the college.

### *Bilingual talks on settlement matters*

Teachers and others consulted in this study reported on the usefulness and growing frequency of bilingual talks organised for the benefit of Sudanese and other African refugees. Specific talks mentioned covered subjects such as health (nutrition, men's health, women's health, drug and alcohol abuse); police matters related to driving and domestic violence; and educational matters

such as learning pathways within and beyond English language and literacy tuition. These talks could provide the basis for further work in language and literacy classes.

## Support for teachers

Sudanese refugees are an emerging population with high levels of learning needs and the study sought to identify how teachers were preparing to meet these needs. As shown in table 4, the most common technique used by teachers to access information about the special learning requirements of Sudanese refugees was to talk to the refugees directly. The teachers were unlikely to access research reports or to adopt strategies such as talking to their colleagues.

**Table 4 Sources of information on the special needs of Sudanese refugee learners**

Source of information	Number of teachers accessing the source of information
Self-access to print or other media resources	19
Professional development	16
Visiting speaker from the Sudanese community	15
Research reports	6
Talking to the Sudanese learners	28
Other (included talking to colleagues; meeting and talking with Sudanese people at church; and observing other teachers' classes)	6

All of these sources of information could be considered forms of professional development, and the data indicate that teachers are accessing a substantial number of them. However, the strong preference for talking to the learners themselves is puzzling, considering the finding that many of the learners have very little English and thus would be unable to articulate their needs adequately. It is interesting to note the general lack of access to research reports as a means of gathering information on the special needs of Sudanese refugee learners. This is in spite of the growing amount of research on refugees generally, and on Sudanese refugees in particular. The research reports hold valuable clues about the specific nature of these learners' needs and the ways teachers might go about addressing them.

Teachers in this study perceived that they had substantial and helpful institutional support to assist them in addressing the needs of Sudanese learners. In general, bilingual support, opportunities for sharing strategies with colleagues, and assistance from counsellors were all needed and available. However, the study found that the need for professional development far outstripped its availability. In view of the findings documented earlier in this report, professional development could include: familiarisation with the existing literature on successful interventions for Sudanese refugees and other learner groups with a similar profile; workshops to explore the nature of learners' backgrounds in a highly oral culture and the implications for program design and teaching; workshops to identify existing teaching resources and the resources needed; and workshops for teacher skill development to meet learners' needs in developing oral language skills, written language skills and numeracy skills.

Institutional support could further assist teachers by arranging smaller class sizes for learners with limited formal education and limited English language skills (reducing the teacher: learner ratio from 1:15 to 1:10) and additional tuition hours for learners with high levels of need.

# Implications

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The study found that teachers' efforts to implement classroom management strategies that met the needs of their Sudanese refugee learners were substantially successful. Specifically, teachers demonstrated their sensitivity to their background as refugees with a history of prolonged armed conflict and other war-related trauma. They also demonstrated a thorough understanding of the resettlement issues their learners were negotiating on a daily basis. Through specific strategies and interventions, teachers participating in the study were introducing learners to the processes of formal education. This is substantiated by the findings relating to a wide range of classroom management practices. Teachers confirmed a high level of institutional support for their roles of teaching Sudanese refugee learners: bi-lingual support, opportunities to share strategies with colleagues, and the services of counsellors were frequently cited as being readily available. In general, the study found that the strengths and strategies teachers utilised when dealing with their Sudanese learners were applicable to all refugee learners with limited English language skills and limited formal education.

Sudanese refugee learner needs did not appear to be adequately addressed in areas requiring specific knowledge of their highly oral cultures and the implications of that knowledge for English language, literacy and numeracy teaching. Some knowledge in this area might have encouraged a stronger emphasis on the initial development of learners' spoken English, and may have revealed some useful strategies for teaching spoken English to this group of learners. The ability to address the needs of this group also appeared to be compromised by teachers' attempts to address learners' literacy development before their oral skills were substantially developed. In doing this teachers may have been responding to a very evident learner need or to contractual obligations to funding bodies to address all language and literacy skills concurrently. Their needs may also have been compromised by the placement of Sudanese learners with learners from other backgrounds with different needs, or different levels of the same needs, and by the adoption of the standard teacher–learner ratio of 1:15 in classes for learners with such a high level of need. Key strategies identified in the study which are likely to assist teachers to meet the needs of Sudanese refugees are listed below. To implement these strategies, support from funding bodies and institutions is necessary.

- ✧ *Provide professional development for teachers:* this should include an examination of the literature on teaching learners with special needs; an exploration of the features of highly oral cultures and their implications for teaching spoken and written English; the extension of teachers' repertoires of strategies for teaching oral skills without recourse to written English; and skill development in teaching numeracy.
- ✧ *Ensure greater flexibility in program content and outcomes:* this is necessary to enable teachers to:
  - ◆ prioritise the development of oral language skills for learners with limited oral skills in English; bilingual support may be needed
  - ◆ prioritise the development of written English skills for learners with more advanced spoken English language skills
  - ◆ place a stronger emphasis on teaching numeracy

- ◆ explore (in consultation with representatives of the Sudanese community) initiatives that link English language, literacy and numeracy development to practical skill development, local employment opportunities or urgent settlement concerns. Consideration should be given to the sustainability of initiatives proposed.
- ✧ *Limit learner numbers:* ten per teacher in classes with learners with very limited spoken and written English and with limited experience of formal learning is likely to offer the best outcome.
- ✧ *Explore options for training/ employing bi-lingual teachers from Sudan:* this will assist with pre-literacy skill development (for example, fine motor skills for using writing implements, letter formation, and left-to-right orientation).

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# Support document details

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Additional information relating to this research is available in the following support documents. They can be accessed from NCVET's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1778.html>>.

*Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document—Advice to teachers* contains the following information:

- ✧ Introduction
- ✧ Framing the advice: The six factors for successful training programs
- ✧ The advice
- ✧ Annotated list of resources for teachers

*Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document—Methodology and literature review* contains the following information:

- ✧ Introduction
- ✧ Australia's Refugee Program
- ✧ Recent research on the refugee experience
- ✧ Patterns of settlement of Sudanese refugees in Australia 2003 to 2005
- ✧ Background to Sudan as a source country in Australia's humanitarian refugee migration program
- ✧ Considerations in teaching adult Sudanese refugees: Recent research and implications for English language and literacy teaching
- ✧ Towards a framework for the guidelines for teachers



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