

ACAL Conference 2014

LITERACY: A LEARNING SPIRAL FOR LIFE

Teachers as leaders/ learners

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Outline

1. Overview of project – Year One/
Two
2. Findings
3. Why MS at an adult Lit/Num
conference?

1. The Project



Teachers As Researchers²¹

“school leaders and/ or teachers to identify elements for change in their own school context and to facilitate the improvement of Literacy and Numeracy learning outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities” (2013 Application Guidelines, p.1)

Action research

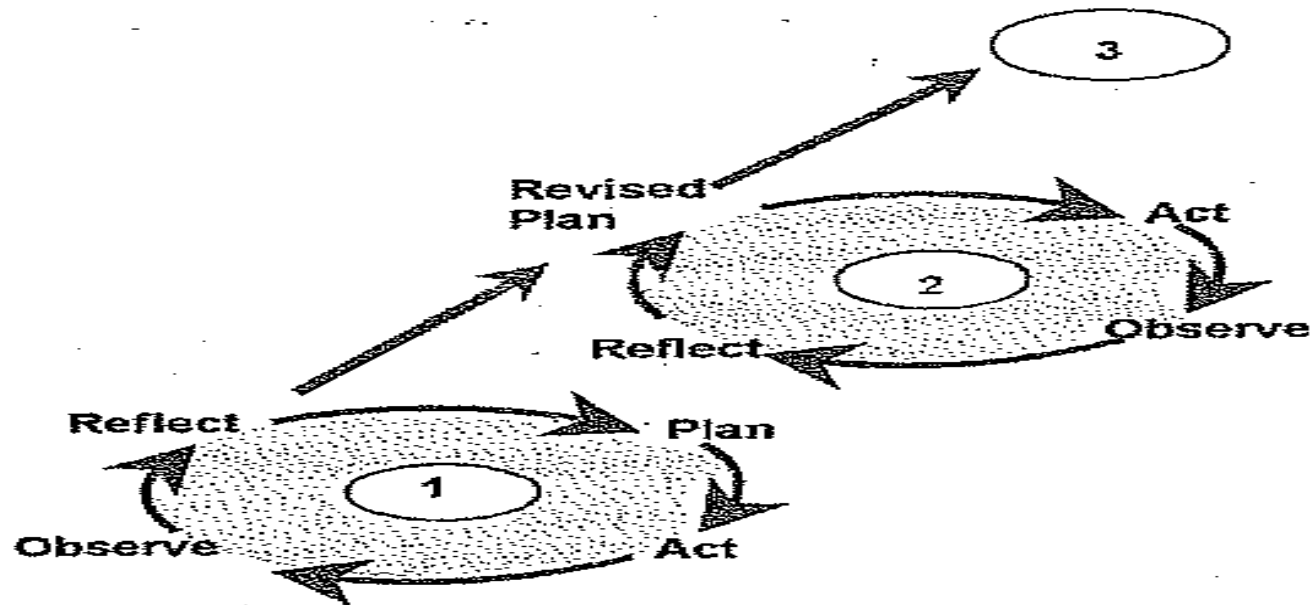


Figure 1. The spiral of action research cycle
(Zuber-Skerritt 2001, p. 15)

Where are the boys?



The project – Year 1

Teachers involved



- Experienced across middle school and cross-curricula
- Mix of genders
- Volunteers to the project
- Expressed interest in the project
- Ethics

Action Plan



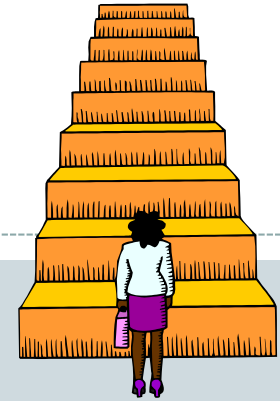
- Research readings
- Observe teacher assessment preparation / processes / pedagogy in the classroom
- Interview nominated students about their attitudes / perceptions (small survey included)
- Analyse task sheets for literacy / cognitive demands

Action Plan



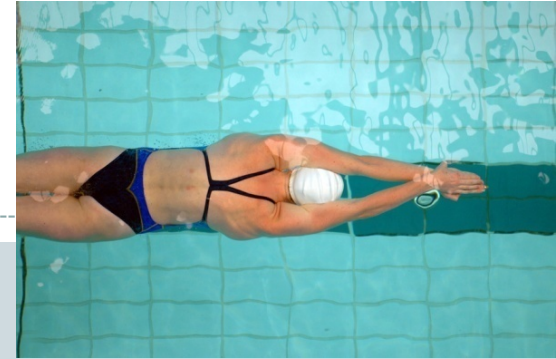
- Analyse student responses to tasks for language levels
- Teachers journal to reflect and share
- Focus group meetings

The Project – Year Two



- Focus on teaching practices to support writing skills
- What are current practices?
- What are best practice strategies?
- Trial and observe / record outcomes

ACTIONS



- Dive in and sink or swim!
- Commitment
- Readings
- Reflections
- Trials
- Reflections
- Focus group meetings
- Interview students

2. Findings



- Literacy demands of task sheets
- Teaching / pedagogy
- Boys and learning

Literacy demands



Looked at Year 8/9: English, Maths and Science

Examined language demands – complexity and conceptual understandings required

Examined types of tasks

Literacy demands



Dense / complex/ abstract language of tasks and criteria sheets

“reveal insights into feelings”

“provide sufficient detail”

“demonstrate discerning analysis”

“how is the reader positioned?”

“range of different organisms in a community which can be used as a measure”

Literacy demands



“show your answer on the answer sheet”

“How would you describe the relationship between the woody understory shrubs and the grasses, orchids and lillies used for food by the Indigenous population?”

“Explain your answer”

“Expand and simplify”

“routine and non-routine”

Literacy demands



Student responses

- Sentence structure concrete and repetitive “they then trained...” “they then planned...”
- Lack originality/ figurative language “as real as it gets”
- Narrow vocabulary range “nice” “adds depth and feeling”
- Cohesive devices repetitive “then / and”

Tasks



Task requirements ✓

- Practical and hands on
- Relevant and related to excursions
- Multiple choice
- Short answers
- Tests

Tasks



Task requirements



- Feelings
- Other perspectives
- Lengthy written responses

Pedagogy



Teacher feedback – observations and interviews

Positive if:

- Immediate
- Specific
- Contributed to feelings of being in control

Being in control = knowing what to do and how to do it correctly

Deed, C and Campbell, C (2007) Boys acting differently: Choice, engagement and learning; Research Online

Pedagogy



Teachers

“I fear a move towards learned helplessness”

“ I never have enough time to do all that is required”

“We can't improve student outcomes if we can't communicate our expectations”

Pedagogy



Student responses

- Draft process / feedback important for success
- Type of feedback – explicit comments or signals on how to improve
 - Engagement important – interest
- Practical assignments that offer choice linked to success

Boys and Learning



Likert scale – attitudes to assessment and learning

Open ended questions

Yes / No responses

1. Ability to write effectively > 90% excellent, very good or good
2. Importance of teacher to assessment success >90%
3. Understanding vocabulary / task and criteria sheets >90%

Boys and Learning



Student comments

- Assessments are frustrating
- Task questions are often repetitive
- As long as I know how to do the task, I don't need help
- Knowing what the teacher expects of me and understanding the level of work required
- Flowing the words correctly

Boys and Learning



Student Comments

- Students report being happy with C standard
- Students not sure why results drop
- Some students report improvements
- Focus and effort linked to results
- Time management linked to success

Boys and Learning



- Writing of assignments needs to be scaffolded – not sure of what to do after paragraph one / conclusion
- Students saw themselves as better than their grades reflected!

Boys and Learning



- Love PowerPoint - dislike writing notes!
- Explicit instruction vital for understanding Science and Maths
 - Fast pace of syllabus daunting

Boys and Learning

Anecdotal / interviews / observations



1. Students lack verbal skills and vocabulary required for higher grades
2. Boys respond favourably to encouragement and reward but if self-efficacy is low then this is not successful in the short term but takes time (Drama teacher)
3. Boys need support with starting tasks **EVEN** though only 50% identified this as an issue on the survey

Anecdotal / interviews / observations



4. Boys might confuse understanding

ORGANISATIONAL

requirements with understanding

TASK

requirements and so become complacent



Anecdotal / interviews / observations

5. Boys require assistance with time management
6. Boys need to be taught explicitly how to plan and edit and review – they don't know how to utilise these strategies

Conclusion



Relevance to adult literacy?



Conclusion



Relevance to adult literacy?

1. K-12
2. Do you recognise any of these boys?
3. Literacy is a spiral – lifelong
4. TIME
5. Adult pedagogy talks about taking responsibility for own learning but what if?
6. Scaffolding and modelling and explicit support
“You explain it well”



Conclusion



Relevance to adult literacy?

7. Cultural and language bias in tasks

8. Unpacking language of tasks and rubrics – what are expectations – in training / in workplace?

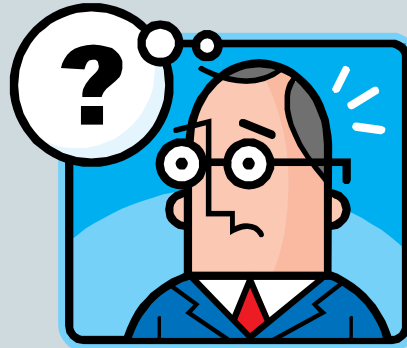


Research papers



Contact me for more information

Questions??



Thanks for listening!