

Traders, Neighbours and Intruders: Points of Contact

Conference Program and Papers
40th National Conference
Australian Council for Adult Literacy

13th – 14th September, 2017
Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin, NT

RECOGNITION OF COUNTRY



We pay our respects to elders past, present and future and recognise the integral connections between land, language, family, culture and learning and the role of education in securing hopes for the future for Indigenous children and adults.

Material contained in the Collection of Conference Papers does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy or Charles Darwin University.

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Peer Review Process

All abstracts were reviewed by a conference committee comprising ACAL Executive and Conference Program Committee members.

Full paper submission was through two options: peer reviewed papers and short articles.

Peer reviewed papers are tagged ** and were subjected to an anonymous blind review of the paper in its entirety by two independent experts from the vocational and LLN field. Results of the peer review process were reported directly to the authors and recorded by the Academic Program Chair. Any papers assessed for provisional acceptance were returned to the author/s to address required revisions prior to inclusion in the conference proceedings. The refereeing system was administered by the International Graduate Centre of Education (IGCE) at Charles Darwin University.

Only papers received prior to the start of the conference were included in these proceedings. This is, therefore, just a sample of those presentations on offer. Papers have been published as submitted.

The Australian Council for Adult Literacy would like to thank the International Graduate Centre of Education for their generous support in the publication of these papers.

Thank also go to the reviewers: Elaine Butler; Johanna Funk; Steven Hodge; Peter Kell; Linda Mahony; Janine Oldfield; Jean Searle; Cheryl Wiltshire; and Keiko Yasukawa.

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Australian Council for Adult Literacy

The Australian Council for Adult Literacy was formed in October, 1976, after a working group on adult literacy was established at the Adelaide conference for the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE). This working group decided that a national council separate from the AAAE was needed, solely dedicated to raising the profile of adult literacy education. Those involved in setting up the separate council felt that rather than being subsumed by the umbrella organisation of adult education, the needs of the burgeoning adult literacy movement in Australia would be better served by having its own national body, to lobby the Federal Government and to develop policy specifically related to adult literacy needs.

Arch Nelson, a member of the working group, became the inaugural chair of the newly formed council, the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL), a position he held until 1984.

In 1977 the first national adult literacy conference was held in Canberra. In his autobiography Arch Nelson describes the two-fold function of ACAL as '(1) to help develop public awareness of the need of adequate levels of literacy; and (2) to facilitate and promote cooperation among concerned people and organisations throughout Australia' (1996 p.232). This also became the agenda for the state councils as they were established (Campbell, 2009 p.25).

Lorraine Sushames, VET Lecturer, CDU
2017 Conference Committee Convenor

- Alison Reedy, Education and Student Success, CDU
- Allison Stewart, Whole of Community Engagement Initiative, CDU
- Don MacDowall, ACAL Administration
- Cheryl Wiltshire, ACAL National Executive
- Fiona Shalley, Whole of Community Engagement Initiative, CDU
- Marty Sison, Volunteer, CDU
- Melissa Royle, Office of Indigenous Leadership, CDU
- Sue Shore, Director, International Graduate Centre of Education, CDU
- Vicki Hartman, ACAL National Executive & Tauondi Aboriginal College, South Australia



Our conference

In 2017 the Australian Council for Adult Literacy celebrates 40 years of actively promoting language, literacy, numeracy, and communication provision and research. This Conference offers an opportunity to also travel back past these forty years of official activism to consider how metaphors of trade, neighbourly contact and mobility shape understandings of adult basic education, foundation skills and the everyday 'literacies' of workplaces, academic institutions and communities.

Traders, Neighbours and Intruders: Points of Contact provides the framework for collective change where policy makers, practitioners and researchers can learn from and engage with a long history of language and policy provision in northern Australia and our neighbours in Asia. For centuries Australia's northern regions have often been portrayed as marginal to the communication practices that sit at the heart of mainstream Australia. Yet northern Australia's rich linguistic traditions, its multicultural engagement, its economic agendas and its policy making opportunities in remote and very remote contexts suggest multiple and diverse ways of moving forward as a prosperous nation.

Points of Contact is a metaphor for critically engaged debates that touch on issues of education and training for active citizenship, productive work, cultural engagement and leisure pursuits. Without positive opportunities in these areas and chances to activate democratic engagement many people are unable to shape the conditions under which they can live their lives. *Points of Contact* emphasises active participation in decision making across a range of decision-making spaces: in classrooms, in factories, under trees, in policy meetings, over backyard fences, in political backrooms and in research teams.

In light of the rich cultural and historical landscape that is northern Australia and its immediacy and connection with a number of our closest neighbours, the conference venue in Darwin provides a rich location from which to challenge stereotypes, reinvigorate relationships and provoke new conceptualisations of participation in Australian life, including for example:

- cross-cultural practices and identities and how these have changed over time
- the implications for locating oneself in the 'LLN' or alternatively named fields
- advances in technology and how these shape and re-shape communication and identity
- assessment, monitoring and power in formal and non-formal education
- citizenship practices and texts that encourage transnational networks.

Throughout the conference we encourage you to think about the opportunities to make new friends and create new partnerships for a more equal and engaged Australia.

Sue Shore
Chair, Academic Program Committee,
2017 ACAL National Conference

Major partner: Charles Darwin University

Charles Darwin University is a new world university committed to bringing people together to use knowledge to shape the future. It's a place where everyone can follow their passion to make things better – however big or small.

The University's main campus is located in Australia's most northern capital city of Darwin; a young, multicultural and cosmopolitan tropical city that sits on the rim of South-East Asia. As the only university in the Northern Territory, CDU is uniquely placed to provide education, training and research expertise to match the growing focus on Australia's north.

The University was conceived to support the economic, environmental, cultural and social development of the Northern Territory. Working in partnership with the Territory and Commonwealth governments, CDU has established a Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Research portfolio strongly focused on Northern Australia and the surrounding South-East Asian region.

CDU has grown from local community origins during the past 50 years to become an internationally renowned dual sector university that caters for students across the Northern Territory, Australia and the world.

Today CDU has more than 24,000 students spread across 11 campuses and centres in the Northern Territory, as well as in Melbourne, Sydney and online. CDU also delivers training in more than 170 locations across the Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

Recognised leaders in environmental studies (tropical and desert knowledges), Indigenous education and studies, remote nursing and education, South-East Asian studies and online learning; the diversity of the University's study programs and delivery methods is rare among Australia's universities.

The success of this 40th annual conference of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy is, in no small measure attributed to how the various sectors of CDU have worked in partnership with each other and our external partners to genuinely draw together the many ways in which language literacy and numeracy are part of the everyday life of all Australians at every point in their learning journey. These partnerships include:

- Office of The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Vocational Education and Training
- Office of The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Leadership
- International Graduate Centre of Education in the School of Education
- Office of The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education And Student Success
- Office of Indigenous Leadership
- Northern Institute



Time	ACAL Conference Day #1 – Wednesday 13 Sept, Darwin Convention Centre			
07.30-08.30 AM	Registration			
08.30-08.40 AM	Welcome and Larrakia Welcome to Country			
08.40-09.00 AM	ACAL President's Opening of Conference			
09.00-10.00 AM	<p align="center">The Arch Nelson Address: <i>To be or not to be...literate: A personal story</i> <i>Heather D'Antoine, Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin</i> Auditorium Level 2</p>			
10.00-10.30 AM	Morning Break			
	Waterfront Room 1 Level 2	Meeting Room 1 Ground	Waterfront Room 2 Level 2	Meeting Room 2 Ground
10.30-10.55 AM	WORKSHOP: Show me the Money <i>Marc Brierty</i>	PRACTICE TASTER: Technology Tearoom - A social learning model to assist mature age learners in developing skills in using digital devices. <i>Kerrie Tomkins</i>	Connecting the Dots: The Reading Writing Hotline's role in navigating the complex LLN landscape <i>Vanessa Iles & Jill Finch</i>	Building English Capacity: A Program with young people in Timor Leste <i>Maria Albion & Joao da Costa</i>
11.00-11.25 AM		Untangling the literacies of university governance documents: A Community of Practice (CoP) approach <i>Alison Reedy, Penny Wurm & Amanda Janssen</i>	A comparative investigation into the delivery of Adult Basic Education in British Columbia and New South Wales <i>Berni Aquilina</i>	
11.30-11.55 AM	PRACTICE TASTER: From 16 to 80 Supporting Aboriginal Students with LLN at Tauondi Aboriginal College <i>Vicki Hartman</i>	Digital learning resources for remote learners <i>Brendan Kavenagh</i>	1977 to 2017: How did we get here? <i>Pam Osmond</i>	A 21 st Century Yolŋu 'Bothways' approach to English and Warramiri Literacy at Gāwa <i>Ben van Gelderen</i>
12.00-01.00 PM	Lunch			
01.00-01.45 PM	<p align="center">Keynote 1 <i>Can technology erase poor literacy from the global South?</i> - Professor Santosh Mehrotra, Auditorium Level 2</p>			
01.45-02.00 PM	History Project			
	Meeting Room 1 Ground	Meeting Room 2 Ground	Waterfront Room 1 Level 2	Waterfront Room 2 Level 2
02.00-02.25 PM	WORKSHOP: ALPA- Developing a Healthy Indigenous Workforce <i>Angela Nolan & Tracy Fitzgibbon</i>	WORKSHOP: I hate Maths <i>Christine Tully</i>	Evaluating the Western Australian dual enrolment vocational support courses <i>Cheryl Wiltshire</i>	What attitudes are we talking about? <i>Ser Loy Chan</i>
02.30-02.55 PM			Describing capability in the foundation skills field <i>Louise Wignall</i>	Digital literacies, hyper-personalisation, new tribes and points of contact <i>Stefan Popenici</i>
03.00-03.25 PM	Afternoon Break			
	Waterfront Room 1 Level 2		Waterfront Room 2 Level 2	
03.30-04.30 PM	Re-imagining Workplace English Language and Literacy for work in the 21st Century <i>Jenny Macaffer & Ros Bauer</i>		Panel: Language at Home and in the Academy: Resistance and Compromise <i>Birut Zemits, Robyn Ober, Melanie Mullins, Therese Parry, Adelle Sefton-Rowston, Michele Willsher & Janine Oldfield</i>	
05.00-06.00 PM	Walk along Waterfront area and explore nearby parks			
06.00 PM	Darwin Deckchair Cinema doors open - food, eating area, drink and networking			
06.30 PM	Film commencing at 6.30pm			
08.30 PM	Formalities conclude			

Time	ACAL Conference Day #2 - Thursday 14 Sept, Darwin Convention Centre			
08.00-08.45 AM	Registration			
08.45-09.00 AM	Housekeeping			
09.00-10.00 AM	<p align="center">Keynote 2 <i>Literacy in the Time of Decoloniality: New Critical Capacities</i>, Professor Melissa Steyn Auditorium Level 2</p>			
10.00-10.30 AM	Morning Break			
	Waterfront Room 1 Level 2	Waterfront Room 2 Level 2	Meeting Room 1 Ground	Meeting Room 2 Ground
10.30-10.55 AM	PRACTICE TASTER: Transition to University: Supporting nursing students to develop their numeracy skills <i>Elaine Bell</i>	Graffiti as literacy: reading and writing as anti-text <i>Adelle Sefton-Rowston</i>	Tacit Knowledge, Performativity and Professionals as 'Numbers Crunchers' of the Digital Age: Implications for Adult Education <i>John Garrick</i>	The Yolŋu way: Learning financial literacy skills through the strength of traditional concepts <i>Bronwyn Rossingh, Yalmay Yunupingu & Mandy Munungjurrutj</i>
11.00-11.55 AM	WORKSHOP: The Impact of Domestic and Family Violence on Adult Women Learners, their Lecturers and their Workplaces <i>Sandra Dann & Rachael Uebergang</i>	WORKSHOP: Blended Learning for the LLN Classroom <i>Kathrin Colgan</i>	Can we learn anything from Kiwis across the ditch? <i>Lindee Conway & David Do</i>	WORKSHOP: Yes, I Can! From NSW to the NT? <i>Deborah Durnan, Wendy Fernando & Bob Boughton</i>
12.00-01.00 PM	Lunch			
01.00-01.45 PM	<p align="center">Keynote 3 <i>Applying 'Red Dirt Thinking' to adult learning in the Northern Territory</i>, Dr John Guenther Auditorium Level 2</p>			
01.45-02.00 PM	History Project			
	Waterfront Room 1 Level 2	Meeting Room 1 Ground	Waterfront Room 2 Level 2	Meeting Room 2 Ground
02.00-02.25 PM	PRACTICE TASTER: Points of contact for research and teaching: exploring NCVER pods to improve practice <i>Michele Circelli</i>	WORKSHOP: Journeys of new migrants: I know who I am now, therefore I can <i>Serena Seah</i>	LLN for employees, is a change of focus required? <i>Lesley Harvey</i>	Communication in times of disaster and emergency: valuing, planning and engaging Indigenous and local knowledge systems <i>Gladys Ortiz & Mary Grace Agbas</i>
02.30-02.55 PM	Reflections on a bygone era: How changes in work, workplaces and policy have changed what we research and what we find <i>Marilyn Kell</i>		Facilitating Foundation Skills - a Pacific perspective <i>Isikeli Naqaya & Lina Visinia-l'amafana</i>	"Locked out" and "left behind": Indigenous Adult English Literacy and Numeracy in northern Australia's remote regions <i>Lorraine Sushames, Alison Stewart & Fiona Shalley</i>
03.00-03.25 PM	PRACTICE TASTER: Phonics-based adult literacy resources <i>Kate Randell</i>	The use of legacy materials for Indigenous literacy development <i>Cathy Bow</i>		Work opportunities for women in Timor-Leste: From training to employment <i>Ricar Pascoela & Sandra Dann</i>
03.30-03.50 PM	Afternoon Break			
04.00-04.45 PM	<p align="center">CLOSING FORUM: <i>Snapshots of change: ACAL's advocacy past, present and future?</i> Sue Shore, Yoshi Budd, Lorraine Sushames Auditorium Level 2</p>			
05.30 PM	Bus – departing from Waterfront/city to Mindil Beach Market			
06.00-08.00 PM	Sunset and Dining @ Mindil Beach Market: Seating area, food, friendship and networking			
8.30 PM	Bus returns to Waterfront/city			
	Conference concludes			

Arch Nelson Address

Arch Nelson AM, Adult Educator 1911-1998

Arch Nelson played a major role in placing adult education on the government and public agenda and he was inaugural Chairman of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL). A pioneer of adult literacy in Australia, Arch is remembered with affection as a modest man who combined in his work, vision with tenacity and gentleness. Those who work in the adult language, literacy and numeracy fields hold dear the memory of such significant people along their educational journey and it is the motivation to 'make a difference' that is celebrated through Arch Nelson's spirit. For more about the Arch Nelson's contributions see <http://www.acal.edu.au/>

The 2017 Arch Nelson Address will be given by Heather D'Antoine, Menzies School of Health Research, Charles Darwin University.

Heather has 25 years of experience in health services as a registered nurse and midwife and as a health service manager in both Aboriginal health services and general health services across Western Australia. In the last 12 years, Heather has worked in health research: eight years at the Institute for Child Health Research and two years at the Menzies School of Health Research. She has clinical qualifications in general nursing and midwifery and academic qualifications in health economics. Heather's research interest is in maternal and child health. She is particularly focused on the area of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) and other birth defects. Heather has worked with a research team on a number of projects in this area including describing what health professionals and women know and do about alcohol and pregnancy and FASD. She has been involved with developing and evaluating resources for health professionals and developing a model of care for FASD in Western Australia.

2017 Arch Nelson Address

To be or not to be... literate: A personal story

Heather D'Antoine, Menzies School of Health Research

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land that we meet on, the Larrakia people, and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

And I would like to pay tribute to their continued preservation of their stories and culture. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples commitment to preserving their stories and cultural practices since colonisation is a remarkable story in itself.

I would like to thank you for inviting me to do the Arch Nelson address. I was taken by surprise when Professor Sue Shore invited me to do this. My immediate response was – I don't do literacy, I work in health, which highlights the silo mentality of which some of us, obviously me, work in. For me personally, literacy has never been an issue. I never gave it much thought and I have benefited greatly from being literate, from the enjoyment of reading a good novel. I spent many a day in the library in Derby, one of the coolest spots in town, to gaining a solid education and training in nursing that enabled me travel and work in WA and the NT and in Great Britain. However, literacy is an issue for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Links between education and health

Although I am not an educator per se, I understand from the Australian Curriculum, that children '...become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively society'. It enables the individual to live a good life in the society that they are part of.

For me, it is easier for me to talk about education rather than literacy per se. In addition, I know that that this conference is on adult literacy but I work in Aboriginal health research, in maternal and child health and I have framed this address through that lens.

I do understand the links between education and health. We talk about it often in Aboriginal health. Education is often a variable that is included and measured in health research. Maternal education in regards to child mortality has been studied at length, in many countries around the world.

Maternal Education and Child Mortality

When we look at child mortality, 5.9 million children under age five died in 2015, 16,000 every day. More than half of these early child deaths are due to conditions that could be prevented or treated with access to simple, affordable interventions.

In 2015, the under-five mortality rate in low-income countries was 76 deaths per 1000 live births – about 11 times the average rate in high-income countries (7 deaths per 1000 live births). Globally, under-five mortality rate has decreased by 53%, from an estimated rate of 91 deaths per 1000 live births in 1990 to 43 deaths per 1000 live births in 2015.

Child mortality varies from 120 / 1,000 live births in Sierra Leone to 2 /1,000 live births in Iceland; in Australia it was 4/1,000 live births. Obvious socio-economic factors would explain the difference between these 3 countries illustrated in the Human Development Index (HDI). This is a composite measure that includes life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, gross national income and gender development index, and other measures. Australia was ranked 2, Iceland at 9 and Sierra Leone at 179 on the HDI.

Reducing child mortality is a goal implicit in the Sustainable Development Goals

There are many factors that are associated with child survival and one of them is maternal education which is constantly measured and reported on in studies on child mortality. A study published by Cleland in 1988 Maternal Education and Child Survival in developing countries: the search for pathways and influence reported that on average each one-year increment in mother's education corresponded with a 7–9% decline in under-5s' mortality. There are a number of explanations that have been offered as to why this is so. One of the explanations, although not the only one, is about **empowerment of women** through education:

1. Instrumentality: ability to feel control over the outside world
2. Social identification: is concerned with engagement with modern institutions and bureaucracies.
3. Confidence: permits interaction with modern institutions and bureaucracies.

Studies in less developed countries showed that maternal school attainment was a predictor of reduced infant and child mortality even when income and other socioeconomic factors were controlled; which contradicts other findings that maternal schooling was simply a proxy for income and social status¹. Mother's schooling is consistently associated with receiving prenatal care, her birth being attended by a trained medical personnel, her children being immunised, and that when they get sick, receiving timely modern medical care².

Obviously, research continues into the predictors of child mortality including maternal education.

My own story

I am a Bardi woman from the West Kimberley; a middle child from a large family. I grew up in Derby. I was born 8 pounds, I went to two schools – one was Derby District School and the other Perth Modern School to do years 11 and 12. I gained a Junior and Leaving Certificate and went on to train as a nurse at the WA School of Nursing. In those days, completing high school was not essential to do nursing but those who hadn't done so had to do the pre-nursing course. As I had completed high school I did not need to do. So, I was already ahead of some of my colleagues. I worked for 20 years as nurse and then went into managing health services and for the last 14 years in health research. I have done ok. My siblings have done ok.

Why is that so? I know that the foundation for this was laid before I was born, and before my mother was born.

I come from a line of women who in their own-way, for the times, were **empowered women**. They also never drank alcohol nor smoked so I wasn't exposed to these substances in utero – hence one of the reasons for the good birthweight.

I was born into a household where alcohol was very restricted. Neither of my parents or my maternal grandfather or paternal grandmother drank alcohol. Our house was not the place to go to if you wanted to drink alcohol.

¹ Levine 2009. Maternal literacy and child health in less-developed countries: evidence, processes, and limitations.

² LeVine and Rowe. Maternal literacy and child health in less-developed countries: evidence, processes, and limitations. 2009.

I never suffered from ear disease or got acute rheumatic fever or any disabling childhood condition. Our parents and grandparents were able bodied and were able to work. We moved from Broome to Derby in 1958 and Dad worked for the Water Authority from then until he retired in the 1980s. We had a father that was never out of work. I'm from a fishing family. Mum held a fisherman's license; we were serious about it. We topped up our income by selling our catch locally. Because of the fishing, we grew up on barramundi. Also, bush foods that we grew up on are reported as 'superfood' such as boab nuts, which we climbed the trees for.

My parents understood the importance of a western education and my father told us that many a time. I was the beneficiary of timely policy. I was of a young age to be 'sent south' to complete school. The timing was not good for my older siblings who went to work after completing year 10. I was the first person in my family to go to university (Curtin Uni); I did an undergraduate degree at a time when hospital-based trained nurses were pressured to do further studies.

Importantly, I was oblivious to what was happening with the removal of Indigenous children. I had no idea it was going on. I did not grow up in fear of 'welfare' as so many Aboriginal people did and with good reason, and some of them were much younger than me. My grandfather who was from Far North Qld was removed, but in his own way, protected us from that; he never spoke about it. It has taken us a long time to find our Qld family, which started to happen after he passed away in the late 1980s.

It is hard to imagine how methodical that policy was as so many Indigenous children were removed and much of this was revealed in the Inquiry into Forced Removal of Indigenous children. For some families, there were as many as 3 generations of removals. What intergenerational effect does that have on families – some of the research is starting to show that now? I personally think that we are just starting to see the full effects of that policy.

Going back to my paternal grandmother; a Bardi woman who was born at Bulgin, near One-Arm Point on the Dampier Peninsular, at around the 1900s. All her children were born there as well (five, plus the youngest one was adopted). She was an incredibly strong and rather pragmatic woman. She was advised by the authorities to move to Broome with her children so that they could receive a western education; which she did. Or her children would have been removed. She had a pretty good business mind and started up a laundry service to wash the clothes for the Pearl Masters, who wore white linen, and other people. The bombing of Broome in World War 11 threw things into a bit of a chaos. She moved south (around Meekathara in WA) with her younger children and according to her youngest son had a laundry service going.

At some stage, Granny moved to Derby when I was very young, one of my older sisters spent a lot of time with her. Granny advised her to invest in property. *'When you make money, buy property and when you make more money, buy more property'*. She wished she had taken her advice. My grandmother did own property, and it was part of her estate when she died in the early 1980s. But my grandmother could not read or write. And it was not a priority for her. Other people read and wrote letters for her. My grandmother was a strong woman who lived through some tough times; World War 1 and 11 (including the bombing of Broome), the Great Depression and some pretty harsh government policies. In spite of all of that, she would fit the description of an empowered woman:

1. Instrumentality: ability to feel control over the outside world
2. Social identification: is concerned with engagement with modern institutions and bureaucracies.
3. Confidence: permits interaction with modern institutions and bureaucracies.

Although my grandmother could not read or write she lived in a different time and she had an education; she had an Aboriginal education. She had standing in the Bardi community which would have enabled her to develop her own standing in the Broome community that was dominated by the Pearling Masters.

But these are different times. Education, and being able to read and write as result of it, opens so many doors than if you don't have it. The NT News reported on a study that was presented at the Indigenous Literacy Symposium yesterday. The study on literacy among Indigenous Territorians in the workplace found that 85% of those people did not have the language skills needed to function properly at a workplace or in education, that 'mainstream' literacy programs aimed at Indigenous adults were failing and that there was no policy in the NT around adult education.

In regards to my very big extended family, I am starting to see disparities emerge. We now have five generations. My mother, who still lives in Derby, is a great, great grandmother. I can see that education plays a big role in these disparities. Some have gone on to university and secured professional jobs as a result of this, and others rely on a boom-bust cycle in WA where there is a reliance on the mining industry or a single-mothers relying on supporting benefits. The reasons are multi-factorial and complicated. Smoking and alcohol are part of the family life now. Those that have been exposed to smoking have been more likely to suffer from ear disease. The women that are smoking and drinking alcohol in pregnancy are putting their children at risk before birth.

On a positive note

There are terrific stories of achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in academia, in the arts, in sports, in clinical professions, in research and in leadership roles at all three levels of government. For example, the number of Indigenous medical doctors are increasing: 204 Indigenous medical doctors are now registered to practice – up from 90 in 2004 - and there are currently 310 Indigenous students studying medicine³. In 2015, there were 3,187 nurses and midwives employed in Australia who identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, representing 1.1% of all employed nurses and midwives who provided their Indigenous status. The main clinical groups have their own peak bodies. In research, there is an increasing number of Indigenous researchers, at all levels of research.

The way we are doing research has changed significantly since I entered into it 14 years ago. There is Indigenous involvement throughout many of the programs of research that I am involved with including involving those that are affected with the respective conditions being researched such as kidney disease, diabetes in pregnancy and nutrition in remote stores. For example, last week, at the ANZ Nephrology Society Conference in Darwin last week, they held a forum with Indigenous Australians who had kidney disease, who came from as far as the Torres Strait, that was attended by clinicians, researchers and health economist. They gained a huge insight into the suffering and challenges faced by people with kidney disease.

Health outcomes

However, the health outcomes that are the focus of Closing the Gap and research are almost unbelievable. The ever increasing rates of chronic kidney disease, much of which is being driven by diabetes which is occurring at increasingly younger ages, is of national concern. Recently, a 7 year old was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in far north Queensland. The rates of type 2 diabetes in Indigenous women in pregnancy is increasing and research in Aboriginal Canadians is showing that children who are born to mothers who had type 2 diabetes in

³ Australian Medical Association

pregnancy, are significantly more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, and at a young age. The rates of childhood infections such as otitis media in Aboriginal children remain incredibly high, which has a significant effect on the child's ability to learn. A study in the NT involving 709 Aboriginal children aged 6–30 months living in 29 communities from 4 health regions⁴ in 2001. They reported that one in every two children examined had otoscopic signs consistent with suppurative ear disease and 1 in 4 children had a perforated tympanic membrane. The World Health Organization has indicated that a prevalence rate of chronic suppurative otitis media (CSOM) greater than 4% in a defined population of children is indicative of a massive public health problem requiring urgent attention. That CSOM affects up to ten times this proportion of children in many Aboriginal communities is an indictment of the poor living conditions in these communities. The associated hearing loss has a life-long impact, as it occurs during speech and language development and the early school years. We have been dealing with this massive public health issue for well over 20 years.

We can't be paralysed by these statistics, but it is hard to see where the tide is turning.

Need for social justice

In 2005, when the then Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma handed down the 'Social Justice' report he said: *'I am recommending that the government of Australia commit to achieving equality of health status and life expectation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous people within 25 year'*.

In 2007, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders wrote an editorial in the Medical Journal of Australia supporting an open letter that was published in *The Australian* newspaper in December 2006 which stated that 'Indigenous Australians continue to needlessly suffer and die early, not from a lack of solutions or governments' commitments, but from a lack of political will and action'. The open letter stated *'It is inconceivable that a country as wealthy as Australia cannot solve a health crisis affecting less than 3% of its population'*⁵.

This was followed with Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage being launched by the Australian Parliament in 2008 with six targets:

1. to close the life expectancy gap within a generation
2. to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
3. to ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities within five years
4. to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade
5. to halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 attainment rates by 2020 and
6. to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

We have 12 years left to close the gap in life expectancy! All of the six targets are all interconnected. In regards to Indigenous child mortality which is about 1.9 times the non-

⁴ Morris et al. Otitis media in young Aboriginal children from remote communities in Northern and Central Australia: a cross-sectional survey. 2004

⁵ Wenitong, Mokak, Councillor, Delaney and Calma. *Rising to the challenge for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: what will it take?* 2007.

Indigenous rate, the progress report on 'Closing the Gap' in 2017 reported 'no significant decline in child mortality rates since 2008'. Figure 1 illustrates the decline in infant mortality rates, which is positive. However, we are not on track to close this gap on child mortality by the end of 2018. *This is of concern!*

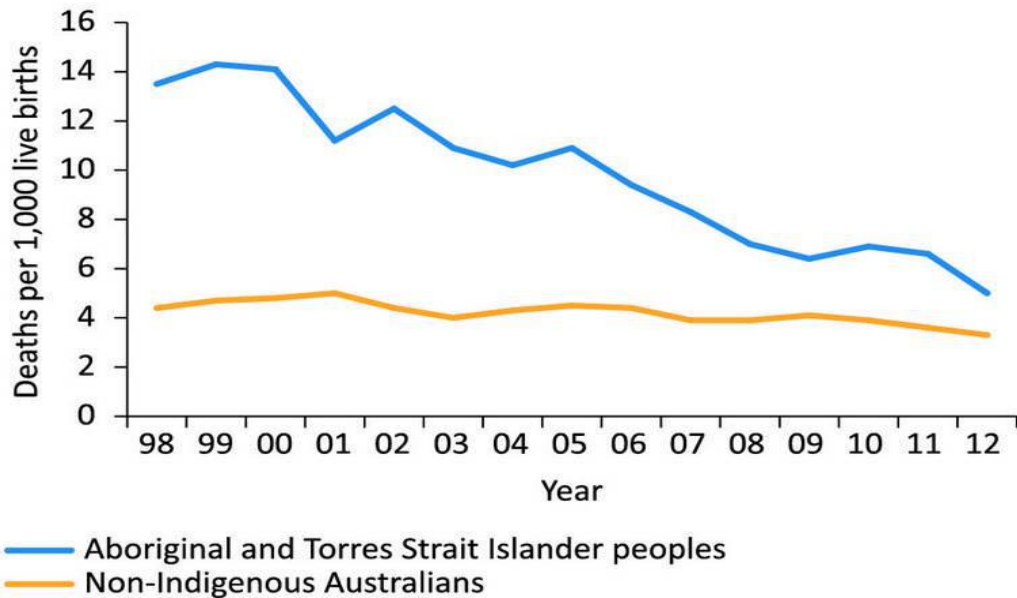


Figure 1: **Infant mortality rates** per 1,000 live births, by Indigenous status, NSW, Qld, WA, SA and the NT, 1998 to 2012

The other target – to give all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities access to early childhood education – expired unmet in 2013. This target has been adjusted to: 95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025. Progress: In 2015, 87 per cent of all Indigenous children were enrolled in early childhood education in the year before starting school, compared with 98 per cent of non-Indigenous children.

The target to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements of children within a decade. In the 2016 NAPLAN results report only one quarter of Indigenous Year 5 students in very remote areas were at or above the national minimum standard for reading compared to 91 per cent for non-Indigenous students.

Call for government action

In 2016, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations united over the lack of progress with these targets, and released the 'Redfern Statement'.

In the past 25 years – a generation in fact – we have had the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, the *Bringing them home Report* and *Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge: the final report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation*. These reports, and numerous other Coroner and Social Justice Reports, have made over 400 recommendations, most of which have either been partially implemented for short term periods or ignored altogether.

In the last 25 years we have seen eight Federal election cycles come and go, with seven Prime Ministers, seven Ministers for Indigenous Affairs, countless policies, policy changes, funding promises and funding cuts – all for the most marginalised people in Australia.

For the last quarter century, then, we've seen seminal reports which have repeatedly emphasised that our people need to have a genuine say in our own lives and decisions that affect our peoples and communities. This, known as self-determination, is the key to closing the gap in outcomes for the First Peoples of these lands and waters.

All of these reports call for better resourcing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

All of these reports call for real reconciliation based on facing the truths of the past and creating a just and mature relationship between the non-Indigenous Australian community and the First Peoples.

There is an urgency about dealing with the many adverse outcomes that we are seeing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. This urgency has been there for many years.

I would like to conclude by saying that my paternal grandmother lived a long-life, and only she can say whether or not she lived a good life. My maternal grandmother died when my mother was 8 years old as a result of child-birth but my mother still lives in Derby, now in her late 80s. I have now lived most of my life, and I have lived a good life. I would like to see my young relatives live a good life and a long life and education and literacy is an important part of this.

I did not know Arch Nelson (1911 – 1998), and had not heard of him until Professor Sue Shore invited me to do this address. But I have read that he was a pioneer of adult literacy in Australia, remembered with affection as a modest man who combined his work with vision, tenacity and gentleness. I'm sure that he would be committed to increasing the literacy levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to tackle the causes affecting this.

I don't have any straightforward advice on dealing with literacy with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a complex issue but I am sure that your many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, who are far more knowledgeable in this area than I am, will work with you on this. Perhaps we should work at creating more opportunities for those in education and in health to work together on these challenges. We in health, talk about education all the time. And I am sure that those of you in education, talk about health all the time.

Thank you!



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Keynote papers

Can technology erase poor literacy and numeracy levels from the global South?

Professor Santosh Mehrotra, School of Social Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Abstract

India has the largest population in the world which cannot read or write even a sentence, nearly 300 million people. Some 47 per cent of Australia's population is said to be not functionally literate, while in the UK some 20% of the adult population had low levels of functional literacy. We know how devastating the effects are on the lives of individuals and nations – and yet the paradox is that there is not yet enough recognition of this issue in policy circles, in both developed and developing countries. Poor literacy and numeracy skills reduce earnings and the likelihood of being in employment, even when individuals have good formal qualifications. Low literacy and numeracy make it more likely that the work will be in informal employment rather than formal work. It is not therefore surprising that a 1% increase in a country's score on the international test for adult literacy is associated with an eventual 2.5% relative rise in labour productivity and 1.5% rise in Gross Domestic Product per capita.

We also know that parents, especially mothers, make more use of information and reproductive health care facilities if they are more educated. That's why more widespread education is associated with lower fertility and better nutritional and health care is provided by educated parents for themselves and their children. The general knowledge required at school increases the understanding of modern health practices and scientific beliefs which make mothers and fathers more open to using healthcare centres. There are also feedback loops from these educational outcomes. For example, the improved health status of a child improves the ability to learn just as improved nutritional status does. Similarly, the effect of education on family size in turn has other benefits: the reduced family size improves the chances of a poor family being able to afford education for all the children rather than merely the boys in the family. Given all these research based facts it is not surprising that adult literacy is associated with a 1.5% rise in GDP per capita.

And yet adult literacy has barely improved globally since 2000. My lecture will deal with two sets of issues. First, I will attempt to explain the possible reasons for this limited progress in adult literacy. Second, I will examine some successful cases and some not so successful cases of improved adult literacy in different countries in the global south. The presentation will close by exploring the potential for the use of technology and mobile telephone in order to fill the still gaping hole in adult literacy globally.

Introduction

In 2015 UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report underlined that nearly 781 million adults are deficient in literacy skills in the world. Judging from recent direct assessment of adults' reading ability a more accurate estimate would be considerably higher. Unesco's 1950 definition of literacy was the 'ability to read and write with understanding a short simple statement about everyday life'. By 1990 (the year of the Jomtien Declaration on education) literacy was more recognised as a 'skill that contributes to individual well-being' (UNESCO, 2016). However, by 2005 the definition had evolved and is now understood as 'the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials'. In other words literacy has increasingly been seen not as a single but as a plural concept. Literacy researchers today ask how people use literacy to see what use it has in their life.

Just as the definition of literacy has evolved over the last 70 years the measurement of literacy has also undergone major changes. In the 1950s the simple technique to measure literacy was self-declaration about literacy. But since 2000 the two main International household survey programs, the Demographic and Health Survey and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, test literacy directly by asking the household respondent to read a sentence from a card. Adults who had continued to Secondary School were not given this test because they were presumed literate. Despite the limitations of this simple technique, the resulting measurements are more accurate than self-declaration. When estimates are based on direct assessment even more appear to be deficient in reading skills than when estimates are derived from self-declaration. The average difference between the two methods of assessing literacy (self-declaration and reading a sentence) for the 30 countries examined in a survey (which were mostly in sub Saharan Africa) is about 8 percentage points, which means that the world is even farther from universal adult literacy than official estimates suggest (Barakat, 2015).

Assessment of literacy for richer countries uses more advanced criteria. OECD developed the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), a study in 25 highly literate societies that sampled 166000 persons aged 16 to 65 (OECD, 2013). This survey defines 6 levels of proficiency. Individuals proficient at level 1 can read brief texts on familiar topics and locate a single piece of information that is identical to the information given in the question. Around 3% of adults read below level 1 in the 25 participants countries and a further 12% read at level 1 but no higher. The results imply that about as many as 1 in 7 adults even in the rich countries (including Australia) either never became proficient readers while they were in school or their reading abilities atrophied because they were not being used. Even in countries such as France, Italy and Spain more than 1 in 4 adults had low literacy. As you would expect adults in occupations classified by the OECD in skilled occupations scored much higher in literacy than those in elementary occupations (OECD, 2013).

Progress from the year 2000 to 2015 in literacy does not generate hope

Since 2000 there have been considerable improvements in the approaches taken to assess literacy skills in adult populations. Unfortunately the utility of adult literacy rates for assessing the success of literacy programs is hampered by the fact that this indicator is based on examining different adult population at different points of time. As a result even if not a single adult changes her literacy status the adult literacy rate may increase or decline purely through composition effects. The most obvious case is that of cohort replacement, meaning young individuals with higher education attainment and literacy skills crossed into the adult age bracket while older individuals with lower educational attainment depart from the cohort. This could lead to an improvement in the adult literacy rate that is real but achieved without a single illiterate adult becoming literate at the individual level.

The central result from a study of 30 countries suggest that most of these countries are on a trajectory of slow but definite improvement in the literacy rate of young female adults over time (Barakat 2013). But these apparent gains disappear from a cohort perspective in most countries. Literacy among a particular cohort stagnated or even declined overtime as skills were under-utilised. This does not contradict the increase in overall adult literacy. However this increase is driven almost entirely by the replacement of older women with low literacy skills, by younger women with higher literacy skills that enter into the age group.

So how does one explain this limited progress in adult literacy in the world?

First the global commitment to adult literacy in the year 2000 was ambiguous. The Millennium Development Goals included no specific reference to adult learning or literacy. World literacy rates grew fastest during the 1970s and illiteracy was reduced by more than

half from 1952 around 2000. In fact between 1970 and 2000 literacy increased from 28% to 60 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. However the Millennium Development Goals implicitly assumed that the goal of universal primary education of good quality would eventually lead to adult literacy. As a result it has been argued that adult literacy has slipped down from the international and national agenda. Analysis for UNESCO comparing national education plans, one drafted around 2000 and the other since 2007 from 30 countries, confirmed that adult literacy was neglected compared with the other EFA goals (UNESCO, 2015).

A second reason for slow progress is that while leaders have recognised the importance of mother tongue instruction and using the learners first language to teach literacy, they have also been ambivalent about the feasibility of a multilingual approach, fearing division or conflict in situations of linguistic diversity. The ambivalent attitude of political leaders means countries have not made major contribution to improving adult literacy skills on a large scale.

Thirdly it is unlikely that literacy skills can ever be promoted among adults unless demand for literacy is also increased. It is not merely a matter of supply. Work opportunities for adults should be such as to demand literacy. For example, at the non formal farmer water school in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh state in India farmers valued literacy as an important skill for decision making on water management and crop circles. However the problem with this approach is the small scale of interventions. Interventions like this one have tried to match community development with literacy skill acquisition. But literacy outcomes have not improved among adults generally, and this may help explain why demand for literacy has grown less than expected.

Can technology be used to solve the illiteracy and numeracy problem?

Beyond the use of technology in formal education programs for adults where computer skills and other components of digital literacy often define learning objectives, distance learning and ICT can provide significant opportunities for informal learning literacy. These methods have been used effectively in 4 of the E-9 countries which account for 90% of all illiterates – China, India, Mexico and Nigeria.

Distance learning and ICT can enable interaction and practice, use learner generated material, stimulate awareness raising and learner motivation, support and train literacy workers, facilitate the distribution of materials to resource centres and gather feedback from centres and individual learners regarding available materials and programs (Pennells,2005). It is rare, however, for adult literacy programs to be conducted solely through these media which instead are used primarily in support of conventional programs as in the Cuban example we discuss.

Some writers recognise that access to technology does not guarantee that its use will be meaningful or empowering. Given such pedagogical and resource constraints ICTs and distance learning have more immediate potential for the professional development of literacy educators than for literacy programs per se.

The unevenness of access to technology constrains its use in many contexts. Most potential literacy learners do not have access to electricity let alone new technology. Thus the use of ICT and other electronic media in literacy learning has to be examined in context. Still Cuba's 'Yes, I can' program provides an interesting example of the use of radio, television or audio cassettes and video at the heart of a literacy program.

Cuba's 'Yes I can' approach has its roots in the literacy campaign begun in Cuba in 1961. Its basic concept is to use the broadcast media and video as an inclusive approach to literacy teaching for all. In principle a learner can acquire a basic level of literacy skills in 65 sessions over 2 months for a maximum of 2 hours a day. A 30 minute video per session trains

students and educators simultaneously. Educators guide groups of no more than 20 students encouraging them to reflect upon and discuss the videos lessons for their lives, thus making learning highly contextualised.

'Yes I can' was introduced in pilot projects in Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, New Zealand, and Venezuela (where it was adopted nationally and 1 million people learned to read and write in 2003) and more recently in Bolivia, Mozambique and Nigeria.

Notice that the Cuban 'Yes I can' program dates back many decades and uses technology like audio cassettes which are not used today. In 2005 the lowest price mobile phone set was out of reach for most non-literate people. But the technology set available for use in literacy programs today are vastly different from what was available a decade ago. That does not mean, however, that the use of radio and television needs to be abandoned. They are much more easily accessible to much of the world rural population than 10 years ago; especially with the spread of electricity and the falling price of television sets they can reach very large audiences in many countries. The potential use of TV and radio as a channel for promoting literacy still remains considerable.

Mobile telephony

I would therefore argue that the rapid expansion of communication technologies within the last decade holds considerable promise. It is easy to underestimate the pace of transformation that has occurred in the last quarter century. The Jomtien EFA declaration of 1990 made no mention of computers or Internet. While these words appear in the 2000 Dakar Framework for education they occur only twice in the 78 page document and then only in relation to what schools should do to promote equitable learning. In the meantime mobile phone use has grown exponentially even in low literacy societies. India, with the largest number of adult illiterates in the world, has 1 billion mobile phone subscribers. Could mobile devices change the literacy environment?

Internet access still remains low in much of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia but it has grown very rapidly in India, with 462 million having access (120 million of them on smartphones). There were 389 million mobile internet users in India as on December 2016. Urban India, with 51% penetration is fast reaching saturation point while rural India with 16% is the future market of growth. Smartphones are increasingly manufactured in India, and their prices are dropping every month.

It may be possible to take advantage of the universality of mobile phones to promote stronger literacy environment and reading practices. People already used mobile devices for banking, bill payment and social communication. They even participate in democratic practices such as engaging with political leaders via SMS (Asino et al, 2011). A recent comparative survey of the use of mobile devices completed by over 4000 people in 7 countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe) found that while more men read books on mobile phones than women, women spend many more hours reading than men did. The Worlreaders mobile application also demonstrate how technology helps create a literacy environment and encourages reading. In 2013, 334000 unique users per month accessed books and stories for free in English as well as other languages including Hindi, Kiswahili, Twi and Yoruba (West and Chew, 2014) . Educational exercises on mobile phones, when added to an adult education programme in Niger improved reading and numeracy outcomes significantly more than in programs without mobile phones (Aker et al, 2012).

The potential of mobile phones to increase demand for literacy skills may become apparent in coming years. Using mobile phones to text and email enhances the use of text as communication. But clear evidence is lacking of their impact on improving literacy skills.

Hence, I would conclude that given the lack of evidence, it appears that while mobile technologies will help, they will be far from sufficient to erase illiteracy from the global South. Traditional methods, where the use of literacy is increasingly attached to skilling programs, that involve the recognition of prior vocational skills, are likely to remain effective. Such programs generate a demand for literacy, since at the end of the skilling programs comes certification of the skills, which can enhance earnings, and even possibility the potential for international migration. Technology used in supplementing methods, especially if technology is used to facilitate educators, can certainly make the adult learning experience more interesting. Illiterate adults are likely to be quite nervous and anxious in the presence of new technology, even though their use of mobile phones for many purposes, including growing banking services, will have significantly changed their risk aversion to technology. Therefore, the widespread availability and use of mobile technology and television, certainly offer a potential for enhancing the learners experience. Hence, as a supplementary source of learning to more formal traditional literacy learning should offer an appropriate way forward for countries, especially but not only, the E9 countries.

Literacy in the Time of Decoloniality: New Critical Capacities

Professor Melissa Steyn, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Abstract

Literacy is generally understood to involve capacitating a person to access symbolic systems — know-how needed to make informed decisions within the complex environments of the contemporary world. The concept has been extended to move beyond decoding text, to being competent in a whole host of knowledge systems, including, for example, computer literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, mathematical literacy, economic literacy, academic literacy and many more. Generally, it is very clear who “has” such literacy and who needs to acquire it, and often this is aligned with the cultural, social and political fault lines established through the modern-colonial order. I will be arguing that the Decolonial turn in social theory has major implications for practice and alerts us to the need for Critical Diversity Literacy, which involves the capacity to “read,” or “see through” assumptions underpinning social relations established through the power relations of Coloniality. Such a “reading” practice is essential for all of us, but may be particularly pertinent for those engaged in the socially complex contexts in which Adult Literacy Education occurs.

Introduction

In this presentation, I will be coming at the topic of literacy from a very different background and vantage point. My scholarship is in Diversity Studies, and stems from a commitment to social justice forged within the context of South Africa. I’m looking forward to learning more about literacy practices and theories from the delegates at the conference. The work I will be presenting piggy backs on some concepts from literacy studies that I have gleaned, but speaks to concerns that I think we share as educators in an unequal world in which we wish to make a difference.

To start with the obvious: we all know that literacy is, first and foremost, the capacity to understand, interpret and employ the symbolic systems that developed to represent spoken language. The ability to decode linguistic (and I guess mathematical) texts is still the primary, and most essential understanding of term, and of course the quest to provide literacy to all people still far from achieved. And we do not want to take our eyes off this ball.

Literacy offers us access to symbolic systems – know-how we need to make informed decisions within the complex environments of the contemporary world. To gain literacy is to change one’s relationship to the world, to other people, to how we are positioned within flows of power, and can be viewed as emancipatory (Hamilton, 2010). We need look no further than how the spread of literacy and the ensuing democratization of information after the invention of the printing press changed religion, politics, and science, subverting established power within European society.

As our societies develop in complexity, we need to make informed decisions for which we need access to numerous symbolic systems. The concept of literacy has therefore extended beyond decoding linguistic text (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), to being competent in a whole host of systems that require recognition, interpretative and expressive ability within signifying systems, including, for example, computer literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, mathematical literacy, economic literacy, academic literacy and many more. In all these areas, not to have fluency within in the relevant meaning systems can be limiting, and being sufficiently out of kilter with these organizing social codes can amount to a dis-ability. Generally, it is very clear who “has” such literacy and who needs to acquire it, and often this is aligned with the cultural, social and political fault lines established through the modern-colonial order.

The understanding of these social configurations within the compass of literacy was linked to the “social turn” in literacy studies, which emphasized the social and cultural embeddedness of reading practices, as situated practices. Social context –cultural, historical, political and economic – and text frame meaning in a mutually constitutive manner (Gee, 2012). In my presentation, I will be arguing for an understanding of literacy that involves reading the social itself as a text (Twine, 2004) – the capacity to recognise and interpret the patterns in unfolding dynamics between people within specific social contexts, how difference is being framed, and possibilities are being opened up for some and closed down for others, depending on how they are positioned relative to each other. Such a literacy, then, involves the capacity to interpret a situation for how it reflects of broader social relations at a level of abstraction from the actual people involved. As with “ordinary’ literacy, developing the abilities required for such reading may require some induction and practice, and, given the complexity of the social world, I sure nobody is ever fully proficient in recognizing all the signification in any situation.

The Decolonial turn in social theory has made us mindful of the fact that the prevailing social systems that shape our worlds, globally, are still those of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), established and consolidated through the modern era; what Mignolo calls “the darker side of modernity” (Mignolo, 2011). The literacy I wish to advance is what I call Critical Diversity Literacy, which is really the capacity to recognize the bedded down ideological relations in our social fabric, inherited from modernity. In effect, this literacy surfaces the taken-for-granted power relations that continue inform and shape our interactions. Unlike the literacy of reading and writing words, this form of literacy is not necessarily linked to formal education. As WEB Du Bois pointed out, those in subordinated positionalities often possess “double consciousness” (Dubois, 2014), having been, of necessity, trained to read an interaction for how they are located not only from their own perspective, but also in the eyes of those oppressing them.

So, what does all this have to do with adult literacy education?

My argument is that there is a burden on educators who may come from historically privileged positionalities to be personally literate not just in the skills they are teaching, but also in recognizing, and being mindful of, the web of significations we are caught up in, whether we know it or not. Developing this critical lens is not an easy process; it may even challenge us in quite fundamental ways, but not to engage in the difficult work is not really an option in the era of decoloniality.

I will be sharing the criteria of *Critical Diversity Literacy* (Steyn, 2014), and look forward to the ensuing discussion with the delegates of the ACAL conference!

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Applying 'Red Dirt Thinking' to adult learning in the Northern Territory

John Guenther, Batchelor Institute

Abstract

The term 'red dirt thinking' was coined by researchers who were part of the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation's (CRC-REP) Remote Education Systems (RES) project. The researchers, who were particularly interested in remote schools asked: "What would education look like if it was grounded in the red dirt context of remote parts of Australia?". Red dirt is a powerful metaphor that reflects the landscapes of most parts of remote Australia and captures something about the wide open possibilities of thinking from within the places where many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live.

Red dirt thinking: challenges the assumptions that underpin system thinking as it is often applied to remote Australia; encourages those who live in remote Australia to have a voice and be heard; and it demands respectful engagement between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, such that local ways of being, knowing, believing and valuing are intrinsically valued. Red dirt thinking challenges generalised notions of deficit and disadvantage while supporting strengths and aspirations of those who live in red dirt communities.

How might red dirt thinking be applied to adult learning in the Northern Territory? In the first instance, it is important to understand where current strategic policy comes from. What philosophical and theoretical bases do policies designed to facilitate adult learning (including training) have? How well do they work (or not work)? What does aspiration and success look like from an adult learning or vocational training perspective in remote communities? How would systems measure these and what outcomes would we expect if we applied red dirt thinking to adult learning? What structures would be required to facilitate these contextually responsive outcomes?

There are lots of questions in this, but the clues to answers to these questions are already available as we look back at the successes and failures of policies and interventions from the past. Further, as we take time to hear the voices of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult learning stakeholders, the answers will no doubt become very clear, as they were for the RES project.

Introduction

Between 2011 and 2016 the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation established a number of research projects, all with a focus on remote parts of Australia, and mostly with a focus on Aboriginal people. One of these, the Remote Education Systems (RES) project looked for ways to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities. The research team visited about 40 remote communities during the course of the project and engaged with more than 1000 participants. In this paper, I describe some of this work, which the team wrote about under the banner of 'Red Dirt Thinking'. I will explain what that is in a moment, but while the learnings from that project were mostly related to the compulsory years of education, here I will discuss how red dirt thinking might apply to adult learning in the Northern Territory. My focus is largely on remote communities.

Before I go in, I would like to acknowledge those who were part of the team of researchers during that period: Chris Duncan (2011-2012), Melodie Bat (2012-2013), Sam Osborne (2011-2015) and Samantha Disbray (2013-2016). I'd like to acknowledge the support we had from a fantastic advisory group who guided us over the five years. I acknowledge the support

of Ninti One Limited too, and the leadership offered by Murray McGregor and the late Steve Blake. I'd also acknowledge the many local community members who contributed to our thinking as a team and who added to the knowledge base about remote education through their writing, presentations and involvement in workshops.

What is Red Dirt Thinking?

The term 'Red Dirt Thinking' came out of a Friday afternoon whiteboard brainstorming session I had back in 2012 with Melodie Bat. We were looking for a way to talk about remote education without defaulting to the discourses of policy, research and educational practice which emphasise failure, gaps, deficits and disadvantage. We wanted to think broadly and widely, a bit like 'blue sky thinking', but to us, blue sky thinking did not reflect the need we saw for contextualised theory and practice as it applied to the context of remote schools. Like the blue sky, the red dirt is almost everywhere in remote parts of Australia. You'll find it in the Kimberley and the Pilbara, you'll find it in the central desert regions, Arnhem Land and in Cape York. It gets into everything. Some would say it gets in your blood!

The key to Red Dirt Thinking is the ability to understand the world from a remote perspective. It therefore challenges the otherwise untested assumptions of the dominant or hegemonic structures that bring education into remote spaces and puts forward the positions and voices of those who live and belong in those spaces.

How does Red Dirt Thinking work in remote education?

With the Remote Education Systems (RES) project we intentionally explored questions of what education is for in remote communities, and what success looks like from a remote community perspective. Based on the responses to these questions we then looked at how teaching might respond to community views of success and how systems might respond. There are several papers and reports that discuss our findings most of which are publicly available (see for example Guenther, 2015b; Guenther et al., 2014; Guenther et al., 2015a; Guenther et al., 2016).

During the course of the project we challenged assumptions about disadvantage (Guenther et al., 2013) and remoteness (Guenther et al., 2015b). We questioned commonly held views about aspiration and success (Osborne & Guenther, 2013). We challenged assumptions about the importance of community engagement (Guenther, 2015a) and collaboration (Guenther & McRae-Williams, 2015). We even dared to challenge the link between attendance and academic performance (Guenther, 2013). We critiqued the assumed 'good' of boarding schools (Guenther et al., 2016). We debunked the idea that resourcing for remote schools doesn't make any difference (Guenther 2016). At times we were strongly criticised for putting forward alternative understandings of remote education even though we often used evidence that came from public and reputable sources. As time went by, once we had qualitative evidence from remote communities, there was increasing acceptance that what we were saying was right.

Not only did we highlight myths associated with remote education, we identified ways forward to improve outcomes and learning experiences for students from remote communities. Our findings showed that education in remote communities is not so much about academic attainment, post school transitions or employment. Rather education should be for maintaining connections to language, land and culture and for supporting young people's identities (Minutjukur et al., 2014; Osborne, 2017; Osborne et al., 2014). Success wasn't so much about academic performance or NAPLAN scores, rather it was about parents and community members being involved in their children's education and schools engaging meaningfully with communities (Guenther, 2015c). And great teachers were not highly trained or experienced teachers from down south. Rather they were the ones who

took time to learn, work alongside local staff, who built relationships with students and community members, and those who could work with local languages (Disbray, 2015a, 2015b; Guenther et al., 2015a).

Testing assumptions

Early on in the RES project our writing was largely theoretical and philosophical. We were criticised for not having evidence to back up our claims. In 2013 we put together a special edition of the Australian Journal of Indigenous Education that had almost no research evidence included at all. But interestingly, those articles are now our most cited articles. I think it is because they challenge conventional wisdom by unpacking the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that underpin education delivery.

Philosophical assumptions and why they are important

Philosophers work at a 'meta-level... raising meta-questions about the object level of the domain they are studying' (Phillips, 2010, p. 13). By definition then philosophy is not practical. Some might suggest then that there is not much use for philosophical thinking. I certainly held that view for a long time, until as part of the RES project I wanted to get my head around what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders thought was important for education. I discovered a rich literature that discussed philosophical issues of values (axiologies), ways of being (ontologies), ways of knowing (epistemologies) and ways of understanding our place in the world (cosmologies). The literature by Nakata (Nakata, 2007; Nakata et al., 2012), Arbon (2008a, 2008b), Ford (2010), Sarra (2011), Martin (2008) and Rigney (2006) among others, presents Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal philosophical standpoints that provide important meta-level understandings about what matters. If it is possible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics to articulate their axiologies, ontologies, epistemologies and cosmologies, surely we could do the same from a system perspective. And so we did, and this yielded some stark and strong pointers to why remote education is the way it is (see Bat & Guenther, 2013; Guenther & Bat, 2013) and why it has largely failed. Taking the meta-level view allows the viewer to compare and contrast systems without having to become mired in the detail of operationalised delivery.

Theoretical assumptions and why they matter

One step closer to pragmatics, theory also helps unpack the rationale for policies, strategies, institutional actions and individual behaviours. Theory, of course helps explain how and why things might happen (or not). I have concluded with my colleagues that much of what happens in education and training is driven by Human Capital Theory (Guenther et al., 2014; McRae-Williams et al., 2016), though there is not a lot of literature pointing to this (Banks, 2010; Shomos, 2010). Human Capital Theory suggests that people invest in education because there is an economic return (Becker, 1964). But what happens when the theory does not work, which in the case of education and training in remote communities, is a major problem.

While there are of course many other possible purposes for education, training and adult learning more generally, the focus of learning for economic benefit is certainly reflected in the discourses of policy (Aspin & Chapman, 2012; OECD, 2005; Rubenson, 2005). The titles of adult learning structures and initiatives (for example *Vocational* education and training, Skills for education and *employment*) leaves little room for the development of social capital, social cohesion, civic responsibilities, individual agency or choice, identity formation, cultural maintenance or a response to human rights, despite the voluminous evidence that suggests these multiple benefits (Côté, 2005; Feinstein, 2003; Feinstein et al., 2008; Green et al., 2003; Schuller et al., 2004). The focus on economy explains why we do not see references to

Freirean theories of adult learning (Freire, 1970) or transformative learning theories (Mezirow, 2012) entering into the discourse of public policy on adult learning.

History matters

Our experience in the RES project made me realise just how important history is in education and training. In communities, we came across many people who reflected on the golden years of Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory (see also Devlin et al., 2017; Huijser et al., 2015; Osborne, 2015). They referred to bilingual education and team teaching, literacy production centres, the early days of Batchelor College teacher education training, of programs like RATE and D-BATE, of representative bodies such as Feppi. These were the days when policy was not driven solely by economic interests. They were the days when the era of assimilation gave way to self-determination.

There is much to be learned from history, partly so past mistakes can be avoided and partly to better understand where people in communities have come from. One of the important findings from RES was that communities with a history of adult learning and employment (reflected in higher labour force participation and qualification levels) were likely to have schools with higher attendance and higher NAPLAN scores (Guenther et al., 2014). While this probably should not come as a surprise, we concluded that one of the implications of this is that a singular focus on early years education misses the importance of having well-educated parents who can effectively support their children at school. Limiting opportunities for learning beyond the compulsory years of education to a narrow set of vocational and employment related skills, means that young people will miss out on opportunities to be stronger parents. We also know that the 'engineered pathways' designed to track people into work (for example through CDP, CDEP, RJCP) have not been effective (Guenther & McRae-Williams, 2015). I have no idea why policies that reinforce past failures continue to be rolled out.

Applying Red Dirt Thinking to adult learning in the Northern Territory

I now want to turn to how Red Dirt Thinking might be applied to adult learning in the Northern Territory.

Philosophy

I think we should start by asking: What would 'good' adult learning policy in the Northern Territory look like? There is tremendous opportunity for this question to be discussed quite openly as at the moment as there is no adult learning policy in the Territory. What do I mean by 'good'? For a start this question can be framed around the various axiological, epistemological and ontological assumptions that Territorians hold and more specifically those who live in remote communities. The question of what it means to 'be' (an ontological question) will—based on the findings of RES—likely include elements of language, culture and land. So when we think of adult literacy we would definitely not limit our thinking to English language literacy.

We could ask the same kinds of questions we did in RES: What is adult learning for? What does success look like? Answers to these questions then shape our ideas of how government or funders might respond and then how we might tackle the teaching and learning issues. The important thing for us as academics or practitioners is to step outside the assumptions driving the existing policy frameworks (which are largely federal at the moment). We should also not constrain our thinking to what governments can do. There are plenty of examples in the Territory where local communities have taken control of their learning agendas (for example the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust and the Yothu Yindi Foundation) which are built on royalty streams. Philanthropic foundations (such as the Dusseldorp Foundation) are also interested in supporting locally driven developments. These alternative funding

streams allow for local ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies to come to the fore and begin to set an agenda which may in turn influence policy.

Theory

While we know that Human Capital Theory drives adult learning policy in Australia (and the Northern Territory), history tells us that it has not always been this way. The question I would be asking is what theories should be driving policy and practice. This might take time to answer, but a starting point is the reshaping of language around training. For example, I would now never use the word 'disadvantage' to describe others. I avoid 'closing the gap' like the plague. They have had their day, just as the word 'assimilation' had its day a long time ago. These words have been adopted by the hegemonic structures to recast systemic problems as 'Indigenous' problems. They simply perpetuate myths and create unwarranted justifications for interventions that keep on failing.

We could learn from the language of human rights and critical race theory, which provide alternative discourses to those promulgated by the hegemony. I use the word hegemony loosely here, not wanting to point the finger at individuals or governments, because the reality is that we are all—to some extent or another—complicit in the hegemony. We could draw on complexity theory to help shape our understanding of how interventions result in change. We could also reconsider adult learning theories to determine which have most relevance for the Northern Territory context. What's more we should be about creating theory as well.

History

We can draw on the past to reshape the future. There are some elements of history we might want to repeat and others we would certainly want to avoid. As an aside, I think it is important to document history, just as Brian Devlin, Samantha Disbray and Nancy Devlin have done with the History of Bilingual Education, and as Batchelor did with the Common Ground book a couple of years ago. I suspect there are plenty of stories of adult learning, dating back from before colonisation that could be captured in a great volume. The point though, is to inform our thinking about the present and the future.

Conclusion

I have scratched the surface and raised a lot more questions than I have probably answered. There is nothing magical about 'Red Dirt Thinking'. It really is just a metaphor for contextually based philosophy, theory and practice, which ensures that the voices of those who contribute to the knowledge created through research, are heard. What it does is challenge conventional wisdom. It questions the validity of what is and puts forward responses to what might be if local contexts and cultures are taken into account. As such, for adult learning in the Northern Territory, Red Dirt Thinking has already challenged some of the myths driving delivery of vocational and adult learning. There are undoubtedly more to debunk, but more importantly, in an environment where little policy exists, Red Dirt Thinking has the potential to shape a more constructive and fruitful adult learning agenda for the Northern Territory.

A few challenges remain for all of us, whether we are researchers, practitioners or system bureaucrats. Our challenge firstly, is not to just *do things better*, but to ask the more difficult 'why' questions. If the 'why' doesn't match the doing, surely we need to question what we do, rather than trying to do what we do, better! Secondly, we need to learn from the past. While we love to hear about success, we will probably gain a lot more from learning from the taboos of failures—in policy, funding, strategy and practice. Finally, our collective challenge is to draw on theory, and indeed generate new theories, to create new discourses for adult learning in the Northern Territory. Those discourses will expose myths and false premises of

policies, programs and practices. Of course, apart from exposing untruths we need to generate a palatable language, which reflects the realities of our multilingual, multicultural context, which in turn reshapes how we all think about, create philosophically congruent policies and then do adult learning.

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To discuss the Graduate Diploma while at the conference, please speak to Wendy Kennedy (pictured)- who is attending the ACAL Conference and associated events.



WENDY KENNEDY

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The Graduate Diploma covers 6 units of competency taken from the TAE Training Package and is recognised nationwide. There are 4 core units and 2 elective units.

CODE	UNIT NAME	HOURS
CORE UNITS		
TAELLN801*	Analyse and apply adult literacy teaching practices	120
TAELLN802*	Analyse and apply adult numeracy teaching practices	120
TAELLN803*	Develop English language skills of adult learners	120
TAELLN804*	Implement and evaluate delivery of adult language, literacy and numeracy skills	120
ELECTIVE UNITS (Choose two from the list below)		
TAELLN805	Design and conduct pre-training assessment of adult language, literacy and numeracy skills	60
TAELLN806	Lead the delivery of adult language, literacy and numeracy support services	50
TAELLN816	Initiate, develop and evaluate adult language, literacy and numeracy resources	50

Conference abstracts

Show me the Money

Show Me the Money is a presentation based around students being able to achieve a number of EAL Framework Curriculum assessment modules simultaneously and is a valuable example of how teachers can incorporate theme based project activities into their learning plans. The oral presentation modules in Certificates III and IV in EAL (Further Study) are compulsory core units that students normally complete in semester one each year. The emphasis is on an active group learning environment and maintaining authenticity and currency. To achieve this, real life examples of realia are used to improve students' understanding of other cultures and real life situations. Australian Bank Notes and Coins are used in class as a springboard, to develop teamwork skills, research and oral presentation skills. The activity examines elements of Australian Art, Culture and History as well as numeracy and WIL. Students are motivated to go beyond the classroom into their communities, families and friends and the exercise empowers them to communicate with local native speakers because money is an everyday item and it is a great talking point. (See examples of idioms, proverbs, clichés, and jargon on Money - there are pages of them!). Students comment how they have been able to talk to their family and friends about who are the famous people on the Australian currency. The assessment activity incorporates Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing and Researching. The task runs on a weekly basis throughout the semester once it is established. The students learn that Melbourne is the home of plastic notes (known formally as polymer notes) and it is a theme that permeates so many facets of life as we discover how money really does make the world go round.

Marc Brierty, Melbourne Polytechnic

Marc Brierty taught at Victoria University for 10 years, La Trobe University for 12 years and for the past 6 years, he has been teaching EAL to Migrants and Refugees at Melbourne Polytechnic. Marc has also taught English to adults in the UK, Japan, Saudi Arabia and China.

Technology Tearoom - A social learning model to assist mature age learners in developing skills in using digital devices.

Many mature aged learners build barriers and have developed a range of avoidance strategies when dealing with digital devices. All of our mature aged learners who participate in the Technology Tearoom stated that they were reliant on younger members of their family to assist them and some even express anxiety around internet and smart phones. Many of our learners stated that they limited their use of smart phones to just making calls and found the phones confusing to use. The Technology Tearoom was developed to assist our mature aged learners to build their confidence and competence in using a range of digital devices. The program is delivered in a social setting and the curriculum is developed with input from individual learners (they identify what they want to learn to do at the beginning of each term). A constructivist learning model has been used which uses the existing knowledge and experience of each individual learner to support them to build their own learning framework and reduce the levels of anxiety they experience using digital technology. The social context of the Technology Tearoom facilitates peer teaching and learning and has been a key aspect in developing individual strategies for our mature aged learners.

Kerrie Tomkins, Leopold Community & Learning Centre

Kerrie Tomkins, MBA, B Edn (Honours), Dip Teaching, Dip Sustainability.

Experience working in education for over twenty years, with the last five years focused on adult learning. Undertaken research into constructivist learning theory and developed a learning model using the theory to assist adult learners to build their own framework.

Currently the centre Coordinator for Leopold Community and Learning Centre, prior to this

appointment was a Regional Education Officer working with business, local government and community organisations in sustainability education for the Victorian State Government.

Connecting the Dots: the Reading Writing Hotline's role in navigating the complex LLN landscape

The Reading Writing Hotline has a unique, 25 year national overview of LLN in Australia. This session will explore the disconnect between the needs of the callers to the Hotline and the provision currently available. It will look at ways we can work together to better connect learners, practitioners, industry and funding. There are still many people out there with non-vocational LLN needs: more than three quarters of the callers to the Hotline are not eligible for the SEE program.

How can we help callers to the Hotline find appropriate provision in a world full of change? How can we assist practitioners by making better referrals? What implications does this have for literacy policy?

Vanessa Iles and Jill Finch, Reading Writing Hotline

Vanessa Iles an experienced LLN practitioner and manager of the Hotline. She coordinates a national database of LLN providers and a team of experienced teachers who field enquiries from individuals, organisations and industry. Vanessa also currently manages several national projects improving the Hotline's engagement with industry and providing an improved service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

Jill Finch is a Project Officer with the Reading Writing Hotline. Jill has been a LLN Head Teacher in TAFE for 25 years and is a past President of NSWALNC. She has coordinated and delivered a number of WELL projects and teacher training programs including the Grad Dip Adult LLN Practice. Jill works with the Hotline to deliver their strategic improvement projects.

SenaiNT: A success story in the transnational delivery of an English language and foundational skills program in Timor Leste

SenaiNT English Language Centre, fully funded by the NT Department of Education, commenced operations in Becora, Dili in late 2015. The purpose of the Centre is to provide Australian Skills Quality Authority accredited Certificate 1 and 2 courses in Written and Spoken English and Foundation Skills to Timorese nationals seeking employment in Timor Leste and around the world, but specifically in the Northern Territory through the Timor Leste government seasonal workers program. Well over 200 students have graduated with qualifications since the program commenced. All staff are Timorese nationals.

Maria Albion, SenaiNT foundation principal and Joao da Costa, former student, SenaiNT

Maria Albion, a Timorese national, is the foundation principal of SenaiNT. She has had a successful long term career in the Northern Territory Department of Education in several locations as a teacher, senior teacher, curriculum officer, assistant principal and executive contract principal. Maria fled to Darwin by boat from East Timor as a young girl in 1975 to escape the hostilities occurring in her home country.

Joao da Costa is a former student at SenaiNT who is now studying education at Charles Darwin University. He will co-present on the difference the program has made to his life.

Untangling the literacies of university governance documents: A community of practice approach

University governance documents are intended to clearly articulate an institution's values, approaches and commitments and how these are to be achieved, though at times the language used in policy and procedure documents is impenetrable to the staff and students

who are required to comply with them. This has serious implications for universities when, as a consequence, policy and procedure documents are ignored or enacted inconsistently. Charles Darwin University (CDU), along with other Australian universities, has experienced increasing numbers of student breaches of academic integrity over recent years. When such incidents occur the importance of clear, easy to read and accessible governance documents is apparent. This presentation explores the high-level literacy practices of a Community of Practice (CoP) that formed to untangle the language and make meaning from university governance documents related to student academic integrity. The presentation also showcases the resources that were developed by the CoP to reinterpret governance documents in forms that are accessible, engaging and meaningful to university staff and students.

Alison Reedy, Dr Penny Wurm and Mrs Amanda Janssen, Charles Darwin University

Alison Reedy is Team Leader, Higher Education and Training in the Office of Learning and Teaching at Charles Darwin University. Alison's professional background started in the area of banking and finance before she moved into the field of education 25 years ago. She has worked across the school, community education, vocational and higher education sectors. She has a particular interest in English language and literacy education, Indigenous education, and online learning and learning design. Alison was the ACAL NT Representative from 2010 to 2015 and is currently enrolled in PhD studies on the topic 'Indigenous Learners Online: Indigenous Perspectives on Online Learning in Higher Education'.

Amanda Janssen is Theme Leader for the Academic Language and Learning Success Program (ALLSP) at Charles Darwin University. This team works with students and staff to improve and develop academic skills and assessment. In addition she coordinates the PASS program, which is a peer led study program to assist students to improve their marks. Amanda is also part of the steering group for the 'External and International Student Orientation' as well as a key member of the working group to develop university wide resources to promote academic integrity. Her research interests broadly include assessment design, Social Semiotics and mapping genre and skills requirements. She is currently part of the executive team for the Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL).

Dr Penny Wurm is an ecologist based at Charles Darwin University with research interests in the ecology and management of monsoonal wetlands and invasive plant species, and a teaching practice in environmental science. In January 2016, Penny completed a three year appointment as Associate Head of School - Learning & Teaching, School of Environment at CDU. She formerly served as Higher Education Project Leader for the Tropical Savannas CRC, and has also taught in the VET sector. Penny has won a Vice-Chancellors Award for Excellence in Learning & Teaching (2015) for the Eastern Indonesian Field Intensive; an Endeavour Executive Award - DEEWR (2011) for a ten week funded placement at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia; a National Carrick Institute Citation (2006) for an engaging, flexible postgraduate program, focusing on tropical Australia and building skills and understandings for regional Professionals in authentic learning contexts; and a national Australian Society for Computers in Tertiary Education (ascilite) Award for 'Exemplary use of electronic technologies in teaching and learning in higher education'.

Comparative delivery of Adult Basic Education in British Columbia, Canada, and Foundation Skills in New South Wales

This presentation offers key findings from a June 2016 NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship study tour to Canada. The Premier's Samsung Technology in Rural and Remote Schools Scholarship provided an opportunity to investigate the delivery of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in regional and remote settings across British Columbia (BC) and to reflect on its

application with respect to current TAFE teaching of Foundation Skills in regional and remote parts of NSW. The aim of this non-academic study tour was to gain knowledge, increase networks and share ideas. Canada was chosen because it has similarities with Australia in terms of size, population and LLN levels. Visits were made to community colleges, teaching universities, community organisations and other providers across BC to learn about their facilities and delivery methods. Surprisingly less use was made of technology for Adult ABE in BC than is commonly used in NSW, whilst volunteers often supported delivery. The Canadian Rockies Great Teachers Seminar in Banff, Alberta, provided further opportunities to network with adult teachers from community colleges and universities. This presentation makes comparisons regarding current delivery practices of Foundation Skills in NSW and several recommendations are made concerning levels of technology, use of volunteers, cultural inclusion and the need for an adult literacy strategy for NSW.

Berni Aquilina, TAFE NSW

Berni Aquilina is a Head Teacher of Foundation Skills at TAFE NSW West region. She moved to Mudgee nine years ago from Nelson, New Zealand, where she was a tutor with Adult Learning Support (a community-based literacy organisation) and a study skills teacher at NMIT. For a short time she was also a trainer for Literacy Aotearoa. Prior to that, Berni had a 20 year pearling career that took her across northern Australia and through the Pacific, where she developed and delivered pearl technician training courses for local people in the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands and Kiribati.

From 16 to 80 Supporting Aboriginal Students with LLN at Tauondi Aboriginal College

Tauondi is a Kurna word, and means to penetrate, or to break through. The name of the college acknowledges the Kurna people, our hosts and the traditional people of the land where Tauondi is located. Tauondi College provides education for the 'whole' person, affirming Aboriginal cultures and identities in ways that respect Aboriginal law and customs and the diversity of students' experiences and ambitions. With this holistic philosophy, Tauondi College offers a range of nationally accredited training programs, as well as non-accredited Adult Community Education (ACE) activities specifically designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities. This practice taster is about the journey Tauondi students travel from Language, Literacy Numeracy development to meaningful training which results in the successful transition to employment. Throughout their journeys, Tauondi offers Literacy Numeracy support and training and employment mentor support, increasing student's confidence and retention rates, reducing their 'shame factor'. COAG target 4.4. Improved literacy and numeracy levels can improve social, educational and employment outcomes. Students that were also mentored have a better success rate.

Vicki Hartman, Tauondi Aboriginal College

Vicki Hartman, is a Foundation Skills Mentor at Tauondi Aboriginal College and has been involved in adult literacy and numeracy since 2009, from a trainer in the Certificate I in Introduction to Vocational Education to her current role as Foundation Skills Mentor. Vicki's role includes coordinating LLN tutor support for individual and whole course groups based on individual and whole course group requirements. Vicki currently sits as Secretary on the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL), since 2015. She is also Vice-President on the South Australian Council for Adult Literacy (SACAL). Vicki has been involved with SACAL since 2010.

Digital learning resources for remote learners.

CARHDS is a very small Registered Training Organisation delivering accredited and non-accredited training to learners in remote communities within the NT. Changes in funding has co-opted CARHDS to 'tune in' to digital learning as a teaching and learning tool to better meet the fast pace of technology, the needs of the learner (often with low literacy), compliance requirements of regulatory bodies and workplace demands. This presentation showcases a series of digital resources developed by CARHDS and its learners through the delivery of Foundation Skills Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways. The digital world demands our attention and our learners need our attention. This is our best effort to balance digital technology, Aboriginal language and workplace responsibilities to create an innovative learning environment - yes still with limited internet access. As we navigate the digital world of technology, we realise that there is a great need to expand our professional development practices to embrace coding, on-line learning, interactive software and at the same time maintain strong interpersonal and relationship skills with employers and learners.

Brendan Kavanagh, Central Australian Remote Health Development Services (CARHDS)

Brendan Kavanagh is a passionate advocate for adult learners and for languages. He has taught English in China and for the past 6 years has been working with remote communities as a Language, Literacy and Numeracy Trainer in the Top End and Central Australia. Brendan is currently studying a Master of Applied Linguistics and is responsible for the development of many digital resources used at CARHDS. Brendan is a fluent Mandarin speaker who is able to successfully integrate Aboriginal languages with learning resources.

1977 to 2017: How did we get here?

The presentation will trace the forty year development of the field of adult basic education in Australia with particular focus on the socio-economic drivers of change. It will trace its beginnings, grounded in a liberal humanist view of literacy education, to the present day employment-driven, human capital view and trace the influences on the profession through those decades. It is the aim of the presentation, and of the study from which it draws its data, to help practitioners to contextualise their practice and to identify ways in which they might regain something of the agency over their profession which was evident in earlier eras. The presentation will draw on data from an historical interpretive study of adult literacy and basic education in NSW which will serve as a case study or exemplar for the development of programs nationally, since all states have been subject to similar national and global socio-economic influences.

Pamela Osmond, University of Technology Sydney

Pamela Osmond has worked in the field of Adult Basic Education since the 1970s. She has taught in a range of contexts and occupied a number of management and curriculum support roles in TAFE NSW. She is the author of a wide range of teaching / learning resources, including 'So You Want to Teach an Adult to Read?' and 'Literacy Face to Face'. Pamela's present roles are as teacher educator at OATEN, TAFE NSW and as project officer at the Reading Writing Hotline. She is at present researching the history of Adult Basic Education in NSW.

A 21st Century Yolŋu 'Bothways' approach to English and Warramiri Literacy at Gäwa.

In North-East Arnhem Land there are numerous stories concerning the Yolŋu 'ancestral dog' Djuranydjura. The most famous concerns his interaction with the Macassans who established mutually beneficial relationships with Yolŋu over the centuries; trepang collecting services traded for articles such as fish hooks, tobacco, knives and cloth (Macknight, 1976). Nevertheless, in the Djuranydjura story, when the Macassan offers rice and shoes and blankets, he rejects them all, in favour of his own land and resources (Warner,

1958; Berndt & Berndt, 1989; McIntosh, 1994). At Gawa homeland on Elcho Island, this powerful story of identity and 'defiance in the face of outside intrusion'(McIntosh, 2003, p. 314) is interpreted to also include the arrival of 'balanda' (white) teachers, and their focus on English literacy. However, it is not that English literacy is not a priority, but that it must maintain its proper place; negotiated to sit alongside literacy of the land, and the foundational Warramiri language itself (Guthadjaka, 2012). One approach of applying such a 'Bothways' pedagogy through utilising a systematic literacy suite such as 'Accelerated Literacy' for both languages and cultures is outlined to demonstrate that synthesis and strengthened identity is quite attainable when teachers and community work together.

Ben van Gelderen, Charles Darwin University

Ben van Gelderen is a Lecturer in Education; Co-ordinator of the Growing Our Own project. This innovative program involves the delivery of the Bachelor of Education in five remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Ben has worked as a Lawyer, English teacher, Chaplain, Teacher/Linguist, EAL/D consultant and Curriculum Advisor. His Master of Education project was collaborative and transdisciplinary research with the Gawa community to help provide digital resources for the intergenerational transmission of language and cultural knowledge and his PhD study is a multidisciplinary history of Gawa Christian School.

ALPA-Developing a Healthy Indigenous Workforce

This presentation will showcase programs delivered by the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal (ALPA) Corporation, demonstrating how these are contextualised to the workplace, while addressing the Language Literacy and Numeracy needs of Indigenous participants. ALPA owns five community stores throughout Arnhem Land and manages twenty-two community stores in the Northern Territory. ALPA's training department identified that there is no word for 'measurement' in Australian indigenous languages and has addressed the LLN skills gap by developing a specific program 'Ready 4 Djama' (work) with a focus on measurement and preparing employees to apply these skills in the workplace. Indigenous Australians are one of the most disadvantaged population groups in Australia as indicated by their poor health status. Identifying the need for education and training in nutrition, the ALPA nutritionist developed a Good Food Person Program, and plans for each store to employ a trained Good Food Person, who can advise customers on nutrition and healthy eating practices. Videos, power point, ALPA wiki spaces and hardcopies of LLN resources will be used during the presentation, to share ALPA's knowledge.

Angela Nolan, Tracey Fitzgibbon, Lisa Daynipu & Meredith Garrawurra, Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation

Angela Nolan has eight years' experience in indigenous vocational education and training, with considerable experience in contextualising assessment tools and addressing the language literacy and numeracy needs of an indigenous cohort. As the Training Manager for the ALPA RTO she manages the retail user choice contract for one hundred and thirty students. Angela developed the ready for work program for CDP and is currently implementing an Indigenous leadership program. In 2016 Angela completed a Diploma of Vocational Education and Training/Design and Development and in 2014 a Graduate Diploma of Adult LLN practice.

Tracey Fitzgibbon's passion for nutrition began during her career with Coles as a Department manager for the Delicatessen, Fruit and Vegetable Department and Grocery Department. After her career with Coles, Tracey decided to complete a Bachelor's Degree in Nutrition and Dietetics and began her career with ALPA. During this time she also completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment which developed her training skills. Her responsibilities as a

Senior Nutritionist involve nutrition and food safety training with staff and managers, promoting healthy options and improving access and affordability of nutritious food.

Lisa Daygnipu works for CDP at Galiwinku as a supervisor and co facilitator of the *Ready 4 Djama* Program which focuses on the need to learn measurement. She will share her experience about the *Ready 4 Djama* program recently delivered in Galiwinku.

Meredith Garrawurra works for the Buthan Store Galiwinku as the Good Food Person, educating customers about healthy eating while coaching other staff in the store who are completing their retail qualification. She will show how the contextualised retail unit has addressed her specific language, literacy and numeracy needs, to successfully complete the retail nutrition unit "Advise on food products and services" to become a Good Food Person.

Numeracy, what's the problem?

Why is Maths such an issue for people? In this workshop we will explore students pre-conceptions about maths and the difficulties they had with learning it. We will then look at the types of numeracy they need for functioning in society including financial literacy, information literacy and technology literacy. We will then explore practical ways to involve students in learning numeracy that connects it their needs. Participants will be given an opportunity to discuss what has worked for them and why it has worked and what hasn't. It will be an opportunity for them to bring along any resources that work with their students. They will also be explore some delivery materials and concepts that have proved successful with a variety of adult students.

Christine Tully, Melbourne Polytechnic

Chris Tully has worked in the Adult Education field for 26 years across a range of areas. Recently she has worked in the Literacy and Numeracy support area, providing numeracy support to a variety of VET programs. She also has extensive experience in delivery numeracy to adults including in classes with a high number of EAL students, indigenous students, people returning to study and in workplaces. She has been involved in the accreditation and re-accreditation of various curriculum and training packages including the CGEA.

Evaluating the Western Australian dual enrolment vocational support courses

The Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills (CAVSS) and Course in Underpinning Skills for Industry Qualifications (USIQ) are a crucial part of the support system for vocational students so they receive specialist literacy numeracy teaching and can also access other soft skills such as cultural knowledge, digital capabilities etc. Recent external evaluations have provided an analysis of how the extensive implementation of these courses in WA is progressing and what issues are arising. Both courses take a radically different approach to assessment in comparison to other access courses which focus on literacy and numeracy levels often based on the Australian Core Skills Framework. In a competency based system, this results in artificial imposition of a particular level on a whole student group or the need to use multiple courses. CAVSS and USIQ are non-assessable and hence teachers are free to focus on the needs of the students in the vocational course which vary according to study modes and industry needs. The success of the courses relies on the expertise of specialist teachers and their willingness to match their teaching methodologies to those of their vocational partner. Business Rules detail the model with a greater level of detail than most accredited courses to promote greater understanding of strategies found to be successful. Reports are available for both evaluations and Cheryl Wiltshire will present a paper at this conference detailing the planned response to the evaluations.

Cheryl Wiltshire, Department of Training and Workforce Development, Western Australia

Cheryl Wiltshire works at the Department of Training and Workforce Development in WA in the professional learning section. She has been part of the team supporting the accreditation and implementation of CAVSS and USIQ for 17 years and prior to that worked in TAFE and jobseeker training.

What attitudes are we talking about?

Learning Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) skills improves lives. Workers with comprehensive workplace LLN skills benefit from improved performance. Work skills and attitudes are linked. Learners have varied attitudes, and occasionally these impede learning. There are attitudes towards learning, attitudes about the learning content as well as attitudes related to the job skill. Although LLN trainers may be limited in their response to the attitudes of their students, they can include attitude content in their curriculum. Does awareness of attitudes associated with content inform pedagogies to improve learning outcomes? This paper discusses some relevant findings from a Master of Education research that examines attitudes in Competency-Based Training within national qualifications frameworks in Australia and Singapore. Document analysis of training packages, official reports and relevant literature with a content analysis approach was used. This paper discusses how content may be analysed for associated attitudes, and provides a basis for identifying such attitudes. LLN Pedagogies can then be adjusted to raise awareness of such content attitudes in learners to help learners achieve better learning outcomes. This paper gives guidance to LLN trainers to address attitudinal components in their teaching of (LLN) skills.

Ser Loy Chan, Charles Darwin University

Ser Loy Chan is a Singapore qualified trainer, assessor and curriculum developer of national CET (VET) programs and held adjunct positions between 2013 and 2014 as an Adult Educator and Research Associate at the Institute for Adult Learning, a part of the national training authority in Singapore. Ser Loy graduated from CDU in 2016 with a Master of Education (International) culminating in a research thesis examining how attitude learning is incorporated into training within the national qualification frameworks of Australia and Singapore. Currently pursuing a PhD in Education and Training at CDU to further research into how attitudes can be meaningfully incorporated into training within national qualifications frameworks.

Describing capability in the foundation skills field

The Foundation Skills Professional Standards Framework was developed through extensive national consultation as an action under the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults. It describes the diverse range of capabilities that practitioners use to deliver foundation skills services in education, workplace and community environments. Descriptors for four levels of capability across three domains - Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement - make it possible to articulate the breadth and variety of roles and responsibilities that are found in the foundation skills space. By providing a consistent language for describing these capabilities, the Framework has many potential uses including career planning, professional development, recruitment and workforce capability management. This workshop will use a series of case studies and activities to explore how the Framework can be used to support practitioner capability, pathways and professional development.

Louise Wignall, Wignall Consulting

Louise Wignall has contributed to strategic projects focused on the importance of Foundation Skills in VET over the last 25 years. Through recent work under the National

Foundation Skills Strategy project she has worked with Anita Roberts to develop a Foundation Skills Professional Standards Framework.

Digital literacies, hyper-personalisation, new tribes and points of contact

The aim to personalise education is widely accepted as one of the most attractive ideas in educational theory and policies. The possibility to utilise new digital tools to identify and address students' specific needs and create individual educational packages is raising the promise of a better and more efficient teaching process. However, education should have a closer look at promises and risks associated with personalisation tools delivered by Silicon Valley companies. Beyond efficiency we see that individuals are susceptible to become trapped in 'echo chambers' that isolate them from opposing viewpoints, making them more open to accept viral nonsense, pseudoscience and to remain exposed to narrowly curated and manipulated information. The hyper-personalisation is created in online environments by algorithms that select not what is important, valuable or educational, but what is the most susceptible to raise Internet traffic and revenues. Algorithms are also designed with programmers' own biases and filters that impact on the structure of these personalised packages. The creation of 'opposite tribes' by these filters is making even more important to rethink and develop new digital literacies for students and teachers in higher education, with new points of contact for alternative views and seminal ideas.

Stefan Popenici, Charles Darwin University

Dr Stefan Popenici is currently working at Charles Darwin University and is an Honorary Fellow of the Melbourne-CSHE at the University of Melbourne. He is also Associate Director of the Imaginative Education Research Group at Simon Fraser University, Canada. Stefan is an academic with extensive work experience in teaching and learning, research, governance and academic development with universities in Europe, North America, South East Asia, New Zealand and Australia. He is investigating digital futures and the role of imagination, creativity and innovation in education.

Re-imagining WELL for work in the 21st Century

The closure of the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program in 2014 has created a vacuum for working people with language, literacy and numeracy needs. Join us in this interactive session by contributing to a new WELL model that is responsive to diversity and the requirements of workers across all States and Territories.

Jenny Macaffer, Adult Learning Australia and Ros Bauer, Director Adult Literacy Services and ALA Board member

Jenny Macaffer is the CEO of Adult Learning Australia, a not for profit national peak body for adult and community education (ACE). She advocates for equitable access to lifelong learning, particularly in communities of disadvantage. Jenny has a long history of working in community development, promoting human rights and social justice.

Ros Bauer has extensive experience in adult education as a language literacy numeracy practitioner. She was the winner of the 2013 Australian Training Awards Excellence in Adult LLN Practice and a recipient of an Executive Fellowship through the Australian Endeavour Awards; which included a professional learning experience in Scandinavia. She is part of the NT LLN Network Group and is the educational consultant to the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation.

PANEL

Language at Home and in the Academy: Resistance and Compromise

Languages spoken and used in the community can be radically different to that which is needed in academic situations. This is particularly true for speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, Kriol, Pidgin and Aboriginal English. These languages, which are essential to define ways of knowing, are also intrinsic to individual social and cultural identity. Sometimes there are tensions and difficulties with negotiating this space between academic English and home language. At other times, compromise is easy when there is a bigger picture or motivation in view. This panel will discuss a variety of issues related to language maintenance and individual adjustments needed to survive and succeed in the English dominated academic domain. Ideas and research by panel members will highlight a diverse range of situations from linguistic research, literature studies, teaching of academic literacy and the perspective of being a university student. Exploring the fine line between resistance and compromise with language between home and the academy will raise many questions that apply to a broad range of situations.

Birut Zemits and Adelle Sefton-Rowston, Charles Darwin University, Robyn Ober, Michele Willsher and Janine Oldfield, Lecturers at Batchelor Institute, Melanie Mullins and Therese Parry, (students at Charles Darwin University)

Robyn Ober has been researching Aboriginal English and language shifts in formal contexts and written extensively on Both Ways philosophy.

Dr Michele Willsher and Janine Oldfield highlight the importance of recognising and responding in a culturally responsive way to the demands of writing for Higher Education.

Dr Adelle Sefton-Rowston explores how Aboriginal English is represented by Indigenous authors in literature.

Dr Birut Zemits (panel chair) teaches in enabling, undergraduate to post-doctoral levels, providing a broad overview of language demands for students in the university. Education students,

Melanie Mullins and Therese Parry share direct experiences of moving between languages and cultural perspectives in their studies.

Transition to University: Supporting nursing students to develop their numeracy skills

Undergraduate nursing students have diverse backgrounds with varying basic numeracy skills. Some students enter university with limited numeracy skills requiring extensive assistance to bring them to a safe level for nursing practice. This study aimed to address all aspects of numeracy required for successful entry into the nursing profession. The intervention combined rigorous formative student assessment with individualised feedback and support in the first year undergraduate nursing program.

Students were given a pre-test multiple choice quiz in hard copy in class and within 48 hours students received feedback and direction about where they need to focus their numeracy development for a subsequent hard copy quiz. A mixed method approach was used, quantitative data was collected focused on the pre and post results analysed along with student interaction with the relevant online resources. A total population of 919 students, 415 consented of which 25 were interviewed and 5 staff were also interviewed.

Results: Quantitative: Post test score increased following intervention (67.95%); Pre & post test score remained same despite intervention (15.9%); Post test score decreased following intervention (10.12%); Missing data (1.2%) Qualitative: 3 key themes: Existing knowledge and experience, learning and teaching strategies, feedback and assessment.

Elaine Bell and Jan Thompson, Flinders University

Elaine Bell is a Lecturer in Nursing at Flinders University. Prior to which she was the Nursing and Midwifery Education Director at the Women and Children's Health Network.

Jan Thompson is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Flinders University where she has been working for the past 25 years. She has been the Coordinator of the Undergraduate Nursing Programs for the past 8 years. Elaine and Jan are interested in transition to university for undergraduate nursing students with a particular lens on numeracy skills and how to scaffold these throughout the three year program.

Graffiti as literacy: Reading and writing as anti-text

This presentation will reflect on the Four Corners program 'Australia's Shame' that exposed the abuse of boys in Darwin's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. When we see Dylan Voller graffiti the walls of his isolation cell and write his name over and over again, we see a boy who is clearly distressed but calling to be read. Literacy as a practice of expression can be taught in various creative ways that lead to practical, but sometimes unpredictable reading and writing outcomes. How is graffiti as (anti-text) an interface for learning?

Adelle Sefton-Rowston, Charles Darwin University

Adelle Sefton-Rowston lectures in Common Units at Charles Darwin University. She completed her PhD in Literary Studies at Deakin University in 2013 and was winner of last year's NT Literary Awards essay prize. She has published critical essays in international journals and writes poetry and short stories. She is an active member of two major literary committees and vice president of the NT Writers Centre Board.

Tacit Knowledge, Performativity and Professionals as 'Numbers Crunchers' of the Digital Age: Implications for Adult Education

This paper examines the relationship between the tacit knowledge held by professionals and the performance measurement regimes of post-modern organizations. Drawing on Polanyi's (1958; 1968) influential ideas about tacit knowledge and Lyotard's (1984) theory of performativity with regard to criteria such as profit-performance, it assesses the applicability and relevance of tacit, working knowledge in the internet age to the daily working lives of adult educators. A central question for the study is whether professionals can still tap into and utilise their tacit know-how without having it reduced by contemporary performance oriented regimes of 'knowledge'.

John Garrick, Charles Darwin University

John Garrick LLB (Hon 1, UTS), M.Soc Stud (Sydney), Ph.D (UTS), is currently Senior Lecturer in Business Law at Charles Darwin University. He is a Supreme Court attorney in Australia and, until 2007, was in private legal practice with a major Sydney law firm specialising in international comparative law and Chinese commercial law reform. He is author and co-editor of a wide range of scholarly publications including several well-known Routledge books on workplace learning and power and international commercial law. He has worked extensively in both legal practice and academia in Hong Kong, the Middle-East, North America and Australia.

The Yolŋu way: Learning financial literacy skills through the strength of traditional concepts

Financial literacy tools and resources have been developed and re-developed over many years as an attempt to bring about awareness and skill development in the financial literacy field that has numeracy and business concepts as its foundation. This heavily Westernised and institutionalised field remains complex and confusing for many. For Indigenous people

from remote communities the challenge to find a productive base for learning these abstract concepts continues. This paper describes a small but interesting project undertaken in Yirrkala whereby a number of complex financial literacy concepts were deconstructed to allow Yolŋu women to devise their own method of learning through metaphors and the deeper cultural and ceremonial practices. This allowed the development of a cultural tool that explains the meaning behind the Western concepts based on a Yolŋu perspective that values culture and respects the strengths of Yolŋu people.

Bronwyn Rossingh, Accountability Notions and Yalmay Yunupingu, Yirrkala School

Dr Bronwyn Rossingh has been leading and managing projects in Indigenous communities regarding youth justice and leadership, improving education pathways, enterprise development and financial literacy for many years. She is the Managing Director of Accountability Notions and also works with CDU. Bronwyn is a Fellow of the CPA and is an Editor of the Evaluation Journal of Australasia. Yalmay Yunupingu is a Yolŋu Rirratjingu woman from Yirrkala. Yalmay has been teaching for over 40 years and is the Senior Linguist at the Yirrkala School. Yalmay has received numerous education awards including 'Teacher of Excellence (Remote Community)'. She is a strong advocate of the bilingual 'Two Way Learning' philosophy and is passionate about Yolŋu people achieving their dreams.

The Impact of Domestic and Family Violence on Adult Women Learners, their Lecturers and their Workplaces

Given that one in three women have an experience of domestic and family violence what consideration have adult learning institutions undertaken of the impact of these statistics on women who return to study, seek to re-train and who wish to enter the workplace? What are the particular learning needs of women students who have experienced or are experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV) and how are these needs being met in learning contexts? This workshop will report on a pilot program run jointly by TAFE SA and a domestic and family violence service in Adelaide for women with experiences of DFV. The program was run at the dv service with 2 subjects from the Women's Education program delivered by a lecturer skilled in working with women students with DFV experiences and supported by a case worker at the dv service. This program had very positive outcomes with the majority of students going on to complete training with TAFE, Universities and in securing employment. Further, this workshop will examine the impact on workplaces when domestic and family violence enters learning institutions. Do learning institutions have domestic and family violence policies in place? Does their enterprise agreement provide for domestic and family violence leave? What do employees need to know about their own safety at work, how do staff and managers handle disclosures of DFV from students and colleagues, what resources are available to negotiate domestic and family violence safety plans and what is known about appropriate referrals within and outside the learning institution.

Rachael Uebergang and Sandra Dann, NT Working Women's Centre

Rachael Uebergang and Sandra Dann are Directors of the NT Working Women's Centre and the Working Women's Centre SA respectively. These Centres work primarily with non union women experiencing workplace issues but jointly work on delivering awareness and training to workplaces and their managers of domestic and family violence in their national DFV Work Aware program. Rachael and Sandra are accredited to deliver White Ribbon Workplace Programs and have experience consulting with organisations who are seeking or who have gained White Ribbon accreditation.

Blended Learning for the LLN Classroom

This workshop will assist educators to familiarise themselves with blended learning tools and applications such as Moodle, Edmodo, Nearpod, Kahoot, and Edpuzzle. As part of a Vet Development Centre grant in 2016, presenters were involved in a 6 month trial of blended learning products with LLN and CALD students. They are keen to share their successes and strategies for overcoming difficulties in implementing blended delivery tools in the classroom. The workshop will be hands on and enhance teachers' technological skills, as well as cover tips for instructional design and dealing with copyright. At the end of the workshop each participant will have an engaging activity to take away and trial with their students. This is a BYOD workshop and participants are encouraged to download Nearpod, Kahoot and Edpuzzle before the session.

Kathrin Colgan, Chisholm Institute

The English as an Additional Language teaching team at Chisholm Institute have been working closely with their students to develop engaging activities through technology that not only strengthens the delivery in daily classes, but prepares the students to enter the new world when they go on with their education. Each of the team members bring more than 20 years' experience in teaching EAL and also draw on their current capability of working with different delivery models and funding streams. Kathrin Colgan on behalf of the team, welcomes you to share the techknowledgy at the workshop.

Can we learn anything from Kiwis across the ditch?

We will inform and inspire on what Australia and its states could do better to help more adults reach their full potential. The adults we all serve would benefit from for more considered approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment. Both countries' recent OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) results provide further impetus for such moves. We want participants to understand New Zealand's coordinated approach to lifting adult literacy and numeracy skills. We will outline the: benefits from improving and integrating assessment systems with teaching, learning, and the use of data; factors supporting good public policy; and assessment tools that support learner success. Participants can then consider what could be done differently nationally or in states. Lindee's International Specialised Skills Institute fellowship study sparked this workshop. She looked at New Zealand's response to Foundation Studies needs among adults. Her report canvasses the benefits of a single assessment tool, associated rigorous research-based teaching and assessment approaches, and applicable lessons for Victoria. David helped develop the latest iteration of the New Zealand government's world-leading programme of system change. Learners, tertiary institutions, employers, and industry, benefit from an approach which integrates adult foundation skills assessment with teaching and learning to create the right conditions to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Lindee Conway, Foundation & Preparatory Studies, Melbourne Polytechnic

Lindee Conway has almost 30 years' experience in Foundation Studies as a teacher, program coordinator and team leader in the community and VET sectors. Her interest in how assessment works successfully for learners and teachers is reflected in her fellowship. She wants to make formal literacy and numeracy assessment manageable for educators and meaningful for adult learners.

David Do (unable to attend) led the development of the TEC's Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015-19 which set future directions for this government priority area. Son of a Vietnamese refugee and Chinese migrant, he's a proud Kiwi born in Auckland. He happily lives in Wellington now after being New Zealand Union of Students' Associations Co-President 2010-2011.

Yes, I Can! From NSW to the NT?

Yes, I Can! (or Yo Si Puedo') is an Aboriginal-led adult literacy campaign that aims to achieve population-level change. It was first piloted in Australia in 2012 in Wilcannia, in the Murdi Paaki region of north western NSW, using a model originally developed in Cuba. Over the last six years, the campaign has extended to 7 western NSW Aboriginal communities. By the end of 2017, over 130 Aboriginal adults will have successfully participated. The Literacy for Life Foundation coordinates the campaign in partnership with local communities and their organisations. Plans are underway to move to the Northern Territory, with several trial sites proposed. In this workshop, an Aboriginal community staff member from western NSW will present on the campaign in her community, supported by a member of the national campaign team and the campaign evaluator. The workshop will explain how the campaign is rolled out in a community in three phases, how local staff are recruited and trained, what resources are needed, and how participants progress through it. By the end of the workshop, people who attend should be able to make an informed decision about whether this model could work in their contexts, and what steps they can take to extend it to more communities.

Deborah Durnan and Wendy Fernando, Literacy for Life Foundation and Bob Boughton, University of New England

Deborah Durnan and Wendy Fernando work for the Literacy for Life Foundation, the national Aboriginal organisation which leads the Yes, I Can! campaign in Australia. Deborah is the national campaign coordinator, Wendy is the community campaign coordinator in Walgett.

Bob Boughton teaches adult education at the University of New England, and has been the campaign evaluator since 2011.

Points of contact for research and teaching: exploring NCVET pods to improve practice

This Practice Taster provides an opportunity to showcase NCVET's portfolio of literacy, language and numeracy related resources. The Centre's VOCEDplus Pod Network captures information about VET and presents it within thematically arranged 'Pod' pages, making access to this information quick, easy and direct. More specific topics within these themes are presented within smaller Pods, called Podlets. The Pod Network has resonated with users in the VET sector as a resource for providing easy access to quality resources. User analytics clearly show that the Foundation Skills Pod is the most viewed page in the entire Pod Network. This session will provide a practical introduction to the Pods, how to use them and enable participants to provide feedback on Pod content and structure of the podlets.

Michele Circelli, NCVET

Michelle Circelli is Team Leader Research with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, where she manages and undertakes research projects funded under the National VET Research Program. Michelle has a particular interest in foundation skills and recently managed and was a mentor for the Foundation Skills Literature Review project, a joint initiative with the University of Technology Sydney and ACAL. This project was aimed at building the practitioner research capabilities of the foundation skills workforce. Michelle was the 2013 Fulbright Professional Scholar in Vocational Education and Training spending time in the United States undertaking research into measuring success of adult literacy and numeracy programs with the Californian Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the federal Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education.

Journeys of new migrants: I know who I am now, therefore I can

In their journey to learn the English language, some students face road blocks that they struggle to overcome. 7 years of teaching English to new migrants has sparked an

investigation into the road blocks facing new migrants, specifically those with an intermediate language proficiency. Students in the class were surveyed about their identify and perception of English ability, prior to and after arrival in Australia, the language they use to think in and whether they see themselves as Australians. They also wrote about the adjustments and factors which would support the change in their cultural identity. There were follow-up classroom discussions. After which, students evaluated the extent in which the survey and discussions helped in their understanding of their developing Australian identity. Following on, the students wrote a narrative about an identity or citizenship shift in their lives. That gave voice to their change in identity and citizenship. They compiled their stories to publish a book and to read their story to an audience. The empowering impact of this project can be seen in the increased confidence of the students and their self-belief.

Serena Seah, Swinburne University of Technology

Serena Seah has been teaching at Swinburne (Tafe) for the past 10 years to new migrants, within the AMEP and SEE programs. In 2010 she was awarded the Swinburne Teaching Award for her work in helping migrant students achieve their goals of employment through engagement with the community, volunteer tutors, mentors and Employment Forums. Her other passion is in her Volunteer Tutor Co-ordinator role where she trains and supports 100+ volunteer tutors across the 3 campuses in the General Education Department. She was on the Knox Multicultural Advisory Committee and also sat on the Board of Migrant Information

LLN for employees, is a change of focus required?

Participation in employment requires specific LLN and communication competencies which do not necessarily mean that a person has to be able to read and write the English language to a high ACSF level. Training has historically focused on the delivery of generic LLN skills that may or may not empower the student in the world of work. For Indigenous people living and working in remote central Australia this approach can have a significant impact on their ability to undertake employment. By contextualising delivery of language and literacy skills specific to workplace requirements, students identify with the relevance of the training and participation improves. It has also been found that students, once engaged can determine to own their learning and in addition, when they have mastered the skills required for their work, actively seek to improve their overall literacy and language skills. From the employer perspective workforce development is paramount to ensure a positive relationship with employees and to improve retention rates. The current delivery model for LLN in the APY Lands is incorporating and building on these employment focused skills and forging strong relationships with employers and students to ensure the needs are met in a realistic, contextualised and dynamic environment.

Lesley Harvey, TAFESA - APY Lands

Lesley Harvey is an Education Manager for TAFESA based in metropolitan Adelaide and managing a team of lecturers in the remote APY Lands in the far north of South Australia. She has been in this role for 16 years travelling regularly to the APY Lands to facilitate the delivery of LLN training. Delivery of training is to Indigenous adult students for whom English is a second or third language and who have low levels of schooling.

Lesley is passionate about improving the life skills and opportunities for Anangu students and has been able to forge lasting relationships with many community members in the time she has been travelling to the APY Lands.

PANEL: Communication in time of disaster and emergency: valuing, planning and engaging Indigenous and local knowledge systems.

Indigenous Knowledge and Disaster Preparedness of the Tagakaulo in Malita, Davao Occidental, Philippines

This study explores the indigenous knowledge on disaster preparedness of the Tagakaulo peoples of Malita, Philippines. In living off these ecosystems, indigenous peoples have been observing the changes in the amount of rainfall, temperature and changes in season. The study sought to explain the disasters they have experienced, effects of these disasters on their families, social networks of the Tagakaulo during the calamity and probable reasons of indigenous knowledge 'erosion'. Qualitative data was gathered through key informant interviews and focused group discussions. It also utilized secondary source data drawn from published materials.

Analysis of the data indicated that the observation of animal behaviors, heavenly bodies' movements, and the gifted people (anitoan) were very important in predicting the occurrence of a certain calamity. More so, Tagakaulo social networking had developed actual actions to respond to and manage disasters. Thus, the significant contribution of this study to mainstream research is the knowledge the Tagakaulo of Malita draw on to support their livelihoods and disseminating this information to a wider audience enables mainstream audiences and educators to understand the importance of local knowledges for sustainable livelihoods.

Mary Grace Agbas, University of Southeastern Philippines

Mary Grace Agbas is a holder of Ph.D. in Education major in Applied Linguistics and an associate professor in the General Education Department. She is currently the Director/Coordinator of the Pamulaan Center for Indigenous Peoples' Education, University of Southeastern Philippines, Mintal campus, Davao City. She graduated Bachelor of Arts in English, major in Literature at the Mindanao State University, Marawi City and Master of Education in Language Teaching, major in English at the University of Southeastern Philippines. She teaches English subjects both in Pamulaan Center and Graduate School of the College of Education.

Indigenous Knowledge on Disaster Preparedness of the Obu-Manuvu of Davao City, Philippines

The study was conducted with Dibabawon and Mangguangan tribes in Montevista, Compostela Valley, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to determine the disasters they have experienced, their preparations for a disaster, the tribes' beliefs and observations on what activities/phenomena foretell disasters, the effects of these disasters on their families and communities, and their social networks during the disaster. Focus group discussions were conducted to gather the data. Secondary sources were also used. Results showed that unusual behaviour of animals such as the brown turtledoves, hornbill, dogs, frogs, and chicken as well as the crickets, centipedes, and worms foretell disasters. Changes in texture, volume, color in trees as well as movement of rocks and soil warn of imminent disasters. Villagers construct some structures to keep them safe during disasters. Moreover, landslides and flashfloods occurred in their respective areas during typhoons and heavy rains. As a result, many people lost their houses and farm animals and suffered from hunger and sickness. The study shows that each of the barangays (village) has organized their respective Barangay Tribal Council of Elders and Leaders (BTCL) to manage the affairs of the indigenous peoples in the barangay, including disaster management. The BTCLs have developed a system before, during and after a disaster. A panawag-tawag or calling of the good spirits is held when disasters have no casualties. However the study also indicated that exposure to

mainstream culture has contributed to an erosion of this indigenous knowledge among the Dibabawons and Manguangans, making disaster preparedness a challenge as older knowledges are not incorporated and renewed in more contemporary disaster planning practices.

Gladys Florangel Ortiz, University of Southeastern Philippines

Gladys Florangel Ortiz is an Associate Professor in the College of Governance and Business of the University of Southeastern Philippines. She is the Head of the Graduate Programs in Development Administration and in Environmental Resource Management. She is a licensed social worker, and in fact placed second overall in the national licensure examination. Her graduate degree is in development administration. She earned graduate units in sociology and anthropology. Her research interests include social protection, disaster risk reduction, development administration and indigenous knowledge.

Reflections on a bygone era: How changes in work, workplaces and policy have changed what we research and what we find

In 2005 I was awarded a doctoral degree as a result of my original research around nine men who self reported literacy difficulties. The chapters in which I provided a vignette of each of the nine and the results and findings chapters proved to be really interesting. Following a recent discussion with a colleague I began to wonder if my study could be replicated in light of the changes to work, workplaces and policy since I completed my study and it prompted the question: if this study could be replicated, would the results be the same? Using reports and discussions published on the ACAL site and my doctoral thesis, this paper seeks to respond to this question. Essentially it reviews the characteristics of those respondents who had achieved success at work despite (in some cases) quite considerable literacy difficulties and maps these characteristics against post-2005 changes to work, workplaces and policy. The review is preceded by a definition of literacy difficulties and an introduction to the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. This reflective paper serves to demonstrate how policy changes have undermined notions of literacy, identity and forever altered the possible findings of such research.

Marilyn Kell, Charles Darwin University

Marilyn Kell is a Research Fellow at the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, Australia. She has extensive background as an educator and, as an academic, has experience with students from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Her research interests include literacy pedagogy and assessment, the international student experience and work integrated learning. In 2013 she and Peter Kell published, *Literacy and Language in East Asia; Shifting meanings, values and approaches*. She is currently investigating the post-school educational aspirations of children from the NT African communities.

Facilitating Foundation Skills – A Pacific Perspective

The Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC) is an innovative development program funded by the Australian Government. APTC provides training towards Australian qualifications to students across the Pacific in the areas of Trades, Hospitality and Community Services. English is rarely our learners' first language and the support APTC provides in identifying and addressing LLN needs is essential. This presentation looks at the model APTC uses for Foundation Skills support, that incorporates some of the best practices developed in the region (including Australia!!) We share with you how we support our students to develop foundation skills to meet the needs of 21st century industry. How do our students develop a 21st Century identity in a region where traditional cultural practices of village life remain strong? Our Pacific Island LLN practitioners, Lina (from Samoa) and Isikeli (from Fiji) will share the impact that this support has not only on individual's skills and employability, but

the ripple effect it has on entire communities. To assist us in identifying our learner's LLN skills level, we conduct an initial LLN skill test whereby the results are measured against LLN benchmarks which have been worked out based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). In addition, we implement Learners Profile and Student Success Profile which are tools that aid us in identifying at-risk learners at an early stage and immediate actions to resolve identified learning issues. Data gathered from these two documents have made us realise the challenging role that we have as LLN practitioners in the Pacific island. The 3-6-9 Scan Form is a tool APTC has developed to document support required for the learners. A Post LLN Test was piloted to determine the learners ACSF exit at the end of their 6-month training with APTC which produced remarkable results. Sharing some of these practices and learning from the Australia LLN community is the focus of our participation. Our findings will support us in better equipping our learners with the LLN requirements to meet the demands of the modern industry and their engagement in their communities.

Isikeli Naqaya and Lina Visinia-I'amafana, Australia-Pacific Technical College

Isikeli Naqaya has been serving as a Learning Support Facilitator (LSF) for the Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC) for 5 years. He first joined APTC as an LLN Tutor before the role was reviewed and upgraded to Learning Support Facilitator. He works in partnership with vocational trainers in providing integrated learning support to students specifically in the areas of literacy and numeracy, employability skills, computer skills and return to study assistance. He graduated from the Fiji College of Advanced Education with a Diploma of Education majoring in English/Social Science and taught in high schools around Fiji. His interest in supporting learners with LLN difficulties inspired him to pursue his studies in Bachelor of Special Education at Griffith University in Brisbane. After successfully completing his studies at Griffith University, he joined the Fiji National University as a Tutor in English as a Second Language (TESL). The opportunity in working for APTC fulfilled his career goal of supporting Pacific Island learners with their foundation skills. His skills were further expanded when he completed his Certificate IV in TAE and the TAELN501B unit in supporting the development of adult language literacy and numeracy skills.

Mrs Lina Visinia-I'amafana joined the Australia-Pacific Technical College in 2014 after more than ten years of teaching in high school and six years as a lecturer at the local National University of Samoa. She is the Learning Support and Work Skills facilitator at APTC Her roles require her to work collaboratively with the vocational trainers in ensuring the learners transition successfully in their learning when they enter APTC and in returning to their respective workplaces. In addition, she is greatly involved in developing LLN profiles of all learners to enable trainers to grasp the levels of LLN skills the learners bring with them in the classroom environment. Lina is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific with a Bachelor of Arts degree double majoring in Language/Literature and Education. She worked with the Commonwealth of Learning while at the NUS in developing learning materials in Basic Trades literacy. Lina recently completed a course in International Trainers and Assessor with Tafe Queensland and she dreams in training the Samoa TVET trainers not only in delivery and assessment skills but with a great emphasis on foundation skills.

'Locked out' and 'left behind': Indigenous Adult English Literacy and Numeracy in northern Australia's remote regions

This paper seeks to respond to the deficit in policy, planning and provision to address the English language literacy and numeracy (LLN) needs of Indigenous adults in the NT. Government policy support for Indigenous participation in the economy emphasises the need for active participation by all people – yet the majority of Indigenous adults cannot fully participate due to low levels of English language, literacy and numeracy. English is often a second language, and not spoken at home. Adult literacy continues to be treated as a

peripheral issue however research shows that English LLN is central to intercultural relationships, social capacity building, framing ones' future and participating in the economy and society. Also, though Indigenous people constitute 30% of the NT's population there is no comprehensive data on Indigenous literacy levels. This paper considers findings from CDU's strategic project on LLN which been putting together a statistical picture from available data. Excellent models of service provision exist, and community engagement indicates high levels of Indigenous aspiration, yet there is little coordinated action for change. This paper considers alternative ways of thinking about the issue and collective impact approaches that could lead positive change.

Lorraine Sushames, Allison Stewart and Fiona Shalley, Charles Darwin University

Lorraine Sushames has extensive experience in the Australian Vocational Education and Training sector where she has held a broad variety of teaching, project management and evaluation roles. Her adult literacy specialist expertise has contributed significantly to her work in design, development and delivery of effective capacity development initiatives conducted in urban, regional and remote Indigenous communities in Australia, and internationally in part of nation building projects in Timor Leste. Her research interests and regular contributions to national and international conferences reflect these diverse 'development' contexts, focussing on the role that English language and literacy plays in independence, empowerment and economic advancement.

As a social planner/researcher and community development practitioner Allison Stewart has worked inter-culturally throughout her career, applying her engagement and strategic leadership skills in sectors such as primary health care, housing and infrastructure; community-based public works, water supply and sanitation, refugee settlement and humanitarian aid, Indigenous employment, education and training and, participatory and applied research. Experience within government, non-government, public beneficence, indigenous corporations and academia has enabled life-wide learning and a range of generic skills, knowledge and a quality of spirit which Allison currently applies to her work with the Whole of Community Engagement program as Strategic Priority Projects (SPP) Manager at Charles Darwin University.

Through her career with the ABS, Fiona Shalley has been committed to enhancing the validity and utility of statistics for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. She moved to the NT in 2010 to play a small part in the operations of the 2011 Census, taking on responsibility for counting the populations living in Arnhem Land, Mount Isa/Gulf, Cape York and Torres Strait Islands. The diversity of people, language and country, the complexity of data collection design and activities, and the power of revealing statistical stories has kept her brain and heart alive. Her last role in the ABS was as the Director for the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics.

Phonics-based adult literacy resources

The targeted audience is language, literacy and numeracy practitioners. There are fantastic resources available for practitioners working with students who are looking to further develop and refine their literacy skills, but there are far fewer evidence-based resources for adult students who are just starting their literacy journey. This presentation aims to explore some resources that have been developed for beginner students. The resources have been developed to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students who did not have access to formal literacy education in their country of origin.

Kate Randell, Adult Literacy Resources

Kate Randell MA App Ling, has worked in English language, Aboriginal education, and literacy classes for twenty years. She has worked at TAFE, RTOs and universities in Australia and

overseas. She has a strong interest in evidence-based teaching strategies, and skill acquisition in early literacy development.

The use of legacy materials for Indigenous literacy development

During the era of bilingual education, many Indigenous children in remote schools in the Northern Territory were given the opportunity to learn to read and write in their mother tongue as a stepping stone to literacy in English. A vast range of materials were produced for this purpose, and also supported adult literacy skills and a rich documentation of Indigenous language and cultural practices. With the demise of bilingual education programs, such activities are significantly diminished, leaving few opportunities for Indigenous children and adults to develop literacy in their own languages. Many of the materials created for the bilingual programs are now available online at the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages (www.cdu.edu.au/laal) and continue to provide opportunities to engage with vernacular literacy. The variety of genres represented in the collection demonstrate a rich literary landscape, which sometimes defies Western categorisation, creating a challenge for classification, and inviting reflection on how the language resources and technologies configure each other. This paper will describe the archive and some of the affordances it offers not only for literacy development but also for new knowledge practices in a digital context, through access to a rich cultural heritage.

Cathy Bow, Charles Darwin University

Cathy Bow is a linguist with research experience in both descriptive and applied linguistics. She currently works as project manager for the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages at Charles Darwin University, and is completing her PhD (jointly between CDU and ANU) in digital technologies and Aboriginal languages.

Work opportunities for women in Timor-Leste: From training to employment'

Work opportunities for women in Timor-Leste are very limited. Apheda Union Aid Abroad and the Working Women's Centres in SA, Qld and NT have supported women through the Working Women's Centre in Timor-Leste to gain training as domestic workers and nannies and then to gain employment mainly in Dili, the capital. This innovative program ensures that employers sign an employment contract before a worker takes up her employment. This provides legal wages and conditions to the women workers. WWCTL staff provide a follow up service to ensure that the employers are meeting their obligations and the workers are safe and happy in their employment. VET training opportunities are limited in Timor-Leste, Women in Timor-Leste are keen to ensure that Timorese women can take their place in the emerging economy and share the benefits of training and employment. Currently informal training is provided using basic resources but the hope of WWC TL is that formal training links can be developed with Australia, thus ensuring recognised skills development for the employees, which in turn potentially secures better employment outcomes for both employees and employers.

Ricar Pascoela and Sandra Dann, Working Women's Centre, Timor-Leste

Ricar Pascoela co-ordinates the Working Women's Centre in Timor-Leste, overseeing 3 staff. Ricar has worked in various NGOs in Timor-Leste and has management experience in this sector. She understands the needs of women in one of the world's poorest countries. Ricar has presented at a number of conferences and meetings in Australia and has completed the Anna Stewart Trade Union Training for Women program in Adelaide.

Sandra Dann is currently the Director of the Working Women's Centre in SA, active voice in women's rights and also a member of the Australia East Timor Friendship Association.

Peer reviewed conference papers

Tacit Knowledge, Performativity and Professionals as Digital-Age ‘Number Crunchers’: Implications for Adult Education

John Garrick, Business Law, Charles Darwin University

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between the tacit knowledge held by professionals and the performance measurement regimes of post-modern organizations. Drawing on Polanyi’s (1958; 1968) influential ideas about tacit knowledge and Lyotard’s (1984) theory of performativity with regard to criteria such as profit-performance, it assesses the applicability and relevance of tacit, working knowledge in the internet age to the daily working lives of adult educators. A central question for the study is whether professionals can still tap into and utilise their tacit know-how without having it reduced by contemporary performance oriented regimes of ‘knowledge’.

Introduction

This paper critically examines tacit knowledge in work contexts with questions drawing on Polanyi’s (1958; 1968) tacit knowledge and Lyotard’s (1984) performativity theories being applied to organizational learning and development regimes. Through these theories I examine why attempts to transform tacit, working knowledge into explicit, measurable and downloadable factors of organizational performance, such as KPIs, are problematic. The central research problem of the study is whether professionals can tap into and utilise their tacit knowledge without having it narrowed down or reduced by contemporary performance oriented regimes of knowledge processing. Why is it that so many professionals today feel like they are performing like replaceable robots; merely ‘crunching the numbers’?⁷

For professionals working within organizations, their know-how is vital in the reproduction of intellectual capital and search for a competitive advantage. Universities are no different to any other commercial enterprise in this respect. The pressure is on to capture and to make explicit the vital insights that were once implicit in specific individuals. If tacit know-how can be shared, it can become part of the transformative capacity of the organization. Such knowledge capture can then be presented as a ‘win/win’ scenario in which everyone is *represented* as profiting. Things can be read differently however (see Hislop, 2013; Chua, 2009; Garrick, 2005). Once an individual’s intellectual capital is extracted, his or her vitality becomes vulnerable (see Garrick and Clegg 2001, p. 133). Indeed, individuals can be made redundant or, as Derrida (1967) put it, placed under ‘erasure’.⁸ Outcomes are not always win-win. Not everyone always benefits as the exploitation of both labour and the environment remains integral to the workings of capital and the social relations that serve it.

To explore the questions at hand I first revisit Polanyi’s classic ideas about ‘personal knowledge’ and ‘tacit knowledge’ gained through interactions rather than from doctrinal propositions, theories or formally expressed and tested hypotheses. Ideas about knowledge being grounded in action have been around for centuries⁹ but re-emerged with Polanyi’s (1958 and 1968) work on the ‘tacit dimension’. For Polanyi, problem-solving, learning at

¹ In fact robots are now performing certain tasks that had previously, generally, been undertaken by teachers, adult educators and industry trainers, for example, on-line marking and providing feedback on certain types of assignments, see: <http://theconversation.com/who-needs-teachers-when-computers-can-mark-exams-41076>

² See Spivak, G.C. ‘Translator’s Preface’ (p. xiv) in Derrida 1967.

⁹ The relationship between the ‘action research cycle’ and knowledge comes from Plato’s rotational metaphor (see Plato’s Letters, VII).

work or from experience, action learning, communities of practice, 'know-how' and similar terms indicate that there are many ways of interacting with the world that deliver worthwhile knowledge. For Polanyi, experiential knowledge is derived from direct engagement with the world in particular contexts and settings. Lyotard's theory of performativity is then used to interrogate the relationship between the tacit knowledge held by professionals and the performance measurement regimes of contemporary organizations. This includes how 'knowledge' may be transmitted in data form. In most commercial organizations, of course, the key purpose of the transmission is making money (Ritholtz and Task, 2009).

Tacit knowledge and the business of making money (*contexts*)

Today's professional service and consulting organisations often represent themselves as members of the 'knowledge industry', providing opportunities for their staff to learn continually (see Taskin and Van Bunn, 2015). Many large firms do employ training and development staff, but along with hyper-competitive work cultures and lack of senior management buy-in to building a learning organisation, nothing undercuts a learning environment as much as an unrelenting demand for hours spent on services rendered as 'billable' (see Yale Law School, 2017; Kolakowski 2017). This is particularly so when that demand comes from a manager (or worse, micro-manager) with bullying characteristics. The term 'billable hours' is actually a metaphor for pursuit of the bottom-line; the dominant driver in many work contexts. Polanyi's (1968) theory holds that workers tacitly absorb a great deal in such contexts. Codifying such tacit knowledge by asking experienced employees to pass-on their know-how to newer employees may be very appealing but can be problematic because tacit know-how is personal and involves individual employees responding in their own ways to the multi-faceted challenges of the professional workplace. What is demotivating, stressful or burdensome to one employee may constitute an opportunity or challenge for another. For instance, some LL&N specialists might relish work opportunities within the Northern Territory's Don Dale detention facility whilst others might find it daunting.

What counts as valuable knowledge to be shared in a work context is invariably a matter of judgement made by those in power. Contemporary approaches to adult education and training also reflect that. Lyotard's (1984) study of knowledge highlights 'the performative' in this context. *Performativity theory* holds that claims about what constitutes knowledge are no longer a matter of 'the better argument' or 'laboratory demonstration', but result from outcomes shaped by sanctioned criteria such as profit-performance, key performance indicators (KPIs), organizational projections, consumer satisfaction measures and so on. Such criteria are commonplace in adult education with students routinely asked to rate their experience of a learning program and teacher (without any cross referencing to, for example, results, result patterns or lecturer assessments of the same cohort). These measures are fashionable artefacts characterised well by Pesqueux (2003: 31-32) as directly relating to an 'efficiency ideology that permeates under a corporate mode of governance in both public and private organizations.' The effects of this efficiency ideology, inextricably linked to the pursuit of the bottom line mentioned above, are briefly examined in the two following case studies. The first is on lessons drawn from the GFC and second, on the VW emissions scandal. I shall then apply lessons from these commercial environments to today's adult education context.

Tacit knowledge and the GFC: Case One

Since at least the seventeenth century the Western tradition has held that 'knowledge' has had deep conceptual connections with truth and understanding (Popper, 1975). However, the arenas of its definition and contestation have shifted. Popper's (id.) argument held that it

was a necessary condition of academic organizations that knowledge is in 'free circulation'. This is not true of business organizations in that commercial information is generally treated as confidential as a prevailing ethic. It is often a privileged few (sometimes corrupt officials) who have access to 'really strategic' information, especially when large sums of money are at stake. Once the preserve of exemplary spaces such as the laboratory or elite university the 'truth' of knowledge, for many business organisations, has shifted to the marketplace where the value of knowledge is gauged and leveraged. In the neoliberal era, under the sway of dominant assumptions that economic growth relies on free markets, deregulation, open trade and the shift of economic control from the public sector into private hands, a central question for the first case study is what went wrong in the global financial crisis (GFC)? Why were the knowledge practices of our shared financial system so deeply flawed? And what do these failures reveal about performance indicators and reward systems?

The various corporate collapses and scandals that characterised the GFC taught us that integrity in the financial system was badly wanting and knowledge management *is* very fragile. That so few appeared to know that such a disastrous economic crash was about to hit is intriguing. That so few clearly predicted it, including amongst many others, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the OECD, the World Bank, the European Central Bank, the U.S. Federal Reserve and influential credit ratings agencies such as Moody's, Standard & Poors and Fitch, is surprising. These institutions, and the professionals within them, are paid extraordinarily large sums of money to know and accurately predict these things: bankers, economists, stockbrokers, insurance brokers, risk managers, investment advisers, fund managers and so on. The few who did predict the crisis appear to have been utterly powerless to do anything about it. Indeed, to say that so few foresaw the GFC is disputed. For instance, the former vice-president of the failed Lehman Brothers Bank, L. G. McDonald (2011), asserts the claim that no one saw the GFC coming, 'that no one could foresee that unregulated banking and trading of bonds could go wrong is absolute bunkum'.

One explanation for the failure of Lehman's bank, for example, refers to a gulf between individual and collective rationality. For instance, what may look rational and make sense from an individual perspective (say, selling sub-prime mortgages in order to meet performance criteria and get an annual bonus) can turn, if everyone does it, into collective irrationality (where lenders go bankrupt, the sub-prime housing market collapses and the financial system goes into meltdown). But this explanation is insufficient as it must be asked how contemporary knowledge management (KM) and performance reward systems could leave the door so ajar to catastrophe. Another aspect of neo-liberalism is the idea that career success is in one's 'own hands' - hence the institutionalisation of the bonus system. If you don't get one it is your own fault. This can have the effect of destroying, or at least undermining, the sharing of information between individuals in organisations - as worker performance systems (and executive bonus payments) in both private and public institutions are increasingly constructed around an individual's KPIs.

Clearly, some fundamental difficulties exist for those charged with managing and retaining intellectual capital in the responsible organizations. The digital era requires fast decisions and *knowing* what ought to be done is the first step. *Acting* on that knowledge is a different challenge. For many, the move to ethical action was found wanting during the GFC (Clegg and de Matos 2016; MacLean et al., 2016; Boatright 2011; Leopold, 2009; Barth et al., 2009).

The Volkswagen Emissions scandal: Case Two

On the 12th January 2017 in the United States District Court in Detroit the German car giant 'Volkswagen' (VW) pleaded guilty to conspiracy, obstruction of justice and importing vehicles by using false statements (ABC, 2017). In total, VW has agreed to spend up to US\$25 billion in the United States to address claims from owners, environmental regulators, states and

dealers and offered to buy back about 500,000 polluting U.S. vehicles. In 2015, VW had been caught cheating on U.S. emissions tests over a period of six years with their vehicles having used illegal and hidden software to intentionally record lower numbers of CO2 emission levels (Hotten, 2015).

VW has subsequently found ‘irregularities’ in tests to measure [carbon dioxide emissions levels](#) that could also affect about 800,000 cars in Europe. The engines had computer software that could sense test scenarios by monitoring speed, engine operation, air pressure and even the position of the steering wheel. When the cars were operating under controlled laboratory conditions the device appears to have put the vehicle into a ‘safety mode’ in which the engine ran at below normal power and performance. Once on the road, the engines switched out of this test mode. The result was that the engines emitted nitrogen oxide pollutants up to 40 times above what is allowed in the US.¹⁰

This fraud executed over several years would certainly have been known by various key players such as the software designers directly involved and key executives close to the action. Indeed, other carmakers have pursued similar unconscionable practices, although the VW case was more extensive in scope and an example of *systemic* mal-practice. It is precisely the systemic nature of such phenomena that creates an even stronger argument that business organisations are *fundamentally* flawed when they don’t allow professionals to be reflective practitioners enabled to raise alarm bells within organisations when it is warranted.

The employees in these corporate workplaces, who either knew or sensed that things were not right, were unwilling or unable to voice their concerns. (If explicitly known, those actors were knowingly participating in serious fraud). This outcome is, in part, produced by the perceived needs to manage the way people produce and consume information and to control the communicative context at work. Managerial approaches to communication that overtly (or covertly) seek compliance and obedience above more open dialogue amongst professional staff clearly contain dangers. Looking ahead, shareholders have legal rights to take action against a company to recover losses that are a result of the intentional falsification of test results and, in VW’s case, a publicly listed trading company will have thousands of affected shareholders. When a company continues to trade when unable to repay debts when due and payable, it is possible for company directors to be personally liable.

What do the two case studies have in common and how do they relate to today’s adult education context?

Despite differences of scale and amplitude, the two case studies have elements in common. In each case, key knowledge workers will have known or sensed something was wrong before catastrophe hit home. But those ‘in the know’ were either unable or unwilling to do anything about the problems they faced. Systems were in place and algorithms shaped responses and response times. Professionals were truly ‘number crunchers’ in these critical scenarios. The harvesting by codification of working knowledge, including how it is stored, accessed, shared and analysed, was found to be lacking. Decision-making based on algorithms is based on mathematical calculation and not upon ethical or moral considerations. The programmers of artificial intelligence in its early stages of development are designing computer systems based on the theories and principles of computer science and mathematics, yet it is the context within which knowledge is produced and transmitted that is particularly pertinent to the form(s) it may take.

¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-34324772>

Employees are commonly subjected to information overload. Worse, if a work context is toxic, the forms produced may be just as toxic (although this does not have to be the case).¹¹ For those knowledge workers in the financial services sector and in VW who tacitly knew things were 'not right' were *not authorised* to act on their knowledge. There were either inadequate or no processes in place in either situation to enable them to voice legitimate concerns (other than the protections offered in some jurisdictions through, for example, 'whistle-blower' legislation which exists to allow ethical individuals to voice concerns - although this may come at the expense of their future careers). Ethical voices from within the relevant organisations were effectively shut down. Those involved in adult education and training positions can take stock of critical case studies to inform their local practises. Turning a blind-eye to systems that produce bullying, unethical, immoral or even illegal behaviour (such as corruption or intent to defraud) may allow for momentary survival in that system. But does such a response represent what being a professional today has become? It brings Arthur Koester's (1967) metaphor 'ghost in the machine' to mind, only in today's post-industrial context one's internal dissonance is less trapped in the body but rather caught in the web.

Adult educators, curriculum developers and industry trainers are often required to help in codifying the tacit knowledge of an experienced employee so that know-how can be passed-on to newer employees. In fact, this activity often has a very strong commercial appeal. But it is also problematic in that such know-how is intangible. It can also promote inertia in that 'gate-keepers' may simply seek to induct less experienced workers into doing things in routine ways (and thus preserve the local status quo). Yet, tacit knowledge is distinct from explicit, formalised routines and standardised knowledge. For Polanyi (1958) it is a product of *personal experience* – and this is not easily digitized and downloadable – especially when it involves judgement and intuition. The above cases illustrate how organizational communication practices such as workplace learning and development, mentoring programs, KM and so on must be more than mere techniques singularly geared towards enhancing the bottom line. Such narrow approaches to working knowledge have been exposed as deficient and potentially dangerous (also see Davenport and Prusak, 2000; Drucker, 2006). For some educators this can generate feelings of frustration and betrayal when they sense that their perhaps idealistic drive to help transform student lives for the better has to compete with bottom-line, perhaps even Machiavellian approaches.

Tacit knowledge and performativity (within organizations)

Tacit knowledge involves 'a sense' of what's going on which is not easily measured or codified. Nor is it always clear why it is important to externalise tacit knowledge, or why it may benefit an organisation as Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Dalkir (2017) suggest that it does. Just what is it that adult educators or learning and development practitioners need to do to ensure employees' tacit knowledge is being externalised beyond simply crunching numbers? Accountants, managers or lawyers, for example, must know a great deal about business law, codes of practice, regulations, and policy requirements. But they also acquire a great deal of experiential understanding of what is required when engaging with clients, colleagues, senior partners, or other businesses (and cultures) and the political contexts in which they operate. It is the same for adult educators generally in that learning may be context dependent. Awareness of the dynamics of that context is thus essential. Pragmatists,

¹¹ In the style of Ambrose Bierce's classic (1911) dictionary, a 'toxic culture' may be defined as a culture whereby power-holders may present themselves as 'caring leaders', yet punish anyone who disagrees ... [and where] every word [can be] a potential improvised explosive device; every action an attempt to destroy someone else under the pretense of providing 'guidance and support' when in reality it is about power maintenance.

including many workplace managers, may assert that it is really *the world of work* that puts in any conception of knowledge to the test. For example, *the* key concept for showing the possession of working knowledge is ‘demonstrated competence’. In this sense, work both produces knowledge and validates it. If something works and is approved by the relevant supervisors, then it is valuable. Lacan likens this approval process to the ‘knowledge of the slave’, which the master converts into scientific knowledge by covert theft (Grigg, 2008: 134) in a process that is historically indebted to Hegel’s ‘master/slave dialectic’ (Huson, 2006: 78). If the knowledge is ‘really valuable’ it may even be patentable or subject to some other form of intellectual property protection such as copyright.

A subtler argument to Lacan’s holds that knowledge produced at work is legitimate in an action-oriented sense, but may warrant more independent tests to determine its broader applicability and validity. The idea of knowledge residing *in work* is thus just one of several ways to understand the nature of knowing and discovering. This highlights the need for more comprehensive understandings of working knowledge and its connections to organizational performance. In turn, such understandings can better connect the tacit dimension to formalised adult education. For instance, recognising and mobilizing organizations’ knowledge construction activities entails addressing how organizations understand (or possibly misunderstand) and use the term ‘knowledge’. Issues related to how knowledge is then shared spring from these activities - through the various regimes of learning at work. It may also be argued that it is often not ‘knowledge’ being transmitted but ‘data’, or a form of work socialisation. It is thus critical to tease out, for example, how stakeholders may superimpose their own meanings on top of knowledge, for their own agenda and benefit. If we talk about an organization’s ‘knowledge capacities’, which universities sometimes do, it is worth determining what sort of ‘knowledge’ the organization possesses and the extent to which it can be viewed as ‘organizational’ in character, that is, not only the contents of the minds of individual employees, but the organization’s capacities to share, develop, draw on, and deploy that knowledge.

Evans, Packer and Sawyer (2016), Langenberg (2011), North and Gueldenberg (2011) and Watkins and Marsick (2010) among others, assert that organizations that take knowledge seriously by investing in its construction and distribution are more likely to derive extra dimensions of participation from their employees. These writers cite the activities and interactions within an organization—even quite mundane ones, such as internal staff meetings or meetings with clients—as potential knowledge-development opportunities. Information sharing, problem identification and team solutions can become ‘action research’ in which the tacit knowledge embedded in organizational practice is drawn upon in constructive ways. Knowledge created in this way is not merely something possessed by technical experts or ‘handed down’ by senior people in the organisation (see Straka, 2005: 27). In turn, more sophisticated and collective frames of understanding may begin to emerge and these will have their own tacit structures characteristic of that organization and its stakeholders.

Post-industrialism and the tacit structures of organizations¹²

For Pesqueux (2003: 32), forms of communication, the extent to which they are open, hierarchical, frequent, oral, written or computer-based, visual and so on, and the extent to which the communication is doctrinal or cross-disciplinary in nature shape the character of an organization’s knowledge processes and thus its performance. In such a performative

¹² There is a wealth of research on post-industrialist organisations, but it is not the objective of this paper to cite these here, nor to ‘unpack’ the ultra-complex issues of post-modern society (see Kumar, 2009 for a helpful overview of key issues and review of the literature).

characterisation of knowledge, context is critical. Work contexts have changed over time with the relatively recent shift for many from physical to knowledge-intensive work and the growth of knowledge work industries such as information technology (IT). The broader context is the mature stage of capitalism in which manufacturing-based economies are shifting towards service-based economies in which information and knowledge are *the* currencies, for example, India has embraced IT work in a big way and China is in the process of transitioning from its traditional manufacturing and export-oriented base to a more service-based form of 'socialist market economy' (see Chan, Clegg and Warr 2017:1-14; Xu, 2016:72; Peerenboom, 2011:272). Manufacturing is not eclipsed in this scenario, just shifted to sites and economies where labour is cheaper and the environment is less protected.

The term 'post-industrialism' is generally used to refer to shifts in the structure and design of industrial capitalism away from mass production, bureaucracy and a technical core of production technologies towards the growth of the service sector with a parallel shift to a relatively weightless, dematerialised knowledge economy (compared to the older industrial economy). This dematerialised knowledge economy is characterised by financial 'products' and IT products (including robots and artificial intelligence) and essential IT 'updates' which are the outcomes of intellectual rather than physical labour. It is also characterised by more globalised wage-rates, with increasing numbers of job functions outsourced to countries with cheaper labour rates.

In post-industrial economies, work management has also changed through the influence of IT and the development of new organizational forms that are less reliant on the command and control relations of old-fashioned (Weberian) bureaucracies. However, very powerful remnants of those bureaucracies remain. What was important to organizations in the industrial past was the harnessing of people's bodies — the need to control the people who were the physical components of the machinations of production — epitomised in the automated production lines of the Model-T Ford and subsequent Fordist and neo-Fordist workplaces. Now it is their minds that organisations seek to harness.

These days, professionals often spend more of their working time servicing clients and customers, searching the internet, composing and replying to e-mails, carrying on conversations in cyberspace and other IT-facilitated activities. In university contexts, many classes are conducted online via Blackboard or Learnline-style platforms and lecturers may be relatively unaware of who their students are or where they may be located. Many contemporary workplaces produce nothing of an object nature and employees' ability and willingness to engage in physical activity appears to be relatively unimportant. By 2014 the number of internet users worldwide had grown to more than 3 billion from about 360 million in 2000. At the time of writing, around 40% of the world's population has an internet connection and the percentage continues to grow exponentially with the proliferation of hand-held devices such as smart-phones.¹³

My point is simply that the predominant way in which much work is now mediated is cerebral, textual, remote and emotional *rather than present and physical*, and is rapidly transmissible. In this milieu, although there may be less need to control the bodies of workers, this does not mean that those bodies, newly recognised as equipped with enquiring minds are actually free to enquire. In the main, they are required to obediently perform in specified ways meant to maximise their productivity and meet their KPIs. Indeed, there are computer and system logs which can show when a worker has been 'online' and therefore, supposedly, working or not.

¹³ See online at: <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/> (last accessed 30 December 2016)

Can tacit knowledge and context be linked without falling into the performativity trap?

Despite executive protestations to the contrary, there is little doubt that contemporary commercial corporations rarely represent an ‘ideal speech situation’ for most employees (Habermas, 1987). The point in raising Habermas’ ideal speech situation here relates to the possibilities for learning and development personnel to ensure employees’ tacit knowledge may be externalised constructively to benefit individuals and organisations. For Habermas (id.), ideal speech is characterised by undistorted communication with no barriers to entry and open to critique on several fronts. This is of course aspirational. In the two case studies (the GFC and VW) highlighted above, it was clear enough that knowledge workers being inhibited from questioning the way things are done at work was part of the problem (see ABC, 2017; Leopold, 2009; Mason, 2009; Muolo and Padilla, 2008). The managerial approach that does not allow communication to flourish brings closure of various types. To illustrate a better way, Langenberg (2011: 165-166) cites the practical example of a steel factory with 10,000 employees wherein interruptions to the production process were viewed as ‘learning occasions necessary to the survival of the company’. To deal with interruptions, the factory facilitated *rule-free space* designed to build “relational trust, shared responsibility, and the capacity to frankly tell the truth” (p. 166).

Langenberg’s open example is, however, not in fashion. Contemporary corporate structures and systems are, at present, primarily vessels for approved discourses. All other discourses are suppressed in some way thereby also suppressing richer possibilities for knowledge construction. For example, it is not always easy to speak up, particularly if one’s message is contrary to existing power relationships or will result in extra costs or time. Just as the production of knowledge in socialist states such as China is often judged by its quantity (e.g. professional writers being paid by thousand-word lots of text), so too is knowledge in the new so-called knowledge economy. A key measure of quantity in the market context is simple: elapsed time. The time that an employee spends working on ideas may be directly billable to the client whose time is being used — because he or she is paying for that time. Avoiding the performativity trap is thus difficult as working knowledge and the business of making money is inextricably linked.

Adult education and the mercantilisation of knowledge

Following the global economic downturn of 2009 and ongoing Eurozone pressures including the 2016 ‘Brexit’ decision, organizational knowledge in a most general sense concerns the appropriation of order from disorder. For instance, at least some of the disordering we are experiencing today is a latter-day offshoot of government sponsored deregulation of the financial and banking sectors — of Friedmanite free markets on one side of the Atlantic and van Hayekian economics on the other. The buy-in to neoliberal economic philosophies has had consequences of scale with the recent downturns having directly affected many millions across the globe through unemployment and the superannuated being left vulnerable and bank liquidity and sovereign debt remaining problematic issues worldwide with deep implications for extreme wealth inequality (Picketty, 2015). Government bailouts of private sector enterprises have become commonplace with government-led economic stimulus ‘packages’ à la Maynard Keynes being required across the world, China included, to help underwrite economic recovery (Picketty, 2014). To write about changes to knowledge and integrity against this backdrop is to acknowledge that the knowledge that contemporary business organizations are often most interested in is connected inextricably with power, events and prevailing interpretations (fashions) of economic theory.

This driving interest impacts directly on the work of learning and development personnel in that such professionals are often required to ‘help’ prepare disadvantaged adults for the workforce or at least better equip them with the language, literacy and numeracy skills needed in even the most menial of today’s available jobs. In fact, adult education is not only

about helping disadvantaged adults develop life skill and employment competencies. Many programs devoted to adult education have either been closed completely or had functions transferred to business schools' human resource development departments, or morphed into 'learning and development' practitioners or teaching online technicians and support staff. Business schools all over the world have become very 'industry-oriented', functionalistic and managerial geared heavily towards producing students as future workforce employees and often primarily for one stakeholder (i.e. industry). This downplays any role in the education of adults to become citizens i.e. to serve society more generally. Often students are merely conditioned to rote-learn and execute pre-defined tasks (assignments) thus reducing learning to functionality and, quite commonly, where a 'migration outcome' is a principal student objective. Furthermore, there has also been a transfer of much adult education from the public to the private sector following the false belief that the latter is always more efficient.¹⁴

With scientific discourse no longer as powerful as it once was, knowledge is increasingly legitimated in and through the practices of work and then validated by being posted on an organization's intranet or published through a social media outlet. For Lyotard knowledge is 'no longer drawn from the grand narratives of humanity, liberty and progress, but rather springs from *performativity* — an improved input-output equation' (1984: 46). *Performativity* gauges knowledge based on the calculable criteria of efficiency, marketability and saleability whereby:

the transmission of knowledge is no longer designed to train an elite capable of guiding the nation towards emancipation, but to supply a system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions [resulting in] the mercantilisation of knowledge (Lyotard, 1984: 51).

In the mercantilisation of knowledge, salability and efficiency become *the* criteria for establishing what constitutes worthwhile knowledge. The phenomenon is akin to the neoliberal marketization of education that has rendered it possible to buy into (and sell) education. Knowledge is no longer a public good that transcends bottom-line considerations. The drive for billable hours or bonus payments is, for example, central to most communities of commercial practice – banking, finance, stock-market trading, accounting and commercial law. The markets of education now operate within a similar framework. Knowledge construction emanating from that practice is shaped accordingly. In such contexts, it is thus useful (i.e. profitable) knowledge, not knowledge for its own sake that is being legitimized.

Lyotard proposes that a self-sustaining system must cultivate *performance-satisfying skill* in its members. It can be readily inferred from this perspective that organizations and intellectual capital more broadly are being narrowly transformed into basic more-or-less technical aspects of knowledge production, transmission, retention and retrieval and possibly subject to policies derived from algorithms as distinct from professionals participating in open forums. Knowledge transmission now commonly occurs through various social media. Facebook, Twitter, iLEARN, LinkedIn, blogs and home-pages are now

¹⁴ For authority to say the belief is 'false' see, for instance, the *ACCC v Acquire Learning and Careers Pty Ltd (Acquire)* (May 30, 2017) where the Federal Court ordered Acquire to pay penalties of \$4.5 million for engaging in unconscionable conduct, making false or misleading representations and breaching the unsolicited consumer agreements provisions in the Australian Consumer Law (ACL) by taking advantage of vulnerable consumers by using unfair sales tactics to pressure consumers to enroll in a vocational training course and apply for VET FEE-HELP assistance. Justice Murphy described Acquire's conduct, where it rorted the VET FEE-HELP scheme, as having a "business model that was based on maximising the number of enrolments it was able to achieve for its clients and thereby maximise the fees payable to it. Acquire's conduct in that regard was deliberate and overt." At the time of writing, Acquire had been placed in the hands of an Administrator.

through inter- and intra-net connectivity intimately connected components of a new and performative, learning narrative. Here again, it can be very difficult for employees to speak up concerning any reservations about, or outright opposition to business strategies that seek maximum efficiency irrespective of the potential collateral costs (for examples, see the above VW case and the *ACCC v Acquire Learning* case.)

In institutions such as business enterprises the exercise of e-power does not automatically constitute a prohibition imposed upon the powerless. There are productive aspects of power and what Lyotard (1984) refers to as *performance satisfying skill* that bring about new ways of identifying with change managers, knowledge workers, e-facilitators and the like. Some even argue that the networked society 'empowers' the disadvantaged. In other words, power is harnessed not only by the apparatuses of state but also by dissidents and interest groups as demonstrated in the series of [sit-in street protests](#) that occurred in [Hong Kong](#) from September 26 to December 15, 2014 which collectively became known as the 'Umbrella Revolution' 雨傘革命 and which followed the example of the 2011 'Occupy Wall St' campaign against corporate greed in New York. Another recent YouTube example is the Pussy Riot 'Performance on Putin, Everyone Sees Trump' in which the Feminist punk group mocked the Russian president and delved into the dangers of oppression and censorship, offering unavoidable parallels to U.S. president Trump (see The Guardian 11 March 2017). On balance though, it is apparent that the prime desire of corporations is to produce efficient and profitable workplace performers.

Critical questions on how tacit knowledge and performativity impacts everyday activities of professionals

When theorising tacit knowledge as relating to *performativity* it follows that one's pragmatic adaptation to the requirements of organizational context will feature centrally. Some may argue that this is a narrow view of tacit knowing and devalues it. Recognizing tacit working knowledge can also be viewed as a significant advance over the conception of knowledge construction as the preserve of laboratories or formal research institutions or derived directly from British empiricism. A problem with the narrow view of tacit knowledge stems from the suggestion that its value is best measured in economic terms. Experiential knowledge can be shared in a variety of ways. Knowledge workers can effectively contribute in a variety of innovative ways encompassing professional learning circles (which may be online), coaching, mentoring and other adult education approaches alongside more conventional supervisory structures. At the heart of the matter though is the need to encourage educators to go further than reflexivity and interrogate one's own (perhaps complicit) practices and consider the very purposes of adult education and training for C21.

Such approaches to professional practice offer opportunities to counter toxic work environments as they enable employees to speak up rather than remain silent about dubious (and perhaps even corrupt) corporate practices. The question remains as to whether the pragmatic contemporary formula of knowledge, which equates to whatever works or does the job, is what should count. My argument has been that that formula is insufficient. As an underpinning of organizational performance, it is limited and directed in a way that it often privileges the short-term and result-driven with consequences and responsibility to others easily overlooked. By way of contrast, historically, quality scholarly knowledge was never meant to be short term, and consequences were meant to be thoroughly thought through in so far as they can be. In other words, knowledge was meant to have integrity.

If working knowledge stops being performative there is clearly an argument that even more alarming outcomes than those of the GFC and scandals such as the VW emissions scam could well result. In an increasingly globalized, technological, networked, fragmented and ultra-competitive society, new understandings will invariably involve relationships between

everyday working lives and perceived commercial imperatives, managerial prerogatives, workplace practices and sanctions, trade unions, diversity and multi-cultural policies and so on. Contested versions of what constitutes useful knowledge, where it is best produced and evaluated (including work-based and academic or lab research) and how it shapes policy-making, adult learning programs, KM systems and the like should be expected.

It is now over 33 years since Lyotard published *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, but his commentary on the changes to knowledge in contemporary society remains highly pertinent. The validity of Lyotard's argument that postmodern society has disrupted the unifying view that social progress can be achieved through the growth and application of science has been confirmed in a variety of professional research disciplines including management (Clegg and de Matos, 2016; Taskin and Van Bunnem, 2015; Spender, 2008), organization studies (MacLean et al., 2016; Sturdy et al., 2009), economics (Cohen, 2003) and accounting (Lounsbury, 2008).

Lounsbury's (2008: 356) examination of new directions in the institutional analysis of accounting practice, for instance, builds on the notion of performativity by acknowledging the ontological position that 'the world is always in flux and the seeds of practice creation lie in the everyday activities of actors'. Although that position may seem at odds with institutional analysis and organizational theory it is easily incorporated. Knowledge produced at work, and a great deal of contemporary research, is increasingly a means to an end as distinct from knowledge for the sake of knowledge or an intrinsic good. There is a range of critical questions concerning this state of affairs whereby knowledge can be 'commercial and in confidence' and thus less open to scrutiny than, say, scientific or academic knowledge. With major commercial work organizations among the more dominant institutions today, it is more important than ever to be vigilant about knowledge construction activities and to better understand the nature of the changes occurring to work, to organizations and to the new production of meanings.

Conclusion

So, is it important to externalise tacit knowledge? Is seeking an explicit uplift of employee tacit know-how of benefit to an organization? Is there a clear connection between an employee's know-how and performativity? In writing about tacit knowledge, power and events, dominant narratives of *knowledge at work* have been identified. By combining Lyotard's (1984) emphasis on the core role of *performativity* in organizations with Polanyi's (1958, 1968) view of tacit knowledge, this paper has argued there is a powerful interaction between tacit knowledge and narratively produced performance regimes which are now supported by digital-age technologies including developments in artificial intelligence (AI). It has also been argued that fostering environments that encourage open communication and allow a role for critique remains important. There is the potential counter argument that critique itself may become 'performative' in that its value becomes gauged against criteria such as risk management or risk reduction, or reduced to a separate KPI. My argument, however, is that knowledge and critique are narratively produced and it follows that knowledge in organizations will be reflexive when it is not merely a banal repetition of what is already known. This theorisation is indebted to Foucault (1972) and Lyotard (1984), but one can also discern Habermas's (1987) contribution in the sense that the creation of knowledge from an interest in innovation – a breaking with the past – necessarily involves critique. Where critique is heavily circumscribed, the capacity for creativity is invariably impaired. This finding is consistent with the earlier work of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) on tacit knowledge in Japanese firms, and of Davenport and Prusak (2000) on working knowledge. What is new is the extent to which digital-age computer systems can render employees increasingly vulnerable to performative agendas. At a time when AI is just 15-30 years from not only equalling, but surpassing human capabilities, voicing legitimate concerns

about development is imperative and directly connected to tacit knowledge sharing. Professionals learn tacitly, from experience, when to speak up and when to keep their mouths shut. If the environment does not permit open sharing, or if voicing concern can disrupt an organization's commercial plans, silence may prevail (see Billias and Vemuri, 2017, p. 2).

Notwithstanding the darker aspects of some contemporary organizational practises including autocratic managerialism and its appropriation of learning and development techniques, there remains room for optimism. There is always potential for open dialogue, interpretive and action-oriented research, deconstruction and virtual research which in turn can afford new knowledge construction possibilities. Looking ahead, what needs to be recognised is that knowledge construction capabilities are invaluable given the momentous changes occurring in the world of work and that performativity is not *necessarily* oppressive but has positive sides. Organizations are virtually insatiable in their pursuit of innovation, organizational learning, new research practices and new knowledge. This highlights the need to continually develop and scrutinise the production and effects of knowledge practices - as exemplified by the GFC and VW cases. These case studies reveal reflexive terrain that was left largely undisturbed by the economic agencies and senior managers who failed to foresee the consequences of their actions (Viskanta, 2016; Boatright, 2011; Immergluck, 2009; Mason, 2009).

These failures present opportunities for learning and development personnel in organizations, including how to enhance the retention and transmission of valuable employee knowledge while, at the same time, encouraging genuine critique (including self-critique), vitality, renewal and integrity. Externalising the tacit knowledge of experienced professionals to allow it to be efficiently shared with newer (less expensive) employees thereby saving money will not do the trick. Research, policies, practices and indeed new literacies are required for the rigorous interrogation of so-called new knowledge. To this extent, I agree with Pesqueux's (2003, p. 32-33; 2005) suggestion that we need professionals who are 'socially responsible, autonomous individuals, cynics and lobbyists in their own fields.' That suggestion can be applied to corporate workplaces, industry training environments and higher education, although a given field's capacity to achieve greater reflexivity is becoming more complex in an era of rising authoritarianism (Pils, 2015: 83; 2016). Speaking up has never been easy and in some situations, is seriously risky. The challenges for contemporary adult educators, knowledge managers and industry training and development professionals are greater than ever, but it is best not to sleep walk into our imminent future/s.

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A Yolŋu 'Bothways' approach to English and Warramiri literacy at Gäwa ¹⁵

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Abstract

In North-East Arnhem Land there are numerous stories concerning the Yolŋu 'ancestral dog' Djuranydjura. The most famous concerns his interaction with the Macassans, who established mutually beneficial relationships with Yolŋu over the centuries. Trepang collecting services were traded extensively for articles such as fish hooks, tobacco, knives and cloth (Macknight, 1976). However, in the Djuranydjura story, when the Macassan offers rice and shoes and blankets, the dog rejects them all, in favour of his own land and resources (Warner, 1958; Berndt & Berndt, 1989; McIntosh, 1994). At Gäwa homeland on Elcho Island, this powerful story of identity and 'defiance in the face of outside intrusion' (McIntosh, 2003, p. 314) is interpreted to also include the arrival of *balanda* (white) teachers, and their focus on English literacy. However, it is not that English literacy is devalued, but that it must maintain its proper place; negotiated to sit alongside literacy of the land, and the foundational Warramiri language itself (Guthadjaka, 2013). One approach of applying such a 'Bothways' pedagogy through utilising a systematic literacy suite such as 'Accelerated Literacy' for *both* languages and cultures is outlined to demonstrate that synthesis and strengthened identity is quite attainable when teachers and community work together.

Introduction

This is the Djuranydjura story; the Macassans came here and built their houses and they said: 'Do you want blankets?'

'No, I have paperbark.'

'Do you want some shoes?'

'No, I have my feet.'

'Do you want rice?'

'There is food for me in the bush. I am looking after the land, so the land will take care of me'. There are many Djuranydjura stories, Macassan stories. Like the balanda, as they come in, their thinking is to build something here, in the Yolŋu community. But they don't ask first "What do you need?" It's just like they are bringing new ideas, from the 'mainstream'. And they end up failing, feeling bad, packing up their things and leaving. And they leave because they had come with their own thinking. And here, when balanda come into the school with a new law, they need to talk backwards and forwards, bring 'both ways' communication first. And then we can move together (Guthadjaka, Gäwa homeland, 2013).

The Yolŋu of North-East Arnhem Land have a long and fascinating history¹⁶ of contact with 'outsiders'. Methodist missionaries first arrived in 1915 and began to establish mission-station communities, bringing with them the Christian message and a distinct, 'pragmatism and paternalism' (Kadiba, 1998, p. 72). Prior to these new neighbours, intruders had engaged in various 'marginal industries such as pearling, buffalo shooting and

¹⁵ Acknowledgement: This paper is presented based on my time living and teaching at Gäwa (2009-2010) and the subsequent formal collaboration with Warramiri Elder Kathy Guthadjaka and the Gäwa community (2011-2016) to develop the 'Warramiri website' and outline their 'Bothways' philosophy of education.

¹⁶ The aptly entitled, McMillan, A. (2007). *An Intruder's Guide to East Arnhem Land* is an enjoyable introduction, although the older, anthropological work Berndt, R. & Berndt, C. (1954). *Arnhem Land: its history and its people* is highly readable and still relevant.

trepaning...(and) are remembered by the Yolŋu chiefly for their violence' (Dewar, 1992, p. 8). There is also a strong oral history of massacres still preserved from the subsequent pastoral industry incursions (Trudgen, 2000). However, long before these interactions with *balanda* Yolŋu had around two centuries of official relations with the Macassans of Sulawesi who would make yearly journeys on the seasonal winds to trade trepang for various items such as fish hooks, tobacco, knives and cloth (Macknight, 1976). The Warramiri clan of the Yolŋu had strong relationships with Macassans, incorporating items such as anchors, knives and anvils as *maḏayin* (sacred ceremonial items) but they also record even older pre-Macassan visitors in their enigmatic *bayini* and *birrinydji* song cycles (McIntosh, 1999). Throughout all these interactions there has been a distinct, intercultural philosophy of assimilating names, technologies, religious iconography (and indeed literacies) into existing Yolŋu ontologies (Thomson, 1949; Bos, 1988) in what is a fascinating dynamic of 'change within changelessness' (Rudder, 1993). Nevertheless, there are specific stories where change was not accommodated and/or the 'new' was openly rejected. The Djuranydjura narrative is a famous example of such an episode where the ancestral dog explicitly rebuffs the offer of rice and shoes and blankets from the Macassans in favour of his traditional country resources. The story was shared with early anthropologists and missionaries (Warner, 1958) and continues to serve as a meta-narrative for communities in their interactions with new influences (McIntosh, 2006).¹⁷ Indeed, in some versions of the story the Macassans are replaced with *balanda* (Berndt & Berndt, 1989). One potential reason for this on-going attraction might well be that the underlying issues have not altered. New influences continually desire to change Yolŋu life patterns for what is perceived as a (well intentioned) betterment. An early example concerns TH Webb, the highly respected Methodist Superintendent. After spending significant time carefully observing and respecting traditional Yolŋu ceremonial life, he advised (well before common consensus) that Indigenous 'reserves' were mistaken approaches as the connection to land was paramount, having 'its roots in the most profound spiritual conceptions' (Webb, 1934, p. 30). But in the very same work he also concluded that, practically:

We must enable the aborigine to understand in what ways the new is superior to the old. He must be enabled to see what advantage will accrue from his acceptance of the new... One of our most difficult tasks is to provide that stimulus or incentive which will set him reaching out after those things by which his life, in all its aspects, will be enriched (Webb, 1934, p. 34).

It is easy to believe that as enlightened 21st century educators we would not attempt to interfere with traditional Yolŋu culture in this fashion. But a new paradigm for Indigenous 'advancement' clearly revolves around literacy, and numeracy to a lesser extent. Indeed, in the Northern Territory Department of Education's Indigenous Education Strategy 2015-2024 four out of the five 'Elements' have their target explicitly tied to attendance figures and NAPLAN literacy and numeracy data (Northern Territory Government, 2015). Indeed, the Wilson report of 2014 had this to say about the role of English literacy in remote Indigenous communities:

Literacy is the foundation for all subsequent success in schooling. Children who do not achieve effective English literacy are less likely to complete their schooling, and more likely to be unemployed, earn less over their lifetimes and experience poorer health outcomes (Wilson, 2014, p. 105).

¹⁷ Also see the famous song 'Djapanā' ('Sunset Dreaming') by *Yothu Yindi*. Although it stands as a beautiful introduction to the role of country, some of the significant lyrics in English are: *Hey, you children of the land, don't be fooled by the balanda ways. It will cause sorrow and woe for our people, and our land.*

The quotes from Webb and Wilson span over eighty years and are phrased with idioms from different eras, but essentially they contain a similar message- *we balanda can enrich your lives, trust us to give you what we know you need*. To be clear, this is not to deny that literacy is a powerful precondition for overall living standards or that English literacy is not a wonderful gift for communication and enjoyment in and of itself (although rice, and shoes and blankets are also fine things...). However, Yolŋu have been through this process before, and will continue to passively resist enforced acceptance of outside influences even when offered out of good will. Thus, in Guthadjaka's version of the Djuranydjura story from Gäwa, we see that the *balanda* emphasis on educational priorities *from the mainstream*, of *new ideas*, and a *new law* (curriculum) of *their own thinking* is explicitly linked to the old Macassan offer of rice and shoes and blankets. The key to a different ending (of not *feeling bad, packing up things and leaving*) is the necessity *to talk backwards and forwards*; only then can *balanda* and Yolŋu *move together*. Thus, it is not a question of ignoring mainstream English literacy, but ensuring that it does not dominate other foundational Yolŋu priorities. In other words, of genuinely incorporating both worlds- of working '*bothways*'.

'Bothways' Literacy Education

It needs to be emphasised from the outset that '*bothways*' is not a short-hand Yolŋu synonym for 'negotiation' as is generally understood by *balanda*. In fact, key expressions Guthadjaka employs in Warramiri language in the excerpt above are loaded with historical/contextual meaning; *marrtji rrambanji* (moving together) does not simply equate with 'partnership' and *bala-räli* (backwards and forwards) discussion is not just 'consultation'. Indeed, all these expressions have a rich and extensive application developed by Yolŋu educators from the late 1980s onwards. Currently, the actual expression 'Bothways' is associated with Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and its overall paradigm of education and research highlighting respect, tolerance and diversity between Indigenous knowledge systems and Western academic positions (Batchelor Institute, 2017). However, *originally*, 'Bothways' education was just one of the five, foundational principles at Batchelor College (as it was then known) -not a summary expression for all of them (White, 2015) -and was configured as a specific bicultural or *intercultural* (Christie, 2007) philosophy of education to negotiate curriculum and authority within Yolŋu community schools. A brief history of this 'Bothways' educational philosophy (and its particular application to literacy) is therefore necessary to truly understand the principles that Guthadjaka is advocating.

Despite the earliest manifestations of 'Bothways' originating in desert regions in the 1970s (McConvell, 1981), it was a string of memorable speeches and articles by Yolŋu tertiary education students whilst studying at Batchelor College from the late 1980s that really consolidated the philosophy. To a large degree it was in response to the short-comings of the bilingual models employed in Yolŋu schools which were genuinely radical for the Australian context, but still retained authority and control with *balanda* teachers and principals (Wearne, 1986). It was also 'trying to get away from the 'Three Little Pigs in Gumatj' idea and bring proper cultural knowledge into the school' (Marika, 1999, p. 112). Thus, Lanhpuy spoke of the long-term impact of schooling on young Yolŋu and the dilemma (in Djuranydjura style) of 'whether to support schooling and expose our children to the processes of cultural alienation and confusion, or to turn our backs on these Balanda schools altogether' (Lanhpuy, 1988, p. 2). His proffered solution was that:

The school, as an institution, needs to be accommodated within the aboriginal society itself. Only when the cultural orientation of the school becomes Yolŋu, will schools become integral to the movement of Aborigines towards self-determination... In this sense, a bicultural or 'both ways' education for aboriginal children will emerge (Lanhpuy, 1988, p. 2).

Yunupingu, in his inimitable fashion, summarized it succinctly:

What we want is BOTH WAYS education – balanda and Yolŋu ways – but we want Yolŋu to have control over both sides of the curriculum (Yunupingu, 1989, p. 4).

But how was this to proceed at a practical level? Other Yolŋu took up this challenge by applying deeper Yolŋu methodologies inherent in their own epistemologies and ontologies, often stemming from the *dhuwa/yirritja* moeity structures. Wunungmurra advised ‘in Yolŋu society there is negotiation of meanings between the two moieties, *dhuwa* and *yirritja*, which can be applied to negotiation between Yolŋu and *balanda* cultures to find the common ground that makes up the two way curriculum’ (Wunungmurra, 1989, p. 13). He also introduced Yolŋu knowledge/identity concepts of *djalkirri* and *dhawurrpunaramirri*, applying them to the educational sphere. This sharing appears to have opened up a flowering of ‘metaphors’ elucidating this new intercultural framework, Yolŋu explaining concepts of *miliŋurr* and *ganma* (Marika-Munungiritj et al., 1990), *garma* (Marika-Munungiritj, 1990), *ŋathu* (Yunupingu, 1994) and *galtha rom* (Marika-Munungiritj & Christie, 1995) applying them to a continually-negotiated, integrated approach to Yolŋu and *balanda* educational priorities. Each Yolŋu metaphor and related discussion is deep and nuanced, and worthy of its own analysis (Christie, 2007). However, for present purposes in regards to literacy, it will have to suffice to note three priorities, allowing the Yolŋu theorists to speak for themselves:

Yolŋu multi-literacy was always considered vital:

- *The writing and reading will be in both ways – English and Yolŋu Matha. Reading and writing in their own language so children will learn three languages – English, Djambarrpuyngu and their own tribal languages (Bepuka et al., 1993, p. 69).*
- *By writing and reading children won't forget about their traditional lifestyle and knowledge. By putting the knowledge onto the paper this makes our culture stronger in the modern world (Bepuka et al., 1993, p. 69).*
- *It was not until I spoke in my own language, Ritharŋu, that my view of the Yolŋu world became more meaningful. It was formal Yolŋu education. I was learning to understand the hard language, the esoteric Yolŋu language (Marika, 1999, p. 109).*

Land-based literacies were also viewed as fundamental:

- *Djalkiri literally means foot or footprint, but it symbolises the foundation, where the human being actually comes into contact with the land, his or her environment. Djalkiri shows us that the curriculum must be integrated, because people cannot exist independently of their environment (Marika-Munungiritj, 1991, p. 18).*
- *Land ensures an integral part of a powerful epistemology. From the Yolŋu perspective of the land we learn... of its fundamental importance and how we learn to value the land for the abstract, deep and common knowledge that is derived from the land, giving us meaning and identity (Marika-Munungiritj, 1991, p. 22).*

Teacher-Learner dynamic was seen as a prerequisite for on-going success:

- *Teachers would also be students of culture... there would be equality. This partnership between teachers and students is of great importance because without it there can be no exchange of knowledge and we cannot learn from each other (Wunungmurra, 1989, p15).*
- *Yolŋu learners respond to caring teachers. Teachers who care about knowledge and intellectual work and who care and respect them as learners... Teachers in Yolŋu can never stop being learners. It makes teachers more humble, it really makes teachers respect learners as equal (Marika-Munungiritj, 1990, p. 47).*

- Another way of saying this is "Balallili" (give and take; reciprocity) talking of the interactions of the tide and the spring, the fresh and salt water interactions...we can apply to theorising the teacher/learner interaction (Marika-Munungiritj, 1990, p. 48).

Thus, 'Bothways' incorporates a number of Yolŋu epistemologies and inter-clan relational dynamics. For 'Bothways' to be honoured and practiced in the educational sphere, it is not just a clever way for Yolŋu to deal with outside influences and *balanda* to be accommodating, but it is an assimilation of such outside influences into the pre-existing Yolŋu ontological framework. Thus, embracing 'Bothways' is a self-fulfilling 'Bothways' commitment in itself.

Gäwa and Warramiri 'Bothways'

Gäwa community is situated at the northern tip of Elcho Island and is a homeland of approximately 40-50 people. Gäwa is an ancestral estate of the Warramiri clan and has been used for ceremonial meetings with interrelated Yolŋu clans and as a site for Macassan visitors over many centuries. In the 1990s, a movement to literally 'return to country' arose where Warramiri and their kinship networks cut a road through the bush and progressively established water supplies, houses and a school to enable their age-old traditional intergenerational transmission of culture and language to continue (Gäwa Christian School, 2017). One of the major reasons Warramiri families decided to 'leave' Galiwin'ku and live at Gäwa was so a distinct Warramiri education could be possible; that the people could live 'on country' and learn from Warramiri land, and utilise Warramiri language in the school.¹⁸ Warramiri language is one of the *yirritja* moiety languages, termed a *Djanju'mi* language (based on the word for 'this') and is considered endangered by linguists (Aboriginal Resource and Development Services, 2015). There are at least two major 'branches' of Warramiri with connected ancestral estates and dialects. At Gäwa these branches have come together to take active and clear steps to revitalise their ancestral connections, as specific clan-based language is foundational to preserving true, Yolŋu identity. Indeed, 'every Yolŋu claims and celebrates their identity through these land-based language and culture complexes' (Christie, 2004, p. 5).

Ben van Gelderen lived at Gäwa as the first 'senior' class teacher, working closely with Warramiri Elder Guthadjaka. During 2011-2016 they collaborated in designing a website and digital resources for Warramiri education (van Gelderen & Guthadjaka, 2017) as well as conducting formal research with the Gäwa community regarding their aspirations concerning a 'Bothways' philosophy. The 'old man' (W) of the Warramiri summarised the need for Warramiri language instruction explicitly:

W: They are only speaking one language, Djambarrpuyŋu, not Warramiri yet. This is a concern. They should be transferring over to Warramiri, both in school and in everyday life. Like having two 'books'...Yes, the school should do it like that, having Warramiri books. How can I say it, all we want is for the teachers to help them. (Guthadjaka) is already doing some work on Warramiri language, the stories. Reading these will help the kids.

Here the 'old man' is referring to the work of Guthadjaka in producing specific Warramiri texts over many years; transcribed audio recordings, traditional songs, seasonal information and new *dhäwu* (stories) to be used in the school and community. Indeed, over the preceding decade Guthadjaka strategically renewed this 'Bothways' tradition by reinstating

¹⁸ As opposed to Djambarrpuyŋu which has evolved into the *lingua franca* of Elcho and the language used in the bilingual Literature Production Centre and school at Galiwin'ku.

foundational notions in public forums and conferences, as well as adding various Warramiri clan specific metaphors for clarification:

In 2008 she spoke of the differences between *balanda* and Warramiri education:

When the Yolŋu children learn on country, they are safe and confident inside themselves, to go forward.... so you see, they know the land and the breeze, and the water, what time the tide will be in, when it will be out, because they are learning on country, and he grows with them, by means of that learning (Guthadjaka, 2010, p. 27).

And in relation to 'gifted and talented' students and leadership:

Those gakaŋ (ancestral identities) will carry them, they will grow, so that they will go into the Balanda culture, growing without fear, courageously, because they have already learnt from this side...So what I want is for the schools and the education department to find that path (of Yolŋu development) and join in with it (Yolŋu Aboriginal Consultants Initiative, 2008).

In 2010, at the *Building Literate Nations Inaugural National Forum* she presented a painting of the Warramiri crayfish:

Can anyone here read this story? Don't worry, we Yolŋu understand that you Balanda people don't have the literacy skills to read our stories!...The word we use is 'lonydju'yirr'. You can see this clearly in the crayfish painting... The 'crayfish' represents Warramiri people, the line-walking journey of the crayfish represents the way Warramiri people move forward together...At Gäwa we have discovered that two-way learning creates an environment where the 'lonydju'yirr' principal works well. The children are making real progress with their traditional literacy skills and their English literacy skills at the same time...Even the teachers and Balanda children are making great progress (Guthadjaka, 2010b).

And in 2012 at the Northern Territory Christian Schools annual conference Guthadjaka presented Gäwa community research:

Learning should be not just two way; it should be 50/50 learning...even traditional knowledge and skills that are our own and unique to Warramiri people. These need to be valued. They are not valued if they are left out. We need to get back a balance to our values and the values that children take up from their home environment and also their school environment. Warramiri things are rare and precious; they belong to us (Guthadjaka, 2012).

For *Bilingual Education: Bothways Learning: a practical approach*, also in 2012, for the Department of Education at Shepherdson College:

Rrambanji Marngithirr: Both Ways is Teacher teaching students and students teaching teacher (bala-räli). The learning is then holistic across two cultures. This is happening at Gäwa and it is working well. We have not yet discovered how far we can take it with good result, but we will find out (Guthadjaka, 2012b).

And in 2013, as a keynote presenter for the SNAICC National Conference:

The list of words that our children understand is getting smaller, word by word. Our words are being replaced with English words; colour by colour. Unless own language increases in step with a growing knowledge of English, Yolŋu people will lose their own language completely... At Gäwa, we found that there were two parts to a better way: Firstly, 'bridging' (gumurkkunihamirr). Bridging is really about connecting. Schools and teachers only need to make the connections available and the 'bridging'

will happen automatically. Secondly, in-season, local background for good communication. The new teaching can often be communicated better with a familiar local illustration. This engages the students who take the position of being the 'experts' on the subject...the students will often teach the teacher as the teacher is teaching them (Guthadjaka, 2013).

It was important to outline these Warramiri 'Bothways' perspectives in detail, for as we have observed, clan-specific knowledge and identity practices are vital. But it is manifestly clear that the 'Bothways' philosophy outlined by Warramiri Elders from Gāwa is remarkably consistent with Yolŋu educators from previous decades and different Yolŋu communities and clans. The emphasis remains on specific (Warramiri) language/literacy development, utilising (Warramiri) land to learn 'through country' and fostering a teacher-learner dynamic that enables *balanda* and Yolŋu to share and model together as a pedagogical approach. Thus, we turn now to a specific approach of teaching both Warramiri and English literacy, a quite literal application of *marrtji rrambanji* (working together) as we applied the 'Accelerated Literacy' model for sessions in both languages.

Accelerated Literacy and 'Bothways'

'Accelerated Literacy' (AL) is a comprehensive program of connected routines designed to function in the daily 'literacy block' timeslot. It was heavily supported in the Northern Territory over the years 2004-2009 under the NALP (National Accelerated Literacy Program) banner in regards to resource development, training and formal evaluation. It is still utilised in many remote schools (Wilson, 2014). It is an amalgam of various other literacy methodologies including critical literacy, systemic-functional grammar approaches and scaffolding strategies (Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007). It was not initially designed as an EAL/D approach necessarily, but was taken up largely in such contexts and it has been argued that it is just as suitable for adult learners as school students (Cowey, 2009). There have been various articles which comprehensively outline the approach (Cowey, 2005; Gray, 2007), but in brief summary form, the major strategies involve the following:

- A strategic choice of an age appropriate/interest level (not 'literacy' level) text which becomes the focus for the entire unit is the foundation. During 'literate orientation' the teacher builds with the students a common knowledge around narratives (and other genres) and the reading skills necessary to understand the meaning of the specific passage set for closer study.
- In 'Transformations', the function of certain words and phrases of the set passage becomes the focus as choices made by the author to create certain impacts on readers are revealed, including sentence structures and literary techniques.
- In 'Spelling', words from the passage are chosen and 'chunking' strategies utilised to build recognition of groups of letters that 'hang together' in English orthography.
- Lastly, in 'Writing', students use the set passage as a template and model for their own writing. Progression from joint reconstruction of the set passage, to joint construction of new texts to independent construction is highly encouraged. As a literacy focus, for assessment, a running-record reading test is completed on the set passage, out-of-context reading of words, weekly spelling tests of chosen words as well as both formative and summative assessment of writing pieces.

A few other introductory notes are necessary. Firstly, the 'Bothways' approach utilising the AL model is not necessarily an endorsement of this particular English literacy approach over any other rigorous literacy suite. It has been argued that the AL emphasis on whole-of-class real learning and the scaffolding cycle may well suit remote Indigenous learners traditional learning 'world view' (McCormack & Cowey, 2008) and that the persistence in choosing texts

at interest/age level rather than literacy level inspires a high level of engagement with literate discourse (Harley, 2008). The 'high challenge-high support' paradigm of the approach and the emphasis on text-patterning functions as a clear model for quality EAL/D teaching and learning systems (Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007) and mapping Second Language Acquisition theories to AL is quite achievable (Mullin & Oliver, 2010). Nevertheless, the pertinent reality at Gäwa was that AL was the accepted approach to English literacy over the years 2006-2014, and thus was chosen to adapt to Warramiri literacy. The fact that it was a text-based literacy approach (true literacy remains the aim; no 'Three Little Pigs in Warramiri' syndrome), that students were already familiar with the practical routines and utilising the exact same routines as the English literacy approach was a powerful mechanism to demonstrate that *balanda* teachers did not consider English superior to Yolŋu languages and that, in fact, all languages can be deconstructed for learning purposes, were all vital considerations. But most importantly, it was in direct response to Gäwa Elders' priorities; the 'old man' who had endorsed the use of Warramiri texts developed by Guthadjaka as well as Guthadjaka herself who had expressed a desire for genuinely integrated 'team teaching' as opposed to 'release' time for the *balanda* teacher whilst the Yolŋu assistant took Yolŋu Matha sessions:

G: And I want that to happen, for there to be teamwork, to plan together the balanda teacher and the Yolŋu teacher. The balanda will help the Yolŋu Assistant planning, not the teacher working by himself. That's what bilingual is- both roads, both ways.

The second issue to clarify is directly related to Guthadjaka's last sentence in the above quote. There is a long and controversial history of bilingual education in the Northern Territory, including pedagogical and political manoeuvres (Devlin, Disbray & Devlin, 2016). But to be precise, the Warramiri 'Bothways' literacy approach is not bilingual as the medium of instruction for the large majority of lesson time remains English, not Warramiri or even Djambarrpuyŋu. At Gäwa this is because there are only two classes, the senior class¹⁹ often has no 'Assistant teacher' and the other 'Assistant teachers' are not necessarily Warramiri speakers themselves. As a young community and school, there is (as yet) no Literature Production Centre, or fully bilingual *balanda* teacher-linguists. Multi-lingual education is undoubtedly the aim of the school in the long-term, but as it stands, the Warramiri 'Bothways' literacy approach is an attempt to utilise the strengths that currently *do* exist at Gäwa: Warramiri resources (digital, text-based and the land of Gäwa itself and neighbouring islands), a literacy suite that is working and that students are comfortable with (Accelerated Literacy) and a small homeland context (with a shared willingness between *balanda* and Yolŋu to truly work together in a team-teaching and teacher-as-learner philosophy).

Case Study: Storm Boy and Balanda Runu'ŋur

To demonstrate the approach, an overview of a school term with associated major literacy routines utilising the AL approach will now be presented.

Step 1: Text Choice

The first crucial decision revolves around choosing suitable texts for the term. As the texts are essentially used for the full ten weeks, they need to be age/interest level appropriate

¹⁹ Although the senior class is formally linked to the school, it is also an 'adult' educational environment. This is because in the homeland context, often students older than eighteen are participating and furthermore, a majority of the male students have gone through initiation and are considered young men by the community.

and contain a section or passage that is useful for elucidating vocabulary and grammatical information, as well as providing a clear template for modelled writing. For the approach at Gäwa we also desired the texts to have some kind of thematic connection and that they utilise all three target languages in some capacity. It was also important to consider what had been studied previously, in regards to covering different genres and styles over the course of the year. In this case, the previous term was focussed on allegoric/symbolic writing, with a strong English and Warramiri focus. We had studied the Dr Seuss classic *The Lorax* with its wonderful word play, rhyming patterns and ecological themes and had combined this with Guthadjaka's *Yuṭa Gonydjuy (The New Wax)*, a Warramiri parable (based on true events from Galiwin'ku) concerning wild bees who left their traditional ways by making 'honey' from the tar that was being used to make *balanda* roads (Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages, 2017). Students created their own animal narratives with a 'deeper meaning' in English as the written task. We had also planned the unit to coincide with the time of year when wild honey was available, so significant time was spent hunting for and learning about the various *dhuwa* and *yirritja* honeys and their totemic significance.

For the current term then, we desired a more complex, English narrative text from the realist genre that introduced further literary techniques, but a slightly easier Yolŋu text (perhaps even a Djambarrpuyŋu one) from which we could model Warramiri writing. We chose Colin Thiele's famous *Storm Boy* with its beautiful descriptions of isolated, coastal Australia and one boy's profound connection to land and local animals and paired this with *Balanda Runu'ŋur*, (Whiteman on the Island) a Djambarrpuyŋu story of a Yolŋu family who found a *balanda* shipwrecked on an island. Thus, our theme revolved around remote, coastal areas, lost and/or isolated *balanda*, survival techniques and food supplies, and the beauty and grandeur of the land itself.²⁰ The opening paragraphs of each text were our set passages for study and would also function as our templates for joint construction writing.

Step 2: Literate Orientations, Transformations, Spelling

Over the weeks studying the texts, we progressed through the full range of Accelerated Literacy routines. We read and discussed *Storm Boy* and *Balanda Runu'ŋur* and made explicit the structural features of writing we were experiencing (Low order). We 'built the field' by using maps and watching excerpts of the movie, by walking around Gäwa to contrast our beaches, winds and oceans with the South Australian Coorong, by using the school canoes and by even building our very own life-sized humpy! This was the crucial aspect of literacy-of-the-land time, as the choice of text actually encouraged these kinds of activities, which also included discussions with Elders around Warramiri seasons and food sources, important beach sites at Gäwa and ceremonial connections.

We spent time inside the classroom focussing on specific words (High order) from the passages and made sure we knew the meaning of each and every word by playing action games, highlighting words in different colours for different grammatical categories, drawing our own pictures and completing crosswords, find-a-words and cloze passages. We learnt of the overall function of words in the passages (Transformations) by cutting up strips and re-organising them and by practicing our own metaphors and similes and double-descriptors. We also focussed on reading the passages in a variety of individual, small group and whole of class fashions, playing games and competitions to recognize words in new contexts. And we 'chunked up' and practiced spelling words from both languages, using paper, little

²⁰ In its prime 'Bothways' was most known for integrating science and maths with Yolŋu knowledges, and some of the metaphors were particularly applied to these fields of education. However, at Gäwa, we chose to begin with a Warramiri/English literacy theme and allow the science and history/geography to be developed from there.

whiteboards and smartboard activities (Spelling). Guthadjaka and I were both present in many classes, but even when she was not available, due to our pre-planning and focus on a specific passage, I could certainly continue with the Transformations and Spelling routines from *Balanda Runu'gur* by myself. Indeed, this is the crucial strength of the approach. Teachers do not need to be linguists or even bilingual practitioners of Warramiri, with adequate planning around a set passage it is quite possible to continue with aspects of the literacy routine alone and/or with minimal support.²¹ Due to the mission history, the Yolŋu orthography is both consistent across the various clan languages and internally consistent (unlike English!) and thus relatively 'easy' for English first-language speakers (Yolŋu Studies, 2015). Certainly, at Gäwa there are existing phonetic resources such as Warramiri 'alphabet' charts which can be mastered with some initial dedication. But the most important factor was the commitment to keep running Warramiri lessons in some form, even when my spoken Warramiri was limited as this was the prime opportunity for students to take the lead, assist with vocabulary and pronunciation in particular and function as 'teachers'.

Step 3: Writing

Undoubtedly, the most enjoyable aspect of the approach, and the culmination of the process was the joint construction phase of the writing tasks. Here, we applied all the new semantic and syntactical knowledge from deconstructing the set passages to a new setting, a new class narrative. For *Storm Boy* we took the poetic and lyrical opening passage and applied it to the life of the 'old man' of the Warramiri as he grew up as a boy on the isolated island of Wunburri (Stevens Island). All of the students had visited this island via a three-hour ride in a tinny, and had stayed there for a few days at a time, but it was no longer permanently inhabited. Thus, even by Warramiri standards it is an isolated and beautiful area! It is also the distinct 'inheritance' of a number of students in the class, and a site of some fascinating pre-Macassan narratives. It was thus a very fertile and important area for students to learn about from the 'old man'. Working through the set passage, a few sentences at a time at the end of each week, we patterned from the techniques employed and finally, a class-produced beautiful text was written and illustrated/collaged.

And for *Balanda Runu'gur* a truly excellent outcome eventuated when we went to talk to the 'old man' who shared a local, lost-*balanda* story. During World War 2 Warramiri families had discovered two *balanda* army personnel who had escaped their exploding plane and been washed ashore in the Wessel Islands. They made their way slowly through the islands until they came to Gäwa where they were rescued, fed well on a diet of fish, turtle, oyster and stingray and eventually canoed back to the distant mission on Miliŋinbi. One of them wrote a memoir of his experiences as he considered the reward the Yolŋu received inadequate for the troubles they went to to ensure the men's safety (Booth, 1988). Of course, for Gäwa students, it was a fascinating piece of history that we could listen to, act out, and ultimately write into our own narrative in Warramiri. Again, it was a team-teaching approach as Guthadjaka and I took turns in helping students recall the 'old man's' narrative, use the existing story template (who, when, where, use of dialogue, orientation-complication-resolution etc), applying Warramiri (as opposed to Djambarrpuyŋu) vocabulary and spelling the actual words. Our new text was called *Märrma Balanda Gäwaŋur* (Two whitemen at Gäwa) and it retold this neglected Australian World War Two story in its original 'Australian' language. In a highly appropriate last twist, when the new principal at Gäwa Christian School desired to reinvigorate distinct Warramiri sessions in the school in 2017, she went searching for accessible Warramiri stories and used *Märrma Balanda Gäwaŋur* as her first text, thus

²¹ There is also an Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Warramiri vocabulary list and basic grammar primer available which can also be utilised in preparation (Aboriginal Resource and Development Services, 2015).

completing the cycle of text deconstruction, to new text construction, back to use as text deconstruction. This was also the direct inspiration to share the approach to Warramiri literacy with the existing Gäwa staff in an on-country workshop in April this year.

Conclusion

The Warramiri Yolŋu have a long and profound history of contact with 'outside' influences. Some of the pre-Macassan visitors are yet to be specifically identified, but traces of their cultures and languages (as well as Badu, Macassan and Christian *balanda*) have been entwined into Warramiri traditional ceremonies and belief systems (McIntosh, 2004, 2006b). Undoubtedly, English literacy is an important skill for life in Australia in the 21st century, even in the remote Wessel islands. Community members talk of English as crucial for future job opportunities. But for the *present*, for schooling and adult education at Gäwa, English literacy must be negotiated to sit alongside traditional literacies of reading and understanding the land with its stories and songs in its entire seasonal array, and the 'new' literacy of the Warramiri language, which in turn supports a holistic, clan-based identity complex. A 'Bothways' approach to literacy is crucial and an approach which utilises existing literacy routines, such as Accelerated Literacy is a viable and powerful option until full bilingual education can be renewed. Lest (despite the best intentions) we *balanda* follow in the footsteps of Macassan traders, become disenchanting, pack up our things and leave.

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Aboriginal Worlds in the Western Academy

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Introduction

In recent years, the issue of how best to support Indigenous students enrolled in undergraduate academic programs has been increasingly directed by practices which promote a 'success-oriented' approach (Devlin, 2009; Devlin & McKay, 2017). This paper outlines a critical reflection of two lecturers involved in the delivery of a mainstream Charles Darwin University Academic literacy unit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students enrolled at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. This is a preliminary examination of a later deeper reflective study. In this study we use Brookfield's (1995, 2009) critical reflection process to examine the curriculum and pedagogical transformations to a standard academic discourse unit in order to make it more conducive to ATSI learning and academic success. Both lecturers have been teaching Indigenous students in the Northern Territory in a variety of contexts over the past three decades and co-teaching this unit provided an opportunity to examine our pedagogical practices that led to ATSI student achievements. This paper firstly presents the context by examining the teaching program. It then explores the student cohort and reflects on specific changes we made in our teaching and learning program to enhance student achievement.

The teaching program

In this case, we were involved in delivering the Common Unit - *CUC100 Academic Literacies Through Exploring Sustainability* which is one part of CDU's strategy aimed at ensuring neophyte students possess the academic literacy skills required for successful completion of their course while also learning about sustainability. This unit was delivered in 'blended mode' meaning that the content was presented online while explicit teaching occurred during two, one-week workshops which students were expected to attend. The unit has four assessment tasks which include: i. two self – reflections; ii. an annotated bibliography; iii. the presentation of an essay plan; and iv. an essay (1500-2000 words). To scaffold these tasks, skills such as critical reading, note taking, writing summaries, incorporating in-text references and essay writing are explicitly presented in the on-line course materials. The unit is one of two designed to specifically prepare students for the academic literacy demands required in the higher education courses.

Reflecting on this teaching experience involved examining the teaching program and the learning profiles of the individual students. The value of undertaking critical reflection to improve one's teaching has a long established history. Seminal contributions by Dewey (1929) on reflective practice enabled it to become an acceptable technique for coming to new understandings, while Schön (1983) explored its value for generating new professional knowledge. Other authors have illuminated its diverse applicability for helping teachers to generate improvements in their teaching (Smyth, 1989, Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Shoffner, 2011). Reflection can be theoretically based or practice based (a theory built from practice) (Ryan, 2011). While, there is no clear prescription for reflection or its processes, reflection definitively refers to the contradictions between formal and practice theories and bridging these contradictions (Bennett, Power, Thomson, Mason & Bartlett, 2016). In Indigenous contexts, it requires a deep examination of assumptions used in curriculum design and pedagogy in order to ensure that teachers are not "perpetuating hegemonic or normalising forms of practice" (Ryan, 2011). Following this idea, we interrogated our work by using Brookfield's (1995) four lenses. Brookfield (2009) argued that critical reflection, when viewed within a pragmatic and constructivist perspective, allows teachers to become "active constructors of their own experience" (2009, p.296). He further positioned the process of

critical reflection within a critical theory perspective explaining how it could also assist teachers to change oppressive structures. As such, we have used Brookfield's framework to explore the pedagogical practices we employed to ensure that our teaching not only provides learners with the space to draw on their own socio-cultural and historical experiences but also provides them with opportunities to explore oppressive post-colonial structures and practices in relation to their personal history.

Brookfield (2009) notes that critical reflection entails an ideological critique that focuses on power and its instruments that perpetuate political and economic inequity:

Ideology critique describes the process by which people learn to recognise how uncritically accepted and unjust dominant ideologies are embedded in everyday situations and practices. Critical reflection as ideology critique focuses on helping people come to an awareness of how Capitalism and White Supremacy – the twin towers of contemporary ideology – shape beliefs and practices that justify and maintain economic and political inequity (Brookfield, 2009, p. 293).

Brookfield (1995) has outlined four "lenses" or steps in his teacher critical reflection that allow teachers to examine pedagogy, curriculum and practice in relation to this hegemony and ideology. They are: (1) our autobiographies as teachers and learners, (2) our students' eyes, (3) our colleagues' experiences, and (4) theoretical literature. (Brookfield, 1995, p. 30).

The first point involves "instinctive reasonings" and "paradigmatic assumptions" in how teachers work (Brookfield, 1995, p. 30). In the case of our autobiographies, we have both had very long experiences teaching in remote and very remote ATSI contexts as well as having developed close personal and professional relationships with ATSI peoples. As such, our autobiographical experience as teachers and a knowledge of ATSI students meant that we instinctively recognised three problems in the unit materials that could hamper the success of the unit for our students. These problems involved the mainstream unit topics (and the invisibility of Indigenous agents or issues), the western pedagogy that permeated the unit (which came from understanding that "culture pervades learning", McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000, p. 59) and an assumed academic discourse level of the students.

A discussion of these problems and how they were resolved and associated this with theoretical literature, as well as the impact of collegial experience on the delivery of the unit, comprises the remainder of the article. Initially, we start with a discussion of the students themselves and look through their eyes in terms of power relations.

The student cohort

The learners in our delivery of this unit were all ATSI and enrolled in courses such as the Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Nursing, Diploma of Creative Writing and Diploma of Psychology. A total of 18 students initially enrolled in the unit (15 females: 3 males). Overall, a total of 13 students engaged consistently with us through the online and workshop materials. Five students did not engage on line, nor come to workshops due to work and other prior commitments and these same students failed to complete the unit.

For the majority of students the assessment tasks presented in this unit were new. Such tasks included: critical reflections; annotated bibliography; presentation of an essay plan; and a 1500-2000 word essay. As well as weekly online materials, students were able to attend a total of three one-week workshops held at Batchelor Institute. The first being held in week 1 of the semester while the second in weeks 10. In the middle of week 10, after consultation with the students a third week of face-to-face teaching was offered in week 11, of which 8 students accepted. In between workshops, interactions occurred through email and telephone. The 13 students were present at either one or both of the workshops. Those

students who could not attend a workshop, explained their absence as either due to family matters such as lack of child minding for their young children and work commitments.

The students ranged from 19 to 67 years of age. There were two distinct age ranges – the first group of learners were between 19-26 years and the second distinct group between the ages 40-67 years. Each group had their own specific learning needs – the younger ones lacking life experience while the second group had problems harnessing the technological tools. As noted in other literature (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2003), students tended to be older and female and rather than being motivated to study by human capital, tended to have collective ambitions of enhancing community social, emotional, well-being and quality of life outcomes related to their study. That is, western assumptions about student goals, interests and perspectives in terms of how best to compete in the ‘market’ do not apply to a student cohort with socially collective ambitions (Bourdieu, 1998).

Half of the students worked in their area of interest, having completed a vocational training qualification of either a Certificate IV or Diploma level, while the others were full-time students surviving on government assistance. Given the lack of exposure to academic environments as a consequence of power differentials (not being members of the same language and cultural group as mainstream middle class students and suffering resource deprivation) (Cummins, 2000) these students faced barriers to university study that are similar to those outlined in other research for Indigenous students (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2003) and include:

- School Experience – for some students the cultural and linguistic differences between home and school meant an irregular formal education experiences and early secondary exit. This resulted in a lack of Standard Australian English oracy and literacy skills.
- Lack of cohesive pathways to university study – while some students had completed a Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification this did not enable them to engage adequately with academic demands and discourse at a university level;
- Limited Exposure to Standard Australian English – some students lived in communities where other languages and English dialects were the lingua franca (common languages of communication) and only the younger students had experience of academic English at high school level. This limited phonological, semantic and grammatical awareness of Standard Australian English and/or Academic English makes attending university even more overwhelming;
- Lack of technological (computer) skills - Some students had very limited use of technology due to financial and service inequality experienced in their home communities and had to learn how to master basic computer skills and other software. For some of these students technology became a foe as they relied on automatic spell checks to write. In many instances, they relied heavily on computer generated words which were meaningless in the context of their writing and rendered their sentences incomprehensible.

These barriers and the lack of prior academic learning experiences, have been identified as potential factors that can cause dissonance in learning or the application of learning strategies that do not match learning tasks (Boulton-Lewis, Wilss, & Lewis, 2003). Students with a lack of experience in an academic learning environment on entry into university often hold conceptions of learning that focus on a superficial level – of acquiring, understanding and remembering or “memorising or mechanistic study approaches” – as opposed to a deeper conception of learning that required metacognitive, elaboration and monitoring skills and strategies (such as applying, relating to knowledge, change in thinking and interpreting things differently) (Boulton-Lewis, Wilss, & Lewis, 2003, p. 87). This superficial conception of learning and the learning dissonance this creates can lead to the low academic attainment of

students. In response to this in terms of ATSI students, Boulton-Lewis, Wilss, & Lewis, (2003, p. 86) suggest that:

... Indigenous Australian university students should be made aware of the requirements of learning at university early in their courses, and that overt facilitation of strategies that promote deeper engagement with information and more meaningful and congruent conceptions of learning should constitute part of the teaching. Additionally, teaching in university courses could be adapted, where possible, to cater for differences in learning, including considerations pertaining to Indigenous Australian students. This might involve, for example, including specific Indigenous examples to elaborate certain points or allowing Indigenous students to consider content from their cultural perspective.

When we examined our autobiographies as well as the student cohort and looked through the eyes of the students, therefore, we decided that it was essential that the first change should be to the unit content in order to cater to the interests, needs and lived experiences of our students and so accommodate their cultural perspectives.

This led us to focus on more culturally relevant topics that allowed an examination of contemporary ATSI experiences. This focus on the contemporary experience of ATSI people is particularly important given the “ubiquitous non-Indigenous perspectives” that tends to underpin academic units and results in a student’s “sense of alienation and disempowerment” (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2003, p. 18). In this case, we recognised that the lack of Indigenous related topics re-enforced an Indigenous invisibility in the academic context (Sellwood and Angelo, 2013) that would alienate our students further from this context. As such, we introduced an essay topic, Sustainable Indigenous Communities, which could integrate the contemporary experience of colonisation and marginalisation for Indigenous people into an academic environment.

Using such a topic ensured that students could use academic discourse flexibly. This thereby reduced the dissonance associated with using such a foreign literacy frame since it allowed expressions of Indigeneity and afforded both narration and recontextualisation of a familiar topic that accommodated students’ own experiences (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2003). This is also in line with the study noted above by Boulton-Lewis, Wilss & Lewis (2003) on ATSI achievement at university and adapting university courses to conform to student interests and cultural perspectives.

Indigenous pedagogy

The second change we made to ensure we catered to and recognised ATSI students in our teaching of the unit material was to use Indigenous pedagogy. The predominant learning pedagogy that we used to transform the tertiary learning space from “a prevailing deficit view of ATSI education into a resource-based view” (Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008, p. 146) was Both-Ways. Both-Ways, a pedagogical approach developed by Batchelor Institute has its basis in constructivist principles. Learning is situated and based on communities of practice, cooperative learning strategies, social interaction, symbolic communication and it is student centred (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It can also be inquiry based and involve negotiated learning, action learning and research, hands on learning, group work and scaffolding (Ober & Bat, 2008). Both-Ways, however, contrasts with other constructivist pedagogies in that it identifies the ATSI experience and culture as central and paramount in the learning context. As previous Batchelor Institute Director Veronica Arbon (2004) notes, Both-Ways at Batchelor is used by both staff and students to:

... step outside the known, to question from different ways of viewing, sensing, feeling and engaging in the world, never a simplistic interpretation of ‘Both-Ways’. All are learners in this environment. The concept has been challenged, but more

importantly, has had the capacity to challenge in return, to push thinking to new levels, to demand alternative interpretations of basic aspects of life and to accept a fundamental quality at one level and negotiate meaning at others. This concept has been a signpost to do things differently (Arbon, 2004, p. 6).

Both-Ways is underpinned by a number of principles that include:

1. A shared learning journey where the program is flexible and where the students can use the “perspectives, interests and needs that they bring from their Aboriginal culture” (Batchelor College, 1985, p. 4);
2. A Student centred approach where student language and cultural knowledge as well as the status they have in the community is recognised and used in the classroom to further develop the knowledge base of all students (Ober & Bat, 2008); and
3. Strengthening identity which involves using and validating both Western and ATSI knowledge systems and mechanisms of analysis, allowing students to lead the learning process and developing (staff-student, and student-student) personal relationships (Ober & Bat, 2008).

Invariably, the teaching strategies employed in Both-Ways entail:

... teaching in small groups using practical activities and discussion rather than a ‘readings-based’ or ‘lecture-based’ program, although reading the work of others or a short lecture may be part of the scaffolding process (Purdon 2002 in Ober and Bat, 2008, p. 58).

As we reflected on our work using Both-Ways, we acknowledged that it manifested in a number of key areas. This included the subject matter (the topic being studied, discussed above). It also involved the extensive use of student led classroom talk (story-telling) as a way to impart complex meanings, integrate problems, solutions, arguments and evidence regarding the ATSI colonial experience (Gasper, 1996). This is to some degree similar to Freire’s conceptions of the classroom ‘culture circle’ where students discuss personally relevant generative themes, in this case colonisation, invasion and Indigenous sustainability, and dialogically unpack their lives and experiences in relation to them (Freire, 1988). In our case, the analytical dialogue between students and lecturers provided the scaffolding for a critical consciousness in our students (where they could view their experiences as operating in greater social landscapes) to be harnessed for academic work (more on scaffolding below). In this way, student voices could be heard, acknowledged and validated (Brookfield, 1995) and students, with lecturer scaffolding, could personally access major western theoretical social paradigms (such as critical post-modernism, Marxist, postcolonial and feminist theory) and use Indigenous ones (country; Tjukurpa or creation history, law, religion and morals; belonging and identity; and knowledge). In this space, we also followed Indigenous protocols and gave the floor more frequently to older students. Using the theoretical literature lens, we found that dialogic interaction is also recognised as one of the best means to “equip indigenous students with the analytical and verbal skills they need to succeed in the contemporary world” (McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000, p. 65).

We reflected that Both-Ways was also embedded in both student and teacher classroom language used in oral discussion which involved code-switching (or translanguaging and the flexible use of one’s entire linguistic repertoire in order to “support ... understanding and build conceptual and linguistic knowledge”, Garcia, 2009, p. 304) between standard, academic and Aboriginal English by both lecturers and students and a recognition of student bicultural competence (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2003). We also ensured activities were predominantly done in groups so students could engage orally with each other to ensure translanguaging occurred. All lecturers were, in fact, tutorials with robust classroom

discussions (where students could freely interrupt) and readings (or least reading sections) were often done as a whole class (where students took turns to read aloud) and frequent interventions were encouraged in addition to other interjections such as explanations, lexical interpretations, and inferences to reduce the cognitive load (the load on working memory) for students (Yueng, 1999). In all this, there was flexibility in terms of time and activity design (changing existing activities and adding new ones to accommodate needs as they arose) and dialogic interaction with students.

The principles of Both-Ways interrelate strongly with those of CRP. CRP principles were used in conjunction with Both-Ways to ensure this unit was culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students. These principles included cultural literacy, interrogating the attitudes and beliefs of the dominant group, a transformative curriculum and a student-centred pedagogy (Pewedardy & Hammer, 2003).

In terms of our application of CRP, we reflected that our cultural literacy manifested in drawing on our histories of working with Indigenous people and being responsive to ATSI cultures, contexts and backgrounds in terms of “understanding of how colonisation has shaped the lives” of ATSI people (Ewen, 2011, p. 72). In the unit, this came to form the basis of curriculum and assessment tasks. Students had a choice of examining the macro-society, their personal communities or their workplace social sectors in terms of the key sustainability elements of society (social equity), environment and the economy (fair distribution of resources) (see Robertson, 2014 for a deeper explanation of these sustainability elements). This was done intuitively for the teachers, collectively, flexibly and iteratively for the students both as a whole class and in groups of students engaged in similar topics where students shared resources, key evidence and their interpretations of texts. This sharing, in fact, is recognised as a key element in successful instruction design for Indigenous students, since being able to share, “reinforces the social, collective focus of learning” as well as allowing task distribution which enhances student control over learning (McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000, p. 65). Interrogating the attitudes and beliefs of the dominant group for both students and lecturers was achieved through the scaffolding of critical analysis (with a critical race theory lens, see below) of video and key reading texts (see scaffolding below). A transformative curriculum arose in our delivery with the grappling of politically profound issues for ATSI people in order to seek their resolution and enact change. This related to the adoption of a ‘culture circle’ process in our teaching discussed above where students interrogated their own experiences in terms of grand social paradigms and so developed a critical consciousness (Freire, 1988). Adopting a student centred pedagogy occurred with using the Both-Ways pedagogy discussed above.

When we reflected on our use of CRP, given the racial divide between Indigenous people and others in the Australian settler colonial nation, CRP entailed a heavy dependence on critical race theory (CRT). CRT is a critical transdisciplinary theory on racial domination that examines conceptual (and discursive) racial categories in terms of power and hierarchy (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The power of CRT as an instrument of analysis lies in its ability to interrogate Whiteness in terms of “deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9). CRT thereby proved an eminently suitable conceptual framework to use in regards to the unit’s epistemology and the curriculum since it allowed both the affirmation of ATSI identity and the unpacking of the oppressive and disempowering colonial experience (loss of land, language, culture, transgenerational relationships) as a means to resolve sustainability issues and enact change (Larkin, 2015) – both of which were not only transformative but required in the assessment tasks. Indeed, CRT allowed our ATSI students to negotiate academic discourse in a way that catered to “their own agenda” (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2003, p.24).

In terms of the unit delivery, we reflected that CRT also provided the conceptual framework through which Both-Ways was achieved where students voiced, in classroom discussion and written texts, their personal perspectives and experiences in relation to the generative themes discussed earlier - invasion, land dispossession, non-Indigenous racism, the continued practise of stolen generation (forced removal of children from families), white domination, institutional racism and marginalisation experienced as poverty, unemployment and lack of education, linguistic genocide, invisibility and terra nullius.²² In terms of critical reading resources, while there was a brevity of written literature found on the topic of sustainability by Indigenous people, there were a number of other texts which included Indigenous voices. These were used to stimulate discussion on Indigenous perspectives, including the critique of authors' arguments in relation to who had authority to speak on these issues. Critiquing non-Indigenous voices became even more important as they discussed the range of sustainability issues on remote communities.

Scaffolding

We reflected that the third change required to accommodate the much lower academic discourse level of our students was intense scaffolding.

As with all language learning, including that in common units, a key aspect of the teaching and learning process necessitated 'scaffolding' of learning. In our case, this entailed a range of teacher-student configurations such as: explicit teaching and modelling; teacher-student interaction (questions and feedback determined by student's learning); student-student interactions (where students dialogue and work together); and independent academic work, where students determine independently the strategies required for a task (see Garcia, 2009). That is, scaffolding involved the Vygotskian concept of working at the zone of proximal development where students are enabled to: complete the task; have the competence to complete a task; and achieve the completion of a task independently; through explicit and (teacher-student, student-student) interactive teaching strategies (that could and did overlap) (Wells, 1999, p. 221).

On reflection, we noted that scaffolding occurred in a number of key teaching strategies. For example, a common tutorial support strategy to help students understand the unit and task expectations included providing a written record for students of unit and task expectations which they could use in class as unit activities were delivered. Another tutorial strategy involved modelling texts at the macro whole text, micro sentence and paragraph level, including lexis and syntax. This also entailed metacognitive descriptions of the task which Quick and Winter (1994) have identified as a means to ensure that the psychological processes involved in these tasks were transparent to students (Quick & Winter, 1994). Frequently we used visual scaffolds such graphic organisers, particularly in relation to writing tasks. More interactive strategies involved the creation of class glossaries for teaching terminology and metalanguage and staging this so that lexis and syntax was explicitly modelled. However, there were also opportunities for interactive and independent hands on practice (e.g. writing a paragraph or doing an assessment activity such as an annotation). Invariably, however, writing was done interactively and in small groups or in pairs with lecturers monitoring and providing feedback in order to enhance the opportunity for translanguaging and social and collective learning (discussed above). Translanguaging and social and collective learning was also enhanced with peer teaching (where the more capable students 'tutored' the less capable in conjunction with lecturers), problem based learning in small groups (for example. identifying the issues associated with the three pillars

²² A Latin expression meaning "nobody's land", used to describe the land in Australia by colonialists after 1770.

of sustainability in terms of remote ATSI communities), recording the activity on flip chart paper and reporting back to the whole class. That is, there was a heavy influence of social interactive (project-based and group) learning supported by visuals which could be regarded as culturally responsive but was also recognised by Cummins (2000) as the most efficacious strategy to facilitate the learning of a second language or dialect since it ensures learning is context embedded and cognitively demanding. The scaffolding process depended heavily on collegial interaction which is the discussion of the next section.

Our Colleague's Experiences

'Our Colleague's Experiences' is the third set of lenses outlined by Brookfield (1995, p. 30). Brookfield (1995, p. 30) identified observation by and critical conversations with colleagues as the foundation of this lens and noted that it can lead to the examination of aspects of our teaching which remain "hidden from us". In our case, the collegial interaction was encapsulated in our team teaching where we jointly clarified lesson goals and outcomes and differentially allocated the responsibility of activity design and delivery. This meant that we had an iterative reversal of roles between teacher and assistant teacher. Following lessons, we examined student responses, their abilities to do the activity and designed follow-up activities in addition to teaching critiques of ourselves. In the literature, this process in team teaching was noted to enable "shared ownership and involvement" which in turn leads to improved teaching and lesson plans (as outlined by Gutierrez and Kim, 2017, p. 10). On examination of our reflection on teaching through teaching critiques, we acknowledged that it offered both validation of teaching approaches and strategies, the creation of new teaching practise insights such as alternative methods of delivery and activities (alternation between hands on, visual or oral and socially interactive), areas in need of improvement (including ensuring students are scaffolded to a sufficient level and reducing the cognitive load through additional sessions of shared reading) and additional insights into student metacognition and achievements. All these processes, in fact, are outlined by Gutierrez and Kim (2017) as the products of team teaching. It was through this process that we could mediate our previous experience, the needs and abilities of our students and the theoretical principles and literature through which we operated to achieve a successful teaching program for ATSI students.

Conclusion

Academic literacy is a complex ongoing and evolving process of analysis, interpretation and reconstruction. While it has the potential for personal growth, if not positively managed, it can alienate ATSI students and undermine their potential given the dominance of non-ATSI perspectives. The use of Brookfield's (1995, p. 30) process of critical reflection with the four lenses of 'Our autobiographies', 'our students' eyes', 'colleagues' experiences', and 'theoretical literature' enabled us to accurately ascertain the elements that made for a successful adaption of a mainstream academic discourse unit for our Indigenous student cohort. Our intuitive understanding of how adult Indigenous students best operate – the collective learning goals and processes; our understanding of student needs and abilities (various levels of marginalisation in the education system that left our students with limited knowledge of academic discourses); our collegial approach to teaching and reflection (that enabled us to co-plan, deliver and reflect); as well as our operation in terms of research and academic literature (our use of Both-Ways, CRP and CRT) confirmed our approach as appropriate, as non-hegemonic and successful. That is, this study demonstrated for us the importance of using Both-Ways, CRP and CRT to inform curricula and learning activities that assist tertiary ATSI students to navigate foreign literacy discourse but with their identity affirmed. Using CRP as the underlying pedagogical principle and CRT as the underlying conceptual framework resulted in the emergence of a repertoire of teaching and conceptual

skills that assisted us to progress students from oral story tellers to people who can also critically engage with academic texts and, even more importantly, the academy.

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Reflections on a bygone era: How changes in work, workplaces and policy have changed what we research and what we find

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Abstract

In 2005 I was awarded a doctoral degree as a result of my original research around nine men who self reported literacy difficulties. The chapters in which I provided a vignette of each of the nine and the results and findings chapters proved to be really interesting. Following a recent discussion with a colleague I began to wonder if my study could be replicated in light of the changes to work, workplaces and policy since I completed my study and it prompted the question: if this study could be replicated, would the results be the same? Using reports and discussions published on the ACAL site and my doctoral thesis, this paper seeks to respond to this question. Essentially it reviews the characteristics of those respondents who had achieved success at work despite (in some cases) quite considerable literacy difficulties and maps these characteristics against post-2005 changes to work, workplaces and policy. The review is preceded by a definition of literacy difficulties and an introduction to the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. This reflective paper serves to demonstrate how policy changes have undermined notions of literacy, identity and forever altered the possible findings of such research.

Background

In 1999 I started an almost six year journey that lead me into the secret, long held fears of nine remarkable men. It took me three months to locate these men in the first place. Most of them *had never been the subject of research and the majority had never discussed literacy difficulties with a stranger. For some I was the first person, apart from their spouse, who had talked about the impact of poor literacy on their working lives. They were courageous, courteous and enthusiastic and this encouraged me to be respectful of my task and guard against any unnecessary intrusion into their lives*²³ In the course of my doctoral studies I interviewed each of them five times over an eighteen-month period. When I talk to higher degree students about this long iterative process they are surprised—surely one interview is enough.

It never occurred to me that five interviews were excessive; nor did the men think this. Due to the very personal nature of the information five interviews, in retrospect, was about right. It allowed a collaborative, trusting and respectful relationship to develop. In addition it allowed for continuous member checking which strengthened the evidence they provided. In the course of the interviews that *took place in homes, offices, worksites and even, on one occasion, in a hotel [the] men changed jobs, moved houses, became fathers and developed new understandings of themselves as people and learners.*

In this reflective paper I take you, the reader, on a journey starting with my thesis and the nine main participants, to the workplaces and workplace policies of 2017. Reflection in this paper refers to looking back on the characteristics of the nine men who were the primary participants in my doctoral study. In rereading their interview data questions arise about the likelihood of finding similar participants today. Since this paper does not report on data collection or analysis it makes no claims of contributing to the fields of reflective theories or methodologies. Instead it asks researchers to consider how the effects of media campaigns

²³ All words in italics are direct quotes from the thesis (Kell, M. F., 2005).

and public policy impact their research. As I hand over the research baton to a new generation of researchers in an era when funding for social research is scant I believe it is timely for researchers to consider the tacit influences of their research.

There are several sections to this paper. It first briefly introduces the nine primary participants, using wording directly from my thesis. Following a statement of the problem, it reflects on the literature and methodology of the original study. This reflection explores the dichotomies of defining literature and situates the study in a sociocultural paradigm. The main portion of the paper reviews reports and documents published since 2005. I will show you that in the intervening twelve years some things have changed and some things have remained the same. In doing so I will answer the question: could my study be replicated in 2017? That is, would it be possible to find nine men who self-report literacy difficulties and would be willing to talk to a stranger about literacy and work.

Nine lives

The men who participated in this study were located in two Australian states. They ranged in age from late twenties to late fifties. Four had completed apprenticeships, one worked in industrial relations and four had learnt their work skills on the job. Although most of these men may be considered to be ‘unskilled’ because they had no tertiary training, none was actually ‘unskilled’. All of them are skilled and in some cases considered national experts, in specific aspects of their everyday occupations. None of them had been immune to the dramatic changes that had engulfed all sectors of the Australian economy over the previous twenty years, even though some were young enough to have worked for fewer than ten years. They were, for example all aware of the rise of digital and IT processes that were impinging on their work. Others had experience redundancy and the difficulties of finding new employment. Neither were they oblivious to or unaffected by negative community perceptions of ‘illiterates’.

Each of the nine men had agreed to participate in the study on the basis of their own perceived literacy difficulties. I made no attempt *to verify or even challenge the participants’ subjective claims of literacy difficulties by means of standardised instruments or the collection of demographic data through surveys, nor was participant selection made on the basis of the results of standardised literacy assessment.* This decision was vindicated in the first round of interviews when more than half of the men indicated that *they did not want to be tested as they found it stressful and felt test results did not [and would not] benefit them.*

Statement of the problem

In the twelve years since I completed my doctoral thesis workplaces have changed. Machines, including robots, have replaced many lower-level repetitive jobs. For many prospective workers who did “not have the skills or education to enter the work force in any other capacity” (Nydegger & Enides, 2017, p. 200) these, now obsolete jobs were the key to steady employment and upward mobility.

Another major impact on workplaces has been the rise of globalisation, underpinned by digital technologies. While the Internet has enabled companies large and small to expand globally, access new products, markets and expertise, it has resulted in a smaller more frenetic workforce where jobs may be short term and less stable (Nydegger & Enides, 2017). These workforce conditions conform to government policies aiming to make Australia more “internationally competitive due to increased ‘flexibility’ of labour and individuals would be ‘free’ to negotiate individual conditions of employment directly with their employer” (Pick & Taylor, 2009, p. 74). A particular characteristic of the nine men interviewed, as part of my doctoral program, is the preference for steady long-term employment. Neither did most of

them seem at all interested in flexibility, in individually negotiating their conditions or improvement.

A major shift in work since 2005 has been the rise of the so-called gig economy “comprising primarily short-term independent freelance workers” (Kuhn, 2016, p. 157). Promoted as opportunities to work independently with the freedom of when and where to work, commentators sanction this new, Internet based phenomenon is little more than a neoliberal scheme for reducing and circumventing certainty, collective bargaining and industrial regulations in the workforce (Kuhn, 2016; Zwick, 2017).

These last two issues are contingent on some degree of computer/digital literacy. Nansen, Wilken, Arnold & Gibbs document the definitional shifts in the term “digital literacy”. However, they argue:

In Australia, increased levels of basic access to the internet, rapidly increasing penetration of digital technologies in households and widespread migration of commerce and services online have shifted the terms of the debate about digital literacy from instrumental literacy alone to a more nuanced position that takes account of semantic and social factors. (2013, p. 20)

The nine men in my study had a range of attitudes towards computers and other digital devices. One used computers at work every day but was suspicious of them. Another, with a friend, surfed the web to research occupational health issues. Still others were completely terrified of computers and completely rejected any thought of using them. All of them use circa 2000 mobile phones.

The workplaces of 2017 are different in many ways to the workplaces of 1999-2000. In particular the introduction of robots and other artificial intelligence devices and the explosion of digital technologies have obliterated the types of repetitive, low skill jobs that many of my participants were employed in. At the same time there has been increased emphasis on literacy tests and results. Figure 1 illustrates typical media headlines about literacy rates in Australia. From a sociologist’s perspective Payne (2008) demonstrates that media in the United Kingdom perpetuates similar ‘facts’ resulting in “a false impression of large numbers of people with low literacy” (2008, p. 222). Beyond media campaigns, Payne has also demonstrated how each media blitz about illiteracy resulted in a government policy response. Each policy is predicated on the most recent ‘shocking’ data.

50 per cent of Tasmanians illiterate

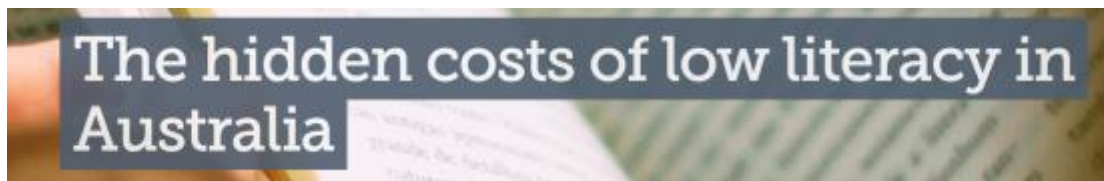
Posted 20 Feb 2014, 5:03pm

Tasmanian government figures show that at least half of the island state's population cannot read or write properly.

Source: Smith (2014) ABC News Online

Illiteracy rates: Australia's national shame

Source: King (2016). SBS Insight



Source: Badham (2013). The Guardian

Figure 1: Media headlines about illiteracy in Australia.

As Payne argues, this taken-for-granted data is nothing but a superficial reading of a much more complex problem. He found only one dissenting voice in the literacy debate, Alan Wells, Director of the Basic Skills Agency who noted, “It’s not true that one in five adults cannot read or write or use numbers”. The reality is that 1 in five adults tested in an international survey “came in the bottom group in literacy and numeracy” (Payne, 2008, p. 225). That is, on a scale of five, 50 per cent of the working age population scored at level three or below. To achieve these levels they were able to read and write something.

However, there is no literature on the impact the headlines, the policies and the community feelings have on the subjects of this data – the people who scored at these levels – who remain invisible (Riekmann & Buddeberg, 2014) in research. I know how hard it was to find nine of them in 1999. With dramatic changes in workplaces (outlined above) and increasing emphasis on “illiteracy” I believe that adults who score on the lowest levels of literacy tests would be less visible and much harder to find in 2017. This paper examines Australian documents published since 2005 that might exacerbate this issue, making the research I did very difficult or even impossible to do today.

The next section focuses on defining the literacy problem. Definitions of literacy, as they were in 2005, evidence a dichotomy of literacy as a social practice on one hand and a functional activity on the other.

Defining literacy

Literacy and its definition have been the source of debate and discussion for centuries. *Most literature around the topic focuses on a particular or specific discourse of literacy (Watson, Nicholson and Sharplin, 2001) that “enables the construction of reality in set ways, based on the values and assumptions of the ... writer. These definitions convey ideology” (Watson, Nicholson & Sharplin, 2001: 5). Ideological views define not only what literacy is, but also who is literate. Bartlett, investigating the literacy experiences of disadvantaged adolescents in Brazil, found that there was a commonly held belief in “a universally valued and valuable way of writing, reading or speaking [that has become] a powerful, pervasive literacy and language ideology” (2007, p. 550.*

Dominant amongst these [ideological] discourses are two groups that Watson, Nicholson and Sharplin (2001, p. 5) categorise as functional-economic discourse and social practice discourse. The term functional literacy, introduced by the US Census in 1947 (Kell, 2005) is a technical view of literacy. Originally it focused on the reading and writing skills necessary for fulfilling a particular function. However, Payne (2006) notes that it now has a broader meaning of the ability to function in society. This broadening has important implications in relation to the reporting of international literacy test results. Claims that a percentage of the adult working population do not have functional literacy and are struggling to cope with everyday life (currently 40% in Australia) are not borne out by a visit to any shopping centre

or supermarket. If four in every ten shoppers were struggling with everyday life there might be overt signs of distress. These do not seem to be apparent.

A social practice discourse helps to explain how individuals who could be assumed to struggle with the literacy demands of everyday life, such as the participants in my study, actually get by. This definition emphasises the social nature of literacy. That is, “what counts as literacy results from ongoing, complex sociocultural negotiations” (Bartlett, 2007 p. 548). Encounters with text in its numerous forms (print, icons, video, for example) are negotiated with one or more other people within specific situations. One participant, for example, explained how he negotiated the task of completing his drivers’ log book when he was a long haulage driver. Another spoke of the discomfort and distress he felt when food manufacturers changed the labels on cans and packets. The same man revealed that for years he was able to discuss current affairs in the crib room at work because he always caught the bus whose driver played the morning news on the radio. These examples, demonstrate the network of confidantes (Riekman & Buddeberg, 2014) that surround and support individuals who struggle with literacy.

Literacy Difficulties

Most definitions derive from the position of the definer and, as a result, *definitions of literacy act to include and privilege some and exclude others, becoming a powerful tool of ideological and social manipulation*. Data from this study indicated the degree to which participants felt such exclusion. Most were ashamed and confused (or had experienced years of shame and confusion when they were younger) about the difficulties they faced in functioning in the prose literate world promoted by policy makers and the media.

None of the men had a literacy difficulty that was the same as any of the others. One, for example was an excellent reader who could not comprehend what he had read. Another could read well, calculate with great speed and accuracy but could not spell. A third could read but really struggled to write in the complex legal language necessary for his job. Finally, a fourth had been so badly bullied at school that he lost his reading skills and in the course of the research had to be coaxed to write words as seemingly simple as ‘I’.

Literacy and identity

Literacy or the perception the nine men held about poor literacy had a direct impact on each of them. Data indicated that, in terms of behaviour, seven of the nine participants in my study were pleasant, co-operative and compliant in the workplace as they went about their daily tasks determinedly not drawing attention to themselves. The eighth was unable or unwilling to provide a source to triangulate his reported workplace behaviours. The ninth man self-reported a long history of fighting and non-compliance in the workplace. This behaviour and his transformation to a highly regarded employee was corroborated by a work supervisor.

All the men believed that society in general had no respect for non-readers/writers. This perspective had shaped their lives and their identity. For example, one preferred to go to takeaway shops with his brother-in-law because he could not read the menu. If he was on his own he always ordered fish and chips – a standard at most takeaway shops. At restaurants he carefully perused the menu and then ordered the same as his partner or someone sitting nearby. In some respects individuals who struggle with literacy feel their difficulties are magnified. As one man explained “*if people see you've got spelling mistakes on a bit of paper that you've written and signed, they think that you're an absolute dill*”.

Three common emotions amongst the participants were fear, pride and regret. All of them lived in fear of people knowing about their struggles with literacy. One, for example had worked in the same job for 20 years before he opened up to his workmates. What he didn't

realise that most of his colleagues had known about his struggles for many years but didn't let on because they liked him and appreciated the quality of and dedication to his work. Another was an aggressive troublemaker at school and for his first seventeen years at work. Then, when challenged by management to solve an enterprise problem, he found that his supervisors were happy to support him. He grew in stature as, with compassionate understanding he was able negotiate a range of literacies to demonstrate his skill and ability. These feelings are not uncommon. Rather Bartlett found that 'shame' is one of the words most frequently associated with 'illiteracy' (2007, p. 547). In the face of shame, embarrassment or fear these individuals internalise their difficulties, not wanting to share something that may be more common than they think with friends and work colleagues.

All were proud of the way they negotiated everyday life. This may have involved relying on family members to read important documents, read menus in takeaway venues, catching a bus to work that coincided with the morning news on the radio, or using the illustrations of grocery items to select the correct product. All were or had been married and spoke with great pride about how well their children had learnt to read.

Far from hiding at home, these men were active members of their communities. Some were engaged at executive level of local sporting groups while at least one was a health and safety activist, spending much of his free time researching (with a friend) solutions to dangerous workplace conditions. Some had attended adult literacy classes but none felt this had been particularly successful.

All were aware of the things they had either foregone or missed because of their literacy problems. They regretted opportunities missed, the relationships neglected and the time and energy they expended on hiding their literacy difficulties. However, the notion of regret was a factor that separated the group. Four of the men chose, when particular opportunities came along, not to allow their poor literacy to hold them back. Each decided to find a way to take new directions in their working lives by negotiating, often with a supportive mentor, a new workplace opportunity.

Theoretical underpinnings of the thesis

In 1996 my lecturer in a Master of Education unit by private study handed me a slim volume called "The Construction Zone: Working for cognitive change in school". My task was to read and review it. I couldn't believe that I was going to have such an easy semester – until I started reading it. Both the content and the language were very difficult to the extent that I started questioning my own literacy skills. It made me recall men my father had employed whom we knew could neither read nor write. I questioned how my struggles with the book paralleled their workplace experiences.

Newman, Griffith and Cole's little book was my introduction to the theoretical concepts of Lev Vygotsky. While many will associate Vygotsky with the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), it was another of Vygotsky's concepts that underpinned my doctoral studies. In essence Vygotsky argued that no one enters a ZPD with no learning. He contended that experience and interaction with the world will develop knowledge and skills that must be accounted for on entry into an expert-determined ZPD.

In the context of my doctoral studies and the nine men who participated, Vygotsky's argument meant that I could not ignore or take for granted the men's prior experiences. If all experiences result in skills or knowledge, then the concept of deficit does not exist. That is, the skills they had gained in negotiating a print literate world set them apart from those dependent on print literacy. They were/are "otherly" literate, using techniques and strategies that most people do not use.

At the time of writing the thesis, I was not aware of the extensive literature on ‘otherness’, deriving from Said’s (1979) work, so did not explore this aspect of my finding. However, it is clear that being accepted in the workplace as being an “otherly” literate individual, whose idiosyncratic skills and knowledge were valued and rewarded, seems to have been pivotal for those of the nine men who progressed through the ranks at work.

Literacy then becomes a dichotomous spectrum or continuum. At one end is the traditional functional concept where print literacy predominates and those, who for a variety of reasons cannot make sense of print, are maligned and blamed for society and economic ills. At the other end are the “otherly” literate, who use oracy, icons and other semiotics to make and convey meaning. Understandings of literacy at this end of the spectrum generally emerge from a *social practice discourse*. From this perspective literacy must be negotiated as a social construction. Essentially this means *that what counts as literacy in one cultural context may have little or no recognition in another setting*.

Post-2005 changes to work, workplaces and policy

The nature of work and workplaces has changed dramatically since 2005, influenced by globalisation and the unremitting development of digital platforms and Internet technologies. Employment has inexorably shifted from permanent to contract or casual. One perspective of this transition is that casual positions are “poor-quality jobs, insecure, poorly paid and with few long-term prospects for career advancement” (Watson, 2013, p. 2). The short-term nature of these positions will not provide the time workers with literacy difficulties need to establish safe relationships conducive to learning, as demonstrated in my study.

The way we work has also changed. McMillan (2016) reported that 40 percent of Australians felt that globalisation and digital technologies had changed the way they worked. For some workers these changes were stressful. However, there is no empirical data on how individuals who struggle with print literacy would cope in this changed environment.

In reviewing some reports on how Australian workers and industries need to keep up with the fast pace of change I have chosen two approaches. First, as I read I tried to think how the nine men would respond to the report. Do I recognise them in the terms that the reports use to describe workers, particularly those with poor literacy? Second, I tried to determine if the report was taking a functional or social practice approach to the workers they describe.

In the following section each report is introduced briefly. This is followed by an analysis using the two approaches as described.

Australia’s Future Workforce

Released by the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) in 2015, this report is premised on the notion that “technology is going to dramatically reshape our workforce ... and the nation’s ability to rapidly adapt to technological change, and even more importantly innovate, will be paramount for job creation and our future economic success” (Martin, 2015, p. 7). Acknowledging that technological innovation is occurring so fast that many future jobs do not currently exist, the report examines how Australia can develop new industries and jobs in a digitised, globalised market. The report makes no direct reference to literacy beyond digital literacy. However, it does nominate the types of jobs that will not survive the introduction of machine intelligence. “Jobs that involve low levels of social interaction, low levels of creativity, or low levels of mobility and dexterity [and might typically be undertaken by workers with low literacy] are more likely to be replaced by automation” (CEDA, 2015, p. 25). The two significant cohorts most impacted by this finding are older men who have been made redundant from heavy industries and youths “who have little skills or work experience” (p. 25) and lack educational attainment.

This is an interesting report. It clearly has a specific cohort I mind, particularly when nominating which jobs will be lost. Strange then that the authors could not suggest ways of helping to make these workers fit for work in new digital workplaces. I believe that the tone of this report would be quite depressing for the nine participants in my study.

Essentially this report takes a *functional* approach to work skills, including literacy. There is an implicit assumption that older workers who have worked in low skilled occupations or younger workers with low skill levels are incapable of learning skills for the digital age.

National Foundations Skills Strategy for Adult (+ ACAL response)

In its opening paragraph this 2012 Australian Government report defines foundation skills in two strands -

- “English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) – listening, speaking, reading, writing, digital literacy and use of mathematical ideas; and
- Employability skills, such as collaboration, problem solving, self-management, learning and information and communication technology (ICT) skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life” (SCOTese, 2012, p. 3).

The report then asserts that workers with these skills “are more likely to be employed, participate in their community, experience better health and engage in further training” (p. 3). If this is indeed the case then workers who do not have good foundations skills must be more likely to be unemployed, be isolated from the community, experience poor health and refrain from further training. None of the men interviewed for my project match this description. None had been unemployed for long periods. At least two had been in the same job for at least ten to 20 years. All were active in the community and none had ongoing health issues.

While grouping foundation skills might seem useful, there is no acknowledgement that outstanding expertise in one or more area may compensate for low skill in another. For example, one man in my study who really struggled with literacy was a great communicator and excelled at Mathematics.

Like other reports, this one follows the line that in the future workers will need high levels of digital literacy, although this level is never defined. It is tempting to argue that individuals with poor literacy will struggle in the digital revolution. However, digital technology is an enabling technology. The capacity to ‘ask Siri’, convert text to speech, customize maps and communicate using emoticons, means that there are new and exciting ways for individuals who struggle with literacy to participate and engage in work and society. One of the men in the study changed to a job that required him to report on health and safety issues. He explained that because the issues had to be explained in particular legal phrases he only need to enter a code for the correct words to be embedded in his report. Since numbers were no problem to him, writing workplace reports was reasonably easy.

The premise underpinning the national skills strategy is to build foundation skills (as defined by adult literacy tests) to benefit both the worker and the employer. This aspiration, noble as it may be, could be negatively impacted by two factors. First, there is no guarantee that the benefits to the worker and the benefits to the employer align. Employers most often want to reduce costs and improve productivity. Workers, on the other hand are reluctant to reveal that they need help to develop literacy or foundation skills. Every moment at work was focused on not letting their employer know that they could not read. One of the men in the study, for example, was so frightened of his co-workers discovering his struggles with literacy that he accepted tuition only because it was available in the privacy of his own home.

Second, the timeframes for the two parties may differ markedly. Policy makers tend to assume that individuals can demonstrate improvements in definable time frames, usually a few hours to a few weeks. Data from the study indicated that the men were keen to learn a range of skills—'fundamental' or workplace. However, many noted that they needed several months of patient tutoring with many, many errors and repetition. They were grateful to the colleagues, supervisors and tutors who had the patience and fortitude to persevere. One supervisor noted that tutoring was very frustrating but ultimately very rewarding, as achieving even the smallest goal motivated the worker to achieve more.

One of the major problems with this report is the often stated assumption that improved literacy will improve productivity. In a response to National Foundations Skills Strategy for Adult ACAL notes that this numerical relationship is unclear, confusing and may "add to the stigma that the Strategy is trying to remove" (ACAL, 2012, n. p).

In addition, ACAL notes that other research indicates that having low foundation skills does not preclude individuals from being productive workers, supporting the national economic growth by undertaking the repetitive tasks more educated workers disdain. This argument fits the findings of my study. All of the men were keen to work and were proud of the contribution they made to the local enterprise and the community. Their positive attitude towards work and their work team negates the notion of deficit implied by the link made between foundation skills (usually literacy levels) and productivity.

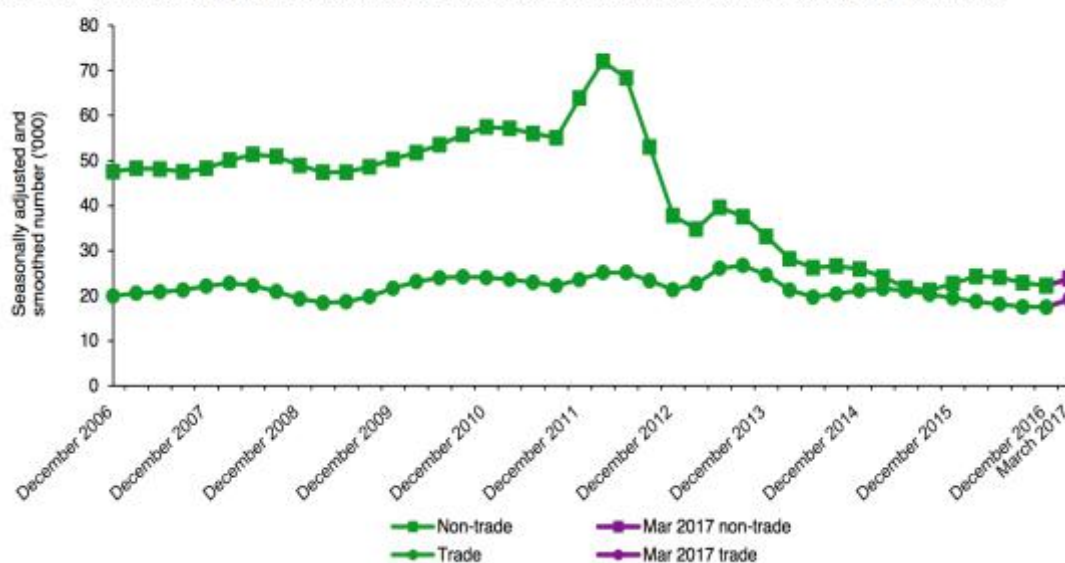
In conclusion, although the Strategy commences with what seems to be a social practice discourse, it is premised on a functional notion of foundations skills, generally referring to literacy. The Strategy relies on unsubstantiated assumptions about a supposed link between literacy and productivity. Further, the Strategy promises collaboration and co-operation between federal and state governments, unions and employers without setting out how this will be achieved or financed. Finally, as ACAL articulates, the only measure of achievement appears to be statistical results from national and international standardized tests. No funding was made available to evaluate the experience of workers, employers, unions and governments in implementing the Strategy.

A Shared Responsibility: Apprenticeships for the 21st Century

In 2011 an expert panel reported on ways to improve the system of apprenticeships, which was based on an old English model that had served Australia well for generations. A pivotal point was the high percentage of non-completions from registered apprenticeship programs and the high cost to taxpayers of government incentives to employers. The report proposed two categories of apprenticeships—skilled (including traditional trades) and non-skill (including "hospitality, clerical and administrative workers, sales workers, machinery operators and drivers, and labourers occupations)" (McDowell, 2011, p. 57). The panel argues that since non-skilled occupations are usually learnt on the job, there was no reason for government to fund this training. Although the report mentioned special funding for four disadvantaged groups, including those with poor literacy, there is little evidence that this recommendation was ever implemented.

Since the release of this report the situation for apprentices has deteriorated markedly, as evidence in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Trades and non-trades commencements, seasonally adjusted and smoothed, December 2006 – March 2017



The men in my study who had completed apprenticeships had done so prior to the release of this report. None of those reported any special considerations due to their literacy difficulties. Typically they directed a great deal of their energies into concealing those difficulties from fellow students and teachers. Where an employer or teacher became aware or the struggles, they were supported and encouraged.

The issue of finding training in workplace skills and literacy was important. Several men, employed at a large Australian enterprise commented that literacy tutoring was available as long as the Australian government funded the tutors. As soon as the funding ceased, classes ceased.

With this experience the decline shown in Figure 1 should not be a surprise. The notion that employers would fund non-skilled apprenticeships and open apprenticeships and traineeships to the open market has proved costly and deleterious in many cases. The lowest ebb occurred in 2015 when the federal government abolished:

- The National Workforce Development Fund, designed to help employers fund skills upgrade training opportunities;
- The Workplace English Language and Literacy program, aimed at part funding enterprises to provide training for workers with poor literacy or poor English language skills’
- Australian Apprenticeships Access Program, a well-rated but problematic program to assist youths from disadvantaged groups to access work-related programs;
- Apprenticeships Mentoring Program to assist new unskilled employees to develop appropriate work skills.

In 2016 the notion of an apprentice had changed. Increasingly apprentices are 25 years old or older (NCVER, 2016), a trend previously by McDowell, 2011). Several of the men in my study were workers who had been made redundant and were retraining for newer jobs. It is unlikely that the kind of worker, particularly those in the study who occupied unskilled positions in heavy industry, would be likely to gain one of these apprenticeships due to their literacy difficulties.

Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy

Over the last decade report after report has drawn attention to the role of Australian workplaces and workers in a global workplace. Implicit in these discussions are the needs for “a skilled and flexible workforce” (McDowell, 2011, p.9). The definition of the skills and flexibility is not clear. Nor is it clear how and where these skills and flexibility are gained. Businesses, for example “regard suitable workers as those who have the technical skills as well as the experience to do the job and the soft skills needed in every workplace, like communication skills and teamwork” (Australian Government, 2017, p.4). Clearly they believe they have no role in educating and training the workforce. However, policy around apprenticeships over the last decade has reduced the role of government and TAFE colleges and placed importance on private providers.

Discussions around the current and future workforce rarely mention individuals with poor literacy skills. Employers would prefer that school leavers had adequate literacy and the government is searching for ways to improve results on national and international standardised literacy assessments. The element that is missing is any understanding that a percentage of the population will fail to gain functional literacy skills under current pedagogies.

Could my study be replicated in 2017?

Before answering this question it is important to ask if there is a place for this study in 2017. Accurate empirical data on the prevalence of literacy difficulties are not available due to multiple and competing terminology and definitions of literacy and literacy difficulties, masking effects and a reliance on anecdotal reporting (van Viersen, Kroesbergen, Slot & de Bree, 2016). Estimates of the prevalence of literacy difficulties around the world range from 5 percent to 20 percent of the population, depending on the issues mentioned above. It is therefore safe to assume that there are workers or prospective workers who struggle with the literacy skills required at work.

Despite the contention that more than 40 percent of the Australian population lack functional literacy²⁴ the people that we come across in the course of our daily lives seem to be coping with and surviving in a print literacy saturated environment. As van Viersen and colleagues (2016) note, within any population there are individuals who struggle with literacy. They are in sporting clubs, supermarkets and in a range of workplaces. Twelve years after the submission of my doctoral thesis these people are functioning to varying extents in more globalised and digitised workplaces. It would be good to investigate whether ubiquitous digital devices help or hinder individuals who struggle with literacy. Replicating my study would help industry, policymakers and academics understand how “otherly” literate workers cope and achieve under these conditions.

One outcome of Bartlett’s (2007) study was the question: “what is accomplished through the micropolitics of shame and shaming?” (p. 547) people who struggle with literacy. One wonders why politicians and some media outlet so easily imply individual responsibility for a problem that in many cases is probably out of the worker’s control. However, I believe the fear of humiliation and ridicule engendered by political and media responses to adult literacy surveys act only to secrete such workers in small but secure networks, that is, if they can obtain paid, regular work. Using a single point of delineation, a single measure, to determine literacy or illiteracy denies the socially constructed and contextual nature of literacy and learning, assigns deficiency and rejects notions of diversity.

²⁴ This contention is challenged by Black and Yasujawa (2014) who argue that the criterion that determine the Level 3 standard are not based on empirical research and may have been confected.

In an era of increased casualisation and rolling contracts, there is simply not the time nor the place for workers with poor literacy to find and work with workplace mentors and tutors. All the men in my study cited the time to develop relationships as important and those who did not have that time either stagnated or reduced their work commitments.

Reductions to VET courses, content and course completion times and the emergence of registered training organisations (RTOs) and private providers has limited the options of prospective apprentices who struggle with literacy. Participants in my study who completed apprenticeships cited the benefits of learning in an environment that allowed the time for learning to occur as a result of many repetitions, encouraged by caring trained teachers. Under a model of pushing students through in minimum time, this would not be possible.

Finally, there are fewer apprenticeships. Without government funding many smaller enterprises which traditionally trained apprentices, particularly in the construction industry, can no longer afford to take on apprentices. In addition larger enterprises that typically trained many apprentices, particularly in heavy industries such as motor vehicle manufacture no longer exist. Employers, themselves new to digital technologies, are demanding that new employees arrive skilled and work-ready—no time for apprenticeships.

Relationship between policy and research

Predominantly the policies reviewed refer to individuals who have literacy difficulties, from a functionalist perspective. They attribute deficit to individuals. As I found when researching my topic this perspective comes with a number of generally accepted but not proven assumptions. I noted that in *policy documents literacy is represented “as a codeword for other concerns and anxieties in public debate” (Green, Hodgins and Luke, 1997: 13) such as unemployment, homelessness and low productivity—factors that are said to impact on national economic wellbeing.* These concerns and anxieties still exist with the added complications of a global, digitised market place.

The presumed and assumed link between literacy and national productivity has been an ongoing feature of government reports and policy in the UK, USA and Australia since the early 1990s (Castleton, 2002), but there is little empirical data to support this contention.

A functional perspective on literacy that characterises (illiterate) individuals as the perpetrators of this ill on society results in policies that seek to remediate the deficit. Increasingly remedial activities suffer from reduced time frames and reduced budgets. It seems that viewing “otherly” literate people from a functionalist perspective has continued and perhaps has been exacerbated since the first decade of the century. It may well drive individuals struggling with print literacy further underground, hiding their secret shame from their work colleagues, if they are lucky enough to have a job. Under these conditions it would be very difficult to recruit participants to a study similar to mine.

A social discourse approach to investigating literacy difficulties, on the other hand, sheds a more positive light on the “otherly” literate. It demonstrates how literacy contextualised to a particular setting, supported by mentors who recognise and support other literacies allows the “otherly” literate to achieve and gain positive recognition in the workplace. Yet government policy and the research it generates is solely on the economic benefit or otherwise of policies that continue to erode the opportunities for workers who struggle with literacy.

Increasingly research has a statistical focus as Black and Yasukawa’s (2014) commentary notes. The need to measure to classify and to categorise based on numbers or scores is undermining the voices of the research focus. Since qualitative research on the “otherly” literate is unlikely to result in a marketable product, it is unlike that the Australian

government will commission or read the stories of men who succeed despite struggling with literacy.

Could my research be replicated today? I doubt it. Even if it were I doubt that any policy makers or industry stakeholders would be interested in it.

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Non-peer-reviewed short articles

Developing a Healthy Indigenous Workforce – *Ready 4 Djama*

Angela Nolan, Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation

Ready 4 Djama is a ready for work program; Djama means work in Yolŋu Matha the local language of Arnhem Land. The Arnhem Land Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA) has forty-five years' experience in training and education and during this time identified that there is no word for measure in Australian indigenous languages; indigenous people comprehend big and small however require specific underpinning knowledge involving the concept of measure. Therefore, there are problems when developing the skills for the workplace, especially now that ALPA has diversified into community enterprises by creating indigenous businesses in construction, accommodation and cabinetry.

The Training Department developed a program to address the language literacy and numeracy (LLN) needs for the indigenous participants to work effectively in the workplace with a focus on measurement and employability skills called Ready 4 Djama.

The program starts with individual LLN assessments using the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) levels and information regarding the participants training, experiences and work interests to inform the facilitator regarding specific needs of the participants and to identify appropriate work placement.

The program explores the cultural dimensions of measurement and begins with specific investigation into the participant's frame of reference and the implications for using measurement in the workplace. The participants are familiarised with units of measure and how measurement is applied practically in everyday life. The participants are given the opportunity to use a range of measuring tools and the applications of precise and accurate measuring verses estimating and guessing.

The first week of the program takes the participants into the various workplaces to identify the various tasks and the language literacy and numeracy skills required to perform the tasks. The participants are asked to determine the measurement skills that are required and various hands on activities and work sheets are completed back in the training room. Once the participants understand the need to learn language literacy and numeracy, the levels of engagement are extremely positive.

A crucial element to the success of this program has been to engage an indigenous co-facilitator with fluent English and the cultural language. During the program, time is allocated to translate key workplace words from the cultural language to English and participants are engaged in detailed discussions to establish the required comprehension. The words are documented on a whiteboard and collected during the five week program for easy reference. During this process the participants are training the trainer and therefore breaking down cultural barriers.

The *Ready 4 Djama* program is a five week program designed to provide an orientation to workplace culture and organisational procedures with an emphasis on underpinning literacy & numeracy skills, aiming to support an effective transition into the workplace.

The program can be tailored to specific industry requirements and Foundation skills units can be offered to provide an accredited program.

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www.alparetailtraining.wikispaces.com

www.alpa.asn.au

Developing a Healthy Indigenous Workforce – Nutrition

Tracey Fitzgibbon, Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation

The two main causes of death amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders are Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes. Both diseases can be delayed if not prevented by certain lifestyle factors. These factors include eating a healthy diet and losing weight (if overweight). Trying to understand what is healthy and what isn't healthy can be quite confusing and even more difficult for someone whose language doesn't include the word 'measurement'.

The best way to understand if a food is healthy or not is to look at the nutrition panel, unfortunately these labels can be very confusing and tricky to understand. Often we don't have the time to spend trying to work out what they mean and how to use them. Knowing what nutrition information to look for, can help the consumer make the best choice for their health and avoid unnecessary saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and kilojoules.

As part of the *Advice on Nutritional Products and Services* (The Good Food Person workbook) it was important for students to understand nutrition panels and then be able to assist our customers in interpreting them. As well as learning about food labels the workbook contains a number of activities and projects that focuses on building nutrition displays and developing cooking skills. ALPA delivers on the job training and assessment which allows us the opportunity to incorporate many practical activities for the learner while embedding Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN).

To help develop product knowledge of sugar in soft drinks and juices the workbook includes an activity that allows students to compare at least four products including a soft drink, diet soft drink, and juice. Once the student finds the grams of sugar in the drink they will then measure out the amount of sugar in the product to create a 'sugar display'. This helps the students visualise how much sugar is in the product and decide if it is a healthy choice.

This activity conversely teaches the student about food advertisement and to look past the packaging of a product and the health statements and focus on the facts on the nutrition panel. The sugar display can then be a great tool for the Good Food Person to explain to customers which drinks are lower in sugar and therefore better for their health.

Another great way for our students to learn about health is to work hands on with the trainer. The students build healthy displays in store and complete cooking demonstrations. One of the reasons the activities were developed is so the students could learn in their own work environment. Supermarkets generally don't focus on nutrition. Yet they can easily influence customers buying habits.

Unfortunately many mainstream health resources can be confusing. Because of this ALPA also created their own resource book that students can refer to while working through the workbook. The resource book uses a number of pictures that help make nutrition easier to learn and understand.

Show Me the Money

Marc Brierty, Melbourne Polytechnic

Show Me the Money is a presentation based around students being able to successfully complete a number of English as an Additional Language (EAL) Framework Curriculum units simultaneously, and is an example of how teachers can incorporate theme-based project activities into their learning programs. The oral presentation modules in Certificates III and IV in EAL (Further Study) are compulsory core units that students normally complete in Semester 1 each year.

This is the list of modules:

- VU21499 Give straightforward oral presentations for Further Study (Cert III)
- VU21508 Give complex presentations for Further Study (Cert IV)
- VU21510 Take notes from complex aural texts for FS (Cert IV)
- VU21503 Listen and take notes for research (Cert III)
- VU21473 Investigate Australian art and culture (Cert III)

The emphasis is on establishing an active group-learning environment and providing a springboard from which to develop the key employability skills of teamwork, planning, organizing, communication, self-management and computer research. Realia - Australian bank notes and coins - are used in class to stimulate interest and maintain authenticity. The activity also covers elements of Australian art, culture and history, numeracy and Workplace Integrated Learning (WIL). Students are encouraged to go beyond the classroom into their communities, to their families and friends. The project gives them a topic of everyday interest to talk about with native speakers, and this gives them confidence in conversation that they frequently lack. (See examples of idioms, proverbs, clichés, and jargon on money – pages of them!) Students have commented that they have felt proud to be able to teach their family and friends about the famous people on Australian currency.

The assessment activity incorporates Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing and Researching. Once it is established, the project runs on a weekly basis throughout the semester. Students learn that Melbourne is the home of plastic notes (known formally as polymer notes) and appreciate that money really does make the world go round and is a theme that permeates so many facets of life.

Project Based Learning (PBL) has strong theoretical and practical foundations, and there are a number of essential elements that should be followed to ensure the success of the project and maximize student learning. John Larmer, John Mergendoller and Suzie Boss (ASCD 2015) point out that teachers and students need a challenging problem or question that will be meaningful for students. Inquiry needs to be sustained and not just 'a looking something up' in a book or online. Projects need to include different information sources, mixing the traditional ideas of research with field-based interviews with experts and users. The authors explain that PBL needs to be authentic as this increases student learning and motivation.

Teachers and students need to find projects that involve the use of real world processes, tasks and tools. In this way, a project can speak to the students' concerns, interests, cultures identities and issues in their lives. The student voice and choice creates a sense of ownership and ultimately this motivates students to go further. Project Based Learning should also involve reflection which needs to go on throughout the process of the project. This is possible both formally and informally as part of the setting up phase, the assessment phase and the final debriefing phase between students and teachers. A planning calendar and

details need to be carefully discussed on a white board so that all students are fully aware when milestone dates need to be met.

From the beginning of a project students need to be informed clearly about how the assessment will take place between the learner and the teacher. Students will need to be directed on how to give and receive constructive feedback from fellow classmates as well as the teacher involved, and to be aware that self-assessment is a valuable tool for reflection and revision. This also helps students to evaluate the results of their learning.

PBL projects also lend themselves to being exhibited in the school community and with the public at large. Projects displayed in hallways and on display boards in schools share the fruits of learning and build a greater understanding of PBL. Other students, teachers, administrators and members of the public have the opportunity to see the work that is being done and this opens up new conversations among the learning community as well providing models of acceptable standards of work.

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Indigenous Knowledge on Disaster Preparedness of the Dibabawon and Mangguangan Tribes in Montevista, Compostela Valley, Philippines

Gladys Florangel I. Ortiz, University of Southeastern Philippines

The study was conducted with Dibabawon and Mangguangan tribes in Montevista, Compostela Valley, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to determine the disasters they have experienced, their preparations for a disaster, the tribes' beliefs and observations on what activities/phenomena foretell disasters, the effects of these disasters on their families and communities, and their social networks during the disaster. Focus group discussions were conducted to gather the data. Secondary sources were also used. Results showed that unusual behavior of animals such as the brown turtledoves, hornbill, dogs, frogs, and chicken as well as the crickets, centipedes, and worms foretell disasters. Changes in texture, volume, color in trees as well as movement of rocks and soil warn of imminent disasters. Villagers construct some structures to keep them safe during disasters. Moreover, landslides and flashfloods occurred in their respective areas during typhoons and heavy rains.

As a result, many people lost their houses and farm animals and suffered from hunger and sickness. The study shows that each of the barangays (village) has organized their respective Barangay Tribal Council of Elders and Leaders (BTCL) to manage the affairs of the indigenous peoples in the barangay, including disaster management. The BTCLs have developed a system before, during and after a disaster. A *panawag-tawag* or calling of the good spirits is held when disasters have no casualties.

However the study also indicated that exposure to mainstream culture has contributed to an erosion of this indigenous knowledge among the Dibabawons and Manguangans, making disaster preparedness a challenge as older knowledges are not incorporated and renewed in more contemporary disaster planning practices.

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Indigenous Knowledge on Disaster Preparedness of the Tagakaulo in Malita, Davao Occidental, Philippines

Mary Grace Z. Agbas, University of Southeastern Philippines

This study explores the indigenous knowledge on disaster preparedness of the Tagakaulo peoples of Malita, Philippines. In living off these ecosystems, indigenous peoples have been observing the changes in the amount of rainfall, temperature and changes in season. The study sought to explain the disasters they have experienced, effects of these disasters on their families, social networks of the Tagakaulo during the calamity and probable reasons of indigenous knowledge' erosion.

Qualitative data was gathered through key informant interviews and focused group discussions. It also utilized secondary source data drawn from published materials.

Analysis of the data indicated that the observation of animal behaviors, heavenly bodies' movements, and the gifted people (anitoan) were very important in predicting the occurrence of a certain calamity. More so, Tagakaulo social networking had developed actual actions to respond to and manage disasters.

Thus, the significant contribution of this study to mainstream research is the knowledge the Tagakaulo of Malita draw on to support their livelihoods and disseminating this information to a wider audience enables mainstream audiences and educators to understand the importance of local knowledges for sustainable livelihoods.

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Can Australia learn from our colleagues across the ditch? ²⁵

Lindee Conway, Melbourne Polytechnic and David Do, Tertiary Education Commission, NZ

Both Australia and New Zealand have policies seeking to facilitate improved personal satisfaction and employability through foundation skills training (SCOTESE -Aust Gov, 2012) (NZ-TEC, 2015). The value of mastering basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy and spoken language – for personal satisfaction – is something that ACAL members understand viscerally (Golding & Foley, 2011) (Mayer, 2016). In addition to the importance of personal development, on both sides of the Tasman less than optimal English-language, literacy and numeracy skills have been linked to long-term unemployment and low productivity.

Evidence for this is to be found in the Organisation for Economic & Community Development's (OECD's) Survey of Adult Skills. Round One of the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC, often called *The Survey of Adult Skills*,) was conducted in 2011-2012 with both Australia and New Zealand's participation. New Zealand participated in Round Two in 2015; Australia took a different approach – to continue to fund projects linked to our National Foundation Skills Strategy (Wignall, 2015; Yasukawa & Black, 2016).

Lindee's interest in our neighbour's approach was piqued when she attended the Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL) conference in Hobart in 2012. New Zealand educators displayed an A1 sized poster with the following message: *Knowing the learner, Knowing the demands, Knowing what to do.*

In her experience as an educator, 'knowing the demands' usually meant knowing when an assessment describing learner gains was due to be sent to a data-base to trigger payment, or meet a contractual requirement. Linking the learner, the demands – whether those triggered by learner or by a State or Federal Government and, best of all, knowing what to do about it seemed (and remains) deeply attractive.

The International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS, 2017) allowed Lindee to travel there on a Fellowship, in early 2016. This was a wonderful opportunity. She visited ten education providers, Higher Education, Dual Sector and Community Education Providers from north to south. This gave her the chance to observe and listen to educators' views on how New Zealand's integrated policies on adult Foundation Skills worked in the classroom and staffroom.

'I got home and my young brother came home from school, really upset. He said, 'They gave me some maths homework and I don't even understand how to start.'

After a life of thinking, *Well, I can't help*, I said to him, 'Okay, let's sit down – **together** – and have a go at it – **together**.' Learner, Literacy Waikato, Hamilton NZ, 2015



²⁵ This paper provides an overview of Lindee Conway's Fellowship findings and New Zealand's system for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Lindee also met with staff at the New Zealand Centre for Education Research and the Tertiary Education Commission (invitations to meet with members of Australian Government Departments is *not* the norm for her). So, her learning about the cohesive strategy was broad and lasting. Lindee's interest in seeking a Fellowship came out of an abiding interest in formal assessment protocols and triggers. So, she went to New Zealand with this uppermost in mind, but the 'whole-of-sector' approach implemented there afforded her a much broader understanding of integrated teaching preparation, professional development, learning and assessment.

Fellowship recommendations for Australian Governments

1. Establish a working group to evaluate the benefits from the creation of Excellence Centres for Adult Foundation Studies and VET learning, such as those in New Zealand (for example the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults at Waikato University and AKO-Aotearoa at Massey University).
2. A funded research program and professional development opportunities for educators would greatly assist with meeting the complexities of contracts described in this report. It may also assist with workforce issues for educators by offering support in new ways of LLN teaching and learning.
3. Support the establishment of a data collection environment – using one single framework to ensure that Australia is able to capture its gains in adult English-language, Literacy and Numeracy acquisition. Having one framework, with one set of indicators or protocols (for example the ACSF would simplify reporting for educators and most likely assist learners' understanding of their skills and gaps (SCOTESE -Aust Gov, 2012).
4. Investigate the utility of providing free Foundation Studies learning opportunities for adults with LLN needs, such as online services and free adult community providers (such as Victoria's Learn Local), similar to the Literacy Aotearoa provision (VIC-DET, 2017) (Literacy Aotearoa, 2012).
5. Evaluate the benefits of allowing a longer time for learners to achieve their aspirations according to their entry levels. Trial this at public and not-for-profit Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in order to ensure control over funding and enrolments.
6. Support a change in policy, which would enable learners to sit Foundation Studies assessments after enrolment and commencement, not before enrolment. Trial this at public and not-for-profit RTOs.
7. Establish research around this policy change in relation to learner retention and learner success in formal learning.

Fellowship Recommendations for Foundation Studies Providers

1. Support the trial of on-screen, adaptive assessment tools for the placement of Foundation Studies learners. Currently, most Foundation Studies providers use a pen and paper approach to Foundation Studies pre-course assessment activities. These take time and are, all too often about ensuring that evidence is gathered for regulatory reasons, not for ensuring the learner has understood where their skills lie or to identify gaps. If providers used adaptive testing for learners they could, then, spend the one-on-one time, between educator and potential learner to discuss the learner's aspirations and concerns. The process between educator and learner could then include a plan for each learner's post-Foundation Studies training.

2. Establish learner-centred assessment processes, which include explicit information to the learners about why any assessment is being conducted and what they can learn about their skills from completing it.
3. Establish Communities of Practice to translate, or map, assessment requirements for auditing purposes to learner-centred activities. Some education providers do this extremely well already, but it isn't universal. This activity would bring the reasons for enrolment to be the focus of the relationship between learners and educators.
4. Publish and celebrate learners' achievements as much as possible.

New Zealand's world-leading programme of system change since 2009

(Click on the hyperlinks to learn more)

New Zealand's literacy and numeracy work programme has successfully transformed their approach to raising adult literacy and numeracy skills for a knowledge-based economy.

Considerable progress has been made in establishing the conditions, capability and infrastructure required to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills. The government's focus has been on improving the quality of teaching in foundation-level learning (levels 1 to 3 of the NZ Qualifications Framework – broadly comparable to the equivalent AQF levels).

Responsive government stewardship of the education system has increased the toolkit for educators and outcomes for learners. Their programme has five main components which work coherently together, outlined below. The current [Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy](#) continues this approach.

<i>Government direction and goals</i>		
<i>Concept of embedded literacy and numeracy</i>		
<i>Developing a high quality national infrastructure to support educators</i>	<i>Creating more learning opportunities through funding</i>	<i>Building sector capability through professional development for the tertiary workforce</i>

Embedded literacy and numeracy

The system change programme and tools centre on embedded literacy and numeracy. This [concept](#) is best practice and combines the development of literacy and numeracy skills with the development of vocational and other skills. It makes the learning real and relevant for the learner, and therefore learners are more likely to engage and gain as a result.

Building a national educational infrastructure

New Zealand's tools equip educators and save them time so they can tailor and focus on the teaching that will make the most difference for learners. Since 2008, New Zealand has moved:

From	To
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no nationally recognised diagnostic assessment to assess learner skills or reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved learner and educator satisfaction • better learner goal-setting and

<p>learner progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few trained and qualified educators 	<p>progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a national infrastructure now in place, widely accepted and used, and maturing well • more educators have teaching qualifications than ever before • expanding the usage and value of this educational infrastructure through fine-tuning and enhancement.
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There are three major parts of this infrastructure:

The Learning Progressions are a [standardised theoretical framework](#) of literacy and numeracy skills developed in 2009 which provide a common language to describe competencies and shape teaching. The framework provides levels and descriptors of capability in a range of skills. These descriptors are used across almost all New Zealand providers and provide a common language. They also contain teaching resources sample lesson plans and assessment responses.

The government has also recently produced [employer-friendly translations](#) of these resources, which show more clearly what a learner/employee knows and can do at each level of the Progressions.

The Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (Assessment Tool) – an adaptive assessment tool for learners’ placement. The beauty of this tool is that is used post-enrolment. It doesn’t act as a gate-keeping device to prevent enrolment. This discovery is Lindee’s single-most and abiding delight of her time in New Zealand.

Key features and benefits of the Assessment Tool include:

- instant reliable robust measurement of students' skills. Teachers can then target or prioritise their teaching with a particular learner or group of learners.
- adaptive online assessment leads to accurate results. No marking is required and information-rich individual and group reports are available immediately.
- when the results are used to inform goal-setting or individual learning plans, learners better understand where they are and where they can go next in learning.
- Tool results are portable and travel with the learner (linked to their National Student Number). This means if a learner enrolls with another tertiary provider they will be assessed and taught using the same literacy and numeracy tools. This also helps ensure consistent support and measurement of progress over a learners' life-course in education and training.
- additional ‘options’ (or customised question sets) have been added to make it easier to help diverse learners (youth, Māori, and ESOL) improve their skills.

Pathways Awarua – a n online self-directed literacy and numeracy [game-like learning tool](#) made up of pathways of modules for learners to complete at their own pace, based on the competencies set out in the Learning Progressions. It’s fun, visual, engaging and provides immediate customised feedback. The modules in Pathways Awarua add 'extra hours of learning' because the learner is often motivated to keep learning outside of class. [Research confirms](#) the tool is highly valued by learners and educators.

As well as literacy and numeracy pathways, the government has funded the development of additional pathways which apply literacy and numeracy skills to specific contexts like: preparing to sit a [learner driver's licence](#) or [heavy vehicle/forklift](#) licence test; workplace [health and safety](#); commonly used words/vocabulary for particular vocations; and financial capability.

Creating more learning opportunities

The New Zealand government funds literacy and numeracy learning opportunities through:

- [general foundation-level teaching and learning funds](#) at NZ Qualifications Framework Levels 1-3 where embedded literacy and numeracy is a requirement of courses, and
- [specific literacy and numeracy funds](#) (such as funds targeted towards workplaces, adults with low literacy and numeracy skills, ESOL learners, and refugees).

Classes and training supported by these funds must make use of the educational infrastructure and sector capability support provided.

In the first years of this system change programme (2008-2012), the government provided 'literacy and numeracy top-up' funding for every enrolled student to help tertiary providers build their capacity to embed literacy and numeracy. This included setting up communities of learning for educators, ensuring institutions' systems incorporated the new national infrastructure, and professional development for staff. This top-up funding ended after 2012 as the government expected all providers to be embedding literacy and numeracy as 'business as usual'. In reality, the extent of 'business as usual' varies – government continues to signal, push, and nudge providers to step up their game.

Since 2008, New Zealand has moved:

From	To
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few specific opportunities to learn, and only a small group of TEOs accepting that improving literacy and numeracy should be part of their provision • limited knowledge about literacy and numeracy, little common understanding about the components of literacy and numeracy, and very little embedding of literacy and numeracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most TEOs in foundation-level education embedding literacy and numeracy as 'business-as-usual' • most foundation-level classes including embedded literacy and numeracy in their delivery • specific literacy and numeracy funds performing well in helping learners.

Our funded courses in workplaces are also seeing considerable success. Our Workplace Literacy and Numeracy fund supports employers to provide literacy and numeracy programmes inside their workplaces to improve productivity and skills. For more, read these employer [case studies](#) from the Skills Highway website, past [Skills Highway Award winners](#) stories, [case studies](#) of how to teach key skills effectively, and video stories of [successful embedding](#) in a range of teaching contexts.

Building sector capability

New Zealand's approach has substantially developed sector and educator capability to teach and embed literacy and numeracy effectively. Professional development and other sector capability support is designed to help educators use the educational infrastructure effectively in the learning opportunities that are funded by government. It is designed to help educators find out about good theory and then apply it.

Funding is made available for professional development opportunities, to supplement the investments tertiary providers [should already be making](#) in their staff. Literacy and numeracy expertise is now widely known throughout the sector and freely available. Educators and organisations take up the opportunities to build capability, although uptake could be higher. These [opportunities](#) include:

- **The [National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults](#)** - Based in Hamilton's Waikato University, this centre provides research, analysis and professional development for New Zealand's educators.
- **Te Arapiki Ako (Literacy and Numeracy for Adults) [website](#)** – A wealth of online resources, practical activities, and guidance for educators looking to learn and upskill.
- **Ako Aotearoa's [He Taunga Waka programme](#)** – this inspiring organisation provides resources and professional development to educators. This programme focuses on educators of Maori and Pasifika learners. Its online shop is well worth a visit; its materials are useful and transferable (AKO-Aotearoa, 2016).
- **Qualification pathways for literacy and numeracy educators.** These qualifications include content and outcomes related to embedding literacy and numeracy in a New Zealand context, the Learning Progressions, and the Assessment Tool. For example, the [New Zealand Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy Education](#) (Vocational/ Workplace) (Level 5) is a recommended qualification for literacy and numeracy tutors.

Conditions of success in New Zealand

The government's investment of millions has been leveraged to improve the quality of the government's foundation-level education investment of hundreds of millions:

- almost \$47 million has been spent on the development and ongoing operation of the Assessment Tool and Pathways Awarua and other literacy and numeracy resources between 2008 and 2016.
- almost \$1 billion has been invested by the government into foundation-level education between 2010 and 2016.

Good results flow when we have:

- clearly understood 'problem definition': significant opportunity to lift many adults' LN skills, shown in OECD ALLS and PIAAC surveys.
- shared goals between government, educators, and the tertiary sector: we all want to improve people's lives through lifting adult literacy and numeracy skills
- willingness and ability to work together: extensive partnership approach (shared goals, engage early and consult widely) throughout the development and fine tuning of resources

- combination of resources: the government's funding, processes, policy, and mandate, combined with the education sector's goodwill, experiences, expertise, and suggestions.

Research about impact of New Zealand's Assessment Tool

Research confirms that learners make gains when they are in courses where the Assessment Tool is used effectively. Research indicates both positive impact and views from learners and educators, as well as some concerns.

[Qualitative research](#) indicates there are improved educational outcomes when the Assessment Tool is used as intended - that is, to inform teachers' deliberate acts of teaching and to better inform classroom practice. Our research also indicated that some learners, as a result of tutor conversations and individual learner plans, developed an understanding of their own literacy and numeracy skills and what is required next for their programmes of study and employment.

Quantitative research shows the positive impact on student outcomes. Statistical analysis by BERL for the Tertiary Education Commission compared learners who completed all enrolled courses to those who completed no courses found Assessment Tool usage. It found Assessment Tool usage increased the probability of course completion in:

- Youth Guarantee-funded courses (a fund targeted towards those aged 16 to 19) between 2010 and 2013 by 31-36 percentage points. Māori Youth Guarantee learners had a 39 percentage point increase.
- Student Achievement Component (general teaching and learning fund) Level 1 and 2 course completion probability between 2010 and 2014 by 13-14 percentage points. The Tool's influence continued to be present after controlling for a range of demographic and educational factors. The difference in probabilities was higher for younger age groups.

There isn't universal acclaim of New Zealand's integrated approach, though. Lindee met and reported on some educators who were still feeling ambivalent about the concerted approach (Conway, 2016). There has too, been some research findings expressing dissent: all of which is healthy and real-world (Strauss, 2016) (Hunter, 2016). The discussion at the 2017 Conference will include comparisons on both sides of the ditch.

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Facilitating foundation skills – a Pacific perspective

Isikeli Naqaya and Lina Visinia-l'amafana, Australia-Pacific Technical College

Introduction

The Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC) is an innovative development project, funded by the Australian government, delivering Australian-standard skills and qualifications for a wide range of vocational careers for skilled workers across the Pacific. APTC offers qualifications in trades, hospitality and community services. These courses are conducted at APTC campuses in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands or Vanuatu. The goal of APTC is to contribute to a more prosperous Pacific, driven by a skilled, competitive and productive workforce. Therefore, developing and equipping our students with relevant foundation skills is an important component of the courses offered. This article will discuss how our role as Learning Support Facilitators support our Pacific Island students in developing foundation skills to meet the changing demands of 21st century industry, and the impact that this support has, not only on an individual's skills and employability, but the ripple effect it has on entire communities. The article focusses on our LLN support processes, the Foundation Skills programme and how these have been brought together in some quite unique delivery models that have had a profound effect on not just our students but the wider community.

Learners' profile

The majority of our students come from rural villages, communities and small island states that hold strong values in their customary practices and beliefs. This can become a barrier to their professional growth as modern theories often conflict with their traditional practices. A study conducted for Indigenous learners in Australia discovered that their learning is swamped by other discourses, such as cultural beliefs and practices (McTaggart & Curro 2009) and this is similar to what we experience here in the Pacific. For instance, because of the communal lifestyle students are raised in, self-regulated learning is a struggle. We believe that we need to recognise these influences.

Moreover, 95% of our students use the English language as a second language, and for some who have a lingua franca and a dialect, the English language becomes a third language. This is accompanied by traditional communication practices that differentiate communication between genders or village hierarchy and make communication in a modern workplace a challenge. Our island students are not always comfortable in openly expressing their opinion or questioning the questionable.

Furthermore, the majority of the adult learners that we have at APTC are those that have not had any formal education, who left school early, and who have very basic or no computer skills. Most have been recruited directly from their villages and communities and have limited experience.

LLN integrated approach model

The LLN Model that we implement at APTC is the Integrated Approach Model. Research suggests that a collaborative team, made up of teachers with complementary skills and expertise is one of the most effective models to use (Black and Yasukawa 2011) and one that proves effective for our island student due to their communal way of life. They are accustomed to sharing learning. In this model, the support is integrated into the vocational delivery. Our Learning Support Facilitators know the LLN levels of learners and they understand the LLN requirements of the vocational courses.

Support for students is provided through group support, one on one support and drop in sessions. These are effectively delivered when we have built a rapport with our students at the beginning of the semester.

Strong LLN support processes

The Integrated Approach Model is supported by strong diagnostic and support processes before, during and after training, all driven by the Learning Support Facilitator in each campus country.

1. Development of LLN entry-level benchmarks based on the ACSF

Applicants sit an LLN entry test; with results measured against LLN entry benchmarks based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). The entry benchmarks levels for each course are different and reflect the levels of each skill required by a student on ENTRY into a course.

2. Development of a class profile

Those who meet the entry benchmarks are enrolled in the class and each trainer is provided a class profile that shows the level of each students' language, literacy and numeracy skills. Therefore before classes commences, trainers have an indication of areas of potential support needed

3. Introductory sessions

In the first three weeks of semester introductory sessions are facilitated for all classes by the Learning Support Facilitators. During these sessions, the students complete:

- Learning Style Survey
- Student Success profile which allows students to set their own learning goals
- Study skills sessions with a focus of building employability expectations into the course from the onset.

4. 3-6-9 Scan (Intervention approach for identified “at risk” students)

The 3-6-9 scan is a process to help trainers identify at risk learners at weeks 3, 6 and 9 of the semester and to provide early intervention support as necessary.

5. Exit LLN testing

To determine the exit level LLN skills of students upon completion an exit LLN test has been developed aligned to the ACSF. For each skill area, over 80% of the students increased their ACSF level.

APTC to Work Programme

The APTC to Work Programme focusses on the skills the student needs to improve their job prospects. It includes Computer Skills training, job search skills and the process for establishing a small business.

Basic Computer Training is crucial training for our learners who have limited to zero computing skills. This stage of the training programme not only develops confidence in our students but enables them to realise the important of technology in this 21st century.

The other part to this programme is a guide to employment which prepares and equips our students with employability skills. It enables our students to develop or improve work application documents such as a CV, application letters and/or filling in application forms.

The APTC logo is “creating skills for life” and we support this by providing students entrepreneurship skills to enable them start their own business. Operating small businesses

in the Pacific is a pathway to creating income but comes with cultural challenges around family and community commitments.

The small business workshop organised for our students every semester has proved to be successful with 5% of students starting a small business and in turn providing employment opportunities for future APTC graduates

Certificate II in skills for work and vocational pathways – case studies

Bringing the LLN support and the Foundation Skills development together has resulted in some unique projects for our students and their communities.

In March 2016 Tropical Cyclone Winston devastated the Rakiraki area. Hundreds of homes were destroyed and many people lost their jobs as a direct result of the catastrophe. Supported by the European Union, APTC through the Winston Rehabilitation Programme, ran a Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways, which developed the foundations skills necessary for students to successfully enrol in a Certificate II in Construction. The Certificate II in Construction, supported by DFAT and Habitat for Humanity, provided action learning at its best, with the students successfully building 20 homes for victims of the cyclone. These students have had a big year! Their community was destroyed, but they formally developed their foundation skills, basic construction skills, they have a future livelihood in construction, and a devastated community has been provided with homes.

APTC supports Inclusive Training and this year APTC has worked in partnership with the Include Disability Employ Ability (IDEA) Programme in providing training for Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways for 14 students with varying disabilities. Part of this programme will be to do a work placement for 105 hours. The students are building their foundation skills, which will open up work opportunities for them. Additionally, APTC has helped to build a connection between the students and potential employers.

Conclusion

Our end of semester survey shows that our students have a 90% satisfaction rate with the LLN support provided to them and we believe that our strong processes play a big part in this success.

This year APTC celebrates its 10 year anniversary and with over 11,152 graduates, a 98.5% student satisfaction rate, 85% employment rate and 97% employer satisfaction rate, we are proud to have been part of this achievement.

From the experience we have in working with our Pacific people, we have discovered that foundation skill development is essential in supporting our students in secure a job, stay on the job, be promoted on the job or simply to be successful. Success is best expressed by the words of one of our graduates. When asked what the APTC did for him he replied, 'It enabled me to believe in myself'.

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The Yolŋu way: Learning financial literacy skills through the strength of traditional concepts

Bronwyn Rossingh, Yalmay Yunupingu and Mandy Munungjurritj

Introduction

Community leaders in Yirrkala are committed to building financial literacy skills and capability in the community. After a period of sustained engagement and relationship building the community leaders invited Bronwyn to explore ways to address this issue and build financial literacy skills in the community. Bronwyn commenced a project to develop culturally based and contextual resources with a group of women who work in the Miyalk Op Shop and Café based in Yirrkala. This project is premised on a community-led and guided process

The community leaders are passionate about utilising their own cultural foundations linked to Western concepts to develop financial skills capability. This project therefore involves developing training and education tools and resources (a prototype at this stage) that are culturally grounded and legitimate for the purposes of enhancing understanding of financial literacy-based concepts so as to build financial capability and wellbeing for Indigenous people of Yirrkala. This project is a collaborative project based in Yirrkala Community working with community leaders, organisations and members and other collaborative partners.

The key aim of this project is: Culture-based training and education tools and resources developed by and for Indigenous people from Yirrkala Community using metaphor-based cultural foundations for learning related to financial capability and wellbeing. This involves:

1. Collaborative development of contextual resources for Indigenous people of Yirrkala Community to build capability in financial literacy.
2. Prototypes based on the turtle and stingray metaphors
3. Enabling learning linkages to business enterprise and money related concepts based on the use of cultural metaphors and language under the guidance of local community people.
4. Participants to take ownership of the project and resources arising
5. Participants celebrating and showcasing the project

In early 2017 preliminary work was undertaken in Yirrkala to collaboratively develop resources for developing business and money related skills utilising cultural metaphors. This project was commenced with the approval of community leaders and support has now been provided by a number of Yirrkala Community-based organisations. The preliminary work has been very progressive in developing the basis for a prototype and establishing strong support for the project. The participants that are involved in this project represent a diverse group with varying levels of language, literacy and numeracy. The project methodology was to explore what the people and organisations involved in the project wanted to achieve. Bronwyn's role during this project was to facilitate and support how Yolŋu concepts and ways could be used as the base to draw on western money and business enterprise concepts where relevant, to build practical training resources – moreover, a prototype in these early stages of the project.

A key strength of this project has been the relationship building and the underlying support provided to the community to take a lead and to have ownership in a real sense and for the project to develop at their pace and stay true to their aims and objectives including having leadership, input, ongoing involvement and keeping the project in the community.

Successful outcomes of this project:

1. A prototype using the turtle metaphor (miyapunu) to develop training resources that are based on cultural concepts.
2. Learning from Yolngu knowledges linked to Western knowledges relating to money and business skills and concepts
3. A methodology of an evolving process that embeds Western knowledge through and based on Yolngu knowledge systems. Removing the 'imposition of Western knowledge' to a position of 'utilising existing cultural knowledge' to instil important concepts related to money and business skills
4. Building confidence in women who are working for the dole and desire more training and are required by the unemployment system to be gainfully employed.
5. Young people identified that have an interest to learn more in relation to the area of financial literacy

Graffiti as literacy: Reading and writing as anti-text

Adelle Sefton-Rowston, Charles Darwin University

Abstract

The Four Corners program 'Australia's Shame' that exposed the abuse of boys in Darwin's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. When we see Dylan Voller graffiti the walls of his isolation cell and write his name over and over again, we see a boy who is clearly distressed but calling to be read. Literacy as a practice of expression can be taught in various creative ways that lead to practical, but sometimes unpredictable reading and writing outcomes. How is graffiti as (anti-text) an interface for learning?

Introduction

The graffiti that Dylan Voller etched into the concrete walls of his isolation unit BMU1 while imprisoned at Darwin's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, is the writing of one boy, but nonetheless inspires a better understanding of literacy for young adults in vulnerable contexts. By examining this graffiti we may also examine colonial violence and the racist power structures that desists learning and the processes of self-regulation that is so important to the growth of a full person. For many of us in the fields of education, we believe and perhaps have even experienced for ourselves the material pathways to freedom that literacy and a quality education can provide. But how might the absence of a quality education in prisons therefore be an extension of colonial violence and the perpetuation of oppression for those who are already marginalised, vulnerable, imprisoned. To deal with the literacy impasse that exists for young people who are in and out of prison, requires experimenting with another type of literacy teaching. It also requires a different type of appreciation for nonconformist writing as a method of engagement. Writing that emancipates itself from predictable meaning is neither poetry nor prose but is unconventional, atypical, and in some ways anti-textual. Graffiti defies many notions of what we may consider to be literate. However, for the purposes of decolonisation I argue it is absolutely necessary that we access, include and encourage many types of writing by the oppressed to 'uncover' what is being kept secret from Australia's narratives. But more so, literacy teaching of another kind is paramount if we want our students to realise the power words have to change the current order of things and to transform the future.

History of Graffiti

There is a history of studying graffiti in various forms and scholarship. Particular people have published a range of material on graffiti that proves silence is not the mere absence of words but that graffiti works alongside what is being said. For example, Guyanese Poet Léon-Gontran Damas': was key player in the Négritude movement (Francophone literature), and he worked to debunk the myth of European superiority in his published collection of poetry titled *Graffiti* (1952). This work, and I quote from a review by (Clavreuil et Rouche p.221) showed 'the discomfort and the nausea of the Black man, assimilated by a strange, imported, imposed culture that destroys, more than one would think, his inner self'.

Photographer Brassai published *Graffiti* (1960) and critiqued the graffiti of Paris. He described how the words and drawings from the wall jumped with forceful simplicity into his face, and he says "They appeal to the photographer", saying, "save me, take me with you for tomorrow I'm no longer here".

In the area of sociology, Jacqueline Z. Wilson *Racist and Political Extremist Graffiti in Australian Prisons, 1970s to 1990s* and noted similarities between Australian prison graffiti and graffiti found in British prisons in the 1990's and that it contributed to a culture of

racism. Graffitists also showed a common sense of national dispossession, far-right sentiment and social disaffection.

And finally, Nicholas Rothwell published a newspaper article titled 'The Writing's on the Wall' in the *Australian* newspaper and argued that graffiti is the vernacular of the indigenous domain and is found all over remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory: on walls, wheelchairs, baby cots and church louvers to communicate to insiders and outsiders in distinct ways. He believes it has always had intense meaning and described it as 'frontier form art making'. Rothwell's studies observe that from all over the NT graffiti pieces share 'the same vocabulary' and similar characteristics: they are sketched out by young community people, deal with romance, social status and the troubles of their maker. For Rothwell graffiti in the NT reveals more than a hundred government reports about remote community life. 'Scrawled words and slogans seek to testify, what their writers want is to be read, seen, noticed: to communicate with each other, in code, but a code so transparent it only heightens the message'. Yet Rothwell identifies a decline in graffiti art in communities across the NT as people are writing less in public spaces and what is already there is being worn away by the elements.

Graffiti as anti-text

Words can tremble when put into discourse. The act of reading Dylan's name over and over again as he carves it into the cell's wall, calls us to read ourselves, our nation, and the distances between many of us. As Ashley Montague writes in 'Touching the human significance of the skin, 'It is feeling that bridges the spatial gap that separates us from others, and puts us in touch with them.' (p.125) The internet has for the first time provided us a virtual space in which incarcerated bodies can 'impress' upon many of us and bring us closer to feeling the wounds inflicted by colonial violence. Sara Ahmed argues that 'emotions become attributes of collectives' and that the 'national character (what the nation is like' is a direct result of how bodies move away or towards other bodies in culture.' (the cultural politics of emotion, p.130). Do we have a choice when we see prison graffiti, for it to motivate us towards others in the form of political action or away from others if we dismiss it as ludic scribble. Graffiti is textual for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has a unique readership, although not always by choice, but it has a readership which means graffiti is not an autonomous or mono act for example graffiti in prisons can speak to inmates, prison staff and now through the digital archive, it speaks to many more of us. Graffiti also uses language, it speaks from the self-conscious to display an interior monologue, it is open to external evaluation, has multiple layers, and too requires deconstruction. Graffiti is often however, non-linear in its narration or lack thereof, it is devoid of resolution, is absent of character but nonetheless it displays interiority. Perhaps graffiti can even be classified as a literary monument because it is public, it stains architecture and in doing so disrupts civility. Meaning is pushed upon civil constructions leaving them, and us, permanently marked. Its affect crosses space as words hit concrete walls.

Like poetry, graffiti is an utterance of lament. Graffiti can explore where language and literature crosses divides. Both poems and graffiti intervene and disrupt habitual aspects of language but there are differences. Poetry can have structure, rhythm, melody but graffiti has architectural absence. However it is not without outline – as readers we can make sense of a hidden presence, margins of silence, and how to frame a 'white' space on a concrete wall. In the case of Voller's graffiti, the Four Corners program made his particular graffiti linguistics audible, as we saw Dylan's name made rarefied because it reached an intense public stare. By studying graffiti as text, it is surely to reveal more about Australia's systemic violence and changes that need to happen as a matter of life and death.

Literacy theory and methodology for the anti-text

Changes needn't only occur in prison systems but should extend to the many systems that interconnect to colonial establishment, including education. Does conventional teaching methodology always engage the most vulnerable? Could conventional teaching methodology support a literacy program with graffiti as a theme to inspire poetry of the oppressed? Here are just few of the contradictions that would make graffiti a continued anomaly to teach to in a literacy classroom.

Whether or not graffiti is seen as anti-text, anti-literacy or as a type of poetics – it requires a more radical methodology and theoretical framework when understanding how it could be applied in the classroom. Such a literacy program, with graffiti as its theme would not fit typical streams of English for academic purposes or English for professional pathways. While an author assumes 'authority' to speak, graffiti tests authority. As a textual and teaching theme it also requires a pedagogy that seeks to disrupt social order and the powers that be. Paulo Freire is one of the most prolific educators of the twentieth century. He is one of the most highly regarded founders of critical pedagogy, but played a vital role in developing a highly successful literacy campaign in Brazil during the early 1960s. His book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' is considered one of the classic texts of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is not concerned with teaching to the 'test' but as a practice of freedom. That means preparing students to become informed citizens who participate in the civic imagination by becoming self-reflective about public issues and the world in which they live. The purpose of an education for freedom is not to up-skill students for the labour market but inform an ever-evolving substantive democracy. Aiming to create literate social agents rather than employed servants of the master-slave capitalist system and its institutions. Writing and thinking are thus a political struggle, that like graffiti requires courage, to make change possible and the status quo ugly, grotesque. To learn to write is therefore a matter of urgency to create awareness of oneself in a deliberately constructed world, and to speak to that world without fear.

Conclusion

Literacy teaching should be a practice of freedom that extends beyond the conventional walls of a classroom. It should enter into darker places that are called to be read as a matter of life and death. Writing can change the world we live in, it has power and the height of this power is no more evident than when it appears uninvited on concrete constructions belonging to those of colonial power. Graffiti marks radical possibilities for new types of learning, and the urgency to write. Could the illicit practice of writing on walls be the harbinger for a new world order?

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“Locked out” and “left behind”: Aboriginal Adult English Literacy and Numeracy in Northern Territory – a call for collective action

Allison Stewart, Lorraine Sushames and Fiona Shalley

Abstract

Northern Territory (NT) government policy acknowledges the “need for active participation by all people, including Indigenous people, for the north to achieve ongoing prosperity.” However the majority of Aboriginal adults cannot engage due to low levels of English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN). Aboriginal people constitute 30% of the NT population and more than half speak English a second language (54%). Reading, writing, oral communication in English and numeracy skills remain a persistent challenge and the issue continues to be treated as peripheral, complex and “too hard”. English LLN is central to social capacity building, engaging with the economy, society and systems. Recent consolidation of an NT wide sample of 670 assessments points to very low levels across the NT, with the majority of people falling well below the level required to participate in education and work. The monetary cost of low literacy and the benefits of improvement have never been calculated for the NT. A Strategic Project has been underway to raise awareness, build the evidence base and catalyse change - much remains to be done. Excellent models in service provision exist, with high levels of Indigenous aspiration identified, and there is real momentum for change - but where is the commitment to collective and sustained action by Government, and who has responsibility for adult LLN in the NT?

In the 1999 independent review of Indigenous education ‘Learning lessons’ Collins²⁶ wrote that:

While Indigenous people are able to engage effectively in their own world, they are limited in their engagement with the world outside. They are almost unemployable outside their own communities and even there are largely employed in unskilled jobs and are reliant on others from outside their community for important aspects of their lives... The wider options provided by better skills in literacy and numeracy are simply not available when they wish to exercise them.

The educational review also noted that there were

many instances where Indigenous people wanted to access interesting full-time and well-paid jobs provided by willing employers, but were prevented from doing so by low literacy skills. One major peak body cited low literacy skills as the first, second and third barrier inhibiting greater employment of local Indigenous people in their Industry. Industry, union, denominational and government agency submissions repeated the theme.

Almost twenty years on little has changed.

This paper puts forward the point of view that not only is being literate and articulate in one’s first language a right, but that in today’s world, proficiency in English is also essential in

²⁶ *Learning lessons: an independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory* (otherwise known as the Collins report, 1999)

order to develop knowledge of, and interact with the wider world, and fully realise individual, family and community potential. Facility with English provides an access point into the world of education, work and functioning within society as well as access to ‘systems’ such as the health, welfare, banking, transport, housing and the legal system. English literacy is a means for understanding what is happening in the world and having a say in it. In the case of Aboriginal peoples, the Whole of Community Engagement initiative (WCE) at CDU²⁷ has seen that the desire to share new information and understanding gained by increased facility in English with others in the family and community is motivating force for wanting to learn – so that everyone benefits, not just the individual concerned.

The WCE initiative, funded through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships and Program (HEPPP) and led by the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor of Indigenous Leadership at Charles Darwin University (CDU), has worked within six remote and very remote Aboriginal communities during the past three years. We have spoken with many people who have aspirations for work and education and have heard people say that they feel “locked out” and “left behind”. Research undertaken through the Strategic Priority Project on Aboriginal adult English Language Literacy and Numeracy (SPP-LLN) – which is a part of WCE – has shown that for those with low levels of LLN it is extremely hard in the current policy environment to rise to a standard of English LLN competence which enables participation in higher levels of VET, in higher education and transition to higher levels of employment. The aim of the SPP has been to:

1. Catalyse support for and interest in development and implementation of an NT adult English LLN policy framework/strategy and encourage collective action
2. Increase understanding of the social and economic impacts of low levels of English LLN and the flow on benefits of improvement for individuals, children and families, organisations and society
3. Foster and facilitate Indigenous-led responses and amplify the Indigenous voice in relation to this issue (via workshops, reports, interviews, meetings, media etc), and
4. Implement, document and promote innovative, evaluated LLN delivery models

In November 2016, the SPP-LLN organised a preconference workshop on Indigenous adult LLN. 81 individuals (36% Aboriginal), from 28 organisations and agencies, came together at CDU to share information about state-wide, regional and local level models and consult on ways forward. As a result, an informal yet active Network²⁸, was formed and those present agreed on the core elements of an Action Statement on Indigenous adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy which was released in March 2017. The Statement is to be reworked and re-released after the Symposium at this conference, with the hope that it will be used to guide action and support positive change in the Northern Territory.

This paper argues that an NT-wide, long-term, multi-partisan solution is required, based on a solid policy commitment. Stakeholders have suggested that this is the only way in which sustained outcomes can take place across urban, regional and remote areas of the NT. A strategic and collective approach is required and the application of a range of models which could include: Community-wide approaches models; workplace capacity building models

²⁷ Strategic Project on LLN being implemented through the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor of Indigenous Leadership

²⁸ A formally agreed, active, but unstructured network which was composed at the forum in November 2016 and which has continued to grow since that time.

Community-based adult learning centres; and other models derived from successful programs implemented in Aboriginal contexts.

In 2011 there were 68,850 people in the NT who identified as being Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander – accounting for about 30% of the total NT population (231,292) (ABS, Census, 2011), 58% live in very remote areas; 21% in remote areas; and 20% in the greater Darwin region and the main towns (5). The NT is a multilingual community. Census data from 2011 identifies that nearly a third (31%) of the total NT population speaks a language other than English as their main language spoken at home. Around 85% of Indigenous people in the NT identify with a clan, tribal or language group (NATSISS 2014/15). More than half the Indigenous population speak an Indigenous language as their main language (54%), and in many cases they speak multiple Indigenous languages (NATSISS 2014/15). The proportion of people speaking an Indigenous language as their main language at home is higher as remoteness increases.

The NT Indigenous population is a highly significant population group for the NT government; are much more likely to be living in very remote Australia; living in dispersed communities across the Territory and more likely to be living in small, or very small communities (e.g. less than 50 people); and the population is 'young'. The working age population (15 to 64 years) and the older population (65 years and over) are expected to grow at faster rates over the next 25 years than the rest of the population. The NT Aboriginal population is a stable supply of population to grow 'Northern Australia' because they are much more likely to remain in the Territory (Biddle, 2009).

What is happening in the Northern Territory today in relation to availability, range and focus of English LLN assistance for Aboriginal adults – particularly those with low levels of English LLN -cannot be separated from the shifts in policy and associated conceptual frameworks during the past decades. The field of adult basic education had its genesis as a named field in education in the English speaking world in the mid-1970s, emerging from humanist discourses of social justice and a socio-cultural view of literacy (Osmond 2016). In Australia, as in other similar countries, this concern for social justice and the humanist philosophy of education which drove the early programs began its decline by the mid-80s. By this time the narrative of economic decline had taken control of the public discourse the result was that the newly-minted field of adult literacy became co-opted into the task of economic reform (Wickert et al. 2017, Wickert and Zimmerman 1991 in Osmond 2016). This narrative of literacy development as human capital model existed alongside the discourse of human rights for another decade or so, but in the view of many, it has come to be displaced completely (for example Lo Bianco 2010, in Osmond 2016).

The realignment of LLN for the most part with economic advancement and reform has had far reaching effects on English LLN policy, funding and programs and their suitability to meet the learning needs of Aboriginal adults in the NT, especially when they live in remote and very remote areas. Evaluation of mainstream programs, such as Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) has shown that the overlaying of mainstream LLN programs in the NT has not worked – either for the people, or for government. The program design is inflexible, highly regulated and compliance driven, therefore not targeted to meet the broad based needs of Aboriginal people in NT. Eligibility for SEE is limited by where it is delivered and annual funding allocated to the services provided and the model of funding provision.

The 2015 the SEE evaluation found the NT had the highest level of assessed need (46%, compared with Australian average of 33%), referral rates of just 21%, and acknowledged that the program was not working in remote areas, with few participants, few outcomes and delivered in only a few places. The NT had below the average proportion of clients starting SEE (8%), and only 3% completed training (compared with 18% nationally).

Other options for development of improved LLN in the NT are generally limited to improving contextual knowledge so that people can do better in employment and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Those programs are generally delivered as accredited training, and often as parts, or units of courses. There are some programs which are working effectively, such as the 'Defence Indigenous Development Program', adult learning centres in some communities, and case studies of successful small scale LLN programs.

Providers working in remote communities for significant periods of time know the value of community led and Aboriginal informed initiatives, however in general, funding appears to be "stop – start", short-term, and very there is very limited funding available for activities which would make a substantial improvement to low levels of LLN in urban, regional and very remote areas. Resources flowing through the VET system are generally targeted at provision of 'learner support' to achieve vocational outcomes. The level of instruction provided, and the number of contact hours allocated does not generally prepare people with low levels of literacy to transition to higher VET levels. There are few options currently for adults with low/very low levels of literacy to attain a Certificate III or IV and above (Shalley and Stewart 2017).

The SPP has drawn on, and pointed to the need for collation / evaluation of models which have or could in whole or part work in the NT. One example is an Integrated Model used at Tennant Creek which moved away from the prevailing ideologies underpinning programs of LLN assistance. The project incorporated a cooperative "community engagement" model with alternative and place-specific approaches to economic development and managing the complexities surrounding LLN delivery. It was informed by earlier research which found that any training and employment model for classroom environments where there are significant numbers of traditional Aboriginal people should be developed "to reflect existing tribal authority and structures and be integrated into the social and cultural schema of the community" (Kral and Falk, 2003, in Sushames 2005). The model demonstrated that learner's multifaceted goals and needs were better addressed through the use of linking programs and "joined-up approaches" on the part of different service providers and funding bodies (Sushames, Mc Padden, Whippy and Thompson, 2010). The model was responsive to local input and conditions, which were reflected in the number of people commencing and completing the training program. Other factors that assisted were the dynamics of a small town where key stakeholders held a shared vision, facilitating implementation through community cooperation.

English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN)²⁹ capability enables progression along educational and career pathways and is essential for full participation in community, business, the economy and broader society. More than half of Northern Territory Aboriginal adults speak English as a second language (54%), yet there is little real acknowledgement in terms of government policy or the re-shaping of delivery to accommodate this. Current policy focuses on employment outcomes, yet improved adult LLN in the general population has proven flow on effects for children, parents, families, and society as a whole. It is often said that literacy is everyone's business. Everyone – including Aboriginal leaders and communities, government, non-government, service providers, business and the community, have a responsibility to work together to ensure that appropriate assistance is available and that Aboriginal people actively lead and are engaged with the process (Shalley and Stewart 2017).

²⁹ Although we use the term 'LLN' throughout this document we are also referring to the range of Foundation skills required in order to establish, apply and maintain LLN in life, on-line and in the workplace.

The Australian government's White Paper on Developing the North³⁰ states that "The north will only truly achieve its potential with the participation of all people who live there, including Indigenous Australians". Recognition of the importance of Aboriginal economic engagement, maximised employment, and participation in business development is also key to the current Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy³¹. Most of the NT's Aboriginal adult population however is not in the labour force. The strong association between labour force status and English LLN competencies suggests they are likely to have lower literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments (PSTRE) skills than those who are employed or unemployed. Less than 5% of NT's Aboriginal adult population has a Higher Education qualification. Given the strong relationship between educational qualifications and LLN skills, the NT Aboriginal adult population is likely to have lower capability in English LLN than other populations (Shalley and Stewart 2017).

The benefits of higher levels of LLN proficiency for individuals can be mapped across multiple social outcomes, including improved health, increased ability to access services, higher employment rates, better social inclusion and strengthened political efficacy (OECD 2013). This holds only if the interactions with, or the services delivered by the broader society, are delivered in the language/s spoken by those individuals.

Young people and adults who struggle with reading, writing and working with numbers are more vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, poor health, demographic displacement and migration, and the impacts of manmade and natural disasters (OECD 2013)³². As the economic landscape continues to change, skill requirements to gain employment become more complex, as people are expected to operate in a world that is more digital, more technologically based, and where good communication is fundamental to operating effectively and being heard. A longitudinal study of adult learning found that adults need to keep using and consolidating their literacy and 'essential skills' after they finish school. Their continued improvement has substantial economic benefits both to the individual and to society (Reder 2011).

Currently there is no comprehensive source of English Adult LLN information for the Indigenous population of NT. Other States/Territories use results from the 2011/12 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey to help them understand adult literacy and numeracy competency for their adult population. The PIAAC survey however did not sample adults in very remote Australia, and did not cover populations living in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This significantly impacts the utility of the data for the NT and proportionately affects data for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

A statistical report on LLN in the NT (Shalley and Stewart, 2017) which includes a sample of 660 LLN assessments has been produced by the SPP on English LLN in response to calls from Aboriginal leaders and the six remote communities where WCE has been operating for the past three years. The ACSF data picture in this report suggests that the issue of low English LLN skills in the NT Aboriginal adult population is highly significant and requires deliberate action from governments, service providers, education and training institutions, and Aboriginal leaders. If the target set in the Commonwealth government's National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults is applied to the population, much concerted effort will be required to improve outcomes.

³⁰ Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia
<http://northernaustralia.gov.au/files/files/NAWP-FullReport.pdf>

³¹ The Indigenous Advancement Strategy is a Commonwealth Government initiative.

³² http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/SkillsOutlook_2013_ebook.pdf

More than 85% of the sample of 660 NT Aboriginal adults assessed against the ACSF have English reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy skills below the level that is needed for independence in the workplace and for having the confidence to participate in all aspects of the broader Australian community. We believe this could translate to more than 40,000 NT Aboriginal adults, with more than 23,000 having skill levels where they will struggle with Certificate I or II level courses and need significant support to complete English LLN tasks.

There is strong agreement from Aboriginal leaders involved with the WCE that English skills are necessary for: post school education success; confident negotiation with government/s and in other business partnerships; responsibilities associated with caring for country; greater employment opportunities and business development. However, this was asserted alongside their recognition of the centrality of their own languages, traditions and cultures. English LLN was supported as a complimentary set of skills that sit alongside traditional languages and solutions must recognise and respect this position. We believe that whatever the way forward in relation to English language, we must consider first languages and English LLN together – how they relate to each other - as well as separately, and that more will be achieved through working together and consulting for positive change in the NT – we believe that this change is possible.

“Our language is like a pearl inside a shell. The shell is like the people that carry the language. If our language is taken away, then that would be like a pearl that is gone. We would be like an empty oyster shell.” Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin’ku.

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Traders, Neighbours and Intruders: Points of Contact

Darwin