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The *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* is an official publication of Adult Learning Australia (ALA). It is concerned with the theory, research and practice of adult and community education, and to promote critical thinking and research in this field. While the prime focus is on Australia, the practice of adult education and learning is an international field and Australia is connected to all parts of the globe, and therefore papers relating to other countries and contexts are welcome. Papers in the refereed section have been blind reviewed by at least two members from a pool of specialist referees from Australia and overseas.

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From the Editor's desk

Continuity and change

Tony Brown

After 23 years occupying the Editor's desk Roger Harris has handed over the reins. Fifty-two years have passed since the first edition of the Journal in 1961 and for one person to have led its production for such an extended period is a remarkable achievement. When Roger took over from Barrie Brennan at the end of 1989 the Journal was then the *Australian Journal of Adult Education* (AJAE). The following year, reflecting changes in the field and the growth of community movements, it became the *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education* (AJACE). In 2000, again reflecting a

shift in thinking and practice, the Journal's name changed to the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* (AJAL) and peer-reviewed articles began. Roger is the only one of the seven major Editors to have edited all three of the Journal's manifestations. His has been a distinguished period of service and he leaves the Journal in a very healthy condition for those who follow.

A continuing thread throughout the Journal's history is its recognition of the breadth of activity that goes under the heading of adult education and adult learning. Before Europeans had ever thought of the great south land Indigenous people had taught and learnt in ways that sustained people and land. And since the very early days of European settlement adult education has combined formal and informal learning. From the young mechanics studying maths and political economy on the *HMS Stirling Castle* as it sailed towards Sydney, adult education has been organised in all types of places and sites from formal institutions like evening schools, universities, Schools of Arts, the WEAs, TAFEs, Community Colleges and in Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres. In organised social movements such as political parties and trade unions, arts and crafts associations, in fitness and sport, museums and galleries, and workplaces, through self-organised activities such as reading clubs and book groups, adults have come together to learn. And in those places educators have drawn on different methods of instruction and teaching, facilitating, mentoring, coaching, training, peer collaboration and so on.

The informal learning of everyday life has long been recognised by adult educators as an essential part making up the breadth of learning in this range of formal and informal activity. It is an expansive notion of education, an approach that Raymond Williams knew as 'public pedagogy' that projects us beyond formal educational institutions to other institutions that educate, such as families, churches, youth groups, the media and others. Writing in the early twentieth century the American, Eduard Lindeman, drew much of his inspiration from the Nikolai Grundtvig inspired 19th century Danish Folk High Schools, his mentor John Dewey and his own experience of extension education in rural America and in community organisations. He

wrote in 1926 that 'Education is life: not merely preparation for an unknown kind of future living... The whole of life is learning, ... and hence elevates living itself to the level of adventurous experiment'.

The Journal plays an important role in linking these past ideas and practices with present day ideas, theories and activities. It fosters our understanding of the traditions that have shaped us and our vision of the educational futures that can help adults learn and act in their society. It inducts newcomers to the 'field' they work in by deepening their awareness of different traditions and perspectives, as well as latest developments. Through its life the Journal has given voice to diverse traditions and practices, and will continue to do so.

The Journal will continue to combine refereed and non-refereed articles, bringing together scholarly and practitioner-based writing from various sites of adult education. It will provide opportunities for experienced and new writers to engage in spirited debate and the critical exchange of knowledge and ideas. We seek to foster and stimulate a community of researchers and practitioners with a broad interest in the learning and education of adults.

The Journal will continue to flourish if it can attract a wide range of contributors to engage in debate with others sharing broadly similar interests. In particular AJAL can make an important contribution to the development and analysis of adult education and learning practices, as well as critical analysis of policy. Contributions therefore, from a broad range of ideological positions, theoretical perspectives and research traditions are welcome. Australia has long drawn on models, practices and traditions from overseas to inform what has evolved locally. But we are also a part of a vibrant region of the world and while we want to research and analyse local practices we want to speak to and hear from international voices. The richer the diversity of contributions to the Journal, and the debates they promote, the more stimulating this will be.

The articles in this issue reflect that diversity. In the first of the refereed articles **John Benseman** analyses a large-scale workplace literacy and numeracy project involving 535 workers in 15 New

Zealand companies. How these workers were recruited to the program and reasons for their course retention are examined.

Darryl Dymock and Ann Kelly look more closely at Sydney University's Department of Tutorial Classes between 1919 and 1963. They argue that the Department was able to continue delivering its adult education program, including its partnership with the WEA, due to disagreement within the University about the program's purpose and the role of the Directors. However, the situation also contributed to a lack of innovation, which proved to be a constraint.

Combining full time work and VET study is the subject of **Michelle Morris's** paper, which she has identified as the challenge of 'trying to keep up'. Drawing on data from a TAFE Institute in South Australia she reports time and money as the biggest factors affecting those combining work with full-time VET study, particularly for workers in low-income jobs. Individual stories show the delicate balance involved between study, work and life and how full-time study places a high level of stress on students' working and family life.

In another contribution examining continuing education and training, **Sarojni Choy, Stephen Billett and Ann Kelly** draw on qualitative data from 51 workers in the health and community services industry. They argue that demographic changes means that a broader educational focus, beyond the prevailing provision designed for those entering employment, is needed to include continuing education and training provision for those already in the workforce.

Cathy Stone and Sarah O'Shea report on research examining the experiences of 37 mature-age university students and in particular the influence of gender on their experience of managing home, family and work in relation to their studies. The lack of time and money combined with self-sacrifice and guilt are highlighted as important considerations for institutions to understand in order to encourage participation of mature age students in higher education.

Sara Murray and Jane Mitchell also cast their attention to the world of vocational education and TAFE, this time in regional NSW, by investigating the experience of 30 young adults in five foundation

courses. They discuss whether the assumptions underpinning the adult learning environment encourage student effort and participation. They discovered positive aspects as well as those that hindered learning and discuss the ways that teachers responded.

There are two non-refereed contributions in this issue. The first is by **Pamela Clayton, Silvana Greco and Maria Jose Lopez Sanchez**, a group of scholars from Scotland, Italy and Spain. Their paper looks at the other end of the age spectrum by considering the learning and guidance offered to older workers in Europe from a social and economic policy perspective.

Sasa Milic's essay, the third international contribution in this issue, examines the concept of lifelong learning in the European University of the 21st century. Writing from Montenegro his essay problematises the place and role of the university in adult education and makes some comparisons with the development of lifelong learning at the university level in Europe.

Changes at AJAL

There have been some other changes for AJAL.

AJAL now has its own dedicated web presence - www.ajal.net.au

Contributions will from now on be made online at that site, and an updated 'Notes for Contributors' can be found there.

You can find articles from previous issues by searching for keywords, titles and authors. Subscribers can download articles. Non-subscribers can purchase articles.

You may also have noticed a new colour cover for the Journal's final issue of 2012 and that will continue.

A new Editorial Board has been established. We are fortunate that many existing members will continue on the Board and be joined by a number of adult education researchers from Australia and overseas who will bring new ideas and perspectives to the Journal.

I'm looking forward to the next stage of Australia's Journal of Adult Learning.

Book Review Editor
AJAL is looking for a Book Review Editor. If you are interested in contributing to AJAL by seeking books and reviewers to make a lively exchange of views and reviews, please send me a note and an outline of how you might develop this section of the Journal.

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Recruiting and retaining learners in workplace literacy programs in New Zealand

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Successful workplace literacy and numeracy programs are dependent on effective strategies to recruit and then retain course participants. This article reports on the recruitment strategies used in a large workplace literacy and numeracy project involving 535 workers in 18 courses. It provides an analysis of the strategies used, their rates of success in the companies, the overall retention rates and identifies effective ways to implement these strategies.

Keywords: *workplace programs, literacy, retention, recruitment*

Introduction

There has been a growing recognition of literacy and numeracy (LN) issues among adults following a series of national incidence studies in many Western countries (OECD, 1995, 1997, 2000). Increasingly, focus has turned to diversifying and increasing provision to address

this issue, particularly for those adults with the greatest needs (usually seen as Levels 1 and 2 in these studies). Historically, provision has been dominated by community-based providers, but now policy interest has also turned to integrating or embedding the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills into mainstream tertiary provision and on-site workplace courses (Casey, 2006; Tertiary Education Commission, 2009). The interest in developing workplace provision has been boosted by parallel arguments that improved literacy and numeracy skills are central to upskilling workforces and ultimately, enhancing economic productivity (Ananiadou, Emslie-Henry, Evans, & Wolf, 2004; Ananiadou, Jenkins, & Wolf, 2003; Gray, 2006; Salomon, 2009). This convergence of two policy areas has led to considerable government interest in workplace literacy and numeracy programs, especially in comparison to more conventional contexts such as community provision and tertiary institutions (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2011; Reid, 2008; Skills Australia, 2011; Tertiary Education Commission, 2010) .

Alongside the increase in workplace provision has been a corresponding interest in understanding how these programs can operate successfully in a context that can be challenging for providers and the courses' host companies (Australian Industry Group, 2012; Reid, 2008). Operational aspects of workplace literacy and numeracy programs differ not only from other provision contexts, but can also differ from other forms of workplace training because of the distinctive nature of literacy and numeracy issues for adults – especially the social stigma attached to this issue. This article examines one of these aspects: the recruitment and retention of learners in workplace literacy and numeracy courses.

Related research

There is a steadily growing body of research literature about workplace LN provision, including some comprehensive literature reviews (Ananiadou et al., 2003; Ananiadou, Jenkins, & Wolf, 2004; Benseman, Sutton, & Lander, 2005; Gray, 2006; Salomon, 2009). The literature includes some studies about pre-disposing conditions that inhibit or encourage companies to provide workplace literacy

and numeracy programs (Salomon, 2009; Schick, 2005; Workbase, 2002), but there is an absence of studies about the logistics and operations of these programs once a decision is made to proceed. Some studies (see for example, Finlay, Hodgson, & Steer, 2007) include some consideration of the course tutors and the learning environment, but have little to say about the recruitment and retention of the participants, even in large-scale evaluations (Wolf & Evans, 2009). Other evaluations (see Kelly, 1999; Long, 1997) mention the importance of developing strategies to recruit people with low literacy and numeracy skills, reporting attendance rates and describing the types of programs, but report nothing beyond this level.

Where there is some discussion of course logistics, there is usually little detail provided. For example the following prescription for running these courses is given in a Canadian literature review (summarised from Read Society, 2009, pp. 16-17)

1. Conduct an organizational needs assessment, taking into account learner goals as well as business objectives;
2. Identify specific training objectives. Select appropriate training techniques and delivery methods. Choose: formal and/or informal methods comprehensive or quick, targeted training how to remove barriers to employee participation (e.g., share the costs; provide transportation, childcare, on-site training, e-learning, and/or flexible schedules, integrated with on-the-job training) location and timing of service delivery. Training techniques; options include: classroom training, e-learning, on-the-job training, mentoring, self-study, one-on-one instruction, coaching, peer tutoring and mentoring;
3. Obtain management and employee support;
4. Then implement the plan.

There are also few studies of learner recruitment and participation in community-based LN programs. A study by Comings, Parrella and Soricone (1999) using force-field analysis, studied the barriers and social and organisational supports that influence whether

learners persist in their LN courses. By understanding how positive, supporting influences can be maximised and negative, inhibiting factors can be minimised or eliminated, the authors argue that practitioners can effectively increase overall retention rates, both at individual and program levels. Based on consultations with experienced practitioners and interviews with 150 students, their study found that immigrants, parents of teenage or grown children and those over the age of 30 were the groups most likely to persist. Similarly, learners who had been involved previously in basic skills education, self-study or workplace training and those who have very specific goals were less likely to withdraw. Based on these findings, they identified four key supports to persistence:

- Management of the positive and negative forces that help and hinder persistence (especially the strongest ones);
- Build self-efficacy (belief in one's ability to learn successfully, not just self-confidence) about reaching goals (especially through mastery learning, vicarious experiences provided by social models such as former students, social persuasion from a culture of support and opportunities to address physiological and emotional states);
- Establishing and revising student goals to use as a context for instruction; and
- Making tangible progress towards the goals.

In a quasi-experimental study of retention, Quigley & Uhland (2000) identified a group of 20 'at-risk' (AR) learners in a large educational complex in Pittsburgh. The AR learners were identified using criteria project members had developed from their professional experience: expressed hostility or overt negativity, overt anxiety about joining the program, obvious uncertainty about the program's value, evident lack of commitment to staying in the program, anxiousness expressed in body language and/or a desire to cut the initial interview short. The assessments were counter-checked by another project member and further exploration of the ARs' schooling experiences was undertaken on the assumption that negative school experiences increased the likelihood of withdrawing from the program. Participants were then randomly referred to a control and three treatment groups.

The treatment groups had one of three strategies: a conventional classroom setting, but with considerable support provided by the teacher and a counsellor; small group tuition; or one-to-one tuition.

After three months, none of the control group was retained and only eight of the students remained; retention was highest in the small groups and lowest in the 1:1 group. The authors concluded that ARs can be identified reasonably accurately at enrolment that all three of the intervention strategies appear to work better than mainstream classrooms (a format they point out that failed for these learners in the past) and that small groups may well be the most effective tuition grouping for increasing retention.

Given this paucity of research on recruitment and retention in workplace literacy and numeracy programs, the present study provides a useful review of this issue as well as clear indicators for successful practice. Recruitment and retention differ from other contexts in that the programs occur in a controlled environment (a workplace), where group factors (vs. the individual learner in most other contexts) shape the learning environment. Workplace programs also need to address not only the individual worker's needs, but also those of the company.

Background

The data for this article were derived from the evaluations of 18 literacy and numeracy courses set up on-site in 15 companies around New Zealand, involving a total of 491 participants pre-course. The programs were diverse in terms of the industries involved, company size, geographical location, program formats, duration and types of learners. As part of the agreements to run these courses, the companies and program providers also agreed to be part of a comprehensive evaluation program.

The courses varied in approach and length and all had been tailored to the specific needs of the company. A third of them were block courses (typically two days of seven hours, followed by a break and then another block of 2x7 hours) and the others were run for one to two hours weekly. The great majority of attendees (71%) attended

their teaching sessions during work time, while similar proportions attended both during work time and outside work time (15%) and outside work time only (14%). All participants were paid for their attendance time.

In the classes, there was a mix of small group and one-to-one tutoring. The courses' contents were usually based on needs analyses carried out by the providers. In about a third of the courses, the literacy content was embedded into other teaching content such as health and safety. The content was therefore highly contextualised, where the teaching material was related to the companies' operations and the participants' jobs rather than a prescribed generic course. Although there is no national database to match the distribution of course-types, consultation with key stakeholders identified these formats as the most common forms of workplace LN courses in New Zealand. The choices of teaching methods and course formats were made by the course providers in association with the companies.

Methodology

A comprehensive, multi-method evaluation study was implemented over a three-year period and sought a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative data to identify outcomes for the course participants, their workplace practices, the companies they work for and their lives outside work. Comprehensive data on all the participants' participation in the courses was collected, which was augmented by interviews with the participants and key stakeholders such as supervisors, company managers, course tutors and provider managers.

A total of 491 course participants were interviewed and assessed pre-course and 343 (69.8%) of these participants were also interviewed and assessed post-course; most of those who missed the post-course interviews had left their companies and were not able to be contacted. No participant refused to take part in the evaluations. The total numbers involved and low attrition rates (explored later in this article) in this study are notable compared with similar studies (Gray, 2006).

The average age of the participants was 40 and interviewees included similar proportions of Māori, Pasifika and New Zealand Europeans, as well as smaller numbers of Asians and people of other ethnicities. Two out of five were ESOL learners and they had been in New Zealand for around an average of eight years. Over half of the course participants had no school or tertiary qualifications and a third had either no workplace training or induction only in the previous two years.

Findings

Publicity and recruitment of participants

Most of the publicising of courses was done by staff within the 15 companies, usually a middle-level manager. In a few cases course providers were also involved, especially when initial recruitment was slow. A range of strategies and combinations of strategies was used to publicise their courses to employees: posters, individual emails, printed publicity sheets distributed to individual employees, announcements at company events (e.g. team meetings, BBQs) and direct approaches to employees by managers and/or supervisors ('shoulder-tapping').

One feature of nearly all the courses was that companies were careful not to use explicit literacy and numeracy-related terminology (e.g. literacy, reading, maths) either in their publicity about the course or in discussions with potential participants because they believed that these words would act as a deterrent. Hence, courses used titles such as *Upskill Yourself, Fast Forward, Growing Lines, Perform, LEAP, Way2Work, Stepping Up, Boost, TeamWorks* and *SWOT*.

Several employers commented that they felt that words such as reading, writing and maths had connotations of failure and negative schooling experiences and were therefore likely to arouse feeling of inadequacy - "they'll run a mile if they think that that's what we're on about." About a third of the managers were adamant on this position pre-course and most had explicitly instructed their providers to avoid this terminology. However, only three of the 14 managers who

completed the manager questionnaire still felt the same way after their course had ended. Eight said that they had thought it was an issue at the outset, but were no longer concerned and the remainder (3) said they had never thought it was an issue.

The reasons for this change can probably be related to a number of factors. Firstly, the managers had come to realise that no matter what terms are used; the course participants quickly came to understand that the course involved the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills—irrespective of how they were described. Secondly, once a company has run a course for the first time, word gets out through the company's informal networks and there is not only widespread understanding of what the course involves, but also a realisation that attending the course does not have the negative stigma that managers had thought it might involve. The courses simply become part of a company's training program alongside any others that a company runs—in some cases, for example, they are showcased through company graduation ceremonies for the participants. In several companies, these graduates were deliberately used as recruiters for successive courses. Thirdly, in many cases, the providers and their tutors had been using LN terminology during the running of the course in ways that help make it part of the everyday discussions that go on around the running of the courses. They helped demonstrate that it is possible to use these terms in ways that are both useful and non-threatening.

The course providers were, for the most part, more relaxed about using LN terms, but still respected the employers themselves not to use them. In most cases, this avoidance also occurred because the providers became involved in the programs after the initial publicity and/or the recruitment process had been completed by the companies. The more experienced providers often commented that they would have liked to have been involved in these processes at the start and believe they would have been able to make useful contributions based on their professional experience in getting courses underway. Where providers were involved in second and third generations of the courses, their input added another dimension and was appreciated by the employers for this contribution. As one

tutor commented "it's our bread and butter to be able to describe these courses in ways that are non-threatening to workers, even if they are feeling apprehensive about admitting they need help."

The proof of any publicity is firstly whether the targeted group is aware of it and secondly whether they understand the content. In many of the courses, a significant number of the participants interviewed in the period just before the courses started said that they were not aware of the course (i.e. the publicity), they did not know that they were going to be involved with it and/or that they did not understand what the course was about. For whatever reason, the publicity did not register with these people even when multiple strategies had been used. Some of the explanation for this discrepancy lay in the complexities of workplaces—multiple shifts, absenteeism, leave and movement within and between departments—which means that single strategies invariably miss some people at crucial times, even when they are well-written and clearly presented.

In some companies, the avoidance of literacy and numeracy-related terms and the description of courses in broad generic terms probably contributed to course participants in these companies saying that they did not understand what the course was about and sometimes that they had not been told about their expected involvement beforehand. In the former case, the managers had minimised the risk of deterring participants by only providing a broad explanation of what the course was about. It is also clear that in some instances the managers themselves did not understand the content or intentions of the courses that senior management asked them to promote.

Across all 18 courses, analysis of the recruitment and attendance patterns showed that the best results of publicising and recruiting (used in about half the courses) were achieved when potential participants were proactively shoulder-tapped by managers, supervisors or key people in the office. These people were usually widely respected by potential participants. Using multiple strategies also increased the likelihood of ensuring good levels of awareness and understanding about the courses by covering exigencies of the workplace and people's lives. When asked what they thought was the

best way of notifying about courses, several interviewees suggested inserts with pay notifications: "it's the one thing that everyone looks at!"

Overall, the publicising of 18 courses and the recruitment of the course participants proceeded reasonably well in the participating companies, although there were also considerable variations across the companies. The evaluations showed that the biggest issues were:

- workers were given inadequate notice of the course;
- poor explanation of what the course involved (especially its LN components);
- over-promising by managers of what could be offered to individual participants.

Final participant selections

The final group of course participants who actually started their courses eventuated as a result of the employees volunteering on an open-entry basis, some careful cajoling and active encouragement of employees by managers or supervisors, and in one case enrolling all the employees of a small company. Even with proactive strategies such as shoulder-tapping, there did not appear to have been any coercive recruiting; all the workers interviewed for the evaluations said they felt that they could have refused to go on to their course if they really did not want to do it. Most of those who expressed some hesitation about doing the course in their first interviews came to enjoy the experience. Very few were hesitant before the course and disgruntled afterwards.

A total of 535 workers who were initially enrolled in courses were interviewed before the courses started. These people had all been chosen by managers as participants for the courses or had volunteered in response to course publicity. After the courses had ended, records showed that 44 (8%) of the 535 had never started their courses, but were still working for the companies.

The reasons for these 44 not starting on their courses varied. In some cases, managers changed their minds and had decided that there

were more appropriate candidates for the courses. The managers saw this as fine-tuning their selection processes as they became more aware of the nature of the courses and further reflected on which workers would benefit most from them. In some cases, the workers had been told that they were going on the course and then "nothing happened, we never heard anything more, so we just assumed that we weren't needed on it." These workers certainly felt frustrated that they weren't told what was happening or why by either the company or the providers.

Seven workers (mainly men aged over 50 years) flatly refused to go on the course when they found out that it involved literacy and numeracy. As one of these people said, "I can't stand these airy-fairy, Kumbayah -type courses" and that he would only attend courses that teach practical aspects of their jobs. With two others (both older Pacific Island men), the refusals were probably due to a loss of face of being in courses with women (a daughter and wife in one case) and younger men.

Course attendance and retention

Beyond recruitment, attendance then becomes integral to the success of a workplace LN program. However, maintaining high levels of attendance is not easy, given the many and varied demands in workplaces which compete for priority. For example, releasing workers to attend sessions puts additional demands on fellow-workers and their supervisors and there are always variations in availability with the type of workplace. Some types of work organisation make learning at work easier than others (especially in larger companies); while some sites have consistently high demands throughout the year, others have seasonal variations in production tempo.

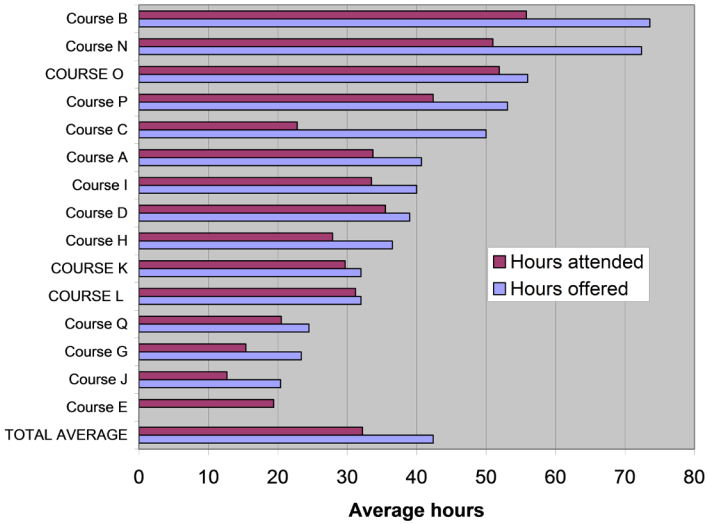
Over the duration of the project it became clear that it was more insightful to monitor course attendance than course withdrawals. Often it was not clear whether someone had finally withdrawn from a course as they might not attend teaching sessions due to factors outside their control such as work demands and subsequently dip

in and out of the course over a long period. Others might exit from a course even after a short period when they or their tutor felt that they had achieved the skills they set out to master (e.g. a specific skill in maths such as calculating percentages). Defining a withdrawal is therefore always problematic, whereas monitoring course attendance rates is more straightforward and provides a more discerning perspective on what was happening in the courses.

Fourteen of the 18 courses supplied complete attendance figures for the evaluations; one had attendance data, but did not report on how many hours were offered. Attendance data was not provided at all for three courses, although these courses had small numbers of participants. In total there were attendance figures for 311 (90.7%) of the 343 post-course interviewees. Two-thirds of the participants achieved 80%+ attendance rates. Course withdrawals and poor attendance occurred because participants left their companies, there was lack of cover and participants experienced personal issues and/or changes in work demands.

Figure 1 below gives the number of hours offered and attended for the 15 courses where data is available. The three courses offered in block format are in capital letters. These courses have the highest attendance rates, which is not surprising as their total number of teaching sessions was much lower than those courses that had teaching sessions weekly. Weekly sessions therefore had a greater potential for absences and work intrusions.

Figure 1: Hours teaching offered and attended in 15 courses



[Courses in capital letters indicate block format]

The average number of teaching hours the participants were offered was 42.4 hours and the average number of hours attended was 32.2 hours. There was considerable variation in the attendance patterns of different courses and of individuals within the same course. Most participants received between 21–39 hours of teaching, followed by 40–59 hours and 0–20 hours. Only 8.9% received 60+ hours of teaching. There was little variation in attendance among different groups of participants, although ethnic minority members and those with qualifications had slightly higher rates of attendance. Courses run by experienced workplace providers also achieved higher attendance rates.

Factors affecting course attendance

Asked how difficult they found it to access their courses, nearly two-thirds (62%) said they 'did not find it difficult', a quarter (26%) said it was 'sometimes difficult' and one in eight (12%) said it was 'usually difficult'. All interviewees were asked post-course what factors had

hindered or prevented their course attendance. The most frequent responses included:

- changing jobs within the company;
- working away from normal work sites;
- work crises (both within the company and in the wider world including the Global Financial Crisis);
- changes in work structures;
- variations in seasonal demands;
- general workplace absenteeism;
- personal crises and family issues.

Based on feedback from both course participants and their supervisors, it appears that educational factors in relation to the courses themselves (e.g. poor teaching, difficulties learning material) have been at most a very minor element influencing attendance. But there was consistent feedback that poor attendance is much more likely to be affected by the realities of running courses around the demands and complexities of workplaces that always have their on-going company performance as their prime consideration.

That said, it is also important to acknowledge that learner commitment is also part of the overall formula for achieving good attendance rates. There were some courses where attendance was poor (especially among some groups of learners in the courses) despite herculean efforts on the part of the tutors concerned (including running public meetings to engage partners and families; reminding learners at work; ringing/texting them reminders; calling round to their homes; and even transporting them to teaching sessions). It is difficult to envisage what more could have been done in some cases and yet attendance in these cases never reached satisfactory levels. Although it is possible to speculate why these learners did not respond very well to these strategies, it is difficult not to conclude that individual motivation was the major factor missing.

Course withdrawals also occurred mainly because of the same reasons, but especially due to workers leaving their companies.

Discussion

While the design of workplace LN programs inevitably focuses primarily on the core components of the teaching process and the teaching content (neither of which were the specific focus of this study), logistical aspects also warrant careful consideration. Recruiting appropriate learners for these courses is a fundamental pre-condition to ensuring that these programs achieve the intended positive impact both on the learners themselves and their wider context of the workplace. The findings reported here show that strategies do vary in their ability to attract, recruit and retain prospective learners, but it is possible to achieve very satisfactory results overall.

Pro-active recruitment by company staff who are respected by prospective participants is probably the most effective strategy, especially when it is complemented by a range of other strategies to ensure that the information is conveyed to workers irrespective of their shift patterns, idiosyncrasies of company operations and any other of the myriad of diversions that abound in workplaces. Course tutors are also an invaluable resource in the recruitment process. They know their prospective learners well from their prior experiences and are able to couch invitations in ways that convey the intention of the course, while also ensuring that the strategies are non-threatening and don't deter involvement. Probably the greatest concern with the pre-course procedures was that a small, but significant minority of enrollees said that they had not been aware they were going on a course in the near future, and even when they did know, they often did not know anything about its content.

Many managers are apprehensive on behalf of their workers that 'the L word' (literacy) is a major deterrent to workers who (they assume) are embarrassed about their LN skills and associate them with a sense of failure resulting from negative experiences of the schooling system. However these evaluations have clearly shown that such apprehension is usually misplaced as participants soon detect the true intent of the courses anyway and come to see LN courses as little different from any other training course they attend. Fudging the

issue by publicising courses with vague descriptions and non-descript course names only tends to increase confusion and delays the process of understanding what the courses are intended to achieve.

There was a high rate of attendance in most of the 18 courses, which is testament to the high degree of support the courses received from management (especially supervisors), the tutors' skills, the high relevance of the contextualised teaching content and the learners' commitment. Where it did occur, absenteeism and withdrawals from the courses were usually related to workers leaving the company or the ups and downs of workplace demands and changes. Educational factors appear to play little role in influencing attendance.

Overall, these workplace LN courses were successful in not only recruiting an appropriate group of participants, but they also managed to retain a high proportion of the initial enrollees through to completion. As in Brinkerhoff's research of workplace training (2003) these evaluations have shown that the eventual impact of an educational course is considerably influenced by what happens in its early stages.

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Meeting diverse expectations: Department of Tutorial Classes, Sydney University, 1919 to 1963

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The University of Sydney has offered some form of organised adult education since the late 19th century. In 1914, that provision was formalised through the establishment of a Department of Tutorial Classes, the appointment of a Director, and a partnership with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). Right from that time, however, there was ambivalence and sometimes direct opposition to the role and sometimes to the existence of the department. As a result, successive directors of the department had to tread a fine line in balancing the expectations of the university with their passion for extending the academy into the adult community, while also satisfying the demands of the WEA. This paper reviews the period of three directorships of the Department of Tutorial Classes, between 1919 and 1963, and argues that the liberal adult education approach adopted by the university from its earliest days was sustained over those 45 years mainly because ongoing disagreement within the university about the purpose of the department and the status of the director, as well as continuing external pressure from

the WEA, ensured that the status quo prevailed, even when there were innovative adult education developments elsewhere, and opportunities for change presented themselves.

Introduction

University adult education was introduced into Australia more than a century ago as a means of extending the knowledge and expertise of the academy to the general public, through means other than formal tertiary courses. All the sandstone universities and others such as the University of New England for some time offered significant adult education programs. Despite the good and, some would say, patronising, intentions of their proponents, however, these programs often struggled for legitimacy within their institutions. Today, only the University of Sydney maintains a substantial program, through the Centre for Continuing Education, a program that had its origins in the 1890s.

Despite its longevity, however, the adult education program at the University of Sydney has also continually struggled not to be marginalised. Critics have seen its goals as incompatible with the mainstream purposes of the university, diverting scarce resources better spent on academic programs, and unduly influenced by its external partner, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) of New South Wales, to whom it was yoked from 1914 to 1983. As a result of such attitudes, those appointed as directors of this adult education enterprise, which for the first 50 years of its life was known as the Department of Tutorial Classes, trod a fine line between reaching into the community and meeting the expectations of the university's Extension Board and Senate, and of its partner, the WEA.

This paper examines the nature of that balancing act for three consecutive Directors of Tutorial Classes at the University of Sydney, from 1919, just after the inaugural director resigned, until 1963, when the retirement of the director signalled a change in the department's name to Adult Education. It argues that, while there were some variations in the nature of the courses offered over that period,

the imperative to meet the expectations of the major stakeholders, apart from the students, ensured a relatively conservative approach, even when there were opportunities for innovation. The paper also proposes that over those years the university never resolved its ambivalence towards the role of the Department of Tutorial Classes and the position of Director.

Early years

The University of Sydney has offered some form of organised adult education since the inauguration of Extension lectures in 1886. Stimulated by a special purpose grant from the New South Wales Government, and against some internal opposition (including from the Vice-Chancellor), in 1914 it introduced 'tutorial classes' for adults, following a British model first launched at Oxford University (Dymock, 2001).

The university adopted the British concept of a 'joint committee', comprising three of its representatives, and three from the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), an organisation set up to provide non-accredited educational courses to mainly blue collar workers (Mansbridge, 1920). The liberal education ideal of the WEA's English founder, Albert Mansbridge, fitted well with the university's approach to teaching and learning. According to Jarvis (1991, 31):

> Mansbridge saw clearly that the aim of education is wisdom, that is, the integration of knowledge, understanding and action. Its process is that of rational inquiry, which depends on the availability of all pertinent information and the evaluation of all contesting perspectives and theories.

In New South Wales, the Secretary of the WEA, David Stewart, maintained close links with the labour movement, a relationship viewed with concern in some quarters of the university because they saw it as threatening its traditional political neutrality (Dymock, 2009). So, even at the inauguration of Department of Tutorial Classes, there were undercurrents within the university that suggested its development would not be smooth.

The first Director (originally called 'Organiser') of the department, Meredith Atkinson, an Oxford graduate, did not much help its cause within the institution. Appointed to the university in 1914, Atkinson soon became involved in the World War I anti-conscription movement in Australia, which created heated debate at the university about politicisation of the director's role. Within the university, Atkinson took on the role expected of directors of such departments, teaching in his field of expertise and organising a program of adult education courses in conjunction with the WEA. It was not therefore a 'traditional' academic department, and some staff believed its purpose was outside the institution's 'core business'. To add to the uncertainty, Atkinson allegedly manipulated affairs within the department to his own advantage.

The sticking point that led to his departure from the university was not, however, his political views or self-interest, but his request that the university should grant the position of Director of Tutorial Classes professorial status. This proposal was opposed even by his fellow anti-conscriptionist, the influential Dean of Arts, Professor Mungo MacCallum, and Atkinson resigned in protest. MacCallum then proposed that the University Extension Board should take control of the department's activities, without any WEA representation at all. After a year-long committee of inquiry, the university Senate decided the WEA should still be included but that its representation on the joint committee should be four, one fewer than the university's five, in contravention of the principle of joint representation established by British universities.

These controversies and machinations in the first five years of its existence set the scene for internal ambivalence towards the Department of Tutorial Classes and the status of the Director which was to affect the department for decades.

1919 to 1934: A secular ministry

The first Director of Tutorial Classes after Atkinson's departure was Garnet Vere (Jerry) Portus, a former priest of the Church of England, who referred to adult education as a 'secular ministry' (Portus, 1953).

Although he had only a few years' experience in the education of adults when appointed, he not only taught in his academic discipline of economic history, but enthusiastically promoted classes and lectures, recruited tutors and students, and carried out the necessary administration for the organisation of the department's program.

Portus had a particular commitment to rural extension forms of adult education, and tried to ensure that appropriately qualified teachers were transferred to towns needing tutors. Occasionally the match between available tutors and content was not perfect. In one instance, a group in Dubbo in the central west of New South Wales wanted a series of lectures on what Portus (1953: 183) described as a 'melange of economic, politics, history, and international affairs'. The University insisted that all tutors be honours graduates, but there were only two teachers at Dubbo High School who met that criterion, and they had qualified with honours in Mathematics and English Literature, respectively. Portus decided the English Literature teacher, Hudson, was the best choice, so he developed a compromise course he called, 'Literature and Social Problems', which continued successfully for the next two years. Later, the University's Extension Board's desire to expand into rural areas led to the appointment of adult education tutors, first at Newcastle, Wollongong and Broken Hill, then at Orange and Wagga Wagga. These positions were funded by the University but the appointments were made in conjunction with the WEA.

In general, the Department's tutorial classes were relatively popular, although not with the workers they were designed to attract. The students were preponderantly middle class, and overall, women outnumbered men two to one. In the ten years to 1923, 176 Tutorial Classes were arranged, of which 43 continued for the full three-year program, and 54 study circles were formed (WEA of New South Wales, 1923). In that year there was a total of almost 1,500 enrolments and the average class size was 26. Among the most popular subjects were those devoted to 'social problems', along with psychology, history, literature and economics.

However, by the 1930s the Sydney University model had moved considerably from the three-year pattern of English tutorial classes. In response to student demand, and against the wishes of the WEA, some classes continued for just one term, whilst others were organised in three terms of five, ten or fifteen lectures (WEA of NSW, 1934). The WEA felt it was the junior partner in the relationship and complained that the University should not be 'regarded as occupying the whole field; on the contrary we are convinced that the value and significance of the university's contribution to adult education would be greatly enhanced if it was part of a greater whole, co-operating with, training teachers for, and helping to maintain the standard of teaching of, other voluntary organisations' (WEA of NSW, 1934). Nevertheless, the WEA continued to have strong input into the nature of the subject areas for the tutorial classes, while the university continued to provide most of the tutors.

In 1934, after fifteen years as director, Portus resigned to take up a professorship in History and Political Science at Adelaide University. Despite his enthusiasm for adult education, he had apparently tired of some colleagues' attitudes to adult education at Sydney University:

> Accustomed to distinguish sharply between the educated and the uneducated by their own criteria of certificates, diplomas and degrees, the universities tended to regard the whole business of extra-mural education as a gesture to the under-privileged. These poor chaps, who had never had any education since their primary schooling, were going to have a chance to drink at the fountains of higher learning. Many of the dons added, *sotto voce*: 'And we hope they'll be worthy of it'. (Portus, 1953: 193)

Portus also said later he thought the role of other educational agencies had been overlooked because of the WEA's absorption with the labour movement, and was critical of the dominance of the tutorial class model in New South Wales adult education (Portus, 1953: 195).

It seems that Portus struggled with the adult education model he inherited at Sydney University and felt powerless to change it. Although tutorial classes still dominated, under his directorship the

work was extended into rural areas, leading to the appointment of tutors at a number of centres, thus helping cement the department's role in the university, even if he felt that role was not always acknowledged.

1935 to 1951: an opportunity for change

Portus was replaced as Director by W G K Duncan who, like his predecessor, struggled to establish the autonomy of the Department of Tutorial Classes over the demands of its adult education partner, the WEA of NSW, and particularly of the Association's Scottish-born General Secretary, David Stewart (Badger, 1984: 32). However, Duncan did swerve from the WEA line when he set up Discussion Groups in rural areas in 1938, despite Stewart's opposition:

> Dave did not like this … and he thought that all possible funds should be spent on classes, as nothing could be so rewarding educationally as direct tutor-student contact in classes; and he did not like the idea that the Department – whose proper task he considered was to teach, not to organise – should take the initiative in instituting a new service. It was only grudgingly and with the most serious misgivings that he gave way. (Higgins, 1957: 70)

Towards the end of the 1930s, the Department (in conjunction with the WEA as organiser) was one of the major providers of adult education in New South Wales, although the numbers enrolled were never particularly large. However, the outbreak of war in 1939 had significant implications for adult education at the University of Sydney through the involvement of a number of key staff in an innovative education program for soldiers.

In January 1941, some 15 months after the outbreak of war, Army Minister Spender announced an Army Education scheme and appointed the Secretary of the University's Extension Board, economics lecturer, R B Madgwick, as its Director. The Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, Lascelles Wilson, became Deputy Director. Under Madgwick's leadership, the Australian Army Education Service developed into a significant adult education

enterprise, particularly in mainland Australia and the southwest Pacific. The curriculum included lectures, music recitals, documentary films, correspondence courses, discussion groups, hobby classes, and publication of the journal *Salt* (Dymock, 1995). Millions of soldiers in aggregate participated in its activities.

The Department of Tutorial Classes also had a key part in another Army Education initiative, the *Current Affairs Bulletin,* or *CAB* as it became known, a regular publication circulated throughout the army from April 1942 to help soldiers understand the background to the war (Dymock, 1995). Duncan (commonly known as 'Dunc') was appointed the CAB's editor, and continued in that role after the war.

While adult education was heading in new directions through Army Education, moves were afoot at the University of Sydney to give more recognition to the Department of Tutorial Classes. At a Professorial Board meeting in late 1942, Professor F A Bland, a former Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, moved that 'the status of the office of Director of Tutorial Classes in the University of Sydney should be raised to that of professorial rank' (University of Sydney, November 1942, 344). This was the same issue that had led to the resignation of the first Director in 1918. Twenty four years later, the vote for change was lost 12-9, and the Professor of Economics, R C Mills, another supporter of adult education, then successfully moved that a committee be set up to report to the Board on extra-mural studies at the university.

The Committee met eight times during 1943 and received submissions from within and outside the university. It made six recommendations, including:

> The management of tutorial classes and discussion groups should not indefinitely remain the University's business; the role of the University in adult education was the provision of facilities for post-graduate research and professional training in the theory and techniques of adult education; and that in order to achieve the latter, the Board should ask the Senate to establish a Department of Adult Education, under a Professor of Adult Education. (University of Sydney, November 1943: 470-2)

Acceptance of these recommendations implied the end of the liberal adult education classes and discussion groups the university had long favoured, and the severing of the university's connection with the WEA, which had existed since the Department of Tutorial Classes was established almost 30 years earlier. Furthermore, the committee's recommendation for a research and training role in adult education and a professor as head would align its purposes with the perceived 'academic' role of the university. If it were established, such a Department would be the first in any Australian university.

At a Professorial Board meeting in 1943, it was moved that the recommendations in the report on extra-mural studies be adopted. However, the acceptance of these recommendations, and therefore of a likely professorship for Duncan, was deferred until the following year. The extent of the opposition to changing the role of the Department of Tutorial Classes after 30 years became evident at a Professorial Board meeting in June 1944, when the Committee's report was challenged on the grounds that its recommendations were for internal, not extra-mural, matters (University of Sydney, June 1944). This created sufficient confusion for the report's impact, and the opportunity for Duncan's professorship, to be lost. As a result, the work of the Department of Tutorial Classes continued as before.

Meanwhile, the initiatives of the Australian Army Education Service and other educational developments in the early 1940s had aroused considerable enthusiasm nationally for a conception of adult education beyond the tutorial classes model that had dominated the inter-war period. At a conference in 1944 on '*The Future of Adult Education in Australia*', Madgwick, as Director of Army Education, said that far more needed to be done than provide lectures and discussion groups typical of the WEA or university tutorial classes. He advocated the use of a wide range of methods and educational activities, and said, 'We must never go back to adult education as we know it' (Madgwick, 1944: 102).

Duncan himself had an opportunity to promote this change. In 1943, the Australian government commissioned him to write a report on adult education. Taking a twelve-month secondment from the

university, Duncan presented his 200-page report, *Adult education in Australia*, in late 1944. In a chapter on 'Why Australia has lagged behind', he discussed the limited appeal of university tutorial classes to the target audience of working men and women, suggesting that adult education had 'failed to touch the real interests of the people':

> Insistence on a strictly non-vocational approach is … one of the reasons for the remoteness and unreality of so much of our adult education. Another reason is that we suffer from an excessively 'literary' or 'bookish' or 'academic' tradition in this field. (Duncan, 1944a)

He was referring of course to the liberal adult education approach, the one that successive directors had fostered, that the WEA advocated, and which the university supported.

A major recommendation in Duncan's report was for a national scheme of adult education, drawing on the lessons learned through the Army Education scheme. However, the Australian government did not support the proposal. Although it was becoming increasingly interventionist in university education, it decided that adult education was part of the states' responsibility for education and that it was not a sufficiently important issue over which to start a demarcation dispute (Dymock, 1995). As a result, Duncan's report was not only rejected by the Federal government, it was never officially released.

Alongside his national review, Duncan prepared another report, *Adult Education in New South Wales* (1944b). One of its recommendations echoed the earlier proposal from the University of Sydney's extra-mural review: that the university should consider establishing a Department of Adult Education to provide research and training for adult education as well as 'new types' of adult education such as refresher courses.

However, despite such recommendations and the spirit of innovation elsewhere in Australian adult education, when Duncan returned to the University immediately after the war, very little changed. The pre-war model of tutorial classes prevailed, even when Assistant Director Lascelles Wilson returned shortly afterwards from his wide-ranging

experience with Army Education. The only significant innovation for the department was the 'Kits' scheme, a more practically oriented group-learning program than the discussion groups scheme, but the new venture did not attract many students (Peers, 1958). In addition, Duncan continued to edit the *Current Affairs Bulletin*, but responsibility for its publication now fell to the newly established Commonwealth Office of Education.

The reluctance of the university to make any change to the existing model was reinforced by the attitude of the NSW WEA, which had much to lose if its relationship with the university was severed. The Association's long-serving General Secretary, David Stewart, regarded the WEA as the 'missionary and organising body' for adult education and the Department of Tutorial Classes as a 'servicing agency' (Stewart, 1948: 65). However, Duncan and his staff continued to strive for greater autonomy, and in 1948 the WEA complained that it was not receiving the support and cooperation it felt entitled to expect from the Department in extending the WEA's work, especially in country areas (Stewart, 1948: 65-7).

One of the grounds for complaint was the action of the Department of Tutorial Classes in appointing an adult education tutor to the New England University College (NEUC) at Armidale, in rural New South Wales, without reference to the WEA (WEA of New South Wales, 1949). Previous appointments of rural 'tutor-organisers' had been made jointly. The NEUC was a new institution, developed under the auspices of the University of Sydney, and its Warden was Robert Madgwick, the former Secretary of the University of Sydney's Extension Board, and more recently Director of Army Education. Stewart was incensed, not only by the lack of consultation, but also by the new tutor's ventures into 'hobbies courses', such as leatherwork, which Stewart considered inappropriate for a university. Despite such occasional altercations, the WEA claimed in its 1955 *Handbook* that the joint committee for Tutorial Classes had survived since its establishment in 1914 because of the spirit in which the two organisations had worked together, frequently postponing decisions rather than putting contentious issues to a vote that was perceived as likely to lead to divisiveness (WEA of NSW, 1955: 19).

So, post World War II, the Department of Tutorial Classes continued in the liberal adult education tradition, with classes and discussion groups jointly arranged by the Department of Tutorial Classes and the WEA. Outside the university, however, adult education in New South Wales expanded after the war, with the State Government setting up the Advisory Board on Adult Education and establishing a network of Evening Colleges, which prepared adults for public examinations and offered general educational courses. By the early 1950s, the government's annual adult education grant was being divided among the Department of Tutorial Classes, the WEA, the Adult Education Section of the Public Library, the NSW Branch of the Arts Council, and the Parent Education Committee of the NSW Education Department (WEA of NSW, 1956: 23).

In 1951 Duncan resigned as Director of Tutorial Classes to become Professor of History and Politics at the University of Adelaide, the same position his predecessor at the University of Sydney had held. He had cause to be disillusioned by the lack of support for his efforts to change the nature of adult education in Australia, in New South Wales and at the University of Sydney. The Australian Government had rejected his commissioned report, and his recommendation the university undertake teaching and research in adult education and move from liberal adult education into professional development courses lapsed in the midst of controversy that resulted in his not being given professorial status.

On the other hand there was criticism of Duncan's willingness to continue to work with the WEA. In Badger's opinion (1984: 35), despite the fact that Duncan 'was so admirably clear headed and incisive on paper, [he] continued to work with institutions and ideas which he had intellectually discarded as inappropriate'. Given the disinclination in some quarters of the university to support change in the adult education model and increase the director's status, however, Duncan may have felt he had no choice than to maintain the existing arrangements.

1951 to 1963: From Tutorial Classes to Adult Education

Duncan's successor, Lascelles Wilson, had been seconded from Sydney University for five years as the Assistant Director, and briefly as Director, of the wartime Army Education Service. In early 1947, the WEA journal, *The Australian Highway* reported that Wilson had come back to his job as Assistant Director of the Department of Tutorial Classes 'bounding with energy and full of ideas gathered from the adventurous field in which he has been working' ('Editor's notebook', 1947, 1). However, as with Duncan, the ideas Wilson gleaned from that wartime experience made little immediate impact on the work of the Department.

Wilson was still committed to the value of liberal adult education and the university's relationship with the WEA. In 1950, whilst Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, he told a meeting of the Victorian Adult Education Association that his definition of adult education did not include vocational and technical education (Wilson, 1950: 2). Rather, he considered adult education to be a 'proper' function of a university because a university was *the* institution for higher learning in the community:

> It represents the most important single force in our modern society that is concerned with the pursuit of knowledge and the fearless search for the truth. The standards and attitudes of mind which these reflect and which the University is so concerned to preserve and further, are standards and attitudes which it is highly desirable should permeate as widely as possible into every part of our society; inform to a much greater degree than they do the beliefs and actions of people in every walk of life. And adult education work offers the greatest opportunity for it to make such contacts (Wilson, 1950: 9).

Stepped-up State Government funding from 1942 had enabled the Department of Tutorial Classes to increase the number of Staff Tutors, from five in 1941, to ten in 1951, the year Wilson took over the department. By 1961 there were fourteen teaching staff. These tutors, whose title came from similar positions in English universities, were appointed on the basis of their discipline knowledge. Although

employed full-time, they generally taught in the evenings (when most tutorial classes were held), and relied on the WEA to promote the courses and make the administrative arrangements.

From the inception of Tutorial Classes in 1914, the salary of the tutors had been set by the joint committee. In 1944 Duncan had convinced the Vice-Chancellor that the salaries be brought in line with those of academic staff of the University. Whilst this seemed to be a more equitable arrangement, it brought its own difficulties, as Badger pointed out:

> It created an 'illusion' that the work of a staff tutor of the Department was in some way comparable or identical with that of a member of the [university] teaching staff. This was clearly not true and was known not to be true by both the [academic] staff and by the members of the Department (Badger, 1984: 35).

The titles were later amended to be consistent with those used in the rest of the university, but the issue continued. This was not only because of the perception that adult education staff were not 'proper' academics, but also because their areas of academic expertise were in disciplines for which the university had specialist departments, such as in English, history and philosophy, and there were no formal (and sometimes no informal) links with those departments.

In 1952, the Commonwealth Government decided that publication of the *Current Affairs Bulletin* was an inappropriate activity for the Commonwealth Office of Education and negotiated with the Department of Tutorial Classes to assume complete control of it, with the incentive of an annual grant. At the time there were some 50,000 subscribers (Department of Adult Education, 1965: 25), an indication of the hunger for authoritative post-war knowledge of world affairs in a world not yet exposed to the news-dissemination possibilities of television. However, within a few years of the inauguration of public television broadcasts in Australia in 1956, the University of Sydney and the WEA combined to produce a weekly television program, *Doorway to Knowledge*.

Initiated by George Shipp, Secretary of the WEA (Sydney) Metropolitan Region, the program heavily involved University of Sydney staff, and included such topics as: *Experimenting with Architecture, Patterns of Life, Great Men of Antiquity* and *Novelists of the 20th Century*. These titles reflect the philosophy of liberal adult education, but at that time there was, of course, no opportunity for the face-to-face debate and discussion that had been the basis for the tutorial classes offered for more than 50 years. In the first year, sixteen one-hour programs were broadcast on Sydney television station TCN9, and it was claimed that 30,000 people on average were watching each episode by the end of the series (Harries, 1960, 77). This figure is an indication that the tutorial classes model was breaking down, and the potential of television as a medium for education was being recognised.

The *Doorway to Knowledge* program was screened until early 1964 when a series on South-East Asia was unilaterally cancelled by the television station and conditions were imposed on any similar future programs (WEA Metropolitan Region, 1964, 6). The reported reason for the cancellation was that Lascelles Wilson, who had just stepped down as Director of Tutorial Classes, apparently made a comment on the program supportive of the North Vietnamese government, at that time engaged in a war with South Vietnam and with the USA, which would shortly be joined by Australian troops (Alan Duncan, pers. comm., July 15, 2004). Soon afterwards, the Department of Tutorial Classes negotiated with Sydney television station, ATN7, to present another educational series, 'Television tutorial', without any WEA involvement in the arrangements. This series was still being broadcast in the mid 1970s, although in a less prominent timeslot than its predecessor.

Within the University, in the early 1960s there were moves to bring the Extension Board and the joint committee for Tutorial Classes together. H J Oliver, Secretary of the Extension Board, had reported positively in 1956 on his observations in England where tutorial and extension departments had been combined into single departments of extra-mural studies (Oliver, 1956). Oliver's report did not bear fruit until 1963, when Wilson announced he intended to retire, and

the university Senate established a committee to examine the 'future relations of the Department of Tutorial Classes and the Extension Board with a view to the long-term development of both' (Shipp, 1963a).

In Wilson's submission to the Committee, he argued for a Department of Adult Education in order to bring the work of the two bodies under a single administrative head, a Director of Adult Education, who would be Secretary to both (Wilson, 1963a). He identified three reasons for such a development: a growth in demand and diversity for university extra-mural teaching, the precedent of similar amalgamations at British universities, and the advantages of utilising Department of Tutorial Classes staff for both extension and tutorial work. 'It would also be desirable', wrote Wilson, 'that the new Director should be *ex officio* a member of the Professorial Board', yet again raising the question of the status of the position.

Wilson was still convinced of the value of the WEA link, despite growing unrest within his Department about the relationship. He told staff in late 1963 that retention of the Joint Committee was vital for the future of the department and that one of the great virtues of the partnership with the WEA was that it took a very heavy share of the administrative and organisational workload which the Staff Tutors would otherwise have to carry (Wilson, 1963b).

The review offered another chance for the University to consider the usefulness of its relationship with the WEA, but the opportunity was not taken. In its formal response to Wilson's proposal, the WEA reminded the Senate Committee that the special relationship between the two bodies was recognised in the University's by-laws and said that the WEA had 'no reason to believe either that the University would take unilateral action to change the relationship, nor that it would do anything else but welcome a frank expression of the WEA's views and would not regard such expression of views as an attempted infringement of its autonomy' (Shipp, 1963a).

Some of the staff of the Department of Tutorial Classes were unimpressed by what they perceived as a lack of consultation on the

proposed new department, and complained to the Joint Committee in mid-1963 that:

> [T]he opinions of those whose full-time professional concern lies with Adult Education and whose collective experience in this field of work might properly be regarded as of value in the process of formulating proposals concerning change, had been ignored or taken to be of little account (Submission to Joint Committee, July, 1963).

The seven signatories, including three senior Staff Tutors and the Assistant Director, Joss Davies, asked for a stay of proceedings.

It was reported at the subsequent Joint Committee Meeting that one senior member was 'clearly irritated by the tone of the submission and the absence of argument either on the principle or on machinery' (Shipp, 1963b). However, the WEA members on the Joint Committee supported the staff, and the matter was not pressed. A minority of the Extension Board felt that 'Adult Education' was not an appropriate name for the new department, but agreed no acceptable alternative had been advanced (Shipp, 1963b).

The university Senate accepted the recommendation that a Department of Adult Education be established, with a Director, not a Professor. Supervision of work of the new Department would be by two committees, the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes and the Extension Board. The areas of work specified were identical with those already being undertaken, and the Director of Tutorial Classes would continue as editor of the *Current Affairs Bulletin*.

In its 1964 Annual Report, WEA Metropolitan Region explained the new arrangements:

> The new Department of Adult Education at the University of Sydney will undertake in addition to work in tutorial classes, discussion and kit groups, *Current Affairs Bulletin* and educational television, a range of activities of an 'external' nature – that is, adult education of a primarily vocational character designed for and attended by selected professional and semi-professional groups. The WEA will continue to be represented on

> the reconstituted Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes and thus play its traditional part in supervising these activities which are jointly offered by the Department and the Association.

The specific mention of vocational education was a sign that, as Wilson's period of Directorship ended and the new Department was inaugurated, the emphasis on liberal adult education was weakening. Nevertheless, it says something for the force of the WEA in the relationship that the Joint Committee was retained, and it was to be another 20 years before the formal link between the two organisations was severed.

Although Wilson favoured the partnership with the WEA, it was in his 12 years as Director of Tutorial Classes that the transition to a broader range of adult education activities began, including the introduction of an educational television program. Due mainly to a particular-purpose grant for tutorial classes from the NSW Government, Wilson was also able to expand the number of staff significantly, and appears to have managed a successful adult education operation. Within the university, however, the status of the department and its staff continued to be a matter of contention, and like his predecessors, he was unable to garner sufficient support for a professorial appointment.

Conclusion

Thanks to the efforts of its three directors and their staff and the tenacity of influential supporters within the institution, the Department of Tutorial Classes became well established at the University of Sydney between 1919 and 1963, after a rocky start. The commitment to liberal adult education was sustained over this period because the university and its partner, the WEA, regarded this as an appropriate way of reaching into the adult community. Nevertheless, there was ongoing tension between the two organisations about their respective roles, and between the department and other parts of the university about the adult education function itself. When opportunities came to make changes, however, internal wrangling at the university, as well as pressure from the WEA, ensured that the status quo prevailed. There are indications that each of the directors

would have liked to have introduced innovations, particularly after World War II, but that those forces were too strong, even when adult education elsewhere was changing.

On the other hand, the directors themselves generally had a strong commitment to the liberal approach, and at least one did not accept that vocational and technical education fell within the gamut of adult education. When change did come, it was gradual, and it was not until 50 years after its introduction that adult education at the University of Sydney began to move away from its liberal heritage to encompass vocational courses. However, opposition to granting professorial status to the director of the department remained constant, helping ensure adult education continued to be seen in some quarters as outside the main purpose of the university.

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'Trying to keep up': The experience of combining full-time VET with work

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Maintaining a healthy work-life relationship is important for the health and wellbeing of individuals and families. This is also true for students studying in vocational education and training (VET) who face increasing pressure to combine study and work. The intersecting commitments of work, life and study create a range of demands for individuals, which, in turn, impede work-life satisfaction. Time and money have been shown to be the biggest factors affecting people who combine work and VET - particularly for workers in low-income jobs, which constitute the biggest employment source for VET students. Data from a research project at TAFESA indicates that working students experience high levels of stress, time strain and interference with activities outside work/ TAFE. The work life outcomes for full-time students are significantly worse than outcomes for workers in the general population.

Introduction

Sarah is a 20-year-old cookery student studying full-time at a Technical and Further Education institution in South Australia (hereafter 'TAFE'). She attends TAFE from 10am until 7.30pm, 5 days per week. Her weekends are spent working day-shifts in a local low-paid job. Sarah describes herself as a social hermit: she has no time for catching up with friends and family due to her intersecting work and study commitments. Sarah needs to work in order to pay her TAFE fees and the increasingly expensive cost to live independently in Adelaide. She has no local family she can turn to for support and feels isolated from her housemates due to the lack of time she has to contribute to household responsibilities. Time and money are of the essence for Sarah. She survives week-to-week, and at times foregoes eating nutritious food in order to pay for her living expenses. Sarah almost always feels stressed and pressed for time, and is dissatisfied with her capacity to maintain her closest relationships. Sarah is experiencing work-life conflict. Combining study and work creates significant difficulties for Sarah, who declared 'it's stressful trying to keep up…'. Sarah's passion for cooking is the one thing that sustains her in this difficult situation. Sarah is one of the participants of a recent study into the work-life experience of working vocational education (VET) students. Her experience illustrates the kinds of work-life-study pressures many students experience, and which this article seeks to illuminate.

In recent years, working has almost become the normal occurrence for full-time tertiary students. Analysis of VET populations shows that almost two-thirds of full-time students are undertaking paid employment, and many work long hours in potentially low paid industries (Polidano & Zakirova 2011). The combination of paid employment and study has a number of effects on education, including pressures on academic engagement (McInnis & Hartley 2002), and lower completion rates (Polidano & Zakirova 2011). In addition, a significant body of knowledge exists regarding the negative effects for low-income earners arising from work-life conflict (Pocock 2009), and the significantly higher work-life conflict experienced by

low-paid workers who engage in VET (Skinner 2009; Pocock et al. 2011).

This article reports on a study conducted to explore the effects of combining full-time study and work using a work-life perspective (Morris 2011). The study used an interpretivist theoretical approach, incorporating a mixed methods design of questionnaire and interviews to explore VET students' reasons for, and experiences of, combining study and work, and looked at their perceptions of work-life interference. The key focus was to examine the intersection of work, life and study commitments. The research highlights aspects of work, life and study interference experienced by full-time students who juggle intersecting commitments.

The next section will outline the background to this study, and the challenges of combining VET and work, and work-life interactions.

Background

Combining VET and work

Research shows that it is common for full-time VET and university students to work whilst studying both in Australia and overseas (McInnis & Hartley 2002; Barron & Anastasiadou 2009; Robotham 2009; Polidano & Zakirova 2011). Up to 63% of full-time VET students are undertaking paid employment: nearly half of these students work over sixteen hours per week, and most in low-paid industries (Polidano & Zakirova 2011). Working students are up to 14% less likely to complete their qualifications than non-working students, with risk increasing in-line with increases in hours worked (Polidano & Zakirova 2011). Despite this evidence, it is inconclusive as to whether working enhances or hinders student achievements: the reality may in fact be a combination of both. Positive outcomes include acquisition of personal skills and post-qualification employment opportunities (Lucas & Lamont 1998; Barron & Anastasiadou 2009; Polidano & Zakirova 2011), and the potential for reinforced understanding of skills learnt in the classroom. Negative outcomes include a decrease in academic work (Astin 1993; Long &

Hayden 2001; Salamonson & Andrew 2006), reduced engagement with on-campus activities and support mechanisms (McInnis & Hartley 2002), increased stress (McInnis & Hartley 2002; Robotham & Julian 2006; Robotham 2009), negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing (Carney, McNeish & McColl 2005), and increased risk of non-completion (Polidano & Zakirova 2011). Notwithstanding the potential risks and benefits, it remains clear that many student-workers experience stress and/or financial strain due to the demands of working, studying and maintaining life commitments (Pocock et al. 2011). VET students may have an increased burden to concurrently work whilst studying due to the requirement to pay up-front fees (Polidano & Zakirova 2011). However the financial commitment of studying at TAFE is becoming less affordable for many clients (Fogarty 2010).

Research has found that there are a number of reasons contributing to the high numbers of working students in the tertiary sector. Whilst Polidano & Zakirova (2011) suggest that 'financial need' is not a motivational factor, previous findings report that financial necessity is the dominant issue (Curtis & Lucas 2001; Holmes 2008). Meeting the growing costs of education is a significant concern for students (Curtis & Shani 2002; Curtis & Williams 2002; McInnis & Hartley 2002; Manthei & Gilmore 2005), as well as increased financial commitments, high cost of living, desire for financial independence, improved self-esteem, and improved job prospects (McInnis & Hartley 2002; Polidano & Zakirova 2011).

It is important to note that 69% of working VET students are engaged in low-paid industries (Polidano & Zakirova 2011). Service industries such as hospitality, retail, domestic services and community services have particularly concentrated numbers of low-paid workers (Pocock 2009). A number of earlier studies show that such low-paid industries represent the major employment opportunities for working students (Curtis & Lucas 2001; Curtis & Shani 2002; Curtis & Williams 2002; McInnis & Hartley 2002; Bird 2009; Smith & Patton 2009). Low-paid workers are frequently time and income poor, constrained in their efforts to provide security for family members and purchase the necessities of life (Masterman-Smith & Pocock 2008). VET

participation results in significantly higher work-life conflict for low-paid workers (Skinner 2009), possibly due to factors such as limited access to flexible work conditions, high rates of work-to-life spill over, and lack of time and money (Pocock 2009). Difficulties surround the measurement and calculations of the experiences of low-paid workers not least due to the complex and diverse means of measuring low pay. Certainly adult minimum wages are stipulated at approximately $16 per hour in Federal Awards (Fair Work Ombudsman 2010) and State Awards (Safe Work SA 2011). However a minimum wage does not in itself constitute low pay. The OECD determines that low-paid workers are 'full-time wage earners receiving less than two-thirds of the median wage of full-time wage-earners (OECD 2006:175).

Work-life interactions

The interactions of work and life can have repercussions on the wellbeing of individuals and families (Squire 2007). Work-life conflict creates pressures on time availability, family interactions, community connections, and personal satisfaction (Pocock 2009). The interactions of the spheres of work and life are complex: rather than sitting alongside each other, each sphere overlaps and interacts (Pocock, Skinner & Williams 2007). The experiences and conditions in each sphere merge into the other, creating multidirectional interactions and spill-overs. For people in the workforce, participation in some form of education and training is associated with increased work-life pressures; time pressures and financial strain are commonly reported to be the major factors which influence the capacity to study (Skinner 2009).

Given the competing responsibilities and pressures individuals face in an increasingly challenging world, it is not surprising that work-life spill-over and conflicts arise. The experiences of work and how it interacts with other domains of life can affect physical and mental health: this is exemplified in the relationship between poorer work-life outcomes and poorer self-reported physical, mental and social wellbeing (Pocock, Skinner & Williams 2007). Work-life conflict and dissatisfaction can have negative impacts on households and relationships; positive correlations are evident between working

hours and family breakdown (Shepanski & Diamond 2007). Further to this, O'Driscoll, Brough and Kalliath (2006) report that the consequences of work-life conflict include withdrawal behaviours, decreased satisfaction, impaired mental health and wellbeing, physical health problems, and increased use of non-prescription self-medication such as alcohol.

Research approach

The following sections report on the experiences of hospitality students at a South Australian TAFE campus (Morris 2011). The research aimed to expand knowledge and understanding regarding the intersecting commitments of work/life/study, and how they are experienced by VET students who combine full-time study with paid employment. For the purpose of this article, findings will report on the pursuit of the following research questions:

- What is the effect of paid employment on the work-life situation of full-time hospitality students at TAFESA?
- What is the incidence of combining study and work for hospitality students?
- What is the impetus for undertaking paid employment whilst studying full-time?
- What is the difference in work-life situation for students who work compared with workers in the general population?

The research used an interpretivist theoretical approach, relying on the explanation of participants regarding their subjective experiences (Hitzler & Eberle 2004) to explore the incidence, impetus and work-life experiences of hospitality students who undertook paid employment in conjunction with their full-time studies. The research design incorporated a mixed method of survey and interviews. The first phase consisted of a written survey of hospitality students, which I title 'VET-AWALI'. This survey was completed by one hundred and sixty four participants, with a response rate of 97%. The survey was designed to collect demographic details, and assess interference across work, family and study domains through the use of Likert scales and closed-questions. The survey was modelled on

the Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) (Pocock, Williams & Skinner 2007), and used a five item scale to measure work-life-study interaction: interference with outside activities, interference with time spent with family and friends, interference with community connections, feeling rushed or pressed for time, and satisfaction with work-life balance. Hospitality students were purposively sampled because they primarily studied full-time, and were centrally located at one campus. Recruitment was undertaken within the classroom environment within hospitality, cookery and patisserie programs ranging from Certificate II level through to Advanced Diploma.

The questionnaires invited participation in subsequent interviews so that the second phase of the study included qualitative data. Semi structured interviews were undertaken in order to more deeply probe the lived experiences and opinions of students (Morris 2011), permitting enquiry into students' situational meanings and motives. Fifty nine survey respondents expressed interest in participation. Fifteen met the selection criteria of a) studying full-time, b) undertaking paid employment, c) domestic student, and were invited to attend interviews. Not all respondents attended interviews due to logistical difficulties with timeframes: many respondents had finished their course and/or were on holidays when interviews were conducted. The final nine interview participants comprised a group which was logistically possible, given the timeframes, and encompassed a range of courses, working conditions and levels of work/life interference.

VET-AWALI survey results were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, allowing relationships to be identified and analysed. Thematic analysis was applied to interview data, which allowed for the emergence of common themes and concepts within the data-set (Braun & Clark 2006).

The research participants

A brief overview of the research participant's follows, all of whom were studying full-time at a South Australian based campus of TAFE. The participants included 65 hospitality students, 70 commercial

cookery students, and 29 patisserie students. There were 86 females and 78 males. All participants were aged between 18 and 55, with 73% aged under 24. The participants comprised 98 domestic students and 66 international students. Seventy two participants lived independently, and 92 lived with family members. Fourteen participants had dependent children, and 109 were undertaking paid employment.

Interview participants were selected from within the above sample. Interviews were undertaken with five hospitality, two commercial cookery, and two patisserie students. Five were female and four were male, all aged between 18 and 25. Seven participants worked in one job whilst two held two concurrent jobs. Eight held positions within the hospitality/cookery field, one worked in retail and one worked in a labour field. Working hours varied with one student working less than 10 hours/week, three working up to 20 hours, two working up to 30 hours, and one working up to 40 hours.

Main Findings

The emergent themes within the interview data reinforced the findings of the questionnaires which suggested that students who combined work and full-time study experienced high levels of stress, time strain, and interference with general activities outside of work/study.

The following sections will address these key themes which include the experiences of combining study and work, comparison of work-life situation between students and workers, constructive experiences of work-study combinations, and support mechanisms which students engage with.

The experiences of combining study and work

Consistent with other research (for example McInnis & Hartley 2002; Barron & Anastasiadou 2009; Robotham 2009; Polidano & Zakirova 2011) survey results showed that a large number of respondents combined work with full-time study: 66.5% of respondents were employed, with 82.6% of those in casual positions, and only 10%

in permanent/ongoing positions. Men were slightly more likely to work than women. Most respondents under the age of 35 worked, whilst most aged over 35 did not. There were only a very small number of parents in the survey (14), and half of these were working. Respondents living alone or in shared rental accommodation were more likely to work (71.4%) than those living with family members (62.2%). One in five (20%) respondents reported receiving less than the state and/or federal minimum wage of approximately $15 per hour (Safe Work SA 2011; Fair Work Ombudsman 2011), suggesting that students may be vulnerable to illegal working conditions. However, for the purpose of this article, low pay is defined as $20/hour or less. Over half of respondents were low paid (53.7%): females were more likely to be in low paid jobs, whereas males were more likely to be in higher paid jobs. The majority of students (77.5%) were working less than 20 hours per week. Whilst short hours of employment were common for both genders, men were slightly more likely than women to be working long hours. Financial need was the main reason respondents gave for working: two thirds reported that they worked to support themselves and/or their family, with a further 30% reporting their primary motive as enhancing future employment opportunities.

In comparing the respondents experiences of the intersecting commitments of work, study and life, it was clear that work-life interference was a regular feature in the lives of respondents; three quarters of respondents reported that work interfered with activities outside of work to some extent, and nine out of ten felt rushed or pressed for time. Women more frequently reported some level of time pressures (98.1%) than men (86.5%). These findings suggest that the combination of work and study has repercussions beyond the workplace and classroom; time pressure and feeling rushed is widespread. These pressures were certainly evident in the responses of interview participants:

> I don't sleep very much - I have maybe two or three hours a night ... I just don't have time ... I get home from the job at about 11pm, so I will just go through and do all of my assignments until about 4am.

> I feel like I'm rushing almost always ... whether it be rushing from one job to do another ... or work to going out somewhere ... I'm always in a rush to get somewhere.

> I was getting up 6.30am, going to TAFE, finishing at 3.30pm ... I'd get home at about 4 ... wash and iron chef whites ... leave at 5 to start work at 5.30 and work through until midnight.

For interview participants, maintaining social connections with friends was a common problem: eight out of nine participants reported that their social life was affected by study and/or work. Long hours studying at TAFE in conjunction with casual/shift-work took its toll on social connections.

> I haven't actually had pretty much any social life for the past six months ... that's probably the hardest thing: the social aspect ... It gets awkward because you're constantly having to say 'No, I can't do that' ... you're putting friends offside.

> I've been a hermit for the past six months ... but I'm meant to be young, I'm meant to be doing this [going out] now ... My treat to myself is I'll buy Indian takeaway [occasionally] .... so that's my social life, that's my going out - that is it!

There was a clear relationship between the number of working hours and the incidence of work-life interference. Respondents working longer hours experienced higher interference than those working shorter hours. This was particularly significant for interference with activities outside of work: 56.6% of respondents working more than 20 hours/week often or almost always experienced interference from work outside of work, compared with 35.1% of those working less than 20 hours. Time pressure was a significant problem for respondents working long hours: 78.3% of those working more than 20 hours/week felt rushed/pressed for time. For example, one student worked five or six hour shifts, five nights a week:

> I wasn't really cooking that much, or eating - I was working that much unfortunately. I think that's why I've got sick ... Working all those extreme hours was really starting to get to me actually - it was building up.

The combination of work and study had a multi-directional intersection, where study affects work, and work affects study:

> I came to Adelaide to do TAFE, but to do TAFE I needed to have work to keep paying - they kind of impacted each other ... I wasn't working to my full potential because I was busy with TAFE, but I was here to be at TAFE but then work was impacting on TAFE. It was kind of a Catch 22.

It was more common for study to interfere with work to some extent (83.7%), than work to interfere with study (44.2%). Work was more likely to interfere with study if respondents worked long hours. The findings that study-to-work spill-over is more common than work-to-study may reflect the fact that respondents placed a lot of emphasis on the importance of study, more commonly the main priority, with work coming second. This was highlighted during interviews, with eight out of nine participants emphasising the priority they gave to TAFE and study:

> I always put TAFE ahead of work, because it's my schooling, it's what's going to get me further in life.

> TAFE [comes first] - always! Even when I'm pressed for money, I will still call in sick [to work] when I have to study ... I'd miss having proper food over school - it's only six months of my life.

Of significance concerning the combination of study and work was the respondents' experience of stress. Stress and mental distress have been found to be a common experience amongst tertiary students in recent studies (Stallman 2010; Robotham & Julian 2006; Norton & Brett 2011). Stress was a major factor in the lives of survey respondents: four out of five working students reported feeling stressed. Not surprisingly, the incidence of stress increased with longer working hours, with 91.3% of students who worked more than 20 hours per week feeling somewhat or very stressed. Student stressors involve a number of factors which can include exams, time demands, financial pressure, increased responsibilities and increased workloads (Robotham & Julian 2006).

> I'll be at work and ... [thinking] what have I got due at TAFE tomorrow, or what do I have to do at TAFE tomorrow, ... I even think work [assignments] when I'm sleeping.
>
> It's stressful trying to keep up and stressful thinking that I'm not doing enough ... and I push myself to work so that's really stressful - so everything's sort of stressful.

The work-life situation of students compared with those of workers in the general population

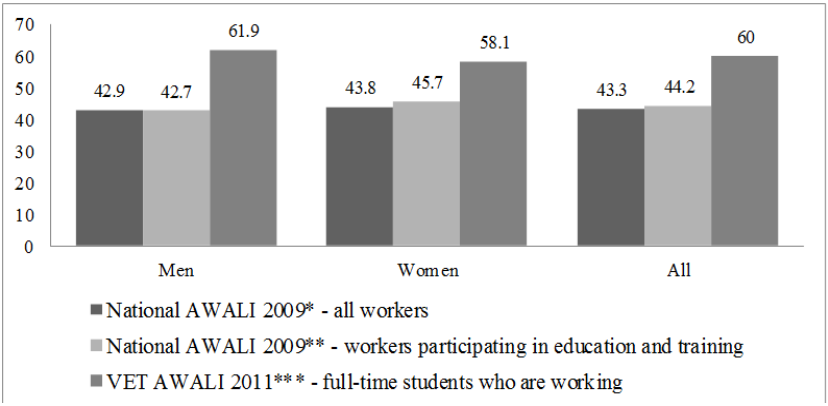
Comparing responses from VET-AWALI with results from a national AWALI survey (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010), it is evident that VET respondents consistently experienced significantly higher levels of work-life interference than workers in the general population on every item of the five-item scale. This includes interference with general activities, social connections, time and satisfaction. Almost half of the working students did not have enough time with family/ friends (Morris 2011:46) compared to only a quarter of workers in the national survey (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010:20). Two thirds of working students often/almost always felt pressed for time (Morris 2011:46) compared with half of national workers (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010:20). Working students also reported lower levels of satisfaction with work-life balance: only 60.5% of working students felt satisfied (Morris 2011:46) compared with 75.4% of national workers (Pocock, Skinner & Williams 2007:15). This indicates that the experience of combining full-time study with work is associated with worse work-life outcomes, with potential repercussions beyond TAFE and work. Working students experienced significant difficulties maintaining important social connections.

A cumulative AWALI score for work-life interference is calculated by averaging and standardising the five measures of work-life interference (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010). Using this index, the minimum score is 0 (least work-life interference) and maximum score is 100 (greatest work-life interference). National AWALI findings over the four years 2007-2010 show that the average AWALI index is between 36.1 - 37.1 for part-time workers, and 44.3 - 46.4 for full-time workers (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010:30). In

2009, the national average AWALI score for all workers was 43.3 (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010:29). For workers who engaged in education and training in that same year it was slightly higher at 44.2 (Skinner 2009:20). These results suggest that workers participating in some form of education and training experienced a worse work-life interaction than those not participating (Skinner 2009).

In contrast to national findings, the average overall work-life index score for working students in the VET-AWALI was 60 (Morris 2011:48). As shown in Figure 1, this is significantly higher than the national AWALI findings for workers in the general population (43.3), including workers participating in education and training (44.2). Comparatively high index scores similar to those reported by working students are only evidenced in national findings for employees working long hours (>48 hrs/wk). These long hours workers have an index score of 57.1 for women and 53.3 for men (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010:34). Working students reported even higher interference with VET-AWALI scores of 61.9 for women and 58.1 for men: these results suggest that working whilst undertaking full-time VET is associated with high levels of negative work-life interference.

Figure 1: Work-life index scores for employees by gender, National AWALI 2009 & VET AWALI 2011



Note: scores indicated above are not adjusted (adjusted scores would reflect estimations of scores if all groups worked the same hours). *2009 AWALI N=2306; **2009 AWALI N=approx.510, ***VET AWALI N=104; Sources: *Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello (2010:29); **Skinner (2009:20); ***Morris (2011:47).

The constructive experiences of combining work and study

The results from the VET-AWALI survey indicate that the combination of full-time VET and work is associated with substantially increased interference across all work-life domains. However, there was also some evidence of positive effects of work-study overlap expressed by interview participants. Firstly, there were positive spill-overs between study and work when work helped to reinforce learning and understanding of how theories applied to the real world:

> Because I'm working in hospitality, I can apply a lot of stuff - it can really help me with my assignments.

> It does help me to understand different types of things in the industry ... I can put that [knowledge] into use because work doesn't really explain that much to you. They just say 'do this', and I don't understand how and why.

Secondly, high levels of motivation and self-determination were evident amongst the working student population. Employment was viewed as a means of securing their current and future aspirations. Participants had goals for the future and envisaged that their hard work now was part of the pathway towards future security:

> [I work] to get where I want to be, like career wise ... there is so many opportunities, so many different directions that I could go. So that's why I love it there.

Finally, participants discussed the satisfaction they gained in exercising the passion they felt for their occupation and their positive experiences of finding a way to gain perspective and/or a place to escape from the stress and pressure of work and life:

> I think sometimes having work outside [of TAFE] and having social obligations creates a better balance and allows you to step back and be more subjective.
>
> Everything's sort of stressful. But the cooking, coming to school, that's not stressful for me ... as soon as I'm here it's fine - it's like this is sort of cooling - like going to a massage place - like it's just relaxing.

Clearly, some felt both positive and negative effects of combining work and study However, in the main, combining full-time VET and work was associated with significant negative work-life interference. Interference with non-work activities, disconnection with family and friends, time strain, work-life dissatisfaction and very high stress levels were all associated with the study-work combination. The work-life outcomes reported by working students are worse than the national AWALI averages: they are higher even than the national findings for employees who work very long hours (>48 hrs/wk). These findings have significant implications for students' wellbeing, incorporating social, emotional and health spheres, which can in turn affect learning and educational engagement and outcomes. However, employment can also bring positive contributions to the lives of working students, such as increased learning opportunities and knowledge, and potential employment outcomes.

Support mechanisms that help students through their study

It is widely recognised that the availability of, and access to, support within the educational environment assists students to overcome barriers to education, and achieve successful outcomes. Robotham & Julian (2006) note that students access a range of support, both formal (professional) and informal (family and friends) to seek help in managing the stress and demands associated with study. Overall, respondents expressed satisfaction with the formal supports offered within TAFE. Whilst utilisation of professional support was low, with approximately one in five accessing counselling and/or learning support, respondents felt that they were supported and knew how to seek assistance, and gained significant support from teaching staff:

> This TAFE, you organise things here to help your students, it's very effective. It's really helpful and I have [had] no problem with that.
>
> All the support's there that I've needed and asked for
>
> [My lecturer] was pretty understanding and just appreciated that I could get there ... It was good having a teacher that really understood what you were going through. Some other lecturers just wouldn't have put up with it.
>
> The chefs here they know you by name, and they know what you do ... it's like you're working at a family business. It's just so warm here ... it's all support - you've got nothing but support from all these people.

During the interview phase of research, informal supports emerged as a large source of assistance, where emphasis was placed on the help and support received from friends and family. Participants described a range of educational, emotional and social aspects of informal support which had helped them during their study, and highlighted the importance of the informal support they received:

> I have had more support [from family] than before, and I suspect that that's the only reason I actually got through the semester ... It's been way better support and I think that's why I've been able to go through with it - so it does help, it really does!
>
> His [a friend's] family was a lot like a second family actually. I would go there and just not have to think ... that was probably the healthiest food I was eating ... To go there and just have a meal cooked for me, it was great.

Living independently appeared to increase the pressure faced by working students. It was evident during interviews that students who lived at home had increased support from family which helped to juggle the intersecting pressures, and balance the financial and household responsibilities. Students living with family described their social support very positively:

> My family's pretty good, because they know I've got work and TAFE and everything, I don't really have any chores and everything as such ... my parents take care of all my expenses - I don't have board ... I don't have any expenses like that.
>
> I have no major responsibilities [at home] - just basically keeping my room tidy ... surprisingly they don't [charge me board]. They say just keep all your earnings.
>
> Every now and again I'll cook tea - not that often ... [I] just keep my room tidy I guess, I'm pretty lucky that way ... our agreement is that once I'm working full-time and not studying I'll pay board, but not while I'm studying.

In contrast, participants who lived independently spoke in terms of getting by and putting food on the table. It was difficult to find time to manage their own personal/household responsibilities in between their work and study commitments:

> I don't get to help out around the house because I'm at school all the time [and at work all weekend]. It puts pressure on me and my housemates ... I feel I'm not doing my part - not pulling my weight.
>
> When I started working I just didn't have time for that kind of stuff [household jobs] ... the biggest issue was my own washing: I had two chef shirts coming to TAFE and working, and using like two daily. Sometimes you'd try and use one for two days, it's just too hard trying to wash and dry and iron.
>
> I would love to have extra money and not be living week to week ... like I've got money saved but it's just for those emergencies, like if my car blows up.

Flexibility and support to arrange fee payments was a crucial factor in managing work-life commitments. The payment of up-front fees caused significant strain for many respondents, with over 85% reporting they would like the option to defer fees by means of a student loan:

> My mum nearly started crying ... we had to borrow money off our family friend to pay [the fees]. We're not well off, so who has that [kind of money] just sitting there?

> They said 'well it seems like you can't support yourself in Adelaide with all your expenses', and I'm like 'No kidding! And you're still trying to make me pay $3,000 straight up front.

It is apparent that full-time VET study can be associated with a variety of pressures which affect working students who live independently to a higher degree than those living with family. Access to adequate support to maintain social and emotional wellbeing is important. This support may come from a range of both formal and informal sources to help alleviate the increasing burdens faced by working students, and enhance work-life outcomes.

Implications from the findings

Understanding the lived experiences of students facing intersecting work-life-study demands is important to providing support to students, applying well-targeted approaches. A number of intersecting pressures were experienced by students; these produced an assortment of demands, across three domains: the VET system itself, work, and home. Within the VET sphere, the main demands were money, time and support issues. Work demands included a range of employer and organisational difficulties, and working in an industry not linked to the field of study. Home demands encompassed household and care responsibilities, social connections, and financial commitments. Each demand was associated - at least for some - with reciprocal benefits or resources, depending upon the way in which the item was experienced. Students who experience an assortment of both demands and resources may be more likely to cope successfully with their combined roles. In order to reduce demands and increase resources, changes need to be implemented about the way student populations are perceived: it may no longer be appropriate to think of students as having study as their central focus, because work is playing an increasingly important role in the lives of the majority of full-time students (Carney, McNeish & McColl 2005; Holmes 2008). The fact that students have dual roles, 'trying to achieve academically and survive financially' (Carney, McNeish & McColl 2005:318) needs to be recognised and supported within educational institutions. The delivery of flexible, targeted services and support, which are

accessible to all students, will enhance students' capacity to meet the intersecting demands of study, work and life.

For VET practitioners, results from this study highlight the fact that time matters: time and stress are significant issues for VET participants, along with the financial strain of paying up-front fees. However, alleviating this burden of intersecting pressures remains an open question. This question might be best considered by addressing four crucial elements.

Firstly, broader access to flexible payment options and payment deferral schemes across all academic levels of study may reduce the obligation to work for some students, thereby allowing students to concentrate on study as their main priority. This would greatly improve the access to affordable education for vulnerable populations who can least afford to pay up-front fees.

Secondly, policy makers may work with education providers to encourage greater consideration regarding timetable issues. This may incorporate a wider range of flexible delivery approaches such as elective online modules, and 'on-and-off campus' delivery approaches, to better respond to the time pressures faced by working students.

Thirdly, on-campus support services need to act as a 'springboard' (Bartley, Ferrie & Montgomery 2006; Skinner 2009), providing the foundation upon which participants can increase their capacity to engage in education and workforce participation. Constructive help through the provision of social, emotional, financial and educational support, which responds to the cost and time concerns that clearly affect working VET participants needs to be a core aspiration of VET providers.

Finally, support needs to be encouraged beyond the classroom and VET environment. Informal support from family, friends and external agencies can play a leading role in easing the pressure faced by working students. This research has clearly shown that participants' viewed the educational, emotional and social support from informal sources as a significant contributing factor to their academic success.

This is particularly important in light of the dual pressures confronting Australia's VET sector: the move towards a market driven education sector heralds increasing costs of education, while workforce participation initiatives will direct increasing numbers of disadvantaged and vulnerable clients into the sector. As noted by Norton & Brett, 'the [education] sector can anticipate even more students to participate from a variety of backgrounds, [hence] the proportion of students expected to struggle is likely to increase' (2011). Given the pressures of competitive and contestable funding for education signalled in the strategic directions of TAFE and VET under the 'Skills for All' policy initiative (Wilson 2010; Government of South Australia 2012a; Government of South Australia 2012b), this should be a central issue for consideration by VET providers.

Conclusion

This article began with Sarah's story. For Sarah, and many working students like her, the balance between study, work and life is delicate. The opportunity to access support services, which are well-targeted and support her particular circumstances may mean the difference between success or failure in achieving her academic goals, and thereafter empower her with the potential for personal and economic growth. Education providers need to recognise the dual roles undertaken by working students, giving consideration to the multiple, intersecting responsibilities and commitments experienced by Sarah and the increasing proportion of other students like her.

This contribution has considered the work-study-life circumstances of a small number of full-time hospitality TAFE students in a single state in Australia. Whilst my study is small its findings are clear: full-time hospitality students at TAFESA experience significant levels of stress, time strain and interference with time spent with family/friends. This clearly shows that work-life interference is a problem for working students. Whilst the spheres of study and work are multidirectional and interact with each other, the direction of interference, or spill-over, is mostly one-way for working students. Most report that study interfered with work, compared with less than half reporting that work interfered with study. It is crucial to acknowledge the high level

of interference that flows from study into students' working and home life.

Given that the financial costs of TAFE study is becoming prohibitive for many potential clients, and are a major barrier to VET participation more broadly, work becomes a fundamental element of the capacity to engage in study. The high incidence of reported stress and time strain amongst working students has repercussions for success within the classroom environment and beyond. The fact that working students experience significantly higher levels of interference than workers in the general population has significant implications for the mental health and wellbeing of students, and the welfare and support mechanisms offered within educational institutions.

While my results show high levels of negative work-life interference, they cannot be assumed for all TAFE without wider surveys of a larger population of vocational students in other programs. A further study could contribute to the knowledge of work-life interference across broader program areas, and wider geographical locations.

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Engaging in continuing education and training: Learning preferences of worker-learners in the health and community services industry

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Current tertiary education and training provisions are designed mainly to meet the learning needs of those preparing for entry into employment and specific occupations. Yet, changing work, new work requirements, an ageing workforce and the ongoing need for employability across lengthening working lives make it imperative that this educational focus be broadened to include continuing education and training provisions for those already in the workforce. To address this refocusing of the education and training effort, this paper proposes that learning at work, encompassing practice-based experiences supported by both formal and informal workplace arrangements, constitute an effective continuing education and training model for worker-learners in the aged care industry. It draws on data from semi-structured interviews and written responses from 51 workers who show preferences for such a model. Not only do aged care workers like engaging in learning

independently and with co-workers and workplace facilitators, they prefer a larger component of courses to be delivered at the work site. The implications of these findings are summarised in this article.

Introduction

The pace and extent of changes in occupational and work requirements and transforming work practices have impacts on the kinds of work available to be undertaken; how that work is organised and practised; the requirements of that work; and with whom workers interact to understand and successfully complete their work (Billett, 2006a). These changes arise in different ways across occupations and workplaces. However, uniformly they require workers to continually learn and update their work-related capacities, and, for many, across lengthening working lives. Hence, there is an increasing emphasis on continuing education and training (CET) provisions to assist individuals to be both skilful in ways required by their current work situations and yet be adaptable in addressing these ongoing changes. There is a need, seemingly, for all workers to constantly acquire and create new and actionable knowledge and skills as they continue to develop dispositions, personal qualities and 'ways of being' (Eraut, 2004) appropriate for their work and working lives (Barnett, 2006).

As much of work requirements and changes within them are shaped by work practices and their socio-cultural environments, much of that development may need to be acquired at and through their work). The occupational learning occurring in the context of work is influenced by local "rules, values, attitudes, expectations etc." (Ellstrom, Svesson & Aberg 2004: 479)." This is because learning at work is shaped and transformed by "material, social, discursive and historical conditions and relations" (p.479) and requires personal reflection as well as collaboration with fellow workers and clients (Kemmis, 2005). Similarly, Hodkinson, Biesta and James (2008) identify ways in which learners as well as the learning situation shape their learning. They propose that, while theories of learning cultures (explaining why situations influence learning) are critical, cultural

theories of learning (explaining how and why people learn) are also significant to the understanding of learning. Moreover, influences of situations and individuals include inevitable relations between them that shape learning in personally distinct ways (Billett 2006b). These propositions suggest that learning is indeterminate in workplaces than in classrooms of tertiary education institutions, although the same considerations apply to both kinds of settings. However, learning at work may require specific sets of skills and attitudes such as those proposed by Tennant and McMullen (2008), which include:

> how to analyse experiences, the ability to learn from others, the ability to act without all the facts available, choosing among multiple courses of action, learning about organisational culture, using a wide range of resources and activities as learning opportunities (e.g. memos, policies, decision making processes), and understanding the competing and varied interests in the shaping of one's work or professional identity (p. 525).

This skill set may complement those required for learning in educational programs including: learning from instruction (e.g., listening, taking notes, summarising, questioning); performing assigned learning tasks (e.g., understanding the purpose of a task, following instructions, anticipating the kinds of responses required); relating practical experiences to the material being taught and applying the principles derived from theory and research; basic learning skills (e.g., finding information, organising and categorising thoughts, reviewing material for examinations, developing exam techniques); and learning how to generalise and when to generalise (Tennant, 2000, p. 126-127).

The workplace learning skills, suggested by Tennant and McMullen (2008), highlight the centrality of learners' action and engagement in their learning and development. These authors advocate a greater emphasis on learning than teaching with individuals directing their own learning in meeting their immediate needs. Such premises might contradict current educational practice founded more on pre-specified content and outcomes rather than on individually initiated learning and development.

Regardless, the demand for on-going learning and particular contributions of the workplace draw attention to the central role that tertiary education and training (TET) provisions need to play in ensuring Australian workers constitute a viable and productive workforce as expectations of greater efficiencies and higher productivity can only be realised if individual workers learn to effectively confront these challenges. However, busy workers likely need to be supported in particular ways to develop further their occupational capacities for them to respond to changing work requirements. They already possess varying levels of existing occupational knowledge and work experiences and these serve as invaluable foundations for their ongoing learning.

Current learning in the workplace

Workers consciously or unconsciously engage in learning while performing daily work tasks to meet immediate situated or contextual goals (e.g., when workers need to learn and know just enough to perform a task or respond to a problem at a particular time). More accurately this kind of learning is participative and involves workers engaging in and learning through goal directed activities at and through work. Workers also are likely to habitually engage in learning through observation of work practices (Tennant & McMullen, 2008) and through interactions with others (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). What they learn in the workplace through such processes is understandably linked to the tasks being performed at the time, as is the case with those in educational institutions despite erroneous claims that knowledge learnt in such institutions is often either exemplified or abstracted from everyday practices. Consequently, their knowledge and experiences and that of their co-workers provide rich foundations and sources of learning. Essentially, learning in the workplace becomes a process as well as a product when meanings are derived by the practices of the work community (Gheradhi, 2009) which allow learners to construct their understandings to a level of sophistication that is influenced by but linked to the circumstances of practice (Jordan, 1989).

Workers may also participate in reflexive pedagogy, for example, by engaging in dialogue with other workers for collective meaning

making (Kemmis, 2005). The workplace environment may support these types of learning in productive ways and thereby help develop capacities to achieve individual as well as organisational outcomes. However, worker-learners may not always perceive their development in knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs, senses, and so on, as learning *per se* (Billett, 2001). So, when implementing experiences that are enacted in the workplace, they may need to acquaint themselves or be acquainted with the pedagogical potential of these opportunities and then appraise them in terms of the best options to meet their learning needs. Therefore, trainers and others responsible for training in workplaces and TET providers have a key role in assisting and engaging with these learners, subsequently enhancing learning experiences that are afforded to them in the workplace and/or through educational programs.

CET provisions in prospect

Workers' intentions for engaging in continuing education and training (CET) are to advance their current knowledge and competencies. Given that this further development will arise mainly through engagement in the occupational practice, it is worth considering how that learning might be progressed within the context of their current work practices and supplemented with experiences in educational institutions. That is, rather than assuming a course-based approach as both desirable and the most efficacious of learning experiences, it is important to consider how these provisions might also be embedded and intermingled (embodied with work activities as well as training in educational institutions), with a stronger emphasis on individuals' learning than on their being taught. One reason for promoting this emphasis on active engagement by learners is that the interests of CET participants in learning may be less in the transmission of knowledge that others say they should learn, such as is common in entry level training, than in meeting more immediate needs. As the workplace presents an authentic site full of rich sources of learning, it makes sense to draw on these and situate more CET within the workplace than in educational institutions. Moreover, as CET has a purpose in assisting individuals with their vocation—an important learning factor for individuals and their workplaces—it can

best serve this purpose if what is learnt is embedded and embodied (Choy & Delahaye, 2009) into the work context. To achieve these goals, then, CET arrangements will need to consider more broadly curriculum and pedagogic (i.e. support for learning) practices than those that are currently operating in tertiary educational institutions for entry level training. Therefore, the enactment of a system for CET needs to be responsive not only to individuals but also to workplaces and communities. Consequently, CET provisions need to employ models and approaches comprising curriculum and pedagogical strategies that appropriately utilise worker-learners' knowledge and experiences for the benefit of individuals, their co-workers, and their workplaces. Needed here is a range of models and approaches that are tolerant to customisation for specific learner groups, industries and workplaces. Moreover, the development of effective models and approaches requires wide consultations with key stakeholders who include worker-learners, workplace managers, TET staff and policy makers. Importantly, learners' preferences for CET must form key considerations because, as Billett (2011a: 221) proposes, "It is students who make decisions about how they engage with what they are provided through educational programs and experiences. This decision-making includes the degree of effort that they exercise when engaging with what they experience."

It is these sets of propositions and premises that inform the practical enquiry which sought to identify how best employees in the aged care industry continue to learn for and at work, whose findings are discussed here.

Aged care workforce

Aged care workers are part of over 1.35 million community services and health workforce in Australia, which represents the largest industry group in the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This figure has increased by 4.6 per cent over the previous year's data and it is estimated that by 2016 one in four new jobs (about 323,000) will be generated in this industry group (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011). Compared with employees in other industries, aged care workers are generally older,

with an average age of 43 years, are more likely to be women (up to 79%) and to be employed on a part-time basis (Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council, 2012).

With a projected increase in demand for new workers, some of whom are expected to be engaged in changing work practices, it is important to understand how workers in this industry are engaging in learning for CET, how they prefer their learning to be organised and, consequently, how best CET might be enacted for them. The research described below addresses these considerations.

The research

The findings reported here are part of a three year project aiming to identify effective models and related pedagogic practices that can respond to the growing demand for CET. Data from interviews with 51 workers employed in the aged care (including disability care facilities) industry in Queensland and Western Australia are drawn upon here. To best understand how workers in this industry are engaging in learning for CET and how they prefer their learning to be organised, a mixed method research design comprising semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and a short survey was used to gather that data. The survey required the informants to respond to written questions containing tick boxes with items relating to how they are learning in their current job and how they would prefer to be assisted for future learning. The survey items on ways learning is supported were derived from a literature review (Billett et al. 2012). Informants indicated which forms of support applies to their experiences of and processes of learning, how frequently they accessed and experienced the selected ones, and their three most preferred kinds of support. During the interviews, the informants shared their experiences in learning when preparing for employment, how they learn for their current jobs, how their learning was supported in their current job, and their views about assessment and certification of learning.

The interviews were transcribed, de-identified, and analysed using NVivo software. Text segments were coded around five themes: i) what has assisted their work-related learning; ii) what has inhibited

their work-related learning; iii) what kinds of experiences are proposed as being ideal for particular kinds of outcomes; iv) how should CET experiences best be organised for particular purposes; and v) what arrangements need to be made to support effective CET provisions.

Responses to tick boxes were analysed for frequencies using the SPSS software. The findings were examined to suggest how best the TET system (i.e. VET, ACE, higher education, learning in the workplace, as defined by NCVER) can sustain aged care workers' learning for employability across lengthening working lives.

Informants

Of the 51 informants over two thirds (73%) was based in metropolitan areas and the remainder (27%) in regional areas of South East Queensland and Western Australia. They were predominantly female (82%) reflecting the gender distribution of workers in this industry. Most workers (64%) were aged over 40 years. Just under half (46%) of the informants had worked in the industry for fewer than five years, about a third (31%) between 5 and 10 years, 21% for 11-20 years and just one had been in the industry for over twenty years. About half (53%) the sample was employed in full-time roles, 43% as part-time, and only 4% as casual employees. The size of workplaces in which they were employed ranged from 5 to over 200 employees and almost half the workers (49%) were in facilities with between 21-99 staff. The highest qualifications held by informants ranged from School Certificates (26%), Vocational Certificates (23%), Diplomas or Advanced Diplomas (19%), undergraduate degrees (13%) or postgraduate qualification (just one informant). The aged care industry is regulated by legislation designed to secure and improve client services and influenced by new technologies. Consequently, workers are required to engage in CET that may or may not necessarily lead to a formal qualification. Although much of this training is sponsored by employers (often partially funded by government grants) and completed during working hours, other forms are self-funded and completed outside of work.

Current ways of learning and preferences for CET provisions

As noted, informants indicated how they are currently learning and being supported in the workplace and also how they prefer to learn and be supported, by identifying actual and preferred means against a list of nine ways of learning identified in the literature. They could indicate more than one item and also introduce additional ways under the "Other" category. Table 1 presents frequencies and ranking of their responses. In the left-hand column is the listing of ways in which learning might progress. The central column indicates the frequency of the current means by which they learn. The right-hand column indicates their preference for means of learning. In the right-hand column of both the current and preferred approaches is an ordinal ranking against each item.

Table 1 Aged care workers' ways of learning and preferences (N=51)

Ways of learning		Current n / %	Rank	Preference n / %	Rank
a.	Everyday learning through work - individually	44 [86.3]	1	29 [56.9]	2
b.	Everyday learning through work individually - assisted by other workers	42 [82.4]	2	30 [58.8]	1
c.	Everyday learning + group training courses at work from employer	34 [66.7]	3	27 [53.0]	3
d.	Everyday learning + training courses away from work (off-site)	23 [37.3]	5	14 [28.1]	7
e.	On-site learning with individual mentoring: one-to-one	19 [37.3]	5	15 [29.4]	6
f.	Small group training at work – external provider	23 [45.1]	4	18 [35.3]	4
g.	Individual training at work – external provider	18 [35.3]	7	18 [35.3]	4

h.	Learning that was offered only at an educational institution	3 [5.9]	8	1 [2.0]	8
i.	Site induction	1 [2.0]	9	0	

Overall, these two sets of frequencies indicate a close alignment between how the workers are currently learning and their preferred means. Three findings are noteworthy here. First, the respondents indicate they mostly learnt at work rather than going off-site for training and this workplace-based approach is also their preferred approach. Second, they reported learning from other workers in and through work activities. Third, they learn through interactions with others (i.e. in groups) and their learning is supported by experienced workers or by external trainers or teachers.

Provisions, such as *individual training at work* supported by an external provider (ranked 7) are less frequently reported, perhaps because this option was not readily available for these workers. However, it was the fourth most preferred way of learning. *Learning that was offered only at an educational institution* was less frequently used (3 informants) and also least preferred (one informant), further substantiating that these workers are learning at work and want to continue accessing and utilising the provisions supporting their learning at work. However, it also is likely that for some workers this option is not fully afforded by their work situation. One reason for informants favouring learning in the workplace is to minimise, even avoid, time away from the worksite. For many, such absences from work have financial implications unless they are paid to complete training when away from work. So, engagement in learning for CET tends to be voluntary and directed by individuals' interests and aspirations, but others may be compulsory (e.g., to meet occupational or legislative requirements or those imposed by the employer). Many employers in a sector like aged care may now prioritise funds for training related to compliance and licensing purposes, and be selective about funding other types of CET. Hence, workers interested in career progression beyond their current place

of employment increasingly have to pay for accredited courses offered by TET institutions.

Learning at work allows workers to remain at work and continue developing the types of competencies they are expected to have. Furthermore, the informants suggest that there is often the opportunity for new activities and tasks to be learnt and the optimal way to acquire such learning was 'on-the-job'. As Brianna (a pseudonym, as are other names in the paper) explains,

> For this particular job, everything changes every day. So, unless you're doing it on the job, there's no way of learning this position.

Here she refers to the influence of new technologies and procedural requirements driven by workplace health and safety matters, and also that the conditions and needs of residents in the care facilities are often unpredictable. Faced with unfamiliar problems regularly, individuals and teams need to work out different ways to solve problems at the worksite. Brianna's comment also reflects the situational nature of the job tasks that anticipate uncertain events. It, therefore, becomes important to identify effective aspects of the workplace curriculum and make available the types of pedagogical support that will facilitate and sustain continued learning. Essentially, learning provisions need to serve as a balance between the types of learning that concentrate on meeting the outcomes of the workplace and those that contribute to individual developmental needs to augment workers' employability and career progression.

Brianna's statement draws attention to the need to engage in on-going learning to maintain her employability which includes responding to constant changes, and the necessity for this learning to involve hands-on experiences. Much of aged care work is manually skill based so hands-on experiences is needed to extend their repertoire of techniques when giving care. The most effective way of learning the required skills are reported as being through circumstances of work which presents authenticity and accessibility to more experienced co-workers for guidance and support. Often, work arrangements and workplace cultures within these aged care workplaces support this type of learning, for example, through working with a more

experienced buddy or rotations in different areas in aged care facilities to learn all aspects of service provisions. This provision is illustrated in the following quotation by Noela and Queenie:

> I have a buddy shift: somebody else teaching me how to do things well (Noela).
>
> You learn from others' perspectives and experiences (Queenie).

Both statements illustrate the significance of guidance from more experienced co-workers. Working in teams presents occasions for just-in-time and just-what-is-needed learning, as described by Merriam and Caffarella (1991). These authors claim that within work settings, employees interact with others and thus are afforded opportunities to adopt better techniques that they observe others using. Within their circumstances of practice they make sense of what is learnt to suit how activities are undertaken in their specific worksite. Hence, meanings are negotiated through mutual engagement and participation by sharing a common language, familiar stories, symbols, jargons and concepts.

What informants suggest in the survey as being widely used to provide guidance and practice to achieve strategic as well as task-specific outcomes (Billett, 2001) are developmental opportunities in the forms of modelling, coaching and mentoring. These ways of learning are often intentionally arranged for less experienced workers, for instance, through a buddy system commonly practised in the aged care industry, but facilitated by work arrangements where a less experienced worker is teamed with a more experienced co-worker. Another informant, Ivy, emphasised mentors' role in extending novice workers' ability to organise and conduct work to address the practices of particular workplaces. Furthermore, she claimed that such learning arises from performing tasks in ways most acceptable in the context of specific workplaces. So, guided learning practices are not only available within this industry, but are valued by aged care workers.

Surprisingly, only one informant preferred learning that is offered only at educational institutions. The survey data show a preference for

learning to be supported through social interaction (i.e. small groups) mainly at the worksite, and, importantly, facilitated by experts. These provisions were also often associated with career progression, using certification to secure advancement. Moreover, a strong preference for practice-based experiences, with educational interventions for individuals and groups (35% for each) is evident in the responses. The workers' key interests in learning from educational institutions were in 'new', 'best', and 'proper' practices (content they could not easily learn through everyday work activities or from co-workers) and methods to appraise current practices. Interestingly, they acknowledged that some of these interests were also met by learning from their industry suppliers. Elaborating on the provisions offered only by educational institutions, the workers stipulated 2-4 hour workshops or 2 to 3 day sessions are best suited to minimise time away from work. Lack of time was a major barrier to participation, unless the learning was directly linked to daily practice, a finding also reported by Bennett et al. (2000) and Moore et al. (2000). These workers also reported that most training provided by education institutions is aligned within certificate level courses, and comprise mandatory requirements for age care work. There was very limited interest in or preference for on-line and computer based learning provisions by educational providers.

While the findings about how workers prefer to learn are routine learning practices, they highlight two specific challenges to current provisions offered by TET providers. First, the preferred provisions are distinct from those organised for entry into employment (e.g., Individual training at work that is supported by an external provider; block release training off the worksite; apprenticeship type learning; and all training done in external training organisations). Second, most of the preferred CET provisions are situated in workplaces as opposed to campus-based training for existing workers engaged in continuing education and training. This is not surprising because learning support in the workplace may be more pertinent and specifically directed than support in TET institutions (Groot, van dan Ber, Endedijk, Beukelen and Simons, 2011) as acknowledged by workers. Meeting these two preferences could be achieved through

practice-based experiences augmented by educational interventions. Indeed, this augmentation or additional support was a key finding.

Current support for learning and preferred support

Beyond the overall provision of learning experiences, informants also indicated current experiences and preferred options for support for that learning. Data reported in Table 2 shows how their learning in the workplace is supported by indicating which of the seven kinds of common support they experienced. More than one option from the list could be chosen. Informants also indicated their three most preferred forms of support. The frequencies and ranking of these are presented in Table 2. In this table, the left hand column comprises the common types of *Support with learning* that were identified from the literature, the data in the second and fourth columns, labelled *Current support* and *Preferred support* respectively show informants' responses to these categories, while the third and right-hand columns show responses to the respective ordinal rankings of these categories.

Table 2 Ways learning is supported in the workplace and learner preferences for support (N=51)

Support with learning		Current support n / %	Rank	Preferred support n / %	Rank
i)	Direct teaching in a group (e.g. a trainer in a classroom at work)	39 [76.5]	1	13 [45.1]	5
ii)	Direct teaching by a workplace expert	37 [72.6]	3	27 [52.9]	3
iii)	Learning in a self-managed group in the workplace with a facilitator	30 [58.8]	5	25 [49.0]	4
iv)	Group activities in a classroom, guided by a trainer or facilitator	32 [62.8]	4	28 [54.9]	2
v)	Working and sharing with another person on the job	39 [76.5]	1	32 [62.8]	1

vi)	Learning totally online individually with trainer	10 [19.6]	7	3 [5.9]	7
vii)	Self-directed learning individually – online, books, etc.	23 [45.1]	6	10 [19.6]	6

The most frequently reported means by which workers' learning is supported is through: *direct teaching in a group* (e.g. a trainer in a classroom), and *working and sharing with another person on the job* (77%). It is noteworthy that *working and sharing with another person on the job* was also the most preferred form of support. Access and availability of others who can assist with learning is useful for undefined or non-prescribed learning and non-routine learning where individuals are required to evaluate the situation, and enact appropriate action and outcomes (Ellstrom, 2001). So, the high preference for working and sharing found here supports this proposition. Given that the tasks for care services in the aged care industry commonly require more than one person, working with buddies is a common practice and allows the sharing of ideas and learning. As noted, typically, workers are paired with a more experienced co-worker who guides and mentors the less experienced worker as they work with residents in their workplaces. The rostered work shifts offer opportunities to work and learn with various buddies as individuals are rotated in different areas of the workplace. The system of buddying and rotation nurtures a culture of sharing and learning together to complete work tasks, allowing individuals to engage in two types of complementary learning: adaptive and developmental (Ellstrom, 2001). While these arrangements present opportunities and afford learning, it is the individual's agency, intentionality (Billett, 2009) and epistemologies (Brookfield, 1997; and Marsick, 1988) that determine how much meaningful learning takes place. As a pedagogical strategy, *working and sharing with another person on the job* is premised on the agency of learners to seek knowledge and understandings from the more experienced co-workers for those co-workers to have the appropriate skills to coach their colleagues.

A response by 73% of the sample to *Direct teaching by a workplace expert* (this being the third most preferred option) suggests that workers value the knowledge and expertise of co-workers who form a rich learning resource. Ellstrom, Svensson and Aberg's (2004) findings also showed that other workers can receive and provide assistance in a mutual way. However, learning opportunities rely on availability, accessibility, willingness and ability (in terms of skills) of the expert to appropriately facilitate learning.

The survey results highlight common practices of learning in groups: Direct teaching in a group (e.g. a trainer in a classroom at work) (77%); *Group activities in a classroom, guided by a trainer or facilitato*r (63%); and *Learning in a self-managed group in the workplace with a facilitator* (59%). These practices reflect the social nature of learning occupational knowledge where different social practices in the workplace allow for appropriating and structuring knowledge in different ways. When meanings and knowledge are constructed jointly it allows meaningfulness for the worksite and its intents. Lave and Wenger (1991), for instance, proposed that learning settings in the circumstances of work are socially authentic and generate the types of learning required to develop procedural capacities and strengthen conceptual links and dispositional attributes required for effective work practice. Group interactions encourage and generate mindful learning that the workplace community can recognise, value and share. This exemplifies Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory on social practice as a primary generative phenomenon. However, the opportunities for generative learning in groups may also be contested. Moreover, productive group learning needs to have clear connections to daily tasks, form part of daily activities, and have a supportive structure within the worksite.

The three most frequently reported pedagogical preferences were: *Working and sharing with another person on the job* (63%); *Group activities in a classroom, guided by a training or facilitator* (55%); and *Direct teaching by a workplace expert* (53%). The frequencies for the first two preferences support immediate socially-mediated learning based in the workplace. Not surprisingly, these workers' participation in *direct teaching in a group* based in a classroom,

which is more teacher focused, is not highly preferred (ranked 5 out of 7) by these informants. Instead, they prefer group activities that are learner-focused and allow them to interact with each other, yet where there is access to a trainer or facilitator. This preference for group learning concurs with Eraut's (2004) findings on the types of activities that account for most of the learning in the workplace (group activities, working with others, tackling challenges, and working with clients).

While *Self-directed learning individually -online, books, etc.* and *Learning totally online individually with trainer* are supported by the employers, these provisions are not preferred by many of the informants.

In summary, the most frequently reported and preferred means through which these aged care workers want to engage in CET are through:

- individuals working and learning through work and being assisted by other workers
- facilitated/expert guided group processes
- the integration of experiences in work and education settings and
- direct support for learning – to individuals or groups from a more experienced worker to learn the capacities required to perform the occupational tasks effectively.

The preferences here suggest that a model for providing and organising CET may include:

(i) Work-based experiences with direct guidance
(ii) Work-based learning experiences in groups and
(iii) Work-based experiences with educational interventions (e.g. TET based training + work-based practice).

These findings have implications for how CET provisions might need to be organised, both in workplaces and educational institutions for a sector such as health and community services.

Implications for CET provisions

The means of, and preferences for, support for learning reported by the aged care workers in this study highlight four key considerations discussed below.

i) These workers engage with CET mainly to advance their existing knowledge and competencies to perform and improve daily work tasks. Therefore, CET provisions need to meet contemporary skill and occupational needs for effective workplace and industry practices (i.e. to acquire and keep a job). So it is imperative for TET staff to maintain the currency of industry knowledge and expertise. CET provisions must also be aligned with current and emerging legislative requirements and, where possible, offer opportunities for accreditation within the Australian Qualification Framework.

ii) The findings here point to the need for an extension and affordance of learning opportunities in the informants' workplaces. This will necessitate embedding and embodying learning experiences in the context of particular occupations and workplaces so that offerings by educational institutions are well integrated. Such practice-based provisions demand new ways of harnessing authentic learning provisions available in the workplace that require different forms of partnerships between employers and educational institutions. This change might be characterised by more purposeful workplace pedagogies that utilise the existing sets of internal expertise of co-workers as well as external experts. Here, workers too need skills to assist each other with co-learning.

iii) CET participants already have experience in learning and work, so it is critical that the provisions concentrate more on workers' learning and less on their being taught. To this end, then, it is important that what is organised for them is inviting, engaging and purposeful so what is learnt can be applied immediately to the work contexts – unlike a heavy focus on content that is typical in entry level training courses where learners need to acquire basic knowledge. A key reason being

that worker learners are time-jealous (Billett, 2011b) and they constantly assess the outcomes they will achieve for the effort and time invested in learning. Moreover, it is they who often decide how they will respond to what is provided. Hence, it becomes necessary to consider their preferences for ways CET is organised and the types of pedagogical support that is afforded.

iv) Finally, learning at work requires individuals to identify and create opportunities for new experiences through volunteering to engage in different activities, initiating new projects, negotiating varied tasks and responsibilities, or being innovative in ways to perform tasks or solve problems. Given that workplace environments are rarely structured for learning and most of the learning is informal (e.g. from other workers and personal experiences) (Eraut, 2004), workers need to be made aware of work activities and pedagogical opportunities for learning. Thus, it becomes important to foster their agency as learners to both develop their competencies and also facilitate learning for co-workers.

The findings presented in this paper offer opportunities for CET providers to recognise and utilise, first, the contributions that workplaces offer and, second, those of experienced workers who can assist fellow workers with learning, and cultivate and sustain an on-going learning culture within the workplace. The expressed preferences of community services and health workers in this study call for a revisiting of current vocational education provisions that are primarily for entry level training and, as such, are limited for those engaging in continuing education and training.

Although based on 51 informants from the health and community services industry, the findings here are similar to what the samples from the mining, transport and logistics, service and finance industries have indicated in the larger study (Billett et al. 2012). These findings show that the informants expect learning offered by TET institutions to be more integrated with work tasks, to be based in work settings, and to be facilitated by TET experts, either in the form of direct support to individuals or groups than has been practised in

the past. Finally, given that the workers constantly learn from more experienced others at work, it behoves TET providers to acknowledge this reality and to build on it in new and productive ways. Our findings show that an effective continuing education and training model for worker-learners in the aged care industry encompasses practice-based experiences supported by both formal and informal workplace arrangements.

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Time, money, leisure and guilt – the gendered challenges of higher education for mature-age students

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Two qualitative research projects examined the impact of university study on two cohorts of mature-age students at a regional university in Australia. All the students interviewed had entered university via non-traditional pathways and had faced significant hurdles in gaining university entrance and continuing with their studies. The influence of gender on their experiences of managing home, family and work responsibilities in combination with their responsibilities as students is examined. Issues such as lack of time and money, self-sacrifice and guilt emerged strongly from the stories of these students as they struggled to manage their multiple responsibilities. The gendered nature of these struggles is explored.

Introduction

This article draws upon the material generated from in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with 37 university students. Each had participated in one of two broader qualitative studies on mature-age students' experiences of university conducted separately in 2006, using a narrative inquiry perspective. Study A (O'Shea, 2007) followed female students who were first in family to come to university, through their first year of university study. Study B (Stone, 2008) collected interview material with mature-age (aged 21 or over) female and male undergraduate students, who had entered university via an access program, and who were in years two to four of their degree. None had any previous university qualifications nor had parents who had attended university. In both studies, participants were encouraged to narrate their own experiences of university and what this meant to them on a very personal level (O'Shea and Stone, 2011).

The participants were enrolled at an Australian regional university, predominantly at one of the university's smaller campuses at which there were approximately 3,500 university students, 60% of whom were defined as mature-aged (over 21). Amongst the 30 and over age group, females outnumbered males by three to one. Students were recruited for both research projects through student publications, notice boards, student emails and snowball sampling where interest spread by word of mouth. The region where this study occurred is regarded as socially and economically disadvantaged. There are higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of educational attainment when compared to statewide figures. The latest Development Plan for the region (2011 – 2015) indicates how the largest employers in the region include those in the health and education sectors with some opportunities available in local government, manufacturing and hospitality. There is a higher portion of employment opportunities in traditionally male occupations such as skilled trades, production and transport /distribution workers. Those who work in white collar occupations make up a significant proportion of the 29% of the population who commute over 80-100 kilometres to the two nearest urban centres. This workforce

demographic has significant repercussions for the female participants in this study, many of whom were not in a position to make this daily commute. Their choices of degree specialisation were largely dictated by the employment choices available locally, much of which was concentrated in the health and education sectors. The following table provides further details:

Table 1. Details of Study A and Study B

Study A: 17 Participants (O'Shea, 2007)	Students recruited on the basis of being first in family at university. Interviewed on four different occasions over the academic year All female, first year students: median age 34
Study B: 20 Participants (Stone, 2008)	Students recruited on the basis of mature-age entry to university via an access program One in-depth interview (1.5 – 2 hours) 15 female and 5 male students in years 2 – 4 of an undergraduate degree: median age 40 None with a parent who had attended university

As researchers and the authors of this paper, our prior experiences of working within university student support services had directly stimulated our interest in conducting such research. We had heard many personal stories of mature-age students that "were overwhelmingly ones of courage in the face of adversity" (Stone, 1999, 264). Women appeared to be particularly disadvantaged in terms of multiple responsibilities and minimal support. We were keen to explore whether such stories were reflective of the experiences of a wider cohort of mature-age students. Whilst the subject matter may not be unique, the value in the stories that follow is both their contemporaneity and also how individual experience can be negotiated collectively. To highlight this collectivity, the sections that follow ground the findings in relation to the research and literature that has been conducted in this field. This discussion reveals that while the numbers of women attending university have grown, this growth in numbers has not translated into gender equity. The calls for widening access may have increased university participation but this participation is still situated within limits imposed by ideologies.

Theoretical Framework

Both studies are situated within an interpretivist framework and informed by narrative analysis (Elliott, 2005). Both narrator and researcher are involved in this interpretation, which leads to a joint construction of meaning. The texts from each study were subjected to a process of thematic analysis, with each text being separately analysed before any comparative analysis was undertaken; initial readings of the text focussed on content while subsequent readings explored thematic similarities or commonalities between narratives. Analysis commenced with the naming and categorisation of the conversations undertaken with the participants. The resulting fragmentation of information led to emerging themes. Reflective research journals were also used, allowing the researchers involved to document the developments in their thoughts and analysis.

With analysis being ultimately guided by the researcher, consideration must be given to one's personal positioning as a researcher and how this may impact upon the focus and theoretical underpinnings of the research process. At the most obvious level, our positioning as female researchers interviewing other women needs to be considered. Being women and feminists impacts on the contours of this study.

Alway (1995) suggests that feminist researchers approach a study from a different standpoint than those favoured within mainstream methodological tenets, most of which are defined by male-centred epistemologies. Feminist epistemologies offer the possibility for alternative theorisation, as such approaches imply that women theorise the act of knowing in a different way from men (Crotty 1998). By adopting this position, female researchers may be able to identify issues and obtain interpretations that might be unavailable within more traditional and often male-defined epistemologies. The perspective in this study has feminist inclinations in so much as we are approaching the study as female researchers and in that, the main objective is to define how women "…are understood as competent subjects getting by, creating and surviving within hostile and limiting environments" (Alway 1995, 222). Much of the analysis has utilised a

postmodern feminist approach, which is essentially a deconstructive orientation, in which minority or subjugated voices are privileged (Olesen, 2005; Yeatman, 1994). In seeking to enquire into and 'make visible' women's experiences as mature-age students, the lens of postmodern feminism can be a helpful one, as the following discussion will reveal.

Participants

Both studies were conducted during the 2006 academic year. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the participants to narrate and explain the significance of their experiences. As such, this research fills a gap identified by Winn (2002) who acknowledges the limited amount of qualitative research examining ways in which: "the circumstances of higher education are played out in the lives of students" (447). The quotes from particular individuals are illustrative of the issues which emerged from the participants' stories overall. Table 2 provides details about each of the participants mentioned by pseudonym. Real names have not been used.

Findings and discussion

A number of common themes emerged from thematic analysis of the interviews. These included financial struggles, difficulties with organising and prioritising, changes in relationships with partners and children, balancing the needs of study with the needs of others and, in general, not enough hours in the day to do all that was needed. All the participants had faced substantial challenges in combining their new lives as students with their existing responsibilities as parents, partners and employees. Meeting these challenges required considerable personal and financial sacrifice.

Previous research has identified similar challenges common to mature-age students as a group. Abbott-Chapman, Braithwaite and Godfrey (2004) for example, found that "mature-aged students face particular challenges in terms of family and employment pressures and demands which compete with studies, and also financial problems associated with giving up full-time employment" (114).

Similarly, both Hinton Smith's (2009) and Kasworm's (2010) studies on mature aged learners have indicated that returning to study after a lengthy break, can be both 'tentative and fraught with fear of failure' (Hinton-Smith 2009, 115).

Time

Amongst this cohort, lack of time meant that sacrifices were being made on a daily basis, in terms of leisure time, social life and even time to sleep. For all those interviewed, life was a constant juggling act.

Time as a gendered construct

Mature-age students are inevitably "time poor" (Reay, Ball and David 2002, 9). Fitting study in amongst work, child-care, domestic responsibilities and any possible social life requires a "complex negotiation of time" (Edwards, Hanson and Raggatt 1996, 213). A number of feminist writers contend that this is particularly complex for women. Gendered expectations place a different value on "men's time" and "women's time", with women's time being given up to the demands and needs of others while men's time is regarded as more valuable and productive (Hughes 2002; McNay 2000). Morrison (1996) refers to the "gender-laden and time-consumptive nature" (214) of a woman's role, in which time is " 'collective' time which others, for example, their families, have a right to lay claim to" (214). Findings from the third Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) survey (Pocock, Skinner and Ichii, 2009) indicate clear gender differences in the work-life balance of women and men, with women "much more likely [than men] to feel rushed and pressed for time" (2) and work-life issues creating "significant barriers to their participation in education and training" (5).

Certainly, from the stories of these students, time was perceived and used differently by women compared with the men. For the women, one of the major challenges was finding enough time for the family, in particular their children, as well as finding time for their studies. Those who were mothers made many unsolicited references to their children, describing the challenge of finding enough time to

them, as well as continuing to meet their study needs and domestic responsibilities.

> I had to make sure that all of their needs were met and the house was looked after. (Rachel)

Amongst the men, only Bob, who had four children and was studying full-time while his wife worked full-time, made unsolicited mention of his children.

> Time for the family is a big one… trying to find time for the kids and the family. They don't always come number one, which is really wrong. (Bob)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, none of the men mentioned housework, while for many of the women it was a source of considerable stress.

> Vacuuming every day doesn't happen anymore and I don't mop the floor every two days. (Helen)

One of the men, Evan, admitted to neglecting some of his usual 'outdoor' jobs.

> My studies impacted because things were being neglected and it was a chore for me to get up off the computer and go and clean the pool and mow the lawn – those sort of things got left… (Evan)

Child-care was mentioned exclusively by the women, including the logistics of fitting study in around the care of young children. Fiona describes how she stays "up later reading" waiting until her son "has gone to bed before I do any work because it's just too hard when he's around… wants attention, needs to be fed and so on". Similarly, Katrina reflects on loss of sleep now that she is having "long, long nights… some nights it could be 2.00 or 3.00 am".

Other times assignments had to be put on hold…

> I was trying to do assignments and I would have kids sick… have the kids home sick and the plans would go out the door. (Mandy)

…or outside child-care had to be organised.

> I had to get child-minders... I used to drop them off at a friend's place in the morning and she would take them to school. (Ingrid)

It was in the stories of the women in particular that the greatest difficulties emerged in meeting the demands of study, housework, children, partners and paid work.

> People talk about keeping all the balls in the air... I've always had so many things on the go all the time, juggling the balls and keeping everything happening. (Amber)

These stories are consistent with the body of research which refers to the multiplicity of women's roles (Acker 1994; Rice 1989; Wolf-Wendel and Ward 2003) and the ways in which female mature-age students are "caught up in a constant balancing act between wanting to study, meeting domestic responsibilities and needing to earn money" (Reay et al. 2002, 10). Scott, Burns and Cooney (1998) in their research into why mature-age female students discontinue their studies, found that "the weight of family responsibilities" (240) was the most common reason. Gouthro (2006) further highlights how women who enter education are often in a state of conflict, desiring to "attain a sense of independence and develop a sense of identity that is not determined by relationships with others (i.e. as a wife or mother) without rejecting the importance of these roles in their lives." (11)

This is illustrated by Tina, who feels that she is "having to push the kids aside a lot"; her guilt exacerbated by the fact that her "...son is going through some issues at school... and you have feelings, is that because of me? – is it all my fault?"

The women tailored their study time around other responsibilities at home, including children, partners and home duties. In contrast, the stories of the male participants indicated that study time was privileged, allocated special significance within the family and kept separate from other demands. Female partners arranged their activities, even paid work to support the family, around male study time.

> Any work my wife is doing she has tailored it around my hours. (Bob)

The women's study time was dictated by the need to ensure that it did not impinge on family time, including restricting study to school hours, making sure that "I've got weekends free" (Anne) and that "classes fitted in with what the girls were doing" (Rachel). None of the men had primary responsibility for child-care; finding time for study was not regularly complicated by the need to care for dependent children.

> When I get home from work… I have something to eat and then I'm straight into the study. (Paul)

Women had the primary care of their children in addition to their studies and in some cases also in addition to part-time jobs. Clearly, for these women the demands on their time were indeed multiple.

> I started this new job a couple of weeks ago. It started on a Monday so I had an assignment due on that Monday which I'd already got an extension for and so I just had to stay up until I finished – up to 3am so I finished it, and that's becoming the norm. (Tina)

Some talked about their changing expectations of partners and children, expecting more help from them with domestic chores, only to find this another source of frustration. Mandy, with five children, had asked her husband to help with the washing, but "…it's getting on top of me now, simply the fact that I can't find anything. He does the washing now but nothing gets put away".

Both Helen and Kira expected more help from their husbands, yet in both cases their marriages ended not long after commencing their studies. Prior to the separation Kira describes her frustration:

> … my husband gets cranky cos it's a messy house. But yeah, my husband can come home from work and sit on his butt, watch TV, and I wouldn't know what it's like to watch TV.

Smith (1996) in her interviews with women returning to study found "scant evidence…that husbands did help occasionally…but this was placed in the context of doing their wives/partners a favour" (68). She found that many of the women she interviewed were dominated by

their male partner's demands, due to his relative economic power as 'breadwinner'.

Our interviews revealed that the notion of "male as breadwinner, female as homemaker" (Smith 1996, 68) was alive and well in this group of participants. The role of student, which requires time for oneself, is not easily compatible with that of homemaker, which relies on giving time for others. This incompatibility and resultant family upheaval is demonstrated by Katie's description of how "the kids are suffering a little bit today [laughs] as all the washing was still in dryer" while for her husband, "he is struggling cos he is used to it all happening and realises that he has to help."

Making time fit

Finding ways to "fit more in" to their limited time often meant trying to develop specific time management strategies. This was easier for the men and the one woman, Carol, who had no children.

> I did have to learn when my best time was to study and stick to it. I get the course outline, I see when things are due and I try to write them all in somewhere and then just knock them off one at a time. (Carol)

> I'll actually draw myself a little diary up. I'll say, ok, Monday night and Tuesday night I'll study that subject. (Paul)

The women with children struggled with traditional time management strategies.

> I find it really hard to focus on assignments and study when all this other stuff needs to be done. Distracting! (Mandy)

Morrison (1996) points out that the "linear time schedules" often encouraged as effective time management strategies for students, are not necessarily appropriate for those who have "caring and domestic roles" (212). Her study of mature-age women in adult education courses revealed how time management was "a complex web" of tasks (Morrison 1996, 223). Certainly, the participants in our research had found ways of managing time that were not based on traditional linear models of time planning. On the surface, these may have

appeared chaotic – staying up till 3.00 a.m. to finish assignments; missing a lecture to complete work; reading a text while feeding children or while waiting in the car to collect them from school – yet these strategies enabled them to fit study time into their fractured, interrupted days, in which their time was largely dedicated to meeting the demands of others.

While they had less time to give to their children, there was often a sense that the quality of this time had improved; that being at university had raised their status in the eyes of their children, particularly older boys, who now treated their mothers with more respect.

> My son now thinks 'Okay, Mum's got a brain in her head'. (Catherine)

> …my eldest son said: 'I never would have thought that you'd be smarter than me'. (Heidi)

Leisure

> Giving up gardening, giving up reading, giving up sewing, giving up relaxing, giving up going out with family visits, giving up socialising, giving up clothes, giving up spending money on anything, giving up having holidays. Lots of giving up! (Nerida)

This theme of "giving up" or "sacrificing" their personal leisure time was a recurrent one throughout the stories.

These findings are echoed in other studies of mature-age students over the past two decades (Edwards 1993; Reay et al. 2002; Gorard and Smith, 2006; amongst others). Darab (2007) identifies how the students in her study redefined the concept of leisure in order to fit everything in; for some of the women study became a form of leisure. Certainly, our research revealed that, for the women with young children, leisure time was virtually non-existent, except when integrated with child-care or study activities, such as having an occasional coffee with fellow students, or taking a few minutes to chat socially to the baby-sitter when collecting children. However, the

stories of four of the five men indicated that they still managed to find some personal and leisure time, albeit reduced.

> I'm heavily involved with the scouting movement … I think it's pretty important that you don't give up everything for the sake of uni. (Bob)

Similarly, Paul still managed to find time to participate in the music group to which he belonged.

> …still went to rehearsals two nights a week and managed to do a few shows and all that sort of stuff. (Paul)

One of the men had made significant sacrifices in terms of personal and leisure time. John, married with a young baby, working full-time and studying full-time, described the way in which his studies had intruded into "every little tiny facet of … life". John's gendered responsibilities of being the primary earner and breadwinner of the family had led to his decision to combine full-time work with full-time study.

> I didn't give up my work, I still have a mortgage and I'm still working… generally 35 hours a week minimum on top of studies. (John)

The time constraints involved allowed no room at all for leisure activities.

Responsibility for being the primary earner was the major consideration for the men, both in their decision to study, and whether to study full- or part-time. This reflects previous research with male mature-age students, indicating that men are "more single-minded" in relation to further study, often "seeking to further specific goals and particular interests" (McGivney 1999, 7-8). This is not to suggest that the women were unconcerned about the need to earn money nor that the men were unconcerned about having time for partners and children. It is more a reflection of their different priorities and situations, predominantly influenced by the traditional roles of women as "carers" and men as "breadwinners".

Persistence of traditional gender roles

So how is it that such traditional gender roles continue to thrive amongst this cohort despite the strong feminist challenge over at least the past 30 years?

Some evidence links the adherence to traditional views on gender roles to lower educational, economic and employment status (Chapman, Cartwright and McGilp 2006; McGivney 2006; Scott et al. 1998; Tett 2000). For example, Scott et al. (1998) found that "partners'/ex-partners' low levels of education and low status jobs were both associated with women's reports of lack of support" (244) with a strong relationship between education and occupation.

The relatively low levels of education and lower status employment amongst this cohort (see Table 2) before coming to university may in part explain the adherence to traditional gender roles in their family lives. It could also be argued that there are broader forces at work here, in the form of government social policy (Thomson 2000; Weeks 2000) in which "the Australian welfare state has been constructed around families, with a silent but entrenched gendered division of labour" (Weeks 2000, 55). Thomson (2000) argues that while feminism has had some brief influence upon social policy in Australia during the late 1980s in particular, overall "social policy has taken inadequate note of the centrality of gender" (83), the effect of which is to privilege the position of male workers and to maintain the perspective that child-care is the exclusive responsibility of women. Women are still more likely to be paid less than men, occupy casual jobs, bear the responsibility of juggling work and child-care, as well as carrying more of the domestic load in general (Thomson 2000).

Money

Financial stress was mentioned as a significant issue by almost all those interviewed. Clara, a young single parent, worries about "financially disadvantaging" her daughter:

> …just her uniform and the types of things that you have to have. I don't want her not to have those and feel like she is different and out of place.

Others, women and men, reflected similar concerns:

> I've been having to budget very tightly… I think they [children] are probably just sick of budgeting for so many years. (Penny)

> Less money, crappier shoes [laughs]… that's the big impact, less money. (Linda)

> The finance thing has been the major factor. (David)

The loss of income for men, who are used to being the family breadwinner, can be a particularly difficult adjustment. McGivney's research (1999) found that "being a student…is not seen as a desirable, high status activity for older men" who are under pressure to be "a good provider" (66).

The single mothers had experienced many years of managing on a very limited budget – "I have always been a single parent in a way and I always managed to survive" (Anne) – although this survival has not been made any easier by "welfare to work" federal government legislation (Wilson 2000) which has seen parenting allowances become more difficult to access – "Because my daughter turned 16 the money I was getting from Centrelink almost halved…" (Virginia).

A Universities Australia report on student finances (James, Bexley, Devlin and Marginson 2007) found that female students were "more likely to be financially dependent on someone else [and] more likely to have a budget deficit, less likely to have savings for an emergency and less likely to have paid HECS or full-fees up front" (2).

This situation is not unique to Australia. Reay and colleagues (2002) in their study of working class mature-age students in the United Kingdom found that, despite the rhetoric of encouraging mature-age students back into education, those with low incomes have limited opportunities to participate in higher education, the effect of which is to "reproduce past educational inequalities" (5), with single mothers being at the greatest disadvantage. "Issues surrounding paid work,

time to study and childcare were inextricably enmeshed with what were often precarious financial situations" (Reay et al. 2002, 10).

Similar issues were revealed in our interviews. Single mother Catherine for example, found little encouragement for her study plans in her encounter with a welfare agency.

> I had an appointment … just coincidentally to talk about what your plans are and that sort of thing. I was feeling great cos I said: 'Oh I have applied for uni and this is what I am going to do'…and all he wanted to talk about was if I didn't get in and … I came out of it feeling like I probably won't get in.

Guilt

A further complication for some of the women was the impact of their studies upon their relationships with extended family members, particularly parents and parents-in-law.

> I don't get to spend much time with them… my parents… sometimes I have to say 'I can't talk to you today, I've got this assignment to do'. She doesn't really handle that well. (Anne)

A concern about ageing parents was also a relatively common theme in the women's stories. Some were caring for elderly parents with serious health problems. Grace had spent "seven years looking after Mum and Dad and putting my life on hold" and now felt selfish and guilty about doing less for them since she had started her studies.

> I was very selfish in the fact that when I started [the access course]… after Dad died… I thought 'this is my time' and I talked to Mum about it – I felt so guilty and feeling like I was abandoning her.

Contrast this with Bob's recommendation to other students, in which the term 'selfish' has very different connotations.

> I always tell mature aged students to basically… be selfish. Make sure you have time for yourself. Make sure you rope off an area in your house that's yours… Give yourself time if you are fair dinkum about it.

For Bob, being selfish is about entitlement, whereas for Grace, being selfish is about not fulfilling one's duty to others, and therefore a cause for guilt. Bob's advice, however practical, is impossible to follow for women with family responsibilities and the gendered obligations that ensue.

Nevertheless, the women tended to minimise the problems. Grace, looking after her mother with cancer regarded herself as "very, very fortunate" that her mother was still alive. Rachel explains that university helped her to cope with organising her father's funeral because "…at uni you are able to put your life over there for a moment and be able to just focus on what you need to do" (Rachel).

This minimising of difficulties is consistent with an acceptance of the gendered expectation that women will carry the primary caring role in the family. Such acceptance effectively denies women a sense of entitlement to personal time, including study time. West (1995) refers to "a gendered oppressive conditioning" of women, in which "her husband is the bread winner and the public person while she is cast, and casts herself, in the role of carer and supporter of him as well as the rest of the family" (140). Similarly, Britton and Baxter (1999) found that women were more inclined to define their academic pursuits in terms of selfishness and guilt rather than self-fulfillment. As such, minimising the impact of university on their caring role perhaps enables many women to continue at university without too much self-censure and indeed, censure from others. As long as family responsibilities are given priority, and the potentially competing responsibilities of study are not overly interfering with family obligations, then study can be seen as acceptable. Hence, there is every reason to be selective in what is revealed, to downplay difficulties and to manage a double load with cheerfulness and little complaint.

Conclusion

The participants' stories revealed gender differences in the experiences of the women and the men in this cohort. The role limitations of women as carers and men as breadwinners (Lister 2000; Orloff 1996; Weeks 2000) had shaped their experiences

accordingly. Their stories also lend support to previous research findings identifying aspects of masculine identity, which deter men from engaging in adult education and taking time away from their primary role as breadwinner (Golding 2006; McGivney 1999). Certainly, the men in this study were keenly focused upon finishing their studies as quickly as possible in order to up-skill and perform their breadwinner role more effectively. The women with children were managing mutliple responsibilities including child-care, housework and paid work. Their stories revealed the interrupted nature of their study progress and the impossibility of having dedicated, privileged and uninterrupted time for study on a regular basis. Family responsibilities, including caring for ageing parents, came first, yet they still managed to succeed at their studies through artful juggling and loss of sleep.

Another common theme was financial difficulties. The women with male partners were receiving little if any government financial support, while single-parent benefits were reduced based on ages of children. Men who had given up paid work in order to study full-time were struggling with reduced incomes, yet still trying to meet their breadwinner responsibilities. For all, making ends meet was a daily challenge.

Mature-age students are already entering Australian higher education institutions in significant numbers (OECD 2010) and as such constitute a highly important cohort in terms of the wider national and international higher education access agenda. As a result of the Bradley Review of Higher Education, commissioned by the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2008), there are significant reforms such as equity targets and 'uncapping' of university places now underway in the Australian higher education sector. Such reforms will inevitably make access to university possible for many more mature-age students. Yet the gendered constraints upon these mature learners remain largely unrecognised and unacknowledged within educational and other government institutions.

> Given that these students have been invited to join the tertiary education enterprise, it is beholden on the institutions that enrol them to be aware of their likely difficulties and to explore ways, where this is possible to ameliorate these (Scott et al. 1996, 252).

Understanding the gendered challenges which mature-age students face is an essential first step towards the development and implementation of social and institutional measures to encourage and support greater numbers of mature learners to enter, stay and succeed in higher education. In the process, the students themselves are exposed to experiences, which have the capacity to transform their lives, individually, socially and economically.

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Table 2 – Details of participants mentioned by (pseudonym) name within the article

Name	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Children and Ages	Yr of degree	Degree Field	FT/ PT	Prior occupation	Partner's occupation
Amber	49	F	Divorced	23, 21	3	Social Science	FT	Technical assistant	NA
Anne	36	F	De facto	19,14	3	Health Science	FT	Health reception	Electrician
Bob	41	M	Married	15,12,10,9	3	Education	FT	Truck driver	Service station attendant
Carol	44	F	De facto	Nil	2	Arts/Social Science	FT	Owner small busines	Information technology
Catherine	44	F	Single	15	1	Nursing	FT	Masseur	NA
Clara	23	F	Single	5	1	Early Childhood Education	FT	Childcare worker	NA
David	52	M	Separated	15,12,9	3	Management	PT	Manager	NA
Evan	44	M	Separated	19,16,10	2	Education/Arts	FT	Bank manager	NA
Fiona	35	F	Single	7	2	Social Science	FT	Admin assistant	NA
Grace	47	F	Married	22, 20, 14	2	Psychology	PT	Hairdresser	Miner
Helen	33	F	Divorced	12, 10	3	Health Sciences	FT	Sales assistant	Salesman
Heidi	47	F	Divorced	20+ (3 children)	1	Social Science	PT	Nurse	NA
Ingrid	48	F	Divorced	21, 20, 18, 16, twins 13	4	Education/Arts	FT	Technical aide	NA
John	38	M	Married	7 mths	3	Science	FT	Shipwright	Teacher
Katie	33	F	Married	6, 9	1	Oral Hygiene	FT	Dental assistant	Small business owner
Katrina	42	F	Widowed	11,7	2	Education	PT	Admin assistant	NA
Kira	38	F	Separated	6, 8, 14, 15, 18	1	Psychology	PT	Probation worker	NA
Linda	40	F	Married	7	2	Social Science	PT	Hospitality	Fisherman
Mandy	38	F	Married	15,13,10,8,6	2	Engineering	PT	Waitress	Training manager (Bank)
Nerida	49	F	Married	26,23,22	4	Education	FT	Customer service	Manager
Paul	45	M	Divorced	16,14,13	3	Management	PT	Manager	NA
Penny	32	F	Single	11,12	2	Education/Arts	FT	Supermarket assistant	NA
Rachel	47	F	Divorced	Twins 17	3	Arts	PT	Masseur	NA
Tina	38	F	Married	15,14,13	2	Nursing	PT	Bank	Bank employee
Virginia	36	F	Single	16	3	Science	PT	Customer Service	NA

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The 'double-edged sword' of the adult learning environment

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The vocational education and training sector plays a critical role in the provision of educational opportunities for young adults who have left school prior to completing a qualification. Some research has found that a major factor that supports student re-engagement in formal education is the 'adult learning environment' that characterises institutions such as TAFE. Other studies have questioned the suitability of the adult learning environment for some students. This study explores how students and teachers in five foundation TAFE courses view the adult learning environment, and how they respond to this environment. The paper argues that the adult learning environment can in some instances be a 'double-edged sword', in that it can both enhance and limit student engagement.

Background

Within Australia there is a small yet significant number of young adults who leave school prior to completing a qualification and/or who are unemployed or not participating in formal study. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) participation data indicate that in 2011 8% of people aged between 15 and19 years, and 12% of those aged between 20 and 24, were not engaged in any form of work or study. Developing practices that re-engage young adults in formal education is important in terms of social equity. Many young adults who have left school early, and who are not engaged in work or study, are from backgrounds associated with social and economic disadvantage (Marks & McMillan, 2001). School completion or an equivalent qualification is highly correlated with gaining employment and longer term health and well-being (Black, Polidano & Tseng, 2009).

The vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia plays a crucial role in the provision of educational services that address disadvantage and provide skills and qualifications that will prepare early school leavers for employment or further study (Skills Australia, 2010; Brown & North, 2010). The term 'second chance' education has been used to describe courses provided by institutions such as TAFE (Technical and Further Education) for young people who have left school without a qualification and/or who are disengaged from schooling (Karmel & Woods, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2005; Wyn, Stokes & Tyler, 2004). Successful completion of second chance courses, generally at the Certificate I, II or III level, significantly improves the chances of young people gaining employment (Skills Australia, 2010).

There is only a relatively small body of literature that has examined the experiences of young adults in second chance settings. However, in the research that has been conducted, there are clear patterns. Young adults who leave school early and then participate in second chance educational opportunities have often had very negative experiences at school. Indeed when young adults have been asked why they disengaged from school two reasons stand out. First, these young people report a dislike of school environments that are rule-bound, inflexible and restrictive. They describe such environments

as ones in which students struggle to conform and in which there is conflict and power struggles (Crane & Livock, 2012; McGregor & Mills, 2011). Second and relatedly, young adults often mention negative relationships with teachers as a reason for disengaging from and leaving school. Students report, for example, that teachers 'talked down' to them (Black, Balatti & Falk, 2010); they were 'picked on' by teachers (Attwood, Croll & Hamilton, 2010); they fought with teachers (Wyn, et al., 2004); and they were punished unfairly by teachers (Lee & Ip, 2010).

A dislike of school and teachers are common reasons that young people put forward for leaving school prior to completing a qualification, but as Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers and Rumberger (2004) argue, such reasons can often be combined with a complex set of additional factors related to social and economic disadvantage. These additional factors include personal and family related circumstances such as ill-health, disability, homelessness, domestic violence, poverty and transience. When these factors combine with low rates of school attendance and/or movement from school to school, a consequence can be a 'downward spiral' of academic achievement, self-esteem and school engagement (Lamb, et al. 2004: 14). Students' dislike of school and their poor relationships with teachers can also be underpinned by a range school practices and policies that can contribute to student disengagement. These include limited subject choice and lack of curriculum relevance, negative school cultures, variable teacher quality, students' experience of academic failure, and teachers having low expectations of students (Willms, 2003; Lamb, et al., 2004; Zyngier, 2008).

A range of policies and practices have been developed within both the adult education sector to provide second change educational opportunities for early school leavers. Given the complex array of factors that can contribute to early school leaving, it is not surprising that there is no one program or practice that contributes to successful re-engagement with learning. Typically programs use a range of curricular, pedagogical and welfare strategies to support re-engagement. Interestingly, when young adults participating in 'second chance' education are asked about the factors that support

their re-engagement, two areas are commonly mentioned. These are a flexible or adult learning environment and respectful relationships between students and teachers. The notion of an adult learning environment is strong in the literature and sometimes the term is even used to signify the opposite of a school environment. An adult learning environment is one in which students do have some freedom and autonomy, and in which there is flexibility in terms of course pathways and timetables (McGregor & Ryan, 2011; Wilson, Stemp & McGinty, 2011; Black, Balatti & Falk, 2010; Wyn, et al., 2004). Wyn, et al. (2004) make the point that a distinctive feature of such environments is that young people do not feel 'humiliated' in ways that they may have experienced at school. Such environments can also have fewer rules than school in relation to, for example, uniform and attendance (McGregor & Mills, 2011).

A second factor that is supportive of re-entry into education is positive student-teacher relationships, in which young people feel that they are "treated like an adult" (Attwood, Croll & Hamilton, 2010; Harkin, 2006). Respectful relationships between students and teachers are commonly mentioned in the literature. Other features of student-teacher relationships seen as important to the process of re-engagement include 'caring', 'supportive' and 'easy-going' (Wyn, et al. 2004; McGregor & Mills, 2011; Livock, 2009).

Interestingly many VET providers operate on the principles of an adult learning environment. The TAFE New South Wales website provides a useful example of how this environment is understood by VET institutions. On this website an adult learning environment is characterised as one that allows freedom of choice, and it is contrasted with the more 'structured environment' that 'children require'. There is a statement that students will be judged on 'output rather than attendance'. The website includes a discussion of the obligations and expectations of students that accompany these freedoms, including treating staff with respect, allowing other students to study without disturbance and applying 'adult considerations to the level of effort' put into study (TAFE New South Wales, 2012).

Concern has been raised in the literature about some aspects of the adult learning environment for early school leavers. Researchers have argued that the adult learning environment of TAFE can be unsuitable for young people, particularly those who might have left school prior to completing Year 10 and who could be under the age of 15 (Polesel, 2010). Further, adult education providers are not necessarily equipped to deal with the sometimes complex academic and pastoral needs of young people in terms of the training and experience of staff, the range of courses available that are geared to the needs and capacities of students, or the resources and funding to provide a range of student services (Polesel, Nizinska, & Kurantowicz, 2011; Polesel, Helme, Davies, Teese, Nicholas & Vickers, 2004). An additional concern relates to low course completion rates among early school leavers in TAFE courses (Karmel & Woods, 2008). The risk factors associated with low completion at TAFE are closely aligned with the risk factors associated with early school leaving (Polesel, 2010; Polesel, Davies & Teese, 2003).

As noted earlier, there is a scarcity of research, which has investigated the experiences of teachers and students in 'second chance' courses. The picture developed to date regarding an adult learning environment for young school leavers is a complex one. While the literature reveals that an adult learning environment may be crucial to re-engagement for early school leavers, there are some cautionary notes sounded regarding some aspects of the adult learning environment for these young people. The purpose of this paper is to explore how both teachers and students in a foundation skills program for early school leavers perceive and respond to the adult learning environment of TAFE.

Research methods

Courses included in the study

This study was conducted in five different foundation skills courses delivered on two TAFE campuses in regional towns in New South Wales. The curriculum content was concerned with literacy and numeracy skills, as well employability skills such as communication,

team work and computer skills. The courses provided foundation skills at the following levels: prevocational, Certificate I, Certificate II and Certificate III. The courses had been designed for those without a Year 10 Certificate and/or with low levels of literacy and numeracy. Students enrolled in the courses attended classes on three days each week over an eighteen week term. There were between ten and fifteen students enrolled in each of the courses.

Participants

Teachers and students consented to be part of the study. 30 students (19 male, 11 female) participated in the interview, representing a participation rate of 70%. The students' ranged in age from sixteen to twenty-five years, and all lived in regional towns. The average age of student participants was 17 years. None of the students who participated in the research had completed Year 10 at school.

All 10 members of staff (four male and six female) working in the foundation skills courses participated in the interview. Seven of the staff had teaching-only roles. Three of the staff had roles that encompassed teaching as well as leadership, counselling and assessment.

All participants in the study are referred to using pseudonyms.

Interview

The data reported in this paper were collected as part of a larger study examining teaching practices and classroom environments that encourage student effort and participation across a range of courses in TAFE settings. Student and staff views were elicited using a semi-structured interview. Questions were open-ended. The term 'adult learning environment' was not used in the questions so as not to lead participants in any way. Students were first asked some general introductory questions related to why they enrolled in the course and the nature of work undertaken in the course. They were then asked what they liked and disliked about the course and what they would do to improve the course. The average time taken for each student interview was approximately fifteen minutes. The interviews with

staff sought to ascertain their beliefs and practices related to student engagement, including the factors that encouraged and discouraged student effort. Staff were also asked for their suggestions regarding course improvements. The average time taken for each staff interview was one hour. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

Analysis of data

The responses to the interview questions were coded iteratively, using an inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). The full range of responses was ascertained from a detailed reading of the transcriptions. The responses were then grouped into major themes. Reponses to the questions were usually multidimensional and encompassed several themes.

Findings

The findings are grouped into three sections: aspects of the adult learning environment that were seen as positive by teachers and students; aspects that were seen by teachers and students as hindering student learning or problematic in some way; and a final section exploring the ways in which teachers deal with issues arising from an adult learning environment .

Positive aspects of the adult learning environment

Both students and teachers used the term 'adult learning environment' in the interviews to describe aspects of the TAFE environment. Students reported that they liked the flexible and relaxed nature of TAFE, being able to work at their own pace, and being treated like an adult by teachers. Teachers spoke of respectful relationships and of treating students as adults. Teachers aimed specifically to create a different environment from that of secondary school and counter the impact of negative school experiences on students.

Students liked what they described as the flexible and relaxed nature of the TAFE environment:

> *TAFE is somewhat more flexible than school. There's not so much pressure and it's just more easy-going, which makes me feel comfortable and able to do my work without much pressure. (Owen/student)*

> *At school you've got all these stupid little rules and you don't really know what's going on. While here you know what's going on and you know what you've got to do, you get it done and then do whatever you do in your own time. (David/student)*

Students also enjoyed being able to work at their own pace:

> *It's easy going and you can take your time of doing it. (Ricky/student)*

> *You work at your own pace so you know, they give you a book and you work through that at your own pace. You know you sit down, you do the task that's given to you and I think that works well. (Jason/student)*

Students appreciated teachers treating them like adults:

> *I like the way I'm treated, we all get treated like adults and even though there is some conflict it's resolved like adults. (Lucy/student)*

> *I pretty much like the adult learning environment, where I get treated as an equal, not like a sort of a subject. (Alex/student)*

The adult learning environment for some of the students was highly motivating and encouraged them to keep attending:

> *They treat you more like an adult than like being a kid and that. And at TAFE you're here because you want to, you're not being told you have to, so you're going to be more willing to come. (Holly/student)*

All of the teachers noted that the adult learning environment within TAFE was a major factor that encouraged students to attend class, make an effort in class, and complete their course. They took care to make TAFE different to school:

So it's kind of a different experience for them here to what they've had at school with the teachers. They call me by my first name, they can go outside and smoke, there's nobody policing them. (Jenny/teacher)

I think we have a little more time ... we are not as big as secondary schools and we are more caring ... a more caring staff unit. (Andrew/teacher)

They're young adults, the students, so you can't treat them like school children. I tell them it is more like being in a university or being in a job. (Charlie/teacher)

The notion of respectful relationships was a recurring theme in the interviews. Teachers emphasised the importance of establishing relationships with students that were based on trust, care and respect:

I don't back off...I want to be there, I want them to talk to me and I want them to tell me what they thinking...and I speak to them respectfully and hopefully they will do the same to me. (Megan/teacher)

We're small enough here and personal enough that we can customize to meet their [student] needs. And I think when they finally get someone that respects them rather than barrages them to do things, they kind of want to work hard. (Jenny/teacher)

Teachers expressed the view that respect involved treating the students as 'adults':

Treating them like adults, talking to them one-on-one and not talking down to them. (Charlie/teacher)

The perspectives provided by students and teachers are consistent with the ideas raised in the literature about productive learning environments for young adults disaffected from schooling. It was clear from the interviews that the freedom and flexibility of the TAFE environment, coupled with positive and respectful relationships between teachers and students was fundamental to students' re-engagement with formal education.

However, as one teacher stated, the students were in many respects "apprentice adults", that is they did not always accept some of the responsibilities and obligations of adult behaviour and relationships. This created tensions in the learning environment for both students and teachers. These tensions are discussed below.

Problematic aspects of the adult learning environment – the 'doubled-edged sword'

The freedom and flexibility of the TAFE environment were important features for student re-engagement, yet these same features also gave rise to some problems. The teachers acknowledged that in some instances, students embraced the relative freedom of the environment but did not necessarily behave like adult learners. Irregular attendance, variable effort, frequent disruptions in class, and lateness to class were problems regularly faced by teachers. Interestingly, some students also expressed frustration with other students failing to behave appropriately in the adult learning environment. In this way, the adult learning environment can be characterised as a 'double-edged sword'.

Teachers expressed a tension between the autonomy that is appropriate to an adult learning environment and making sure that students were punctual, stayed in class, and took responsibility for their work:

> *It is very difficult. At what point do you say enough's enough, really? Some of our students constantly push the boundaries. I know with the one group in particular, we have a lot of trouble with students coming late. You know, 9.30 is just this abstract time and students wander in as they please. (Amanda/teacher)*

> *One of the classes … they will go, 'Can I go out for a smoke now?' And I say 'you are in an adult institution, if you want to go out, go, but don't be too long. You know you have your 15 minute break in the middle of the class'. (Megan/teacher)*

Students also expressed concern about peers who did not attend regularly or who did not appear committed to learning:

Maybe attendance should be mandatory, I don't know if it is or not or you have to arrive on time or otherwise get penalized or something. I don't know, 'cause I see a lot of people not attending on time or not at all. (Adam/student)

Get people here that want to learn, not people that want to come here because they're getting paid for it and come when they feel like it … if you had people here that really wanted to learn and gave it 100%, TAFE would come out better, the people would come out better and we'd have a better society. (Jacob/student)

Students also expressed the tension between the autonomy of the adult learning environment and their own need to be regulated to some extent. Some students said that they would prefer the teachers to be more demanding of them, but these students were also, implicitly at least, expecting the teacher to be responsible for their learning:

I think maybe that the teachers… they're not persistent with making sure you're doing the work constantly all the time. (Chloe/student)

… If they [teachers] push you enough you can learn more and more. But if they don't push you, you're not going to learn. (Jacob/student)

Teachers' responses to the challenges of the adult learning environment

The perceptions of the teachers and students highlight the many benefits conferred by the adult learning environment as well as the challenges. How did the teachers in our study respond to these challenges? Despite the tensions involved, teachers were not critical of students, but accepting of and realistic about the students' capabilities. Teachers adopted a developmental approach, such that they attempted to incrementally increase students' autonomy and appropriate learning behaviours.

Teachers dealt with lateness and in-class behavioural issues with patience, and treated all students with respect:

> *I am mindful of the fact that it is an adult learning environment and I think in the end you have to have patience… it is a different environment and they've had bad experiences with school and they generally respond well to the idea that you respect their point of view. (Sarah/teacher)*

The teachers acknowledged the difficulties associated with starting a lesson when students arrive late. The teachers typically welcomed late students to class, spoke to them about lateness, and designed lessons activities that enabled multiple starting points:

> *We just try to carry on as best we can, I mean if it's a project and that's easy to do, 'pull out your project and continue where you left off last lesson'. If it's a worksheet we just hope that they can sort of catch-up to where we're up to. And then once everybody's there I can have a chat with them and say 'well, did you catch the first part of the lesson, have you caught up on it?' and make sure that they have. (Amanda/teacher)*

Teachers recognised that they needed different strategies regarding lateness, depending on students' individual circumstances and the nature of the work the class is undertaking:

> *If it's a student that I know has issues with lateness because they for instance work at the pedestrian crossing down the street and they're late, they're 10 minutes late, or they've got children … If they've got massive social issues I let them come in and as long as they're not interrupting the lesson I let them come in at their point in time. (Lauren/teacher)*

Teachers also had practical and sympathetic strategies for students wanting to take non-scheduled breaks during lessons:

> *A lot of them have got drug dependencies, nicotine. You can't just, you can't say, 'Oh no you can't go on a break,' because they will just go and they won't come back because they don't want to face the music when they come back. So no, I say 'you can walk out whenever you want'. You know, it's not a jail and they are adults, it's an adult environment. (Megan/teacher)*

Punctuality and appropriate in-class behaviour were seen as developmental issues, and teachers allowed students to develop these skills gradually:

> *When I'm having students with massive behavioural issues that don't want to learn, and make it obvious that they don't want to learn, then I may start to impose more penalties for lateness. I will use those things to then impose a penalty, it might be for a week that I shut the door, but yeah, those penalties are certainly way down the track and particularly after I've got trust and after I've got a whole heap of other strategies in place. (Lauren/teacher)*

> *When they first start, they can't put their phones down for a while and they are texting virtually the whole time if someone is returning their text. But after a while, they tend to leave that and they can go back to it in their break or at the end of the class. (Megan/teacher)*

For some students, teachers set regular attendance as a first goal:

> *I think there's some students that you know you're not going to get much work out of. And with those you don't focus so much on the outcomes of the unit but more on just trying to help them attend regularly. (Amanda/teacher)*

Teachers also took responsibility for students' work folders and provided pens. They reflected on whether that was the best thing to be doing, but were realistic about students' current capacity to take responsibility themselves:

> *And often I think, should we be encouraging them to do that, to get a bag, to get their own folder, to get their own pens? But then you know, one of those classes I keep their folders because I know it's never going to make it back the next day. They have a folder that they can save their files electronically to, but I will obviously keep a hard copy folder with their things in it. And we will provide a pen. (Megan/teacher)*

Once again teachers took a developmental approach to increasing students' sense of responsibility for their own work:

> *Some students like to take their work home, which is great because it's obviously taking ownership and responsibility. But again that's been a learning curve. When I first started teaching these courses, I found that I'd give work out and it would get lost or it would be at home. And it would never come back and you know we're forever spending time giving out the same work that was lost. So many years ago I decided the folder strategy would work. They're quite happy to give you the folder and have you look after it. That's not a very mature approach to it, as in not taking responsibility, but over time I'll find that they actually ask to take their folders and keep their folders and take them home, if they're improving and committing to the course. (Lauren/ teacher)*

For the issue of student effort and application to work, teachers also adopted a careful and patient developmental approach. Teachers understood the difficulties that some students had experienced at school and set goals of gradually decreasing students' antipathy towards the learning environment and developing a positive mind-set toward their study:

> *But in the lower level courses, they don't lose that antagonism towards school and they can be very immature and so that's an issue. And you have to treat them like adults, even though they don't always behave - to get them to say 'well, it is up to me, you know. If I work, I'll get somewhere, and if I don't, I won't'. And 'the teachers aren't out to get me and I shouldn't give them a hard time, cos then I'm giving me a hard time'. (Charlie/teacher)*

The teachers discussed the careful way in which they needed to develop students' learning behaviours. They acknowledged if they 'pushed' too hard or were too strict some students may not return:

> *When it comes to discipline, I think if I get too heavy, they walk out the door and they won't ever come back and I have never had that happen yet. (Megan/teacher)*

> *Yeah, I say to them, 'Look, try and be here at the right time because we have only got so much time, you know, each week together' But there are two students who will always walk in at*

> *10:00 or 10:30, and I just say, 'Hello guys, come in, take a seat.' Later on I might say, 'if you want to get your work done, you have got to be here earlier'. I might say, 'Look at the time,' but you know, I don't insist that they apologise or explain anything, I just say 'sit down, take a seat', because I would rather them come at that time than not come at all. (Sarah/teacher)*

Teachers avoided applying rules in the same way as a school might:

> *... I always stress the exact start time ... but if I try and impose too many rules it becomes too much like school and it creates more of a problem in the long term. (Lauren/teacher)*

There was also an acknowledgement from all of the teachers that setting homework was not appropriate for similar reasons:

> *I don't really think that anyone in this section would be setting a lot of homework because the feeling is that it wouldn't happen. So then that would be not a success for the student, so therefore I think we'd be back to school mentality. (Lauren/teacher)*

Discussion and conclusion

The interviews revealed that the adult learning environment of TAFE is seen by teachers and students as vital for student re-engagement in formal study. The adult learning environment in this study encompassed freedom and flexibility and was underpinned by positive and respectful student-teacher relationships. TAFE was seen by participants as very different to secondary school. Much of the literature has also identified that these features of educational environments are crucial to the process of re-engaging young adults in formal education (Mills & McGregor, 2011; Wyn, et al., 2004).

As noted earlier, some researchers have raised questions about whether environments such as TAFE can cater for the complex learning needs of young adults disengaged from schooling (Polesel, et al. 2011; Polesel, 2010; Wyn, et al. 2004). Our research provides a nuanced response to such questions. Certainly, the study revealed specific difficulties for students and teachers as they worked together in an adult learning environment. We argue that, in the context of this

study, the adult learning environment was a 'double-edged sword', reflecting the fruitful, but at times highly challenging nature of this environment. The freedom and autonomy were seen by teachers and students as an essential part of the process of student re-engagement with study and they provided a contrast to students' experience of school. Yet as both teachers and students noted, the freedom and autonomy also enabled poor attendance, lateness to class and other behaviours that jeopardised course completion. Similarly, teachers and students wished to have mutually respectful, equal relationships, based on the fact that all parties are adults. However, some students did not, at least initially, demonstrate appropriately responsible or 'adult' behaviours towards their learning.

The teachers in our study thus faced a dilemma. If they imposed too much discipline or structure, some students could leave the course because TAFE was 'too much like school'. If teachers did not impose some structure then students may well not attend, apply themselves in class, or complete a qualification. The strategies employed by teachers to negotiate this dilemma involved respectful relationships at all times; an individualised approach for each student; flexible lesson design that enabled multiple starting points for a lesson; and explicit behavioural and learning standards accompanied by a developmental approach to these standards. The teachers in this study thus managed the adult learning environment by adopting a careful approach, with realistic and incremental goals for students. They negotiated the 'double-edged sword' of the adult learning environment by allowing students some freedom and autonomy while ensuring that they did indeed attend class, gain skills and meet course outcomes.

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Learning and guidance for older workers in Europe

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Despite still widespread unemployment in Europe, there is a growing shortage of labour, due to the ageing of the population and discrimination against old people both in and out of employment. Following the long history of human rights legislation, such discrimination is now outlawed but many third-agers have become discouraged or do not know how to make their careers more secure. Vocational guidance, therefore, is needed in order to reintegrate them into the labour force and manage their careers effectively.

1 Sadly Dr Pamela Clayton passed away in the period between submitting this article and its publication. Her fellow authors wish to dedicate the article to her memory.

Since the beginning of past century then, theoretical approaches to guidance have been increasingly enriched by several social sciences such as social psychology, pedagogy, economics and sociology. In this paper we will focus on the social and economic policy approach.

Keywords: *third age, social vulnerability, social exclusion, unemployment, age discrimination, third age guidance*

Older adults in transition: new opportunities and new challenges

The major economic, social and political changes that have transformed all industrialised states during the last fifty years are on the one hand globalisation and the development of information communication technologies and on the other the process of individualisation (*Individualisierung*) (Schmid 2002).

At a macro level globalisation has made all state economies more inter-connected and interdependent, thanks to closer economic and financial exchange between countries and to revolutionary new technologies and communication methods. This has had also a strong impact on the Taylorist-Fordist paradigm of production which, starting from the 1970s, has undergone a profound transformation, with the subsequent creation of a new productive paradigm that is much more flexible and based on new forms of employment relations (Regalia 2000, Chiesi 1990). It is also based on much less hierarchical work organisation in order to be able to adapt to and satisfy the needs of customers, who demand much more specific and sophisticated products than during the Fordist-Taylorist era. This new form of employment and work organisation has made employment much less stable than thirty years ago, encouraging (or obliging) people to change their jobs during their lives much more often than decades ago, with all the opportunities but also risks that a career change or change of work environment implies.

Together with these processes, the culture of new social movements also began to take root, from those related to civil rights, feminism

and homosexuality to environmentalism and the anti-globalisation movement, and set upon a path of rethinking norms and values, identities and social roles in different spheres. For example, the significant changes that have occurred in the family have called into question the traditional male-breadwinner model and the related gendered division of labour that was dominant in the last two centuries and seen the rise of new household models (cohabitation, single parents, living apart together, step-families, single life, and so on). On the one hand, there are new opportunities and new rules to create family life; on the other hand, there is a rising instability in this institution, as divorce has risen dramatically in the course of the twentieth century in almost all industrialised countries.

In addition to, and strongly related to, these social, economic and technological changes, the great demographic changes that have characterised all major European countries, Italy included, must be mentioned (Società Italiana di Statistica 2007): above all, the ageing of the population thanks to a continuous increase in average life expectancy, a decline of the risk of mortality at all ages and a decline in the birth rate following the peak of the "baby boom".

At the micro level, the consequences of social and economic processes on the individual imply a renovating phase of the process of individualisation, a concept that should not be confused either with the concept of *individuation*, which from the perspective of Jungian psychology means the evolutionary process that brings an individual to develop his/her inner Self (Jacobi 1997: 134-137) nor with that of *individualism* in the economic neoliberal perspective of the free market, that sees the individual as an self-sufficient, atomistic and autarkic human being. Rather, it has to be understood from a sociological perspective close to the concept elaborated by the German sociologists Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, who refer to a process of *institutionalised individualism* (2001, p. xxi). This refers, as underlined elsewhere (Greco 2005; Greco 2007: 26), to the process whereby "individuals perceive and increasingly define themselves as creator of their own lives, no longer following a collective design based on several principal institutions such as the

family, work, religion etc" (see Bauman 2002, 2003; Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 1994, 2001; Schmid 2002).

In post-modern society more and more people are freed from traditional institutions (de-traditionalised life) through the democratisation of individualisation and have to reflect on their lives and choose several elements of their lives, such as their work, their partners and their morality, that they wish to follow. Nothing is defined unreflectively by tradition, by collective and group identity, by religion, by nature nor by destiny any more and nothing can be taken for granted: every choice related to different aspects of the diverse social sphere – from work to family bonds – lasts "until further notice", according to Zygmunt Bauman, until something happens that calls for a new choice, a new decision, a new trajectory to follow. "Nowadays everything seems to conspire against lifelong projects, permanent bonds, eternal alliances, immutable identities" (Bauman 1993).

The biographies become, therefore, more and more reflective (Giddens 1991) as many authors have underlined. Some called them "do-it-yourself" biographies, others *bricolage* biography and finally, also, elective biographies. This do-it-yourself biography gives to the individual the freedom to choose, the opportunity to expand his/her self, to gain new abilities and skills, to explore new scenarios, to challenge the well-known boundaries, to have new possibilities to start a new life project: to live a life of one's own (*Eigenes Leben*) in the words of Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2001). It also gives older adults the opportunity to rethink their projects in later life, maybe even a new career after fifty, for example, a new marriage, the expression of new creativity, or to make a useful contribution to society, primarily (but not only) in intergenerational dialogue and solidarity. Indeed, older adults are important caregivers for younger generations – from caring their grandchildren to giving material and financial support.

Difficulty of integration and risk of social exclusion for older adults

The other side of the coin of the individualisation process, which implies the capability of adopting freely chosen lifestyles, raises many difficult questions and dilemmas that the individual has to cope with in later life. The first question has to do with the issue of how to guarantee the continuity and unity of one's life course (Melucci 1999). If the individual has to change, to adapt to the new situation, the risk is of a non-linear inharmonious patchwork biography, a cacophonic biography. The second question refers to the fear of choice and change, the fear of the unknown but also the fear of uncertainty. The third, the most problematic question, refers to the fear of a biographical slippage and the difficulty of social integration into society, in other words, the risk of and the exposure to social vulnerability which can easily lead to a process of social exclusion.

If, on the one hand, the opportunities to rethink and reshape one's own destiny as a consequence of the individualisation process gives to the individual, older adults included, more freedom to choose, to explore and expand their selves, to influence more consciously their life course, on the other hand, the do-it-yourself biography easily becomes also a "risk biography", a "breakdown biography" depending on the economic situation, educational qualifications, stages of life, family situation and colleagues (Hitzler and Honer 1994; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 7), making thorough social integration difficult. According to Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim:

> The façade of prosperity, consumption, glitter can often mask the nearby precipice. The wrong choice of career or just the wrong field, compounded by the downward spiral of private misfortune, divorce, illness, the repossessed home [...] can easily bring to "breakdown biography" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 3).

The causes of risk biographies, that make social integration difficult, often arise from life events. They cannot be defined "previously" in absolute terms but they are "critical" as Günther Schmid states (1998: 7-8) in the sense that "the single individual could not have foreseen them; they were external to his/her control obliging him/her to a strategic change in order to re-adapt to the new situation".

These "critical events" can represent the start of a downward spiral of cumulative negative events that make him/her precipitate into an area of social vulnerability that means:

> The social area that falls within a triangle - the triangle of risk - consisting of three vertices that respectively represent the problematic points: a) the limited availability of the basic resources necessary for survival and family reproduction; b) poor integration into the network of social integration; c) a lack of ability to face difficult situations (Ranci 2002: 29).

An example of a "critical event" could be the loss of one's job as a consequence of greater restructuring of an enterprise than the single individual could have foreseen. It was not under his/her control to influence this particular situation. The loss of a job especially in late middle age (a "young-old adult") can be a strong disadvantage especially in an institutional context where age discrimination is still common and it may represent the start of a vicious cycle of negative events.

Just to stay with our example, it can bring to a family reduced income (limited availability of the basic resources necessary for survival and family reproduction). This can lead to the breaking of family bonds (even divorce) and the weakening of more broader social bonds (more feeble integration in relational networks) and individuals are less able to re-enter into the labour market (a lack of ability to face a difficult situation).

Nevertheless, according to recent comparative research (Gallie and Paugham 2000) adult unemployment does not necessarily mean the break-up of family relationships and social networks in all European countries, especially in Southern European countries characterised by a familial welfare regime like that which prevails in Italy. The consequences of unemployment depend more on the nature of these bonds. Unemployed people often frequent others who are unemployed or are relatively distant from the working environment, which makes it more difficult to re-enter the labour market. This is especially the case in countries like Italy, where the network of acquaintance or the "weak ties" described by Mark Granovetter (1973)

represent the primary source of access to the labour market (see Reyneri 2005).

Having said that, critical events can represent the beginning of a vicious cycle of negative events that bring an individual first to a situation of social vulnerability and second may begin a process of social exclusion from the elementary rights of full citizenship.

International and European legislation on the human rights of older people

The Preamble to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights highlights the importance of economic rights:

> The ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his [sic] economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights and freedom (Office for the High Commission for Human Rights, 1966).

In 1982 the United Nations adopted an *International Plan of Action on Ageing* (United Nations 1982) and in the *International Year of Older Persons 1999* adopted the *Principles for Older Persons*, emphasising the independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older persons (United Nations 1999).

Unlike these, the *European Convention on Human Rights* (Council of Europe 1950) does not include economic rights and is silent on age discrimination. Indeed, in the United Kingdom, this was specifically allowed under the *Employment Rights Act* (United Kingdom Parliament 1996): legislation on unfair dismissal did not apply when an employee was asked to retire upon reaching normal retirement age. This age could be set by the employer, irrespective of state pension age.

The human rights legislation mentioned, it may nevertheless be argued, includes older age under "other status" (which implies that age was not thought of in the era of a supposed "job for life") and the 1966 Covenant contains two articles of relevance here. Firstly, there is the right to earn one's living by "work which he (sic) freely

chooses or accepts" and the duty of the state to provide "technical and vocational guidance and training programs" to achieve full realisation of this right (Article 6). Secondly, "equal opportunity to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence" is a right for everyone (Article 7).

It is now recognised that many older people do not enjoy equal rights and opportunities in the labour market. The first attempt to rectify this was the *Treaty of Amsterdam* (European Union 1997), which specifies that action may be taken "to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation" (Article 13). The European Union (2000) subsequently produced the *Employment Directive* requiring member states to introduce legislation prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of age. Exceptions include "a maximum recruitment age based on the training requirements of the post" (Article 6.1c). This is the only area where exceptions can be made and perpetuates the stereotype of older people as less competent. The Directive is, nevertheless, a significant advance and all member states have enacted the necessary legislation to put it into practice, albeit with varying degrees of commitment and supporting policy and legislation.

Development of policy on vocational guidance in the European Union

Perhaps the first significant development, with the instalment in 1992-93 of *National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance* in all European member states,[i] was the recognition of the importance of vocational guidance. Since 2000 there has been a steady stream of documents emanating from various bodies of the European Union. The majority of these cited guidance as one of several other policy points, as in the Lisbon memorandum, "Preparing the Transition to a Competitive, Dynamic and Knowledge-Based Economy" (European Parliament 2000). This was followed by a report that identified access to guidance as a priority area for the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work program (European Parliament 2001). Later in the same year, came a communication on lifelong learning, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, that highlighted

guidance as a transversal theme and a priority area for action in the development of lifelong learning (European Commission 2001) and a report on vocational education and training in which guidance was a frequent theme (Council of the European Union 2001). The *Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning* (Council of the European Union 2002a) recommended that member states give priority to high quality guidance targeted at different groups and the *Action Plan for Skills and Mobility* noted that guidance could assist in the upskilling of the workforce (European Commission 2002). The usefulness of guidance for enhancing occupational and geographical mobility was noted in a resolution later that year (Council of the European Union 2002b) and two Commission Communications (European Commission 2003a, 2003b) noted that investment in guidance and counselling could help reduce the skills mismatch. The proposal for *European Employment Guidelines* (Council of the European Union 2003) recommended guidance as a way of preventing unemployment. A major step forward was the publication of a report on the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, *Education and Training 2010*, which placed guidance as one of four key actions to support "learning at all ages" (Council and Commission of the European Union 2004).

Then came the first major European Union document entirely devoted to guidance. This includes the following:

> In the context of lifelong learning, guidance refers to a range of activities that enables citizens *of any age* [author's italics] and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests … Guidance can provide significant support to … older workers (Council of the European Union 2004).

Policy at European level has not necessarily been followed by policy and practice by member states, as research conducted in 2005-6 revealed (Clayton, Greco and Persson 2007). The free all-age guidance services in Scotland and Wales, for example, are unmatched in most European countries, and not all state employment services offer vocational guidance and counselling. As is the case with adult vocational guidance generally, that for older people is patchy and where it exists it is provided by a range of agencies. There is, then, a dearth of person-centred guidance for older people who, like any

other group, are characterised by heterogeneity in terms of social variables such as gender, class, health, location, skills – without even mentioning personality, aspirations, family situation, interests, etc. (Loretto, Vickerstaff and White 2006).

There are also differences in their labour market participation in different countries. According to the latest data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), there are significant differences in the employment of older people (defined by the LFS as aged 55-64) between member states (Eurostat 2008a). Iceland and Sweden have the highest employment rates in Europe of people aged 55-64, at 70 per cent and over. They also have a much smaller gap between men and women than do other countries. In the 27 countries of the European Union, the percentage in the labour force decreases quite dramatically from a certain age and the employment rate of older people, at 44.7 per cent, is below that of total employment at 65.4 per cent. Furthermore, the participation of older women is generally lower than that of men.

One important reason for the decrease in employment is exit from the labour market below the official age of retirement, that is, the age when citizens are eligible for a state pension or forced out of their jobs by a statutory leaving age – again with the exceptions of Sweden and Iceland (Eurostat 2008b). Highly qualified people are the most likely remain in the labour market after 55 (Eurostat 2008a: 133), partly because of higher earnings and less physically demanding work than manual workers (Humphrey *et al.* 2003). Exit tends to be abrupt rather than gradual or phased (Romans 2007).

Not all older people have difficulties in the labour market. Some have secure jobs, can choose when to leave and can look forward to retiring with an occupational pension. These are principally men with medium to high-level skills, continuous employment histories, good health and employment in relatively stable sectors. Even if they started working life without educational qualifications, they have valuable experience and may have acquired qualifications along the way.

Nevertheless, many people in later life encounter barriers to finding or keeping employment, or maintaining a decent standard of living after retirement. These barriers include disability, poor health, low or out-of-date skills and lack of confidence, compounded by age discrimination and poor access to support. Discrimination occurs partly because unemployment carries a stigma that attaches itself to individuals and the longer someone is unemployed, the less "employable" s/he becomes (Ford 2005). It is the most disadvantaged who face the greatest hurdles and have the least chance of an adequate pension or the free choice to retire early rather than being forced out by ill health. One route to more choice for older people is through vocational guidance that takes account of their past experience and their current needs and wishes.

Justification for third age guidance from an economic perspective

From the economic point of view, the permanent efficiency-equity dilemma (Cuadrado *et al*. 2006: 68-9) runs beneath the conflict between economic and social objectives, the latter being greater consumers of resources. The choice made will be a political one, since it is governments that set priority objectives in any one country and at a given moment in history. If there is a social-democratic notion of the workings of society, the objectives set will be those closer to equity, such as social equality. If, on the contrary, there is a more liberal vision of the workings of society, where the market is the main protagonist in the assignation of productive resources, it will opt for efficiency with objectives nearer to independence, freedom, etc. In both cases, full employment will contribute, although with different policies, to achieving social welfare of the population.

Trying to quantify the benefits of guidance is a complex task as the results can be evaluated only over the long term, with the added difficulty that the longer the time, the more that intervening factors may eclipse the benefits of the guidance (Plant 2001). Nevertheless, guidance, as an intermediate economic objective (Jané 1973, Irastorza 1979), can play an important role in the more efficient assignment of productive resources, specifically human resources, in achieving improved competitiveness and productivity in the economy. It may

also contribute towards reaching the ultimate objective of social equality, broadening the training and employment opportunities of all people (Killeen, White and Watts 1992) and therefore, achieving the active ageing of the population.

The economic reasons for implementing specific policies of guidance for older people are discussed below. There are two levels: the "macro" reasons that are broader and refer to the economy as a whole (here we will consider the European context) and the "micro" reasons, more centred on economic agents such as companies and individuals.

Macro-economic Reasons

It is relevant to consider the political and economic context of the European Union (EU), which has encompassed the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) since 1997 and subsequently the "Euro zone" to which many, but not all, member states belong. The most commonly used traditional instruments for achieving specific objectives by the authorities in the field of economic policy have been monetary (Cuadrado *et al* 2006: 288 *et seq*) and fiscal policies (Sevilla 1998: 115). Both policies contribute to achieving different operational objectives, specifically the attainment of sustainable economic growth. With expansive monetary and fiscal policies, the economy is stimulated and gives rise to a higher rate of growth.

When European countries joined the EMU, monetary policy was no longer solely the responsibility of each Member State; it was now the Central European Bank that decided the monetary policy to be applied. As a consequence, the European economies lost one of their most effective instruments. Therefore, in the Euro zone, only fiscal policy remains an effective instrument for stimulating economic growth. In order to prevent excessive use of expansive fiscal policies via an increase in public expenditure, the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) was approved at the *Dublin European Summit* in 1996, limiting, under threat of sanctions, the levels of public deficit and public debt of each Member State to three per cent and 60 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) respectively. The most visible consequence of the SGP has been that some countries have been

experiencing problems of economic growth in the last few years, such as is the case in Germany and France, which do not have the freedom to increase their public deficit above the established limit to reactivate their economies and so to create new jobs.

Most of the Member States of the EU have seen unemployment growing gradually and almost constantly from the mid-seventies to the present. The aggravation of the problem since the economic recessions of the nineties and the current period, and the confirmation that this is due to structural reasons, has prompted European authorities to abandon policies that were ineffective and to adopt new policies to alleviate member countries' main problem: unemployment.

Currently there is no generally accepted definition for employment or labour market policies and what is included in them. However, the difference between "passive" and "active" labour market policies suggested by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is generally accepted (Fina 1999). Up to the mid-nineties, the predominant employment policies in Europe were passive, but since then active policies have become more and more significant. Proof of this are, for example, youth employment plans in France and the United Kingdom; the search for new sources of employment; training policies for the unemployed; actions aimed at specific groups, such as young people, women, unemployed over a certain age, etc.

In order to have an idea of the cost proportions of active and passive policies related to Gross Internal Product (GIP) in the EU, in 1998 Europe set aside about three per cent of the GIP to these policies, a substantial sum. Almost two GIP points correspond to passive policies and just over one point to active policies. Lluís Fina Sanglas (Fina 1999) analyses this issue, observing that in all the countries (bearing in mind that it was the Europe of the 15 under examination) the cost of passive policies was greater than that of active policies with the exception of Sweden and Italy.

A later report compiled by this same author (Fina 2005) states that in 2002 the situation had changed considerably. Employment policies

made up some 2.08 per cent of GIP in the EU, of which 0.71 per cent were active policies and the remaining 1.37 per cent were passive, leading to the observation that spending on active policies has indeed increased proportionally.[ii] The important aspect to note is that public expenditure of the member states is restricted. Unemployment subsidies, i.e. passive programs, are included in public expenditure. But as we have seen, the tendency has been to reduce them in favour of active programs, which is where guidance is placed (Suso 1997).

In addition, the payment of pensions forms part of the public expenditure of a country and as the active population becomes older, the question of the source of the resources to pay for these obligations is a high priority. One possible solution is the prolongation of working life (WHO 2002, Suso 1997). To the extent that guidance enables the achievement of the objective of maintaining older people as active, it will contribute to reducing the mounting public deficit of economies by increasing state income arising from tax collection. A further macro-economic reason needs to be considered: the opportunity or alternative cost of depriving the economy of the knowledge, skills, know-how of this group, who has the most experience (Pérez and Nogareda 1995).

Micro-Economic Reasons

The cost of implementing guidance services is high because guidance, in order to be effective, must not be measured in economic terms but by quality levels (Plant 2001). Although there are negative stereotypes associated to older workers, it is easy to find more arguments in favour than against when employing older workers. (London, 1990; Canaff, 1999; Kirk & Belovics, 2005) . Hively (2004) asserted that older workers possess qualities such as "superior attendance record, "high job satisfaction", "eagerness to learn new skills" and the "ability to learn into old age", a position supported by Kirk and Belovics (2005), and Gilsdorf (1992: 78) reported that:

> Older workers tend to arrive at work promptly (or early), have low rates of absenteeism, are safety conscious, and show loyalty to their employees They then to be more satisfied with their jobs,

salaries, supervisors, and co workers that are younger ones. They are trainable and retrainable.

It should be clarified that the reasons given below, when referring to the qualities of older workers, are not categorical statements but hold true in the majority of cases. These arguments may vary depending on many factors: older people are not a homogeneous group, and a holistic approach in guidance, that recognises external factors as well as the person, is necessary (Plant 2001).

Nevertheless, a presentation by the Director of Human Resources of a large Spanish company bears out the academic findings.[iii] The supermarket chain Masymas has been active for 50 years in the Region of Valencia (Spain) and employs over 1600 employees, of which 17 per cent are older than 45 years of age, and is very satisfied with the older members of its workforce. Firstly, as previously stated, older workers have more experience and therefore more capability for reacting well when faced with possible problems. They are people who are, in general, more responsible and reliable compared with younger workers. They have a good attitude to work, which stimulates a good working environment as they sometimes prevent conflicts between younger workers who are more insecure and inexperienced. Lastly they are more loyal workers, staying with the company for a longer period of time than younger workers, as in many cases their priority is to make Social Security contributions to assure a good pension. Another consequence of this reduced mobility is the saving of training costs when contracting a new employee. All these benefits, intangible in many cases, create a series of positive and very valuable externalities (Greenwald 1983) that companies should take as given. They can benefit from older people without any added cost. In addition, in some countries, as is the case in Spain, companies have access to generous financial incentives for contracting older workers, an interesting aspect to add to the previous list of financial reasons for contracting this group.

Finally, as well as providing general benefits for the economy and for the companies that employ old workers, the main benefactors are older workers themselves, as individuals. Being active at work

may lead to better life habits (for example, the improvement of physical and mental skills) and consequently better health. This also contributes to helping European countries to limit allowed public expenditure (SGP) since it allows the reduction of the state health budget (Pérez and Nogareda 1995).

For all these reasons, guidance can be a very convenient and effective strategy for extending working life and therefore contributing to the main principles of the active ageing of the population. It also can play a relevant role in achieving full employment and therefore economic growth and improvement of social welfare.

Conclusion

For economic, social and demographic reasons, and not least in the spirit of human rights, there is a pressing need to retain older workers in the labour market or to help them re-integrate into working life. This is as true in times of unemployment as during full employment, for many older people possess valuable experience and skills that can enhance profitability or effectiveness and contribute to the development of younger workers. In practice, however, older workers face negative stereotyping and discrimination, despite recent European legislation, and risk being forced out of the labour market against their will, with the possible consequences of social exclusion and vulnerability to poverty.

Anti-discrimination legislation has not so far proved sufficient to make significant changes in the lot of many older people, but recent developments offer some hope in the form of a greater use of active labour market policies, including the provision of vocational guidance. There is a long way to go, as guidance provision is poor in many countries and has a low profile. Nevertheless, an effective network of guidance providers can play an important role in supporting older people who wish to be in the labour market to do so, with potential benefits for employing organisations, national economies and, not least, extending active life and social inclusion for older people who might otherwise face poverty and exclusion.

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Note:

[i] All centres are now members of the Euroguidance Network, www.euroguidance.org.uk.

[ii] Source: European Commission, European Social Statistics, Labour Market Policy. Expenditure and Participants (Data 2002).

[iii] The presentation was made by Mr Jorge Fondebilla, Director of Human Resources of Masymas, at the meeting: "Work for the over 45s", organised by the Consorci per la Recuperaciò Econòmica i de l'activitat de la Marina Alta (CREAMA) May 31, 2007.

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The twenty-first century university and the concept of lifelong learning

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In recent years, major universities and governmental and nongovernmental organizations around the world have been engaged in discussions about implementing the principles of lifelong learning as fundamental principles of individual education. Until about a decade ago, adult education in Montenegro (whose development resembled that of adult education in the other republics of the former Yugoslavia) was characterized by the founding of workers' or people's universities; establishment of training centers at major companies and factories; and continued professional training, which included part-time enrollment in traditional universities. In other words, adult education was treated as an integral part of the formal education system but was not included in the state budget for education. Over the course of the last ten years, Montenegro has lost its old system of adult education, but it is still quite far from establishing a new one. Tellingly, no strategic document pertaining to adult education in the country recognizes the University of Montenegro as having a major role

in lifelong learning. This essay problematizes the place and role of the university within the system of adult education and offers a comparative analysis of the development of the concept of lifelong learning at the university level in Europe.

Keywords: *lifelong learning, adult education, expanding accessibility, different learning styles, social partnership, social justice.*

Introduction

In recent years major universities and governmental and nongovernmental organizations around the world have been engaged in discussions about implementing the principles of lifelong learning, as fundamental principles of individual education. Lifelong learning has gained in importance, particularly in light of the current predictions that, by the year 2050, 9.2 billion people will be living on our planet and life expectancy could approach 100 years of age. 'Knowledge will become the most important asset, one always subject to change due to innovation. Basic education will remain crucial: everyone will have to continually educate himself or herself in order to increase the chances of employment'. The explosion of knowledge will lead "many to conclude that they will never have time to read, hear, see, explore, and learn everything: since available knowledge now doubles every seven years and will double every 72 days in 2030, the time required for obtaining information, studying, and acquiring 'usability' will increase at the same rate" (Atali, 2010:109, 130). Although many political and educational strategists around the world tell stories about the knowledge society and about the increased levels of quality education, the reality that surrounds us is much more cruel. More than 1 billion people are basically illiterate, and at least twice as many are functionally illiterate. More than 150 million children aged 6-11 receive no education at all; millions of children around the world join the labor force at age 7 or 8 although a number of UN declarations on human and children's rights strictly prohibit child labor; 12 million children have became orphans

due to AIDS; etc. Globalization provides many opportunities for individual and social development, but it also brings poverty to an ever-growing portion of the world population. The UN statistics indicate that 43.5 percent of the world's population lives below the poverty line, which amounts to a subsistence on less than $3 per day. Globalization also encourages numerous migrations, creating an increasing pressure on the countries of Europe, North America and Australia, where immigration is often accompanied by increased unemployment and unequal opportunities in education. Basic-literacy programs are few in number; in Europe alone more than a third of the working-age population has less than a high-school education. This percentage is even greater in 'third-world' countries, where a large percentage of children either receives no primary education or follows inappropriate and often very old/non-innovative curricula; both textbooks and teachers tend to be in short supply, and the latter often lack the professional training necessary for development of a knowledge society and individuals capable of lifelong learning and critical thinking. 'We are faced with unequal distribution of food, water and energy, and with environmental degradation, which in the long run threatens our existence. In addition to material deprivation, poverty also means lack of opportunity, thus making it difficult for a society to function. Unacceptably large numbers of children will face unemployment in the future, while a growing number of young people will feel socially, economically and politically alienated' (CONFINTEA VI, 2011:35).

Lifelong learning at European Universities

In pedagogical theory, lifelong learning is defined as an imperative and a prerequisite for individual development—that is, for an individual's social emancipation—as well as for the cultural and economic development of society as a whole. 'In the past two decades, the idea of a university has been critically reassessed. That reassessment has now become an urgent necessity. In the last twenty years, all European countries have found it necessary to introduce comprehensive reforms of higher education in order to meet external and internal challenges of globalization, massification, equal accessibility, and rapid modernization. The traditional idea

of university—rooted in the belief that acquisition of knowledge is an end in itself—has faced a utilitarian challenge. To be sure, the university is not only an alma mater but also a for-profit business corporation. Yet, this does not mean that universities should be pushed down the narrow path of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is a threat to utility itself and, in the long run, it can ruin the very idea of university. Still, these pressures are forcing universities to adapt to the marketplace and to create new roles for themselves. Such changes are already noticeable in learning outcomes, which are now defined not as scholarship (i.e. education), but as the ability to perform particular tasks within a particular profession' (Radonjić, 2010:113). One of the central features of educational policy in the European Union today is continuous learning. A product of that policy was the 2006 Communiqué of the European Commission, which clearly states that it is never too late to learn and that every age is the right age for learning. The Action Plan, created in accordance with this general objective, contains five key goals:

- remove barriers to the participation in higher education;
- increase the quality and efficiency of higher education;
- accelerate the process of accreditation and recognition of prior learning;
- provide a satisfactory level of funding;
- establish a system of monitoring higher education.

Implementation of lifelong learning presents a challenge to twenty-first-century universities to develop a variety of elective courses and to open their doors to students from various age groups and backgrounds. An official document of the European University Association, 'Trends V' (Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007), states that, although lifelong learning is perceived as an important mechanism, one that should play a key role in the development of a university, that is not the case in practice. The Bologna Declaration is a case in point: it undoubtedly promotes lifelong learning on paper, but very little has been done to conceptualize and implement a higher-education policy based on lifelong learning. The recognition and accreditation of prior learning and qualifications are two key issues that European

universities are only beginning to address. The implementation of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), an important element of the Bologna Declaration, has created many problems, but it now serves as a good foundation for understanding students' acquired knowledge as well as helps implement the RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) system. However, while universities remain fully committed to structural reforms, strategies for lifelong learning are mostly neglected. But despite the academic community's resistance to or half-hearted acceptance of this concept, two important social trends will 'force' them to give this matter some serious thought: namely, economic development and population aging. Economic development demands that previously acquired knowledge and skills be continually upgraded, while the aging population leads to a decrease in numbers of traditional students (19-25 years of age). Certain estimates suggest that, in the near future, nearly half the jobs in the EU labor market will require at least a Bachelor's Degree. Population aging has led a number of EU universities to change their enrollment policies in order to attract as many quality high-school students from non-EU countries as possible as well as students from different age groups. 'More than half the workers will change their places of residence every five years, and they will change their employers even more frequently' (Atali, 2010:109).

Project BeFlex, which is coordinated by EUCEN, was created as an extension of the Bologna Process and as an incentive for development of the concept of lifelong learning. Seven European universities participate in this project, whose goal is to make the existing university structures (which are in compliance with the Bologna declaration) adaptable to continuing education. Different countries implement lifelong learning differently. In places like England, France and Finland universities have established independent institutes that are responsible for lifelong learning; in other places university administration logistically supports the academic structures dedicated to lifelong learning; in a number of countries lifelong learning has taken the form of part-time Master's programs. Not infrequently, so-called open universities have been put in charge of lifelong learning. In very rare cases, as is Finland, universities have established institutes that are, in addition to providing various

lifelong-learning services, actively engaged in research and in development of the philosophy of lifelong learning. 'Finnish system of university continuing education is considered being the highest class at the European level, and even in the rest of the world, in terms of level of participation achieved, the spectrum of courses offered and the level of quality of this type of education' (Schaeper, 2007:28).

In its 'Lifelong learning for all', the OECD has adopted a comprehensive view, which covers all purposeful learning activities, from the cradle to the grave, whose goal is to improve knowledge and competencies for all individuals who wish to participate in curricular activities. 'Four main characteristics can be identified: a systemic review (opportunities for learning throughout the life cycle, from pre-school until after retirement, including all forms of formal, non-formal and informal learning), student-centered education (meeting the education needs), motivation for learning (learning for learning's sake) and an education policy with multiple objectives (such as personal development; knowledge development; and economic, social and cultural goals). Initially the European Commission used a much narrower definition, describing lifelong learning as an all-purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence'. This definition was later adapted to its current version: 'Lifelong learning should be understood as all learning activities undertaking throughout a lifetime, with the goal of improving knowledge, skills and competencies for personal, civic, social and/or employment needs' (Petegem et al, 2010:1).

Comprehensively defined lifelong learning is certainly the foundation of each of the four pillars of learning recommended by the International Commission on Education for the 21st century: learning for knowledge acquisition, learning for work, learning for existence, and learning to live together. 'Without a doubt adult education is an important component of the process of lifelong learning, which combines formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Adult education meets the needs of young people, adults, and the elderly. Adult education covers a wide range: general education, vocational education, literacy and family education, civil rights and many other

areas that different countries prioritize differently' (CONFINTEA VI, 2011:31). The papers presented at the 6th CONFINTEA Conference identify a global trend, according to which adult education remains permanently underestimated, underdeveloped, fragmented, and poorly funded even though it is increasingly seen, from a political standpoint, as a key element in building a sustainable and socially cohesive future. 'There are significant differences between regions and countries in terms of access, content and policy domain in the field of adult education. Despite these significant differences, there is a growing consensus when it comes to adult-education policy and to adult education within the comprehensive framework of lifelong learning and education for sustainable development (ESD). This would entail the adoption of adult education as a fundamental EFA (Education for All) strategy within the redefined national and international commitments and programs, in order to promote adult education within a holistic perspective' (CONFINTEA VI, 2011:26). Such a broad understanding of lifelong learning and the recognition of its vital importance to individual and comprehensive social development have helped change ideas about who could facilitate lifelong learning. Among the potential providers of adult education—especially those that could implement the goals of lifelong learning—the university has emerged as a key player.

Lifelong learning at the University of Montenegro

In the second half of the twentieth century, adult education in Montenegro—whose development resembled that of adult education in the other republics of the former Yugoslavia—was characterized by the founding of workers' or people's universities; establishment of training centers at major companies and factories; continued vocational training; and part-time studies at traditional universities. Although adult education was treated as an integral part of the formal education system, it was not included in the state budget for education. Either adult students themselves or their employees financed their education. From a conceptual and strategic perspective, adult education had a primarily compensatory function, while the function of lifelong learning received very little or no attention. In accordance with its compensatory function, adult education

was mostly limited to acquisition of basic literacy and elementary knowledge, and to continued training or retraining in the event of a job loss or as required by changes in the labor market.

In the last ten years considerable changes have taken place in the field of adult education in Montenegro, with the goal of abandoning the earlier, communist approach to this segment of education and introducing more contemporary methods of educating adults. Accordingly, the workers' universities were closed ten years ago. The intervening decade represents a sufficient temporal distance for a professional debate to begin: how necessary and beneficial were those changes to the system of adult education?

Although the University of Montenegro has no department of andragogy, and even though Montenegro has no agency or institute for adult education, we are past the beginning stages of building a system of adult education. In a relatively short period of time (the last ten years, that is) important strategic and legislative steps have been taken toward the development of a system of adult education, such as the passage of the Law on Adult Education (2003) and the Law on Vocational Education (2003), and the adoption of the Adult Education Strategy (2005-2015). A series of laws (e.g., the Bylaws on the Establishment of Educational Institutions, the Bylaws on the Qualifications of Educators and Professionals in Adult Education, the Program for Andragogical Training, the Program for Basic Functional Literacy, the Draft Law on Professional Qualifications), plans (such as the Adult-Education Plan for 2006-2010), and methodological guidelines (Curricular Methodology, etc.) have been adopted. 'Reforms of education in general, and of adult education in particular, have already begun in Montenegro. Notable achievements give grounds for optimism. In a relatively short period of time Montenegro has joined the European mainstream, contributing to some of Europe's achievements as well as sharing some of its problems. At the same time, complex economic issues, certain delays in the reforms, and the complexity, fluidity and decentralization of adult education require continued analyses and reviews - both for assessing what has been accomplished, and for further planning. Such analyses and reviews should be neither amateurish nor blinded by enthusiasm;

the approach needs to be professional and thorough. Strategic and policy documents on adult education in Montenegro reflect, on paper, the latest trends in adult education but do not emphasize enough the concept of *lifelong learning*. The significance of this concept not only arises from the need to ground adult education scientifically and philosophically but also has practical implications: it establishes an educational continuum, in which all age groups are equally important and in which (according to the established criteria) funding and—crucially—mobility (the ability to enter and leave the educational system) must be maintained, thus establishing a strong link between formal and informal education' (Popović, 2010: 275, 285).

Tellingly, no strategic or legal document pertaining to adult education recognizes the University of Montenegro as a key player in lifelong learning. Its role is defined extremely broadly: 'The University of Montenegro creates conditions and opportunities for the training of teaching staff who will work with adult students and for the affirmation of life-long learning' (Adult Learning Strategy of Montenegro, 2005:78). The primary goals identified in the Strategy for Adult Education are, above all, a higher level of accessibility to higher education; diversification of the forms and methods of higher education, to improve the levels of student achievement; and generation of additional sources of 'income' for the universities since different educational services based on the concept of lifelong learning could secure certain financial resources to the university. The development of lifelong-learning strategies should include measures for overcoming the barriers specific to the Montenegrin system of education, such as:

- financial barriers (lack of financial resources and low income);
- geographical barriers (the unavailability of higher education in rural and remote areas);
- social and cultural barriers (special attention should be paid to the socially deprived and educationally 'neglected' groups, such as the Roma population, etc.);
- barriers of unavailability (the inaccessibility of higher education to individuals with special needs);

- temporal barriers (problems experienced by those who want to study and work).

The University of the Twenty-First Century and the Concept of Lifelong Learning

At the start of the twenty-first century, the university is facing many challenges, together with the need to redefine its own position in society, its basic functions and, above all, its purpose. I will present my discussion of the future of higher education by examining:

a) the paradigm of university development;

b) development opportunities;

c) partnership for development;

d) personal development through lifelong learning.

The very word *paradigm* implies a formula or even key determinants of a system. It is generally accepted that the world is changing rapidly and dramatically and that the solutions of yesterday do not apply today. This trend can be seen not only in university or even basic education but also in all other areas of life, from the way we work or play to the way we request and transmit information, resolve ethnic tensions and issues of justice, and order the state we live in.

Although all of us have witnessed far-reaching changes in society in general, we do not seem to be fully aware of the consequences those changes have had on the education system as a whole and on higher education in particular. There is a growing belief that education reform is not a process that will lead to desired changes; re-invention, rather than reform, has become the focus. This is not just a word play; new paradigms need to be established. The establishment of a new higher-education paradigm must begin with a review of the existing paradigms and a test of their validity. Old university paradigms tend to be focused on the vision of a university as a bastion of knowledge, whose primary functions are teaching, dissemination of knowledge, research activities, and production and application of new knowledge. But the world is changing. Universities are not monopolies any more, nor do they play the leading role in today's knowledge society.

In the past, individuals eager to learn sought knowledge primarily at universities or in large, well-stocked libraries. Where do they go today? The first destinations are usually Google or Wikipedia. Specialized information is no longer searched for in bibliographies or catalogs; direct contact with experts in reference areas is established via e-mail. Will universities and other knowledge brokers be marginalized in the near future? Let's take an example from everyday life. As soon as we wake up, we check messages on our mobile phones, read our e-mail, switch on the TV and follow the morning news. From where does the knowledge necessary for the performance of these services come? From the university? Or from multinational corporations, telephone companies, the Silicon Valley, the electronic media?

Moreover, in the MDG (Millennium Development Goals) universities are no longer recognized as a source of information; instead, information is obtained through the databases of various local, national and international NGOs. So where is the university? If we try to imagine the future of higher-education institutions, we must ask ourselves, is it possible that the universities as we know them will become obsolete some day—when the development and transfer of knowledge acquire shapes and pace unknown to us, when knowledge begins to replicate itself at immense speeds, when new ways of knowledge transmission develop? However, one often hears different points of view expressed in university circles: that institutions of higher education should remain patient precisely because higher education is slow to change; it has an established rhythm (curricula remain unchanged for years/decades; when they do change, they change gradually; numerous are the meetings that precede even the smallest of alterations in education policy, university development, etc.).

In contemporary socio-political thought, one of the most appropriate social paradigms is that of *sustainable development, i.e. the survival and progressive development of the planet*. Admittedly, this popular notion was, at one point in time, limited to the concerns about the environment, when the focus fell on imminent dangers that the emission of harmful gases, pollution, and global warming presented

to our planet. But thanks to a decade of the United Nation's research on sustainable development, we now recognize that the threats to the survival of our planet lie in the economic, social and cultural spheres. The Earth will not survive if one third of its population has control over only 3 percent of its resources, and if the rich continue to get richer and the poor poorer. Indeed, it will not survive long if different cultures resolve their differences by intolerance, violence, and war. It will not survive if the powerful continue methodically to threaten the more disadvantaged by letting them die from preventable diseases, such as malaria and HIV-AIDS. In this context, universities have a special role: to increase their efforts and use their resources to reverse this alarming trend. Of course, universities cannot do this alone. For instance, Thailand has made a big step towards combating the unhealthy trend of neo-liberal consumerism, in a society governed by greed, by supporting 'sufficiency economy.' 'Education must be a driver of opportunity and social justice rather than defense and securing of privileges. We must make certain that the opportunities that higher education offers are available to anyone who may have potential benefits from it, regardless of their origin. This applies not only to the prevention of open discrimination, but also to the actively work on creating conditions that resources are recognized and supported regardless of one's age.' (DfES, 2003:2).

In talking about development opportunities, we are talking about *possibilities*. In an open, democratic institution of higher education, there are many opportunities for people to better themselves and their society. Democracy does provide opportunities and benefits, but it does not guarantee them. A balance must be struck between opportunity and compassion, so that the individual does not benefit at the expense of others or of the common good. Looking at specific examples of university development, one can differentiate between two models. The first model is the innovations introduced as concessions to the primacy of sustainable development. Universities remain within their traditional boundaries and true to their traditional approaches to education, but new objectives and ideas are added to the existing programs. The other, completely different model is the fundamental reorientation toward the concept of lifelong learning. Aiming to develop different educational opportunities,

the university's lifelong-learning strategy should be specifically targeted at *expanding access* to higher education. Increased levels of accessibility should be achieved through a strategy for lifelong learning whose objectives and activities would be the following:

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES
The University of Montenegro's contribution to the development of the concept of lifelong learning (LLL) at the state level	• Promotion of active, partnering relationships with all the institutions involved in LLL, and joint implementation of projects • Organization of national and international summer schools/ camps • Active participation in the processes of licensing and relicensing of specific professionals – medical doctors, teachers, engineers, etc. • Providing support and training to interns during internships and in preparation for professional exams • Organization of preparatory courses in cooperation with social partners, to facilitate continuation of higher education (after 25-26 years of age) • Training of instructors from social-partner organizations • Providing specific professional development to meet employers' needs or demands • Promoting entrepreneurship in society at large • Research/forecast of labor-force needs in different production/ social sectors

Creating conditions for the development of lifelong learning at the University level	• Conceptual changes in the University education designed to meet individual needs • Redefinition of the Bologna process in respect to its current exclusion of part-time education • Promotion of the philosophy of lifelong education in all university departments and programs • Increase in strategic and systemic support for different types of study for existing students • Development of RPL (recognition of prior learning) mechanisms • Consider the possibility of introducing tailored study programs, designed according to individual students' needs • Create the so-called fast-track study models for specific circumstances • Consider the possibility of introducing modular teaching at the University • Change the academic calendar in order to make the teaching more flexible and introduce different forms of condensed teaching
Development of a lifelong learning system at the University	• Establish a University center for LLL • Create a system for training university staff in the specifics of adult education • Continued education and earning of higher degrees (e.g., from Associate to Bachelors) • Establishment of a center for excellence in teaching and learning • Accreditation by the national Education Bureau of courses appropriate for employees' professional training • Establish student-support centers that would monitor students' standard of living, provide counseling and professional guidance, help solve financial-aid problems, etc. • Organize different forms of continuing education (seminars, courses, etc) with individual professionalization as a goal • Organize educational support for the socially disadvantaged • Development of different educational modalities (part-time, distance learning, etc.) • Elimination of systemic and structural barriers to lifelong learning

Developing multidisciplinary programs	• Increasing the number of interdisciplinary study programs • Increasing the levels of full-time and part-time students' internal and external mobility • Development of joint-study programs with universities in the region and in the EU
Development of IT services for LLL	• Enabling continuing education via electronic means, using IT and the internet: online interactive courses, e-learning, distance learning (Lubarda, 2010, 320) • Creating an on-line platform for learning, better known as Blackboard (Bb)
Development of the support system for the education of the "third age" population	• Foreign language courses for the "third age" population • ICT courses for the "third age" population • Organizing different cultural and educational activities

Such a broad notion of lifelong learning certainly raises many questions about how to conceptualize and implement different modes and modalities of adult education and how to create a flexible institutional framework that would remain relatively independent within the system of higher education (and of the education system as a whole) and not serve merely as its extension. The specific target groups that should be given higher accessibility to higher education are: future students; adults with specific gaps in their knowledge or skills; adults earning a higher degree; unemployed youth and adults; ethnic minorities and the underprivileged; individuals with learning disabilities; mature students; people in remote and rural areas; people whose jobs require retraining; the "third-age" group (that is, senior citizens).

Increased accessibility to higher education should be the goal for all four categories of the lifelong-learning continuum: pre-higher education (continuing education of the population with only a secondary-school degree); higher education (educational support given to vulnerable groups of students), educational continuum (retaining the majority of students and continuous improvement of student achievement through higher quality of teaching and different pedagogical and didactic models of teaching); a broader program

of study and increased recruitment efforts (identifying in the local communities and workplaces individuals that appear to have an interest in learning and finding ways to involve them in the process of higher education).

The third important element in the future of higher education is *partnership*. The coordination of different social policies (from family life and health to education), with their close ties to economic policies, strengthens communities and forms the basis of their active participation in society, enabling them to exercise their rights to education and lifelong learning. It is important to understand that partnerships encourage cooperation, collaboration, and positive interdependence; i.e. the stakeholders in higher education come to realize that they cannot successfully pursue their own goals unless all the other participants in higher education/community successfully meet their own goals, too. Students notice that they need each other if they want to finish a group project. In today's globalized environment, partnership is a must at both local and international levels. That is why it is imperative that we establish the maximum possible level of partnership in Montenegro: among public and private education sectors; among governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions; among all the stakeholders in education.

Of course, the idea that universities need to cooperate with local communities and society as a whole is not new. 'The advanced requirements clearly indicate that the university must have a strong relationship with social needs and to 'serve' to the fulfillment of certain current social issues, as it will otherwise become socially irrelevant' (Ostrander, 2004:76). When we talk about the university as a partner in creating and implementing strategies for lifelong learning, we undoubtedly have in mind an active partnership among all university units, partnerships with other universities in the country and abroad, and partnerships with state agencies and social partners. A functioning and 'consumer'-orientated system of continuing education requires a very flexible approach to cooperation among social partners. It also requires the understanding that full cooperation has multiple benefits, both for the university and for the social partners, but also for those to whom the continuous-education

services are being offered. "Partnerships are equally important and need to be created in a way that allows adult education programs to take into account the needs of learners in a particular context and to, except for basic education and professional skills, include social and entrepreneurial skills, gender equality perspective, values, commitment, knowledge, behavior and skills necessary for achieving sustainable development "(CONFINTEA VI, 2011:27). An important aspect of the partnership between universities and social partners should be a pro-active approach in identifying potential higher-education students among the members of the workforce, as well as continued efforts, on the part of the social partners, to advertise educational opportunities at the university level. The experience of the countries bordering Montenegro, such as Croatia, shows that 'a network of institutions for adult education still does not make a coherent whole; a number of institutions, with their individual programmatic development and availability, cannot meet the needs of all potential adult learners. In addition to establishing a network of educational institutions, special attention should be paid to educators who implement programs of adult education—above all, to those educators' own education, training, and professionalization' (Adult Education in Croatia, 2009:7).

Fourthly, it is important *to facilitate personal development at the university through lifelong learning*, or—to find a better term—to perpetuate and promote personal development. Let us now move from the conceptual to a more practical level. It is very important to understand the full implications of education for sustainable development (ESD) and to uphold it as a new paradigm in higher education. But, as noted above, a new paradigm is not only a change in perception; it is also the way one chooses to work and conduct oneself in accordance with that changed perception. Academia has the reputation of being more preoccupied with understanding a problem than with solving it. When it comes to sustainable development, we cannot afford to find ourselves in the state of the so-called analysis paralysis; we must act. Before we act, we should seek answers to a few practical questions: If we change our personal paradigm, how do we change our university? Are we going to teach academic subjects—Accounting, Algebra, Psychology, etc.—in a new way? Will

professionalization courses be different? Can the passion for and commitment to sustainable development remain unchanged? How? In adult education selection of educational content is particularly important. Although adult education is often motivated or inspired by the need for a narrowly professional or other specific knowledge, 'it is necessary to overcome partial acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values and, instead, affirm the process of acquiring a fundamental knowledge apparatus and a system of values that will guide an adult through the process of learning and education to the process of self-learning and self-education' (Matijević, 2009:78). Very similar is the view expressed by the contemporary Austrian theorist of education Liessmann, who writes that 'a flexible man, ready to learn all his life, puts his cognitive abilities at the disposal of markets that are rapidly changing. He is not a caricature of a humanistically educated man—as sketched out by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his brief theory of man's education—but his antithesis. With everything that people now must and can know - which is not a little – their knowledge still lacks the strength of synthesis. It remains what it needs to be: a fragment, easy to acquire, quick to adapt, easy to forget' (Liessmann, 2009:8).

Conclusion

The present moment is marked by many unknowns, which include rapid changes in the labour markets, changes in the structures and types of jobs, enormous increases in the amount of knowledge, uncertainties in everyday life, failures of communication, and very frequent and wide-spread economic and financial crises. All this points to the fact that education systems should 'produce' highly flexible individuals—individuals willing to be re-trained, easily adaptable to changes in work and family environment, ready to continuously upgrade their knowledge and develop a variety of communication skills. Without insisting that lifelong learning is the only adequate response to the numerous challenges faced by today's educational systems and by those who participate in them, I believe that lifelong learning is one of the most effective responses to the changes that life will continue to bring. I therefore consider the development of a lifelong-learning strategy at the university level extremely important. That strategy should not be an elegant mission

statement that is never put into action. Without a doubt, this task is difficult, for it involves paradigmatic, structural, and behavioral changes. Nevertheless, it is a job that must be done.

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