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# AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

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Adult Learning Australia

# AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

The *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* (AJAL) has been published on behalf of Adult Learning Australia for over 58 years, and is now recognised as the leading journal in Australia on adult education. The Journal is widely regarded internationally in the discipline of adult education.

AJAL is concerned with the theory, research and practice of adult learning and adult community education. Its purpose is to promote critical thinking, research and practice 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

Dr Tracey Ollis

In this issue of AJAL, we lead with an article on adult learning and transformation in further education in the United Kingdom. Adult education and its capacity to transform learner worlds came to our attention through the critical pedagogy tradition of learning, which has strong links to critical theory. Critical pedagogy places issues of inequality, race, class, gender, ability and the capacity for social change at the centre of educational theorising (Brookfield 2005). As Darder, Baltadano and Torres (2003, p. 2) explain:

> *Critical pedagogy loosely evolved out of a yearning to give some shape and coherence to the theoretical landscape of radical principals, beliefs and practices that contributed to an emancipatory ideal of democratic schooling in the United States in the 20th Century. In many ways it constituted a significant attempt to bringing an array of divergent views and perspectives to the table, in order to reinvigorate the capacity of radical educators to engage critically with the impact of capitalism and gendered, racialized relations upon the lives of students of historically disenfranchised populations.*

The critical pedagogy tradition of adult education is informed by the writing of Paulo Freire whose seminal text Pedagogy of the oppressed (1972) gave insight into the impact of rationalism on what he termed the 'banking system of education'. Beckett and Hager (2002) call it the front-loading model of education, knowledge is deposited or imparted by teachers and learners are passive recipients of it, not active agents constructing their own learning. This approach is contrary to adult education, which views adult learners' experiences as rich sites of knowledge that can be brought into the classroom. Freire's solution to the banking system of the education was for teachers and students to engage in dialogue through what he described as 'problem posing education' (Freire, 1972). As Darder (2015, p. 100,) explains,

> *Freire's notion of dialogue aspired to an integral awareness of self and others and an emergence of consciousness, which arms teachers and students with the critical objectivity necessary to allow ourselves and others 'to be' so that together explore the consequences of relationships and their material circumstances.*

Popular educators, such as Freire, point out the importance of understanding systems and structures in their creation of and continuing contribution to oppression. Freire believed in education that was liberating in the sense that it should embrace with intentionality and purpose social change. Freire knew that literacy education would change individuals, enabling them to act to change society. Through this awakening termed by Freire as 'conscientisation or conscientizacao' learners would become empowered through their acquisition of knowledge.

Freire's conscientisation has so often been misunderstood. It is not state of mind that has a focus on the 'self' or individual empowerment so readily constructed in twenty-first century discourses on self-help or self-empowerment (Ollis, 2015). As Antonia Darder (2015) writes, 'Freire's notion of conscientizacao entails the organic formation of an intimate relationship between consciousness, human action, and the world we seek to reinvent'. Freire's conscientisation is one which is constructed as a positive force for change when critically conscious people come together to change the world for the common good.

We still see the influence of Freire's writing on adult learning today in the rich relationships that are built between learners and teachers and teachers and learners. It is in this unique space of learning where permeable

boundaries of teaching and learning take place, as learners are able to reconstruct previously held negative views about themselves as being 'unsuccessful' learners (Crossan & Gallacher, 2009). It is in these spaces of learning such as, Neighbourhood Houses, Men's Sheds, Learn Locals, community learning centres, adult migrant education settings and others that we see relationships at the core of empowering learner experiences.

As stated, we commence this edition with an article from the United Kingdom, by **Vicki Duckworth** and **Rob Smith** titled: *'Women, adult literacy education and transformative bonds of care'*. The paper draws on their research project 'FE in England – Transforming lives and communities'. This research was conducted at a time when adult education has been further eroded under neoliberalism and the dominance of current skills discourse. This research outlines how adult literacy education has the ability to disrupt previously held negative learner identities, through transformative bonds of care in the education process. The research reveals that further education offers opportunities for Freirean like 'organic transformative consciousness raising' as it provides a space where hope can act on learner agency, which 'fuels women learners' lives and teachers' practice'. Further the article reminds us of the 'politics of literacy' and the costs to learners in an education system that sorts, assesses and categorises learners according to their so-called abilities, knowledge and skills. This research uses the methodology of biography and the in-depth data of learners' experiences, which will resonate with the adult community education sector in Australia and the AJAL's broad readership.

Our next article turns to adult learning for women and migrants in South Korea, **Romee Lee** and **Jinhee Kim**, in their paper 'Women and/or immigrants: A feminist reading on the marginalised adult learners in Korean lifelong learning policy and practice'. Lee and Kim explore from a feminist perspective marginalised adult learners in terms of South Korean lifelong learning policy and practices. This article focusses on the socio-political dimensions of adult learning for women and migrants, who they argue have historically been marginalised. They uncover the overlapping social divisions of gender and race/culture in current adult learning and lifelong learning policy in South Korea. Using the methodology of content analysis, the paper provides a critical overview of policy documents such as reports from UNESCO and the OECD, Korean White Papers in lifelong learning, reports, research papers and the authors' own embodied

professional experiences as educators from national and international projects. They argue the findings from the research points to South Korean adult learning policy being in a state of flux, with adult learning policy and practice being influenced by the policies of neoliberalism. As in Western countries, the discourse of lifelong learning policy has tended to focus on economistic measures and employment outcomes rather than education that focusses on learning across a lifespan, through various stages of their life and is viewed as a 'social good'. The current policy is driven by marketisation and privatisation, which as Lee and Kim argue, 'diminish the value of LLL as a common good in a rapidly changing Korean society'.

We return to the Australian context of adult learning in the next three articles with a focus on the VET and Higher Education space. **James Richards** and **Andrew Dolphin** in their article, 'Transitioning from VET to HE in Hospitality and Tourism Studies' examine 'the relationship between performances in competency based training (CBT) and performance in Higher Education (HE); with particular attention to results and grading as a determinant of student capabilities in HE. It explores the legitimacy of using VET grades of adult learners as a predictor of whether a student will be successful at university. The research is set against a backdrop of the massification of HE. It highlights current discourses, regarding VET who use a CBT curriculum and the increasing trend towards dispensing with grades. This is in contrast to the goals of universities to predict whether students have the capabilities, skills and knowledge to ensure success in their transition from VET to HE, and to decrease attrition rates for VET students. The quantitative research uses a convenience sample of 24 students studying hospitality and tourism at William Angliss Institute. The findings of the research will interest anyone who works in the VET industry with students who articulate to studies in Higher Education. The authors argue the pedagogy and practices within CBT prepare students well to engage in critical thinking in a university environment, contrary to other cited research. They also argue for the retention of grading in CBT, because it is a useful measure to gauge student's ability to complete their studies. In addition, the research also found that students felt motivated by receiving grades. Finally, they argue for retention and even further refinement of grading within the CBT system in VET.

Author(s) **Andrea Reupert**, **Melissa Davis**, **Sandra Stewart** and **Heather Bridgman**, in their article, 'A new education pathway for postgraduate psychology students: Challenges and opportunities'

argue the high demand for psychology graduates and psychological services and the limited amount of psychology places in Universities, has ensured new innovative models of psychology training is needed. In the paper, they outline the '5+1 internship pathway'. Using a content analysis of Psychology courses across Australia and the authors own embodied experiences as academics involved in training the psychology workforce, they claim the program integrates well with other training models. They state online training should be prioritised to ensure access for students from rural and remote areas and for those students who are seeking flexible modes of delivery.

In the article *'It Pays to Prepare'*, by author **Christopher Pearce** we continue with the Higher Education space. This quantitative study explores the effect of low stakes, low-value tutorial pre-preparation exercises using Expectancy Value Theory (EVT). EVT examines the relationship between a student's expectancy for success on the preparation task and the value attributed to that task. Pearce argues that using a flipped classroom pedagogy to prepare students for low stakes assessment promotes deeper level learning and also enables the teacher to focus on areas which require further clarification or expansion. The program was trialled at the University of Technology's Faculty of Law. The findings found student feedback and results demonstrate that students found the task contributed to their learning experience in the subject. Students also noted the task required an increase in value to encourage completion. Pearce claims '... this feedback demonstrates a strong relationship with the Expectancy Value Theory, namely, that student effort will rise in accordance with the value attributed to the task'. The author argues based on the research results, low-stakes tutorial preparation tasks could encourage participation in tutorials, it could represent a useful form of assessment in law school courses.

Our final article by author(s) **Janette Brunstein** and **Ricardo Alves** de Souza focusses on learning in the workplace and is titled, *'Critical reflection in the workplace and management competencies: In service of transformation'?* This article explores critical reflection (CR) in the workplace, drawing on qualitative data from managers in a financial institution. It aims to comprehend the meaning that CR produces in the work environment and how it relates to managerial competence and professional conduct. The paper provides a critique of Mezirow's transformative learning, which they claim maintains a politically neutral

position. This is in contrast to the origins of CR stemming from critical theory, which always views education as a political project, with a focus on emancipation of self and others. The authors argue 'CR empowers openness to think of new forms of organisational life because it does not conceive of the organisation as a structure to be taken for granted –an approach that favours the creation of alternative organisation models'. The article concludes with some reflection on rethinking CR in organisations. They claim the competencies that were developed were more concerned with performance and self-interest rather than providing a context for organisational transformation and change.

## From the Book Editor's desk – Dr Cheryl Ryan

The book review by Dr Christine Schulz is of John Dewey's seminal work *Experience and Education*. The review is a timely reminder for us given the current debates in Australia and globally about education and the juxtaposition of experiential learning alongside the test-based accountability approach to learning and education. His scholarship and influence are enduring, stretching across time and trends.

I am keen to include reviews on historical, seminal and contemporary literature as a means of reflecting on where we are in adult learning, how we arrived at this point and to engender further thought and discussion.

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# Women, adult literacy education and transformative bonds of care

Dr Vicky Duckworth
Dr Rob Smith

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*Drawing on a research project: 'FE in England – Transforming lives and communities' (sponsored by the University and College Union) to explore the intersection between women, literacy and adult education, this paper argues for the place of research in affirming localised understandings of education that cut across the grain of contemporary educational reform. In the context of the increasing dominance of a 'skills' discourse in education in the UK and reductions in funding targeted at adult education, this research project exposed how further education can still challenge and address hurt and often spoiled learning identities and counteract the objectification of the skills discourse through creating catalysing bridging bonds of care. The research data illustrate that further education offers organic transformative tools for consciousness-raising (Freire, 1995) and a caring space where hope can act as a change agent that fuels women learners' lives and teachers' practice (Duckworth, 2013; Duckworth & Smith, 2017, 2018b).*

*To support the discussion, our paper draws on a range of learners and teachers' narratives to expand on the conceptualisation of adult education as a bridging space for a curriculum informed by an ethic of what we term dialogic caring. We also develop a theoretical position that anchors the research in learners and practitioners' experience as an empirical antidote to the simulations (Baudrillard, 1994; Lefebvre, 2004) conjured up by the decontextualised knowledge production activities that marketisation has imposed on educational institutions. We position education research as having an important role to play in revealing powerful often hidden social practices and lived human experience beneath the neoliberal, globalised 'grand narratives' of international competition. To that end, we mobilise the term transformative teaching and learning to signify educational experiences that are not only student-centred, but which defy, counteract and work against the neoliberal educational imaginary. We align our research approach with adult literacy education and critical pedagogy as working towards social justice and against deficit generating educational structures that marginalise women, their families and communities.*

***Keywords:*** *adult literacy, transformative teaching and learning, dialogical care*

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## Positioning literacy, renewing agency and care

The research this article draws on conceptualises literacy through its link to learner identity; it looks at how learners' everyday lives have been shaped by their relationship to dominant literacies during experiences of schooling and how re-entering further education spaces can catalyse positive changes in students' lives, choices and prospects. We present this through the concept of transformative teaching and learning – a contested and arguably overused and / or imprecise concept (Hoggan, 2016) with many antecedents (Freire, 1995; Mezirow, 1990, Illeris, 2013) but one which we see as necessary to reclaim in the current context of further education in the UK.

In the UK and internationally, the current discourse around literacy is driven by international surveys that have become increasingly important over the last twenty five years. Produced and promoted by a range of

agencies including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the European Union, national governments commit funding to these surveys and the data are used to decontextualise and compare each country's 'performance'. In this process, views on what counts as literacy are shaped and literacy is reduced to a unitary, measurable factor.

However, literacy is not simply an 'autonomous' (Street, 1995) skill to be acquired and tested through competency assessment and, if generalised and conceptualised in this way, it can become a vehicle for bringing about the symbolic domination of institutionalised literacies which derive from notions of human capital, economic investment and returns (Becker, 1993). When framed by such human capital discourses, at the level of the individual, literacy becomes reductive (Black & Yasukawa, 2012, 2016); it manifests as a technology for stratifying human beings as embodied labour power and a way of quantifying potential 'productivity'. This framing also contributes to the stratification of higher prestige literacies with the effect of reifying existing social divisions. Through the sorting and delimitation of individuals, it can also impact on the productivity and wealth of the communities and societies in which they live (Ade-Ojo & Duckworth, 2016).

In many ways this 'economisation' of literacy serves to depoliticise it at the local and individual level. This is consistent with a neoliberal hegemonic view that typically attempts to neutralise politics through a common sense understanding that economic considerations are sovereign (Davies, 2014). To counteract this, we argue that adult literacy education can be positioned within a discourse of transformation. In other words, it can be seen as offering spaces in which individuals can (re)discover their agency: an enjoyment of learning and success as learners that connects with their lives in the outside world including through employment.

## Politics of literacy

It is important to acknowledge how literacy in the UK school curriculum has increasingly been used as a key tool in the regime of testing and assessment that ranks schools and children in terms of 'performance' (MacBeath, 2015). In England this has resulted in approximately one third of 16 year olds being labelled as having 'failed' (Dorling, 2011).

The dominant utilitarian model of 'delivering' literacy education reifies dominant literacies, sorts learners and reproduces class inequalities while failing to address the impact of power relations in learners' lives (Crowther, Hamilton & Tett, 2006) including the issue of gender inequality (Duckworth, 2013). This market-driven model also fails to recognise literacy as a means to achieve personal enlightenment or to mobilise the wider social benefits it can confer with regards to health and well-being.

Further education in the UK has long been characterised as 'the handmaid of British industry' (Ainley & Bailey, 1998, p. 14) which suggests not only the instrumentalisation of its curriculum, but also, in the context of a hierarchical divide between academic and vocational qualifications, the objectification of students through an emphasis on vocational curricula. Recent further education policy in England has been substantially shaped by funding reductions consequent on the financial crisis of 2008/9. This has had a significant impact on funding for adult education courses (Smith, 2017), which include Access to HE and adult literacy classes – from which the data in this article draws. Access to HE classes typically are connected to HE courses through a foundation year arrangement; while the provision of adult literacy classes has moved increasingly into third sector (charitable) providers.

## Methodology

The research took place over two years between May 2016 and 2018. It involved interviews and other contributions from more than 70 participants and data was gathered from more than 30 different further education providers. The initial sample was accessed through the researchers' professional links with colleges. The research questions were:

1. How does further education provide routes to higher education for learners who would not otherwise access HE?
2. How does further education offer learners the chance to engage in education at multiple stages of life, recognising that their relationships to employment/education are not neat and linear?
3. In what way does further education provide vocational education at all levels on a holistic personalised basis that is successful in providing learners with the confidence, knowledge and skills to progress?

How can we improve on the efficacy and appropriateness of the current funding and accountability regime in order to develop a model that supports transformative further education?

The first participants were students who had been identified by their tutors as having overcome significant obstacles in their studies and often as having joined courses with few or no qualifications and who were seen to be thriving. Their teachers were also interviewed. Other later participants were often people who had contacted the research team in order to tell their stories. The methodology incorporated aspects from a range of different approaches. For us, life history and biography provided important entry points into our research and the flow between past, present and future (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Duckworth, 2013; Bloch, 1986). Having biographies that are closely bound up with further education and this provided the researchers with a crucial frame of authenticity when meeting and speaking with participants. Reciprocity in telling our stories while asking participants to share their own contributed to the collaborative practice of gathering the data. On the use of life stories in research Goodley, Lawthom, Clough and Moore (2004, p. 167) comment that:

> *Researching life stories offers opportunities for drawing on our own and others' narratives in ways that can illuminate key theoretical, policy and practice considerations.*

Listening to participants' life stories provided insights into the transformative impact of further education for them and on their lives; it also illuminated the ripple impact on family and community. The researchers also strove to enact a democratic approach to research. This approach sought:

> *not only to change conventional relations of engagement in the research process, but also to transform fundamentally the nature of research, in terms of what counts as knowledge and who produces, owns, uses and benefits from it, with implications beyond that for wider social relations.*
>
> (Edwards & Brannelly, 2017, p. 272)

The democratisation was about respecting the ability and voice of participants as they told their stories. To that extent we were also

drawing on creative methodologies as advocated by Gauntlett (2007) in which participants are the 'experts on their own lives' and while our approach didn't use creative methods per se, the research conversations frequently entered territory that was emotionally intense and intimate.

The approach also relates to Nind's (2014) perspectives on inclusive and participatory methodologies that emphasise the co-production of research knowledge:

> *Mutuality and 'radical collegiality' in the research endeavour stands to transform what it means to be a teacher, student and researcher.*
>
> (Nind, 2014, n.p.)

Participants engaged with the project because they had a positive story to tell. The research approach itself became a part of the affirmative practice that helped create the conditions for the transformative learning that participants had often experienced. In that sense, taking part in the research reinforced the positive learning identities that the participants talk about having achieved. The methodological approach adopted in this study sought instead to be forward-looking: to endorse newly established learning identities and to share in a collective imagining of future plans. We drew on participatory methodologies where the oppressive qualities of the 'researcher' and the 'researched' relationship were challenged, this cohered with our intention to position social justice at the core of the undertaking. As such we strove then to convene research discussions in a safe space, a space moreover that shared some characteristics with critical pedagogical space. Underpinning this was a sense of research as a social practice (Herndl & Nahrwold, 2000) i.e. not divorced from everyday relations or having any 'mystique' that might in any way make participants feel like 'subjects'. Instead, just as education can be experienced as a socially embedded process that is to a greater or lesser degree conditioned by the social forces and structures that shape our society, so as researchers we were aware of how research can reduce to a limited and convention-ridden exchange between people who do not enjoy an equal social footing.

As such, the approach adopted for the study was closely aligned to critical pedagogy (Freire, 1995; Breunig, 2005) and extended a number of its underpinning principles. Research conversations (we reject the

term 'interviews' because of the connotations it carries of an unequal and uni-directional exchange and distribution of power) were framed to foster and sustain a sense of equality between participants. As a researcher whose own story has involved transformation through education, one of the research team shared her story with participants. These exchanges were typically reciprocal and dialogical as stories were exchanged and opinions and feelings shared.

In dissemination, the methodology draws on video as a medium for foregrounding participants' voices. For that reason, the project drew on the British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines for Research (2011), being particularly mindful of the ethical issues associated with using video. While participants understood that they could remain anonymous, most wanted their real names used, seeing this as an affirmative aspect of participation in the project. Colleges and teachers that were mentioned were anonymised or permission was sought to include names. The question we as researchers thought it important to ask ourselves when producing this knowledge and disseminating it was: what meanings were being foregrounded? Where were participants being positioned? What impact might dissemination have on their hopes and trajectories? Participants' experience of education frequently involved symbolic violence that sought to position them at the bottom of an existing social order. But symbolic violence does not only occur in educational circles. A critical and reflexive research methodology has to be conscious of the potential for research interactions to visit just the same kind of violence of definition and imposed meanings and of use on participants and their stories.

In the next section, we will focus on some key participants from the research to provide evidence for the part literacy education played in catalysing learners' experiences of literacy learning and connecting educational achievements to their dreams and aspirations. We will also chart the role of care in this process.

## Findings

### *i) Challenging intergenerational poverty and the ripple effect*

Anita was a participant from the North East of England. She returned to education as a mature student. Regarded as a failure at school

because of her dyslexia, she developed a skill set as a parent and in the community. Adult education harnessed these skills and she began to study to become a social worker.

> *The teachers at school assumed I was born to fail. Dyslexia was not … I had one teacher at school that sent me for assessment. But it was the early eighties. It had just been identified. So you were thick, you were stupid and if your parents didn't even have any faith in you, you're not going to have any faith in yourself … The progression course before the Access to Higher Education course was putting my toe in the water to see if I could so it … I came to college and started with GCSE, then went onto Access.*

Her story shows us how adult education can offer opportunities to develop new knowledge and new identities. Importantly, the educational space is one in which new identities are formed through and by the relationships of affirmation and care established by teachers. Anita goes on:

> *In eighteen months, I'll be a qualified social worker. My tutors are the ones that got me here … They encouraged me. They never once doubted me. They made me grow. Through that, I've been able to inspire my kids. One's at Manchester University … he's in his final year. My daughter wants to go to Oxford to do Medicine. My oldest one has gone into the building trade and is doing fantastically well. He's gone into the management side. He would never have done that but he saw that I could do it. If mum can do it, I can do it. I like to think I have inspired them.*

A key theme that emerged from the study in this passage is the notion of the ripple effect of transformative learning. In a sector of education in England that is dominated and governed by metrics (mainly focussed on so called success rates: retention X achievement) linked to funding (see for example Smith, 2015; Smith & O'Leary, 2013), the notion of the ripple effect is a counter metric: an unmeasured and therefore widely unrecognised social benefit that falls outside a neoliberal purview but nevertheless has a significant positive economic impact beyond the achievement of a qualification by a single individual. Anita's journey can be described as her following a trajectory that moves away from 'dead-end jobs' towards a career with significant organisational and administrative responsibility and challenging literacy demands. The

affirmation of her tutors and the bridging of strong bonds of care they established helped her to 'thrive' and led to a realisation of her aspirations with regards to having fulfilling employment. This, in turn, has impacted on her children's aspirations and educational progress catalysing a transformation in the dynamics of her family. Anita also described how she supported other people from her village with a similar, negative experience of schooling to return to college. The initial barrier that adult education helped Anita to overcome was the constriction of the label of being thick / dyslexic that marked her out at school as a failure according to the dominant model of 'autonomous' literacy. Once this constriction had been tackled, the rebirth of hope and the construction of new, positive learning identity leading to a material change in Anita's social positioning inside her family, her community and then in society more widely took place.

***ii) Motherhood: different capitals, different literacies***

Anita's narrative illustrates how when mothers' confidence and expertise is re-positioned as valued and needed knowledge, they can develop new literacies, advocate for their children and contribute to their literacy progress. In the next participant's case, adult literacy classes have connected with and harnessed the agency and aspirations associated with motherhood in shaping a new learning identity.

Jade is a young mother who attends adult literacy classes run by a local charitable trust in the north west of England. Being a mum motivates her and she has seen her confidence increase while studying and has learnt new literacies. Now, she has aspirations for her future and is determined to be the best possible role model for her son.

> *It gives me confidence. It makes me feel better. It makes me feel more like I can go and get what I need to achieve and … be who I want to be. I just want to be like … someone with a job. Have money. I want to be able to treat my son. I used to get holidays when I was younger and it was exciting and I want to be able to treat my son to stuff like that. At the moment I can't really do that and it's making me feel like I can do it. I can do it. … I want to give him the best childhood that he could have and that's by me doing what I want to do as well … I've been through times of depression but I've always tried to stay positive … I've been at*

> *the lowest place in life … My son brought me out of it. Children look up to their parents and I want him to look up to me … It's for my son. It's all about him really. What he's had in his life up to now is crap. He deserves a lot more. Kids are innocent and pure and they are the way they are taught …*

This passage illustrates the centrality of motherhood as a motivational force for Jade as an adult learner. It is important not to underestimate the affective dimension of the learning experience she is describing. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful here. The meanings of habit and habituation that habitus carries within it may be connected to established social patterns of being and acting in the world, but they are also bodily, they involve feelings of acceptance and resignation or possibly of resistance and rekindled agency. Jade's account communicated strongly a habitus associated with poverty and unemployment. For her, there was a relationship between these aspects of her life and her mental well-being. The seeming intractability of her circumstances resulted in depression. This feeling of being trapped and locked into a pattern of existence was broken by her adult literacy classes. Jade finds motivation through fond memories of her own childhood, in her hopes for son. These hopes are anchored in the principles of happiness and innocence and she feels it to be her role to provide these for her child.

Rather than a focus on the production of depersonalised neoliberal vision of human economic potential signified by human capital, in Jade's case, her literacy classes engage with her existing emotional capital (see Reay, 1998; 2000) as a way of opening up possibilities for educational success. Emotional capital includes the need to be a good mother and educational care (O'Brien, 2007) such as the support offered to Jade and Anita by their teachers. In Jade's case, it also extended to her circle of friends. Jade was determined to introduce one friend (with experience of mental health issues and also a mother) to the literacy classes as a way of helping her out of a cycle of depression and deprivation:

> *(M)y friend, she's had her kids took off her, and she's suicidal, I don't like seeing her like that – it breaks my heart, looking at her. I try and help her as much as I can and get her on the parenting course or the literacy course. Just to get her to stop thinking. Or to get her mind onto something else. I'm always speaking about*

> *courses that my friend could go on because she's just so low and I think she deserves a lot more than she's ever had in her life – to build up a bit more, because she thinks very lowly of herself.*

Jade expressed a sense of being comfortable, feeling welcomed and belonging in her literacy classes. The educational space here was transformative in the way it sought to connect her current aspirations for herself and her son with a future life course trajectory. Reay (1998; 2000) suggests that an investment of emotional energy in education by working class mothers depletes their own emotional well-being. However, in Jade and Anita's cases, rather than depletion, we see invigoration: motherhood seems to have acted as a catalyst to the women accessing education and then harnessing educational experience to a future trajectory in life and work, and in helping their children to succeed.

Our third illustration from the project is shared by Marie. Marie is a staff nurse who grew up in a large family on an estate in outside Manchester (where she still chooses to live). In our conversation with her, she talked about how she went back into education after a negative experience of school. She also talked about the power education has given her and her family to make choices in life. Adult education brought about a turning point in her life when she became 'hooked' on education after starting a course at a local college rather than take up another low paid job opportunity. Through this, adult education became the medium of her transformation and through her, brought about a big change in the opportunities and the educational and life course trajectories of her family. As she stated:

> *I don't care if [my son] stays in education till he's thirty years old. I want him educated because education gives you power and that's what I want my children to have. I want them to be able to make choices. Definitely, I want them to be able to … you know … say, "Well actually I don't want to do that, I want to do that. And I want to go and live there, I don't want to stay there and live there. And I want to have a car and I want to do this." Just choices … I want them to be able to go to Costa and get a coffee. Something I could never do… that's what education will give him – choices.*

One of the important things in the passage is the emphasis Marie places on the range of opportunities on offer that she wants for her children. This is about positionality in the world and a rekindled sense of agency to act in and on the world. As Bloch states:

> *Dreams … and possible things circulate inwardly which can perhaps never become outward. Of course, nothing would circulate inwardly either if the outward were completely solid. Outside, however, life is just as little finished as in the ego which is working on this outside. No thing could be altered in accordance with wishes if the world were closed full of fixed, even perfected facts. Instead of these there are simply processes, i.e. dynamic relationships in the Become has not completely triumphed, the Real is process: the latter is the … mediation between present, unfinished past, and, above all: possible future.*
>
> (Bloch, 1986, p. 198).

There are echoes in the renewed perspective on life and the world in Marie's narrative (as expressions of hope) interact with the world. Key in this, is the idea that the world is not fixed and that the real is an ongoing process of becoming that can be changed through individual agency. Transformative teaching and learning centres on this sense of becoming and offers a way forward for people who may feel trapped in a cycle of deprivation and poverty.

It is important to note that the transformative learning experiences for Marie made seeing the world in new critical ways possible. Marie described having her eyes opened to the systematic inequality of society and the wider world. There is almost a sense of lost innocence in her interview when she describes:

> *I used to think doctors and police were all good and that people like that never lied. Now I know different. … I used to think people were better than me. But no one's better than anyone: we're all equal.*

The unseen literacy at work here is connected to Bourdieusian notions of social and cultural capital [1](Bourdieu, 1974) but moves beyond that to a newly established 'informed' position within the field of social

relations. Through her engagement with learning, Marie has developed a facility for reading social relations in her workplace but also in society more widely. This social literacy enables her to read society and social situations in new ways. It also connects with notions of social capital as explored by Tett and Maclachan (2007): adult literacy learners' increased self-confidence and ability to connect with wider and new social networks. But in Marie's case, it also connects to consciousness-raising: an enhanced critical perspective on society. It provides Marie with a vantage point from which to understand not only her own position within society but to come to grips with the bigger structural forces that shape her life and the lives of others. This social literacy is deeply imbued with criticality as Marie has learnt a body of subject knowledge but also acquired an understanding of the factors that positioned her where she was before she began her journey.

Acquiring social literacy is about being able to navigate the complexities of different social groups; it's about being able to move without feeling like a fish out of water between different contexts: home, the classroom, the school on parents' evening, the doctor's surgery, the police station with a sense of agency. We might call it wholeness or confidence but it comes from a deep understanding of the self as subject: our sense of who we are in society.

A fourth project participant, Nyomi, was studying a Podiatry degree when we met her in a college in the north east of England. The narratives of participants in this area of the country were all marked by the historical context of the 1984 Miners' Strike. The closure of pits in a large number of villages can be linked both to the forces of globalisation (cheaper coal from Colombia was available) but also to the Thatcher government's attempt to challenge trade union power. These closures had severely impacted on job prospects and the economic activity in the area. The impact of this was still being felt more than thirty years later. Nyomi talked about leaving school feeling confident and self-assured and then losing this confidence through the attrition of unemployment, demanding family circumstances and mental health issues. Nyomi's narrative makes it clear how returning to education, this time with an understanding of her dyslexia, enabled her to change her life. As with Anita, Jade and Marie, she talked about the ripple effects of her continued education and the benefits for her family.

> *I had wanted to be a youth worker. They had pulled quite a lot funding for youth workers at that time. So I then spent the next four years, I would say, unable to find a job, caring for my partner who is on Employment Support Allowance. I kind of spiralled into quite a bad depression. I got pregnant, had my daughter and luckily my daughter gave us a little bit of a boost, so I went and got help for my depression … It was the Health Visitor that spoke to us and tried to get us to get a little bit of motivation and to go back out into the world and try again.*

This narrative suggests a tipping point can be reached in people's lives when a combination of external circumstances can seem to create insurmountable obstacles to the realisation of hope. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), women are more vulnerable to the effects of this.

> *[W]omen are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, psychosomatic systems, eating problems and sexual dysfunction. Violence may also affect their reproductive health.*
>
> (WHO, 2000b, p. 3)

Mental ill health is strongly linked to the prevalence of deprivation and poverty in communities. For Nyomi, her hopes and plans were affected by economic and employment conditions and further affected by family circumstances. Adult education, in the form of an Access to HE course, provided a gateway to renewed hope.

> *(The course) was hard work, it really was. … But it gave me such a sense of belonging. I knew I was doing it for my partner and my daughter. But I also knew that I had to do it for myself. Because I had spent the last four years extremely depressed because of the way my life was panning out. I didn't think … I didn't see myself in education again. And it's hard when you come from living and not having a job and you know that you should be working … and nobody employing you … The only thing I could do to give my daughter some kind of life was to do the Access Course. It's been amazing. I opened up. I came off anti-depressants which I'd been on for quite some time. I made friends with people. And I haven't really spoken to a lot of people in years. It really does change your life. It's allowed me to get back out … Within two months I was a completely different person … I've made people proud and I've made myself proud.*

Communicated powerfully by the passage is how Nyomi's experience on the Access to HE course was founded on strong ties between herself, the teachers and the other students from the same and other similar villages. The relationships that grew within the transformative teaching and learning space helped her reposition herself in relation to the outside world.

In a context in which pit closures effectively closed down the established life course trajectories of whole communities in the north east, adult education is seen to offer a space in which individuals from those communities can plot a way forward. The importance of the affective aspect of the transformative educational experience is writ large in Nyomi's increased self-esteem and her statement that not only did she feel a sense of pride in her achievements but that she had made others proud. This pride can be read as an indicator of the distance travelled on her journey of hope.

### *iii) The role of teachers in facilitating dialogic care*

According to our research data, teachers in further education play a vital role in creating the social conditions and establishing the strong relational ties through which transformative learning takes place (Duckworth & Smith, 2016). As a starting point, their practice needs to take account of the negative prior educational experiences of learners who in many cases have been judged and written off by a rigidly linear school system that assesses individuals against a normative, age-staged matrix of 'learning progression' (Duckworth and Smith 2018b). These teachers understood that in some cases it had taken enormous courage on the part of some would-be adult learners to cross the threshold onto college premises. An initial focus of their work had been to create a safe learning environment, establish trust and build confidence. The teachers formed affective bonds and these bonds arose from an awareness of the historical positioning of the learners and their communities and how their location had shaped their trajectories.

One participant, Judith, Nyomi's Access to HE teacher, was conscious of the importance of her teaching work in a region with historically high levels of unemployment and job losses.

> *For me transformational teaching is teaching that makes a difference. Whether it's people enjoying the lesson … or sometimes … people have come in and they've been very quiet and haven't had much confidence. You'll see them five or ten*

> *years later and they'll say I'm a primary school teacher now or I'm a social worker or I'm doing my master's degree, I'm doing my PhD. And you think: Wow what a difference!*

What's interesting about the description is that Judith sees the transformative potential as immanent in the students. Judith sees this transformative process as a collective phenomenon and as having social as well as individual origins:

> *People feel once they get to their twenties or thirties, Oh I didn't stick in at school or I'm not clever enough or I'm never going to do anything. And it only takes one person in a friendship group to go and do something like an Access Course and go on and do well and then their friends want to come on as well. … We have to break the cycle of low aspirations in the north east because we've got whole generations now who don't work …*

Judith's understanding of her role is deeply rooted in the location of the college and in the communities the college serves. In this case, her role involves addressing the legacy of the industrial strategies of 1980s Thatcherism when the large scale industries of motor manufacture, coal and steel production had public subsidies withdrawn. Judith here signals how the impact of the Access course on an individual often led to the recruitment of others from that individual's social network. Judith identifies some important ingredients in the formation of dialogic caring relationships with the learners. Amongst these, although not specifically named is the respect she has for them as people. Once more the egalitarian nature of transformative teaching and learning comes across powerfully:

> *We try to get to know the students as people and be part of their journey … A lot of people think they're not academic when actually, they are. … They're so used to thinking of all the things they can't do, we've got to focus on what they can do … By the time they finish they realise that they can do the same as those people they thought were better than them because they had a degree or they are a doctor. I've had people say to me: … I've learned how to phone up and complain if I'm not happy about something. I've learnt to say, I disagree with that. At the end of the day they are empowered and they have more confidence.*

The emphasis in this is very much on the self-discovery by learners of already-there potential: a process which makes becoming a realisation of immanence and which unlocks the door to a previously remote and unattainable future. There is a sense then that the teacher's role in the process is one of producing the transformative educational space and opening up the learning dialogue with individuals. The role of care in this is seen in the nuanced meeting of individual students' needs underpinned by a consideration for their dignity.

## Discussion

### *Transformative teaching and learning and 'differential space'*

In seeking to theorise what we mean by transformative teaching and learning, we also draw on the theories about space and time developed by Henri Lefebvre in his book The Production of Space (1991). Lefebvre saw abstract space as 'dominated' and often oppressive and defined it as:

> *the urban spaces of state regulated neo-capitalism characterised by their commodified exchange value and their tendency to homogenisation.*
>
> (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 49–53)

'Differential space' on the other hand he saw as offering a counterpart to abstract space that arises from its contradictions and the inherent possibilities that are constrained within it. Differential space:

*… privileges inclusiveness and use value rather than the exchange value of abstract space. It is often transitory space which can arise from the inherent vulnerabilities of abstract space.*

(Leary-Owhin, 2015, p. 4)

As explained above, literacy within neoliberalism is instrumentalised and mobilised in the service of the creation of an imagined national pool of human capital. This form of literacy is commodified by the funding arrangements underpinning much further education, which attaches an arbitrary 'cost' to the 'doing' and 'delivering' of literacy qualifications.

The alternative view of literacy education traceable back to Freire (1995) provides a setting for the emergence of differential space. Adult

literacy classes provide and realise differential space in two significant ways: first, by taking the reductive utilitarian view of education as a starting point and, through an engagement with learners' educational biographies, critiquing this; and secondly, by providing an affirmative environment for the development of learners' aspirations and a reorientation to possible life course trajectories in the future (Duckworth & Smith 2018a). It is this aspect that makes differential space a landscape in which learning that can be described as transformative can take place.

Transformative teaching and learning is a pedagogical approach that specifically counteracts the effects of the neoliberal instrumentalist purposing of education. It is a pedagogy founded on care and solidarity and is driven by a dialogue between students and students and teachers. A key distinction between transformative teaching and learning and 'student-centred' approaches resides in this re-evaluative and ultimately retro-active aspect. An important initial stage of transformative teaching and learning involves remedying the damage caused by the internalisation of negative labels and expectations from students' compulsory education. Transformative teaching and learning moves from the transformation of the individual to situate learning and personal development within a social context that is perceived to require transformation as well. In that sense, it suggests a continuum (or at least a bridge) between the Mezirowian focus on the individual and Freirean conscientisation. Transformative teaching and learning puts an emphasis on further educational space as differential and 'politicised-democratic space' (Leary-Owhin, 2015). Duckworth and Smith (2018a) argue that teachers play a vital role in establishing an environment or space and set of relationships in which students can validate their socially situated knowledge and value the knowledge generated from their lived experiences. They also shift from positioning the motor of transformation (only or primarily) within individuals, seeing it instead as an effect that is consciously produced through interaction between teachers and students through 'dialogic care'. The kind of care underpinning transformative teaching and learning is not demeaning or passivising but instead is orientated towards fostering student engagement, autonomy and choice.

## Schooling, class and gender

The research data emphasised the enormous (often negative) impact that schooling had on the women in the study. The literacies the women brought to school as children afforded little symbolic value in that they could not be used in class to pass exams. For example, the caring literacy traditionally carried out by girls and women, caring for siblings and their children remained invisible and unvalued. In addition, oral and written linguistic capabilities were not equally valued in schools, and learners' idiolects (and through them, their identities) were devalued through the hierarchisation of varieties and dialects that positions Standard English as imbued with an intrinsic prestige that masquerades as natural and almost moral in character – rather than as a dialect whose status is rooted in specific historical incident / accident (Trudgill, 2000). As such, literacy was very much linked with their subjectivity and how they viewed their self-worth in the public and private domains of their lives. This meant that learners who were not proficient in the linguistic and 'academic' literacies required in schools were defined as 'failures' or as lacking in intelligence simply because of the way they related to and articulated their knowledge of the world. This, in turn, influenced their experience at school, the 'choices' they had or did not have and subsequent trajectories as adults.

Our study explored participants' lives and afforded a comparative exploration of gendered construction of subjectivity in and through education. While their schooling was marked by labelling and marginalisation, their experience of adult education renewed hope in ways that impacted on their life course trajectories. Our analysis of the learners' life stories moves away from a simplistic notion of individuals 'bettering themselves' – we extend the idea that this is 'linked to their selfhood and social identities' (Luttrell, 1997) and rather than viewing working class identities in pathological terms, we see them developing a criticality that repositions them as they are, as working class women, in a new relation to people from other, more privileged and middle class social backgrounds. In Marie's and in Anita's cases (but also in the stories of other participants not covered by this article), this meant bringing a different set of values to their work, and a viewpoint that understood and reached out to people they perceived as coming from a background similar to their own.

Our analysis unpacks these negative ontological assumptions, based on dominant and normative discourses of the middle class, which pathologise gender and class and women's and working class experience (see Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody, 2001; Duckworth, 2013).

## Dialogic caring and hope

The ideological coupling of choices and opportunities for all was a key theme in New Labour's rhetoric about responsibilities (Jordan 2005). It resurfaced in the notion of the Big Society that was an early policy theme of the Coalition Government (2010–15) and was carried forward in a slightly different form into the agenda of the new conservative government. Theresa May's first speech outside 10 Downing St includes the lines:

> *When it comes to opportunity, we won't entrench the advantages of the fortunate few. We will do everything we can to help anybody, whatever your background, to go as far as your talents will take you.*
>
> (Prime Minister's Office, 2016)

Here, the meritocratic emphasis of New Labour is transposed into the notion of 'talent': an ideological and mystical quality (reminiscent of IQ) that transcends and therefore makes unnecessary any attempt to address the structural causes of poverty and deprivation and instead places significant emphasis upon an essentialist notion of 'ability'. The narratives of several of the women in the study (e.g. Anita, Claire and Marie) suggest that teachers' perceptions of their 'ability' were defined by judgements about their home background (including their social class) and gender. Once unlocked from the impact of deficit judgemental lenses and constraints, these women were able to reclaim confidence, dignity and assertion. Implicit in their schooling then was a condemnation of the lifestyle, culture and choices of the poor and marginalised. We see this in the labelling and pathologising of the women in the study and the impact this has on notions of choice / or indeed lack of choice in the public and private domains that they inhabit and more broadly health and well-being.

Culturally sensitive literacy education has the potential to transform students, teachers (and researchers) to become writers of their own

educational stories and, moreover, authors of their own lives. The telling and sharing of the stories was a way for the women to share what had happened and make the connection with someone who would not judge, but who had similar experiences. In this way, through digital media the research study aims to contribute to the ripple effect that participants' stories evidenced. Through the sharing of these histories participants began to recognise that what had happened to them at school was not their fault and began to feel a sense of agency in their lives.

The research process created a safe space in which the telling of narratives was experienced as affirming and this can again be linked to the narrative as a capital for resistance against the barriers the women have faced; for example, being poor, labelled and stigmatised. Offering a democratic and 'differential' space both in the classroom, the community and through research activities for the learners to share their narratives also allowed for a sharing of stories about obstacles and ways to overcome them. In this context, the narratives in themselves became a resource of hope and assumed the status of a capital, which others drew from to inspire and offer strategies to move themselves and others forward.

## Conclusions

This research illustrates how literacy is crucial for promoting women's rights as it provides opportunities for them to revisit and reclaim the spoilt learner identities to ones of empowerment (Pants-Robinson, 2016). Indeed, women are marginalised and often silenced if they are unable to access the powerful literacy tools that can enable them to transform their lives (Duckworth, 2013; Duckworth & Smith, 2017). Many of the learners in this study have experienced social and economic inequality for most of their lives. They were aware that they had been labelled and stigmatised but the bonds formed in their literacy classes facilitated them to overcome their experience of past symbolic violence within the education system. Then, the strong bond they formed with the teacher and their peers supported and cemented the development of a new identity within a collectively experienced space.

The research narratives reveal how the participants try to make sense of their structural positioning as literacy learners in a society based on inequality of opportunity and choice. Through their educational

journeys, these women challenge and transform existing hierarchies. As learners they overturn the monopoly on hope that is reified by existing social inequality and the employment and income structures that support this. In that sense, literacy classrooms take on the characteristics of 'differential space' (Lefebvre, 1991) as spaces and times in which agency can be rediscovered and an engagement with society on different terms planned for.

The research foregrounds the importance of caring bonds in supporting learners through their educational journey. The study reveals how teachers, even when constrained by performative curricula, can open up a space for critical reflection and dialogue which facilitated learners to challenge dominant notions of what literacies are and which literacies matter and which do not. It was this move from a competence-based model to a holistic approach (see Morrish, Horsman and Hofer, 2002) and care (see Feeley, 2007; Duckworth, 2013; 2014) which allowed us to fully explore the learners' motivations and barriers. Dialogic care was an integral aspect of the methodological approach.

Transformative teaching and learning experiences are largely hidden from view because their impact falls outside the metrics that drive further education policy and underpin funding in the UK (Duckworth & Smith, 2018b). Their wider impact remains unmeasured by blunt assessment. For that reason, we argue that adult education and literacy programmes should be viewed through the lens of transformative teaching and learning as this makes possible a reclaiming of educational space and purposes that do not objectify students in instrumentalist ways.

In current neoliberal conditions, educational achievement in schools has been reduced to an institutional quest to improve measurements and metrics in the service of a grand narrative centred on human capital accumulation. This grand narrative views the future primarily in national economic terms. We should not be surprised that these conditions result in the mass labelling of great swathes of the nation's children as failures. After all, in 2017, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland the pass rate at GCSE level – the examinations taken at 16 – was 66.3% (Richardson, 2017). That said, as Bloch identifies, this 'Real' is in process rather than being fixed. All parts of our education system, we might think, should hold to a central purpose of catalysing learners' hope. This research study revealed that, despite significant funding cuts

and the objectifying force of a neoliberal skills discourse in the UK, adult literacy and adult education more generally, continues to give primacy to such a role.

### *Endnotes*

1 Literacy is one of the strongest indicators of social and cultural capital. Social capital includes the resources that one gains from being part of a network of social relationships, including group membership. Cultural capital includes knowledge, skills, and education.

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# Women and/or immigrants: A feminist reading on the marginalised adult learners in Korean lifelong learning policy and practice

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*This paper aims to analyse the policy and practice of lifelong learning (LLL), particularly adult education and learning (ALE) for women, immigrants, and women/immigrants in South Korea. An international as well as national policy document analysis was conducted to explore the impact of Korea's policy and practice of LLL for these groups of learners. Findings reveal that they are situated in the middle of gendered and/or racialised trends in ALE within an intensifying neoliberal context where learning is mainly utilised as a tool for employment in contemporary Korean society. Possible implications from the analysis were addressed to suggest policy updates and better practices.*

***Keywords:*** *women, immigrants, feminist, adult learning and education, lifelong learning, Korea*

## Introduction

The issue of inequality in the realm of lifelong learning (LLL) is a double-sided dilemma for policymakers. While much of the recent emphasis on LLL, particularly adult learning and education (ALE), has focussed particularly on socially marginalised groups of people to help them keep up with the changes happening in their lives (Walters, 1997; Bagnall, 2006; Guo, 2010; Kim & Lee, 2016), these desirable phenomena also run the risk of deepening inequality. This is possibly due to the unequal mode of distribution of opportunities and the lack of recognition of the learning needs of these groups, the result of which are persistent structural issues in society.

This paper focusses on the socio-political trajectories of inequality of women and immigrants as marginalised groups of adult learners in South Korea (Korea, hereafter). These two groups are often the centre of attention in the current LLL and ALE context in Korea. Both women and immigrants, as social categories, share striking parallels (Haslanger, 2000). Both are marked by biological features and have been sustained hierarchically in most societies, past and present. In Korea, the recent discoveries of women as an underutilised human resource and the increasing need for the inclusion of foreigners, under the tenet of multiculturalism, have made unique configurations within LLL and ALE policy and practice. This paper focusses on the complexly interwoven characteristics of these groups as a case of overlapping social divisions of gender and race/culture presented in LLL and ALE policy and practice.

Therefore, our research questions were as follows:

(a) How have these groups of people been socially constructed as adult learners within the historical, as well as socio-political Korean contexts? What can be identified as persistent inequalities for each group of adult learners? In particular, how does 'intersectionality' of gender and race/culture work in the field of LLL and ALE in Korea?

(b) What kinds of ALE programs have been discussed as important to support these groups of adult learners? What has been addressed by Korean policies and what has not?

Various international, as well as Korean, data were analytically reviewed to gain a clear picture of the present realities. Reports from UNESCO and OECD, Korean White Papers in LLL, monitoring reports, research papers

and authors' professional experiences from national and international projects are included for this analysis. This paper first discusses the context of Korea's LLL and ALE policy and the learning experiences of the marginalised groups of adult learners within it from a feminist perspective. Then, it examines the current ALE practices for women, immigrants, and women immigrants in Korea as well as the barriers to meaningful learning. Lastly, several points from the investigation are addressed to inform policymakers, educators and learners.

## Contemporary understanding of LLL and ALE in Korea

As one of the world's biggest capitalist economies, Korea is currently experiencing most of the major issues faced globally today. These include the demographic shift toward an older and more diverse society, the changing employment pattern from stable to flexible, and growing inequality in terms of the concentration of wealth (Kim, Kang, Kim, Hong, Ahn, Lee, Lee, & Chang, 2016). For example, Korea currently has the world's fastest growing ageing population (12.7% of total population) and the lowest fertility rate (1.05 per person). The country is also experiencing rapidly increasing ethnic diversity (4% of total population), which is a big change as Korea was formerly an extremely homogeneous country (National Statistics Office, 2017). This has resulted in increased demand for LLL to meet a new set of needs in the Korean context, referred to as 'lifelong education' (LE) (Kim & Lee, 2016).

In Korea, LE is defined as all forms of education (formal, non-formal, informal) for people of all ages. It mainly underlines ALE, however, which includes vocational skills and training and various sorts of continuing education. The spectrum of LE programming ranges from the recognition of academic achievement outside the conventional education system, such as an Academic Credit Bank System and Bachelor's Degree Examination, to liberal arts education, literacy education, culture and leisure-related activities, civic education, as well as vocational education and training, and more. Therefore, many of these are being taught in non-formal education contexts or often achieved within informal learning settings.

Facilitating the notion of LLL and ALE into policy and practice started in the early 1990s. The Lifelong Education Act (LE Act) that was initially enacted in 1982 and reincarnated in 1999 to accommodate solutions

to contemporary challenges, making ALE its foremost emphasis (Ministry of Education & National Institute of Lifelong Education, 2013). Although Korea has one of the highest rates of progression from secondary school to higher education, the country confronts several other challenges. These include:

a) one of the highest unemployment rates of young people among OECD member states

b) the gulf between the labour market and higher education creates societal instability (Kim et al, 2016)

c) the loose link between industry and the education sector and an accompanying mismatch of skills and competency (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2014)

d) disparity between the haves and the have-nots in participation in LLL (Kim, 2016).

Importantly, LLL as a philosophy promotes the idea that every learner has the right to choose from a variety of learning options and to strive for self-directed learning based on their needs. The overhauling of its education and training system, as well as putting more emphasis on ALE, has therefore been centred in the recent Korean LLL policy shift from the formal education of children and adolescents to non-formal education as well as informal learning of adults.

Owing to the deep-rooted cultural tradition that values learning and learners, system changes conducted under various slogans have enjoyed relative success. Korea's increased global presence as one of the most faithful partners to the expert supranational institutions such as UNESCO, OECD adds to the effectiveness of its practices. Based on UNESCO's recent monitoring survey; for example, Korea was identified as having top-level practices, which are briefly summarised in Table 1(UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2016).

***Table 1:*** *Summary of the ALE monitoring based on five Belem's framework for action*

| Area | Definition | Korea's situation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Policy | Policies and legislative measures | LE Act provides a system and expertise, administrative, as well as consultative bodies of ALE.<br>The 3rd LLL promotion plan emphasises LLL, which focusses on seniors, women, and working class adults. |
| 2. Governance | Implementation of ALE policy | Decentralisation of the governance in planning and facilitating ALE has commenced at the national, provincial, and community level. |
| 3. Financing | Financial investment to ensure quality provision | ALE is funded by central and local governments as well as NGO sectors. Central government funding is still considered to be limited. |
| 4. Participation, inclusion and equity | Inclusiveness of ALE that helps adults to achieve human, social and economic development | Participation is expanding but there are discrepancies in the distribution of opportunities; for example, young city dwellers with high levels of education and income participate more. |
| 5. Quality | Multidimensional concept and practice that include the modes of delivery, needs assessment, professionalisation | Quality assurance framework has been introduced and institutional monitoring is conducted and utilised as criteria for funding allocation. |

Table 1 illustrates Korea's current achievements as well as its challenges. Korea's LLL policy has achieved a significant level of institutional development. Despite the favourable international recognition, it is too early to say if Korea's LLL policy is meaningfully aligned with the country's sustainable development goals, particularly when it comes to the education of marginalised adults. For example, Korea's social expenditure (10.1%) is much lower than other OECD countries, such as Sweden (27.6%) and Japan (23.7%) (OECD, 2015). According to OECD (2015), the foremost indicator that impacts income levels in Korea is not

competencies but rather the years spent in formal education, which is also considered problematic. It is hard to say if Korea's ALE has played an effective role in promoting an inclusive and equitable society by advancing the lives of formerly marginalised adult learners. Suffice it to say, Korea has faithfully followed the globally suggested model practices and its ALE has now been moving from the margins to the centre of Korean policy, addressing national competitiveness through LLL. In this vein, the Korean government has endeavoured to increase participation rates in LLL and ALE activities since 2007. Korea's policy and practice have fostered LLL as an agent to achieve economic growth and social inclusion. However, there are some concerns regarding the unwanted side effects that often accompany rapid progress. For example, the privatisation of ALE is one issue with potential negative impacts. It can be stated that this privatisation, fuelled by market-driven tendencies, may increase the gap in the rate of participation rates in LLL and ALE activities between those with the financial means to participate and those without. It could diminish the value of LLL as a common good in a rapidly changing Korean society.

## Understanding on learning of marginalised groups of adults: Diversity and democratic consideration on LLL

Despite various definitions and connotations, long-lasting epistemology of LLL and ALE has concerned with democracy and community combating marginalisation (International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, 1996; Walters, 1997). It has been acknowledged that LLL, as a theory in the context of the cultural pluralism, is a common good because it supports different voices and self-expressions of all people regardless of class, race, and gender (Kim & Lee, 2016; Kim, 2011). In this vein, LLL policy has taken a social role to enhance full participation, including marginalised individuals and groups, by encompassing 'active citizenship' and 'participatory democracy' for all (Bagnall 2006).

As stated earlier, UNESCO and the OECD have contributed to the creation of supranational level discussions of LLL. These leading institutions have pointed to turbulent global trends and elaborated on reasons to promote learning to either support or combat them. These trends include demographic shifts, growing migration flow, changing employment patterns and the digital revolution (International

Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, 1996; OECD, 1997). For UNESCO, on the one hand, the representative tool for gaining sustainability is continuous learning (International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, 1996; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2016). UNESCO's notion of LLL 'as a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organizing principle of all forms of education' (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010) has been meaningfully accommodated in the global agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as a normative and value-laden concept. On the other hand, the OECD emphasises a clearer direction motivated by human capital approaches to LLL. The Project for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) has impacted policymakers from many countries in terms of addressing adult competencies in the areas of literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. According to many researchers, increased interest in competencies shows a major transition in the focus of learning 'from what people know' to 'what people can do' (Tsatsaroni & Evans, 2014). PIAAC is a good example of this transition in LLL and ALE. Although each LLL discourse has salient characteristics that distinguish one from the other, both have become compatible in the contemporary context that is epitomised by the statement that sustainable development that is embedded within humanitarian epistemology cannot achieve its goals without human development and competencies of individuals and social groups (Reischmann, 2014; Kim et al, 2016). Overall, it is clear the direction current supranational discussions on LLL should go. They need to strike a balance between the humanistic and economistic aspects of LLL in order to 'improve the conditions of humans across the globe' (Gouthro, 2007, p.144).

ALE, as a key component of the LLL, has become a crucial part of a larger set of social, cultural and economic practices of each nation state. It has been gradually inserted into the broader picture of a country's diverse policies, yielding significant outcomes regarding health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social, civic and community life (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2016). However, this increased emphasis on ALE has the potential to offer opportunities or challenges in the everyday lives of people, especially when ALE is driven by so-called 'employability' discourse, particularly when created for marginalised groups. As Reischmann (2014) claims,

ALE has often been considered a tool, not the goal itself, which possibly narrows the concept of LLL to market-centred continuous education and/or training. Hake (2008) argues that there are overwhelming statements that have paralleled LLL with employment-related activities, in his analysis of a UNESCO study that includes case studies from Australia, China, France, Japan, Malaysia, Norway, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Korea. This tendency would "lead to the conclusion that the prevailing policy narratives in a range of Asian and European countries constitute a dominant discourse of 'learning to acquire employability', or what has been referred to as the 'learning for earning' narrative (Reischmann, 2014, p. 289).

Some scholars, including Walker (2009), call this trend 'inclusive liberalism'. Walker expresses that equality concerns are now increasingly displaced or re-interpreted through imperatives in which the competencies of adults, through ALE, is overly emphasised. While many countries in the world are still in the middle of a struggle to implement 'Education for All (EFA)' for their children and adolescents, provisions for ALE often become a task beyond the capability of these countries. ALE provision varies significantly along with the wealth and/or preparedness of a nation state. Even with much increased access to ALE, resources can be inadequately distributed among diverse groups of people. This is especially the case for groups comprised of people who have been identified as different from the mainstream due to class, gender, race, culture, and so on. Higher income countries are no exception.

## Critical feminist understanding on women and immigrants as adult learners

As addressed, LLL is a long-lasting discourse that deals with social inclusion and exclusion (Jarvis 2007). Even though learning is a driving force of social change, the opportunities for learning, and appropriate conditions that make it happen, are often absent from the lives of the marginalised (Guo, 2010; Kim, 2010). Therefore, LLL as an underlying tenet in the current policy of a state should be examined to discover hidden issues associated with underprivileged groups' exclusion from wider society. This can be linked with critical social policy studies to deconstruct assumptions that are taken for granted about the discrimination against certain groups of people (Walters, 1997).

Women and immigrants are two groups of adult learners that share many idiosyncrasies. Both gender and race have had implications for social status and power and have almost always been used to create social hierarchies, placing women and some ethno-racial groups lower than their counterparts (Haslanger, 2000). The intersectionality of these two has often been investigated in terms of a question regarding how multiple forms of oppression drastically impact the lives of some people (Hill Collins, 1998, hooks, 2000). In the context of Korea, the concept of subaltern can be invited to describe women's and immigrants' lower social status and the social restrictions in families, workplaces, and communities that are often illustrated with human rights infringement, career discontinuity, wage disparity, underrepresentation in upper administration and so on (Kang, 2014).

The notion of justice based on the politics of differences can be addressed as a starting point for this paper. Following Young (1990), this paper conceptualises oppression as a structured institutional constraint on self-development of some groups of people in a society where everyone is told they are entitled to develop and exercise their capacities. Social justice, therefore, 'requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression' (Young, 1990, p.47). It has been argued, however, that everyday life thrusts multiple forms of oppression that 'crisscross and sustain privilege as well as discrimination' (Nagel, 2014, p. 56) on many groups of people due to their differences. Creating a model for an interlocking analysis that looks in particular at gender and race/culture intersectionally is the second conceptual framework of this paper, understanding that each group is not homogeneous, but rather serialised, having many intra-categorical differences (Young, 1994). Therefore, over-generalisations like 'womanhood' or 'migrant-hood' are avoided. Rather this study pursues an approach that depicts the realities of women, immigrants, and women immigrants in Korea. To do so, Haslanger's (2000) four concerns in analysing gender and race/culture issues in particular are adopted. First, identify persistent inequalities and explain how each group is socially constructed in Korea. Second, identify the effects of interlocking oppression between gender and race/culture. Third, question if some Korean policy and practice are 'gendered' and/or 'racialised'. Finally, take into account the agency of those who are oppressed so that they can be empowered as critical social

agents as a process of building an alternative policy and practice that are impacted by their voices.

## Main findings

Overall, both women and immigrants in Korea are negatively conditioned by the Korean historical as well as socio-political context. Despite the overall expansion of provisions for adult learners, these groups of the learners are marginalised and the issues of ALE are intertwined in their marginalisation.

## Korean women as adult learners: Context and issues

For a long time, the education of women in Korea was seriously disregarded in families, communities, and workplaces. Until approximately the 1970s, daughters in many families were often persuaded to stop their education midway for the sake of their brother's higher education (Jang, Oh, Eun, Lee & Lee, 2012). Nowadays, the alienation and sacrifice of women in education is hardly observed quantitatively. As various statistics and media reports have shown, the tide has changed in gender equity in education, particularly in higher education in Korea. Korean women's enrolment in higher education surpasses that of men. More girls (73.6%) than boys (66.3%) now enter post-secondary educational institutes (National Statistics Office, 2017) and so-called 'Alpha Girls', who are successful in all sorts of careers, are gaining momentum (Choi & Lim, 2010).

However, it is ironic to see what happens in their early to middle adulthood. As of 2016, the employment rate of Korean women was 56.2%, which is much lower than that of men (75.8%) and ranks at the bottom among OECD member countries. The gender gap in earning is the highest among OECD countries (Kim et al., 2016). In particular, the career discontinuity of married women appears to be serious. For example, Park (2009) conducted a qualitative investigation into middle-class families in which highly educated career women retreated from the world of career to exclusive parenting, becoming so-called 'helicopter moms'. It indicates both a crucial legacy of gendered division of labour and its neoliberal transformation. For working mothers, life would therefore be tougher than stay-at-home mothers, particularly in terms of work–family balance, a weighted state policy nowadays (Won, 2016).

ALE for Korean women reveals some important issues of societal disjuncture that exist between the public and private spaces of their lives (i.e. family and workplace) according to their class, gender and, if it applies, race/culture. As stated from the nation-wide survey on LLL, Korean women in general participate more in non-formal education programmes than men as they are given with fewer opportunities in formal education or training programmes sponsored by employers (Ministry of Education & KEDI, 2015). For instance, the pattern of participation of middle class women in ALE leans heavily toward programs regarding hobby, sports, leisure and entertainment, not vocational capacity building. They invest less money in their learning than men because they earn less, which means that they tend to be led to lower quality education and training programmes than men; are more likely than men to pay for learning out of their own pockets and gain less from these programs than men do (Ministry of Education & KEDI, 2015).

While the tangible changes in the societal norms, such as gender equality, seem to be slow, the recent LLL policy has announced women as a main policy target in the state's LLL (Ministry of Education, 2013), which has not yielded fruitful outcomes according to the analysis of this paper. There are two major reasons for this. They are as follows:

First, most new ALE is focussed on 'gendered' support for women's (re) employment. The economic downturn became one of the starting points of this trend toward employability for the (re)educating of women. Hundreds of existing, as well as, newly created educational institutions for women have been (re)named as a 'New Occupation Center for Women'. In a way, this tendency has been welcomed in that it brings a positional upgrade of ALE for women combining various strands of employability-based programmes as its new axis.

These employment support programmes, however, are still few. According to Jang et al. (2012), only 13% of women who participated in the programmes between 2008–2011 found jobs. Half of which were temporary or insecure positions. The gendered dimension of planning in the development of the employment programmes was highlighted: while there are few studies on this aspect, there is evidence from media coverage, as well as data from the contents of the programmes themselves, which ignore women's prior learning or work experiences as instruction emphasises how to break off from their learned 'lax attitude'

gained during the period of motherwork and/or homemaking (Kim, 2017). Particularly for working-class women, 'lifelong learning' would become 'lifelong (l)earning' (Jackson, 2003). In choosing 'voluntary' exclusion from employment and labour market-focussed ALE, middle-class women hardly gain any benefits from this new and ambitious change in ALE, despite it being developed with them in mind.

Second, the learning needs of women to find ways to live fully in various life spaces such as families, communities and workplaces hardly exist, which is related to the so-called 'old-fashionedness' of ALE for women that is still connected to diverse gendered notions in learning. Boeren (2011) addresses inequality and disparity between men and women in different subfields of education and learning that are related to recognition of prior learning, access to higher education and gendered subject choices. It can be stated that the participation patterns in ALE are classed and gendered. Likewise, ALE for women in Korea is in many ways a representation of a sexualised social division because ALE that is other than employment-related hardly reflects a woman's prior learning, experiences, competencies and links to next levels of learning opportunities (Lee, 2017), despite the new and growing demands of a rapidly changing society. The 3rd LLL Promotion Plan of Korea is often praised for its timely awareness of the need for change in ALE to accommodate the changing lifecycle of each group of people (Ministry of Education, 2013). Based on this new understanding, the majority of current women's ALE is problematic and outdated, maintaining socially woven constraints when they try to reify and consolidate gendered learning. This status quo is blind to the changing lifecycle of women in the evolving Korean society.

## Immigrants in Korea as adult learners: Context and issues

In the last decade, the number of foreign residents in Korea has doubled, hitting 2.18 million in 2017, and accounting for nearly 4 per cent of the nation's total population. It has been reported that at this rate their number is expected to surpass 3 million in 2021 or 5.8 percent of the population, higher than the current OECD average of 5.7 per cent (Ministry of Justice Republic of Korea, 2017). Currently, two representative groups of immigrants exist among the many others. First, migrant workers (approx. 790,000) from neighbouring countries have taken up an important position in the Korean economy since early

1990s. Second, female migrant spouses (approx. 220,000) offer more direct reasons for Korea to adopt 'multiculturalism' as its major policy due to the need to include them as Korean citizens. The majority of migrant workers and spouses are ethnic Koreans, the descendants of people who moved to China in the period of colonisation in the early 1900s. Ethnic Koreans from China do not have access to the privileges that most overseas Koreans enjoy in the Korean territory. They do, however, have more choices with both residency and work than other migrant workers.

All these groups of immigrants face issues of discrimination and alienation over (non)citizenship in addition to racial and/or cultural differences from the social majority. For instance, a 2015 Study on Multicultural Acceptability in Korea revealed that 32 per cent of respondents said, 'I don't want a foreign neighbourhood in my town', but only 4 per cent of respondents gave the same statement in Sweden (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family Republic of Korea, 2016). Also, the alienation of children and adolescents who have multicultural backgrounds is prevalent in schools and communities (Segye Ilbo, November 1, 2017). With no state immigration policy in existence, humanitarian categories are applied to North Korean refugees and foreign spouses of Korean nationals to endow citizenship or permanent resident status to them while others are to remain as temporary migrants. In a country like Korea, which has kept predominant ethnic homogeneity, racial difference has brought new issues of ethics for co-existence. Considering that Korea is identified as a country with high levels of education and income, this explicit aversion to racial minorities is rather considered an outlier. In addition, the suffering of ethnic Koreans from China and North Korean refugees shows that discrimination has not only been racial but also cultural (Kim, 2011). Calling Korea's discrimination against others 'GDP racism' (Kang, 2014), some scholars also point out it is also deeply capitalistic (Park, 2012).

The current situation faced by groups of immigrants in Korea is reflected in the seriously top-down characteristic of ALE for immigrants and the resulting skewed distribution of resources that is not only inefficient, but also unjust. While a 'citizens first' rationale applies to the distribution of learning opportunities, Korea's case makes itself negatively unique due to its 'bureaucratic expansionism' (Kim, 2014). Government funding is overwhelmingly channeled through a couple of selected groups of

immigrants, namely, some female migrant spouses. They have been included in the recent LLL White Paper and announced as policy-targeted adult learners, along with North Korean refugees (Ministry of Education & National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2013). All other groups of immigrants are hardly called 'adult learners' due to the following reasons:

First, mainstream discourses of LLL as policy and practice of a nation-state naturally leave many immigrants abandoned by negating both their prior learning experiences and future learning opportunities (Lee, 2010). Migrant workers are easily labelled as 'low-skilled' manual workers. Before entry, they are often victimised by fraudulent brokers. After entry, they are simply treated as a group of manual labourers without proper vocational education and training in Korea. This 'lack of learning' situations for them is much worse than a decade ago. All the while Korea boasts of its world-class hiring practices of non-regular and/or temporary workers due to its expanding neoliberalism (Kim, 2010). In this context, neoliberalism embraces economic liberalisation promoting the private sector's autonomy, rather than the government's intervention, in the economy and society. It would underline economic efficiency and a monetised conception of performance, which can diminish the value of equity, common good and social justice (Harvey, 2005). Evidence of these negative changes are abundant in the case of migrant workers. For example, the required hours for Korean language learning has now been reduced from 150 to 85 hours, while the cut-off score for the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) has been heightened. This shows an increased learner responsibility in an ever-precarious learning environment. Public funding for supporting language and vocational learning, which was already small, has now been cut further due to the shifted focus of funding after the enactment of the Multicultural Families Support Act (Won, 2008; Kim, Lee & Cho, 2010) that mostly aims for the support of foreign spouses of Korean nationals.

Second, marketised ALE in Korea has disillusioned migrant workers, Korean ethnic workers in particular. Many of them invest in learning to achieve F4 visa eligibility, which is issued to Koreans overseas. Gaining Korean certificates as technicians is one of the ways to do so. However, the education and training available to them is seriously flawed due to the apathy of the Korean government and the lack of monitoring of vocational training institutes (Kwak & Kim, 2013; Lee & Choi, 2015).

Even if they achieve these certificates, they rarely lead to employment because these learning opportunities have no relation to the real labour market demand in the first place. They have also reported learning needs for Korean language and culture in advanced levels and soft skills to better adjust to life in Korea, but this hardly exists (Yeo, 2005). Lack of learning, therefore, has characterised them as deeply marginalised 'foreigners' who have permanently fallen short of being 'Korean' even though they seek learning opportunities.

## Women immigrants in Korea as adult learners: Context and issues

The situation of women immigrants in Korea shows a unique picture of gendered migration, which is not separate from the overall trend of the 'feminisation of migration' in that women go from South to North looking for gendered work opportunities (Hochschild & Ehrenreich, 2004). In the Korean case, ethnic Korean women from China and North Korean refugees have taken a significant part of Korea's lower tier of the service industry, such as health, beauty, and care-giving for children and seniors, but are exposed to the diverse infringements of human and labour rights, suffering triple exploitation as females, migrants, and aliens (Byun, 2007; Jeon, 2016).

On the other hand, the increased number of female migrant spouses has changed Korea's long-time belief of itself as a 'single-race nation'. There are studies that have analysed the socially constructed identity of female migrant spouses as a social 'replacement' of Korean women, who have now started to reject the taken-for-granted gender inequality that is particularly enforced through marriage and family formation (Won, 2008; Kim, 2011). As of 2016, one in ten marriages in Korea is international, and 87% of foreign spouses are women. Being alone within their 'Korean' families, they often face one-way 'Koreanisation' under the name of 'settlement support' stipulated by the Multicultural Families Supports Act (Won, 2008). Evidence exists that point to considerable attention being paid to support female migrant spouses as policy-targeted adult learners and that ALE policy has been designated as the main enforcement tool of that support (Ministry of Education & National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2013; Kim, 2016). There are a couple of concerns with this trend:

First, there have been mishaps in ALE distribution. The expansion of ALE for some female migrant spouses, who are complete newcomers,

is justified and often embellished as an inclusive adult education policy engaging with multiculturalism (Kim, 2016). Many of the ALE programmes created for them are offered through The Centres for Multicultural Family Support (CMFS), which is supported by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The programmes are mainly targeting female migrant spouses whose Korean language proficiency would be assessed as basic. When female migrant spouses seek ALE programmes that are more competency-driven, outside the settlement sector, they soon find these learning opportunities are almost non-existent or, if any exist, are widely based on the needs of Korean men or male migrant workers (Kim, 2011). Female migrant spouses who are ethnic Koreans are heavily affected by the trend of multiculturalism as they are excluded due to the gendered and racialised image of women immigrants, who are the main clients of current learning opportunities for women immigrants, known as 'learn-fare' (learning as a main enforcement of welfare). This brings an important critique on education and training for immigrants that points to the nature of ALE as mere repetition of low levels of knowledge and skills that do not offer the meaningful competencies required in a new land (Guo, 2013).

Second, there is a pervasive failure to recognise their learning needs. There are a number of educational issues in the current ALE for female migrant spouses (Jang, Kim, Lee, Jang & Yoo, 2009). Their learning needs are hardly assessed or researched in the rapidly growing number of educational programmes developed for them. There are numerous stories of blunders in educational planning in which many of these learning needs are excluded, replaced or re-interpreted. For example, sewing or massage training programmes are often recommended to South-Asian women immigrants in the name of 'immigrant women-suitable jobs,' which shows embedded gendered and racial assumptions in ALE (Kang, 2014). In cases of vocational programmes exclusively for them, participants are often regarded as women-at-risk, for whom ALE is the given solution to the urgency of the economic risk their families face, which is not always the case (Lee & Choi, 2015). They are also exclusively grouped in most educational settings, regardless of their differences within the group, such as language proficiency, cultural adjustment, or settlement phases, which impacts the outcomes – the enhancement of competencies – negatively.

## Discussion and conclusion

The findings illustrate that Korea has been a faithful supporter for the supranational level of discourses on LLL and ALE and in trying to set up an infrastructure in which policy and practice bring increased individual competencies as well as social cohesion nationwide. ALE for women, immigrants and women immigrants in Korea, however, are rather negatively influenced by the swirling context of LLL, where class, gender, and race/culture interlock in the changing neoliberal condition of living.

### Neoliberal economy and its impacts on Korean lifelong learning

LLL for these groups of adult learners in Korea shows two opposite, but related, approaches – welfare or marketisation, both of which produce shared discriminations amongst women and immigrants, due to their lower social status compared to their counterparts – men, non-immigrants. In particular, there is a clear tendency to view female migrants as alien others who should be helped to start their lives over in the host country (Epps & Furman, 2016), even though they arrived in Korea as adults with prior experiences. The status allowed for them is concerning as it runs counter to the rationale of LLL, in which democracy and social inclusion are embedded.

Since many groups of women, immigrants, and women immigrants are considered marginalised in Korea, ALE as a form of social welfare largely dominates the lives of these people due to the large-scale policies that are allegedly for them. For example, the cases of career-interrupted local Korean women and that of women immigrants look different but are based on the same sexism that (re)creates lower-class women as a reserve workforce, either in a patriarchal labour market and/or conventional family structure in Korea. Even today, women suffer from the so-called 'glass ceiling' and do not often succeed in climbing the hierarchical ladders in workplaces. Overall, women are still expected to take on the main responsibilities of the family, such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children and seniors. The neoliberal shift towards an increased focus on the responsibility of the individual learner makes it even more difficult for women to achieve equal opportunities and that is the reason Boeren (2011) calls on policymakers to ensure women's inclusive accessibility and equal participation in LLL activities. However, the current neoliberalistic characteristic of LLL is a warning sign that

shows where this LLL drive is headed. These policy-driven attentions and/or intentions will become chaotic with their lack of understanding of the commonality as well as diversity within and across these groups – women and immigrants. This lack of understanding risks of alienating them, particularly the working class included in 'learn-fare,' as they are unjustly stereotyped as single-minded worker candidates whose economic needs top others.

The remaining groups of women, immigrants, and women immigrants are located in similarly underprivileged positions in ALE, as individual consumers who are mostly led to make vulnerable decisions as they are given less-than-satisfactory choices. In this regard, the majority, who have power and authentic knowledge, point out the others' perceived weaknesses and deficiencies in society (Mitchell, 2003). For example, many women who seek competency enhancement suffer in the men's world of learning and are often treated as deficient learners. Immigrants also suffer in ethnocentric spaces (Castles & Miller, 2003; Kim & Lee, 2016) while women immigrants stand at the intersection of all and have a greater risk of being victimised (Kofman & Raghuram, 2006). Women immigrants are present in multiple sites and different spheres of the host society, which is beyond their narrowly imagined roles by Korean policy and practice. They are, however, exposed to complex forms of human rights violations (Kofman & Raghuram, 2006). This fact also applies in the realm of LLL and ALE. In the context of Korea, there are few ALE programmes to serve women immigrants who are already prepared with a fairly good command the Korean language in order to empower them as a self-governing agency. They know that the existing ALE programmes, which are allegedly for them, will not raise their competencies and life skills but they cannot find anything else (Kim, 2016).

## Gendered and/or racialised approach and educational failures

Female labour migration has increased in the past two decades (United Nations, 2016), and has become more complex and interconnected, attracting considerable attention from researchers and policy makers. Not only macro structures, such as policy and systems that divide man/woman and citizen/non-citizen, but also micro dynamics within a specific field of practice that govern the everyday life of these learners (Kim & Lee, 2016). The concerns in LLL are the gendered and/or racialised approaches that are prevalent in the current ALE programmes designed

for these learners. The non-recognition of prior learning in the process of planning and facilitating learning opportunities is prevalent. Women and/or immigrants are expected to humbly accept the conventional or changed conditions of life, and any drop in their living conditions if they want to benefit from these 'generously given second-chances'. Then, gendered and racialised contents and instructions are produced and are taken for granted in the field of practice. The findings show that these ALE programmes almost always require minimum enrolments to be stably funded and the purpose of the programmes are never fulfilled due to numerous educational mistakes by good-hearted practitioners with low cultural competence and/or awareness of gender-equality or diversity.

According to the analysis in this paper, both non-recognition of prior learning and arbitrary assumptions on the learning needs women, immigrants, and women immigrants are based on the lack of empirical research on them as adult learners. The possible negative outcomes of this lack of research is to the demise of the learners in these seemingly expanding learning opportunities that could have otherwise offered a lifetime of individual prosperity as well as social inclusion. What can be learned from previous experiences in other cases is that communication and dialogue must be a priority at the consciousness-raising sessions to end sexism and other types of oppression (hooks, 2000). In women and immigrants' ALE in Korea, grassroots feminism, critical multiculturalism, and/or feminism/multiculturalism should do more. Bagnall (2006) argues that commitment to others and engaging with their differences enables adult learners to be involved in respecting others and their cultures as valued ends in themselves. It could enforce democratic social relations between diverse people and institutions while counteracting against any type of marginalisation.

This paper locates Korea as a complex space where learning opportunities for women and immigrants have been unequally and/or inappropriately distributed among diverse groups of learners within these two social categories. For women, gender inequality is still a major issue and impacts their lives negatively, while ALE falls short in producing positive impacts that help (re)design their lives. For immigrants, ALE has not provided a roadmap for meaningful support due to non-citizenship and/or racial, as well as cultural, discriminations. For some women immigrants, ALE often thrusts them into the danger of being trapped as 'learn-fare' recipients. There is a need for more

critical reflections and thorough investigations of the inequality that happens in ALE at numerous borders between gender and race/culture. Having recognised that a crucial role of LLL is to overcome inequity, discrimination and alienation within given societal conditions (Walters, 1997; Jarvis 2007), the philosophy and implementation of LLL should be re-constructed to empower the marginalised.

To better serve these groups of adult learners, the role of the state is foremost needed in tackling these distribution/recognition issues pointed to in this paper. Interdisciplinary as well as interdepartmental cooperation is pressing to look at the intra- and inter-categorical differences of these adult learners so that they may benefit from meaningful learning. For educators and learners, creating solidarity is needed to understand the similar locations of the learners regardless of their diversely designated affiliations, such as Korean (non-immigrant) women, immigrant women, or male immigrants, and so on. Combined, LLL/ALE policy and practice in a state should be ready to confront the question about the role of LLL for the marginalised: how can lifelong learning best support the mariginalised groups' self-fulfillment and social change to combat the injustice and inequity in the era of neoliberal globalisation?

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# Transitioning from VET to HE in hospitality and tourism studies: VET grades as an indicator of performance in HE

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*After reviewing research concerning student transition from Vocational Education and Training (VET) to Higher Education (HE), which mostly focussed on enablers, this paper examined the role of graded assessment within a competency based training (CBT) framework and its relationship to subsequent performance in HE studies. From this background, the key question was derived; is there a relationship between grades awarded under CBT and HE academic performance? The academic results of 34 students were reviewed for both VET and HE studies, and correlations analysed using the Spearman Rho calculator. A Likert style survey was used to gauge student perceptions as to their investment in assessment activities and the extent to which VET studies prepared them for HE. Results indicated that a positive correlation existed between performance in VET studies and those in HE. This correlation was supported in that most students reported that they did attempt to achieve the highest grades possible across both sectors. It was concluded that using VET grades as predictors of success in HE was valid for this cohort and that students believed that VET assisted in*

*preparing them for HE studies. The findings add to the argument calling for retention and indeed refinement of grading within the CBT system.*

***Keywords:*** *competency based training, academic success, preparation, VET grading, selection HE, predictors of success.*

## Introduction

This paper examines the legitimacy of using Vocational Education and Training (VET) grades as a predictor of performance in a Higher Education (HE) context. Higher Education providers in Australia are challenged to assess the potential for academic success of prospective students. Measures include Australian Tertiary Admission Rank, a number that ranks a student against all the students who started high school with them in Year 7, and other measures such as CBT completion. It is widely accepted that measures such as these are problematic. The literature reviewed indicated that the determination of potential for academic success is one of the top three primary challenges for HE providers. Research indicates that while grades for units of competency from VET may not be used for employment purposes, they are used as criterion for entry to HE programs. In fact this has been a strong argument for the retention, and indeed enhancement of grading within VET. Additionally, teachers of VET are of the view that grades provide useful information to students regarding their capacity for HE studies. An alternative view suggests that the very nature of VET studies, being competency based, does not adequately prepare students for HE studies. This view also contends that it is the different assessment requirements for VET and HE that can be problematic for transitioning students. What has not been determined by empirical research is whether grades awarded within a CBT framework do in fact relate to level of performance in HE. Trends among CBT providers are to dispense with graded assessment and in doing so, dispense with graded final results. This trend has a substantial impact on HE providers' ability to use CBT achievement as a reliable indicator of potential academic success. Although the reasoning behind these trends is not discussed in this paper, this notion of a final grade being 'competent Y/N' does question the relationship between CBT performance and HE performance.

Given changes in the vocational sector prompting the removal of graded results, the focus of this study is to examine the relationship

between performances in a competency based training system (CBT) and performance in HE with particular attention to grades received. The premise is that the value of graded CBT as an indicator of HE performance will assist HE selection process in determining potential for academic success.

## Literature review

Recommendation two of the Bradley Review, established by the Australian Government to consider and report on the future of higher education, sets a national target of at least 40% of 25 to 34 year olds attaining a qualification at Bachelor level or above by the year 2025 Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008 (p. 21). An argument has been mounted that this target can only be achieved through the broadening of university selection criteria and the inclusion of students from lower socio-economic groups (Watson, 2006; Wheelahan, 2009; Hosken, Land, Goldingay, Barnes & Murphy 2013; Griffin, 2014). It is noted that this cohort often has VET qualifications, which uses competency based training (CBT) as their default study mode of choice (Wheelahan, 2009) and that this choice is not based on inability (Devlin, Kift, Nelson, Smith, & McKay, 2012). As such this group may not have traditionally received encouragement to progress to HE studies. In 2009, only 5.9% of VET students completing studies at colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) were offered undergraduate places, compared with 44.3% from secondary education on the basis of their Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) (Palmer, Bexley, & James, 2011). With regard to these figures, the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee pointed out that universities have little or no basis for differentiating between applicants with VET qualifications compared to students with a secondary school leaving certificate inferring that the selection of VET award-holders is problematic (Carnegie, 2001). This stance was confirmed by Young (2005). Although not without problems, a secondary school leaving certificate or ATAR score as a differential in student selection is more widely accepted as a reliable measure than VET grades.

Palmer, Bexley & James (2011) identified a range of imperatives that underpin university selection practices in relation to VET award-holders. Apart from transparency and fairness, identifying the potential for student success was deemed to be one of the three primary challenges. Similarly, Edwards, Coates and Friedman (2013, p. 151)

state that 'Establishing new selection criteria and practices is now a high priority for Australian higher education'.

However, Watson (2008) makes the point that admission does not indicate success in transition from VET to HE studies. While pathways into HE are expanding for VET award holders and admissions to HE are increasing, there is the need to consider completion rates for this cohort. Watson (2008) and Gilles, Bateman, Foster and Griffin (2005) report that attrition rates for TAFE award holders is significantly greater than those of school leavers.

In response to this, the majority of research into the preparedness of VET graduates to succeed at HE level has focussed on interviews with students and their transitioning experiences. This research highlights the challenges of workloads, theoretical content and assessment methods confronting the transitioning student (Harris, 2008). Forbes (2009) identified that students are also affected by the learning institute: its values, quality, learning and assessment methods, inclusiveness and communication; and environment: living arrangements, finance, work, parental support and peer support. Given these findings, recommendations for preparing VET award holders for success at HE level tend to focus on the need for support, orientation programs and changes to HE delivery methods. This research focusses on what could be called 'enablers' that HE institutions could enact to ensure the success of articulating students once they have accepted admission.

With regard to the attrition rates, Griffins (2014) highlights the importance of personal qualities in the successful transition from VET to HE and that these are difficult to foster through support systems. Further she continues that 'the realities of previous educational achievement and the requirements for study can act as a large barrier, especially for disadvantaged learners' (p. 15).

She continues and cites Coates and Ransom (2011) who states that these barriers might be mitigated by the provision of timely and useful information for the student.

This information is supposedly available to both the student and the HE selectors in the form of grades achieved by the student in their VET studies. Therefore, at the centre of this discussion is the role played by grading within the CBT system of training as used in VET.

Grading is common practice despite questions regarding its legitimacy within a CBT framework (Maxwell, 1997; Thomson 1996; Wheelahan, 2009). Indeed there have been calls for more attention to grading in any enhancement of Australian nationally endorsed training packages. These calls advocate for a more standardised approach to grading as this is seen as supporting the selection procedures of both employers and higher education (Gillis & Griffin 2005; Graded Assessment in Queensland: A discussion paper 2005; Learning Australia Report of student achievement in vocational education and training 2005; Schofield & McDonald, 2004; Williams, Bateman, & Keating, 2001).

Williams and Bateman (2007) identified two educational paradigms driving the need for grading: one dealing with learner requirements (the motivating effect on learners) and the other associated with selection issues. Although they believed that the selection paradigm was driving the need for graded assessment, they also acknowledged the motivating effect on learners and that 'grading engenders a culture of excellence'. This supports Gillis (2003) who states that learners believe their chances of selection for employment or higher education are increased by the use of grading. Watson (2006) acknowledged the role played by graded assessment in providing valuable information to HE course conveners. She claims that the difficulty in assessing the suitability of VET graduates without the aid of grades leads to higher rates of attrition. Watson (2006) further suggests that many course conveners found that grading to be a useful selection tool.

Richards (2014) conducted a study of VET teachers' attitudes to grading within a CBT system. The results indicated that the majority of VET teachers surveyed believed that while a student's grades were not used for selection in employment, they do act as an indicator of success in HE studies. HE selectors and the student can use this information to further immediate study choices.

The view that grades should be used to assist with the selection of VET award-holders for HE was endorsed in recommendation one of a report by Gillis, Bateman, Foster and Griffin (2005, p. 8), 'Scored assessment results [should] be reported in statements of results in addition to statements of achievement in issuing qualifications for VET courses Certificate LV and above'.

In their study of selection practices for VET award holders for admission to HE, Gillis, Bateman, Foster and Griffin (2005) found that most

universities considered the successful completion of Certificate lV and above to be an alternative equivalent qualification to senior secondary certificates. They concluded that selection officers, while using an holistic approach, tended to place importance on the academic record, taking note of grades achieved for units of competency. The extent to which this was done varied between universities and levels of demand for courses.

Watson, Hagel and Chesters (2013) found that academic staff reported that, because of the competency framework, students coming from VET may not have the more generic skills and abilities required for studies in HE. Griffin (2014) also cites a discussion paper by the community services and health skills council which also considers that the difference between CBT requirements of VET courses and the curricula-based approach of HE can be problematic for transitioning students. White (2014) makes the point that it is in the area of assessment that provides the biggest challenge for the transitioning student. She identified that VET assessments were mostly structured on task and performance criteria, while degree assessments required literacy and analytical abilities.

This use of grades for selection into HE courses highlights some contradictions. Gillis, et al (2005) confirm that while universities use grades for selection and in the granting of credits, the view is held by a number of universities that studies using training packages (CBT) do not adequately prepare students for HE studies. It is considered that content and outcomes, including assessments in CBT are driven by industry and that an emphasis is placed on teaching students to 'do, as opposed to developing higher level skills of questioning and analysis as required in higher AQF level courses (Gillis & Griffin 2005; Young 2005). This view was confirmed by Wheelahan (2009b,) who states that for studies in VET 'learning outcomes are divorced from process of learning and curriculum' (p. 16).

These discussions concerning the different focus and andragogy between VET and HE and the different skill requirements for success in assessments suggest that performance in VET cannot be equated to performance in HE.

However, to contradict this view, Young (2005) provides evidence that TAFE award-holders performed as well as year 12 leavers with ATAR scores in the top 20% of the population. Similarly Watson, Hagel and

Chesters (2013) report that universities that keep pertinent records reported that the performance of VET award holders was largely comparable with school leavers.

The arguments above support this paper's premise that grading in CBT may be seen as an indicator of academic success, similar to that of ATAR scores. Similarly, that a driving force for maintaining and enhancing grading within a CBT system is associated with selection into HE studies and the provision of meaningful information to students considering investing in immediate further studies.

## Research questions and methodology

Given current literature indicates graded CBT as a selection mechanism for potential academic success is not overtly considered, this paper focus on examining the relationship between performances in a competency based training system (CBT) and performance in HE, focussing on grades received. The focus of this study is to examine the relationship between performances in CBT and performance in HE with particular attention to grades received and has generated two questions.

The first question addresses a gap in literature as to whether a relationship exists between a student's performance in a CBT system and performance in HE as denoted by grades. This affects arguments in favour of grading within a CBT system based on the selection principle and the use of grades by HE providers as a selection tool and for the granting of credit. The results may also clarify the usefulness of grades in providing information on potential performance for students considering transitioning to HE.

The secondary question was 'What are student perceptions regarding effort required for the different assessments of VET and HE?' These reports would be necessary to position actual performance with students' estimates of effort involved for the different assessments of VET and HE. The importance of this question is that while there may exist a difference in the requirements for assessments in both VET and degree courses, a student's result may also be subject to the investment of that student in the assessment. Exploring this notion of investment would inform the reliability of any correlations between graded CBT and HE success.

This study uses both empirical analyses of student grades and a Likert style survey. The convenience sample included 34 volunteering students who had articulated from hospitality studies in VET to hospitality management studies at HE level at William Angliss Institute in Melbourne, Victoria. This Institute is a specialist institute for hospitality, tourism, events and food studies. Grade point averages (GPA) for both VET and HE studies were calculated, then interrogated using Spearman Rho calculator to determine the nature of the relationship between the scores for the returned sample.

The GPA was calculated using the Institute's policy, which assigns a number to the grade awarded at both VET and HE levels as shown in Table 1. This was then divided by the number of attempts in all subjects. This method of determining the GPA for students is well accepted in many Australian Universities.

***Table 1.*** *Numerical award given to grades in VET and HE studies*

| GPA calculations for VET | | GPA calculations for HE | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 3 | High Distinction (HD) | 4 |
| B | 2 | Distinction (D) | 3 |
| C | 1 | Credit (Cr) | 2 |
| N (fail) | -1 | Pass (P) | 1 |
| Incomplete | 0 | Fail (N) | -1 |
| | | Incomplete | 0 |

A questionnaire made up of eight, five point Likert scale items was used to measure student perceptions regarding various criteria to clarify what might be revealed statistically. The questionnaire included topics such as student perceptions of the effort they had expended in relation to their assessment; whether they felt the grades awarded were fair and whether they felt that their VET studies had prepared them for studies at HE level.

## Results

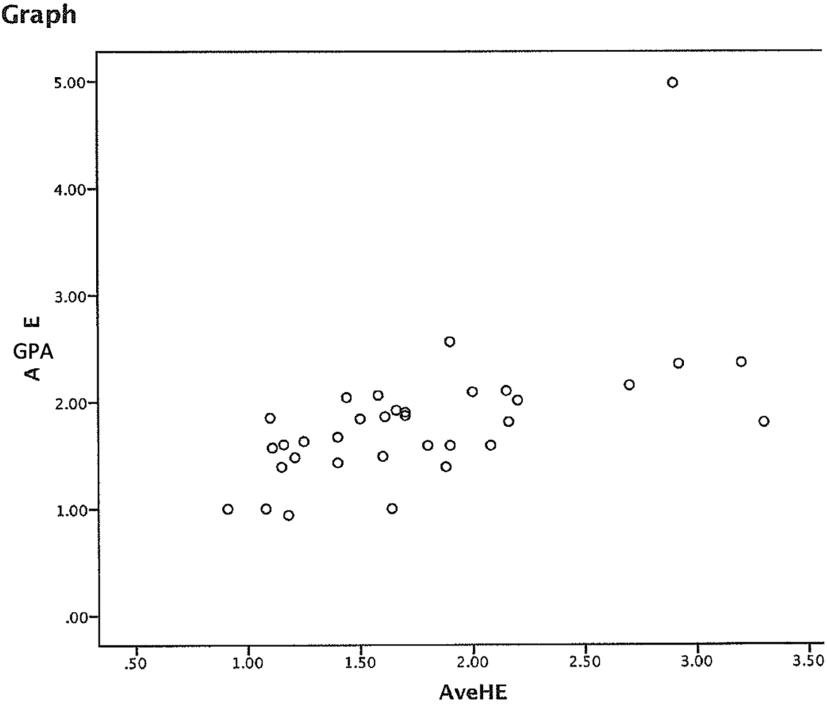
As the design of this study was to use empirical data of student grades and a Likert style survey developed to measure student perception, the

results have been presented in these two factors to clearly demonstrate the findings. In determining the results, it is acknowledged that the sample size is small but the correlation between VET grades and HE performance and supporting qualitative survey results in this cased provided triangulation of the relationships (Barbour & Schostak, 2005), and so corroborated the results.

## Empirical result discussion

The GPA for each student was plotted as a scatterplot to investigate the nature of the relationship between the variables (see Figure 1 below). The distribution suggests a strong positive linear correlation between GPA's achieved at VET level with those at HE level. The scatterplot also indicates one outlier which, being a small sample would have influenced the results. Deletion of this outlier would have further improved the significance of the correlation over the small sample.

***Figure 1:*** *Scatterplot AveVET, AveHE*



The Spearman's Rho calculator was applied to student GPA's for both their VET and HE performance, including the outlier. Spearman's Rho measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables, in this case the grades a student received in VET and those from HE. The resulting calculation gave a value of R as 0.63. By normal standards, the association between the two variables would be considered statistically significant (Veal, 2006).

This means that for this cohort, there was a significant relationship between the grades achieved in their VET course with those achieved in HE.

### Qualitative result discussion

Sixteen students responded to the survey giving a response rate of 47.05%.

Ninety four per cent of students reported that they strived to get the highest scores possible for VET studies with 81% reporting the same for their HE effort. However, students reporting a 'strongly agree' moved from 13% for VET effort to 31% for effort given to HE studies.

This confirms the positive relationship between VET and HE scores in that most students were attempting to gain the highest possible results in both sectors. However, a larger percentage of students (19%) reported that they did not try to get high grades in their HE studies compared to VET with only 6.3%.

Questions 3 and 4 respectively referred to the student's perceptions of the legitimacy (fairness) of the grades they were awarded in VET and HE according to their perceived effort. Overall, a slightly higher score was recorded for HE legitimacy (86%) than for VET (75%). This was despite the apparent transparency of CBT rubrics for performance, which are supposedly associated with 'doing' rather than 'thinking' and as such could be considered more specific and measurable (using behavioural objectives) than for HE assessments.

With regard to levels of understanding as to what was required for higher grades in both VET and HE, the results were 81% for VET and 75% for HE. Thirty-one per cent of students strongly agreed that they understood requirements under the CBT system, compared to 25% for HE.

Eighty-eight per cent of respondents believed that their VET studies prepared them for study at HE level, with only 6.3% strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Overall, 75% of students found the transition from VET to HE studies in terms of the material to be learnt was 'easy', with 6% strongly disagreeing.

## Discussion

This study investigated the legitimacy of using VET grades as an indicator for performance in HE by empirically determining whether such a relationship exists. For this cohort, given that a positive relationship exists between student VET results and subsequent HE results, then the use of VET results as an indicator of potential performance in HE can be justified. Similarly, VET students would be able to use their results as an indicator of potential success at HE level in considering investment decisions on immediate continuation of further studies. This result supports the usefulness of grading within a CBT system for both selection purposes and in providing information for students preparing to enter HE studies.

The findings provide legitimacy for VET teacher's beliefs that VET grades were indicators of potential success in HE (Richards, 2014). This, in turn informs them as to the importance of providing the correct feedback for students considering progression to HE.

This positive correlation brings into question the assumption that VET using a CBT approach based on industry requirements and purporting to train to 'do' rather than 'think' does not adequately prepare students for HE studies. This result does not support statements regarding the difference between these two modes of andragogy as stated by previous researchers (Gillis & Griffin, 2005; Young, 2005; Wheelahan 2009b). The positive correlation between grades achieved indicate that VET courses, in terms of teaching and assessment methods, appear to prepare students for the higher-level skills of questioning and analysing as required at HE level despite the different assessment methods as espoused by White (2014). This is also confirmed by the results of the survey where students reported that in their view, VET studies had prepared them for studies at HE. Therefore, it can be determined that the act of participating and completing a VET course does aid students in subsequent HE studies and may satisfy the claim for a need to identify potential students for HE from non-traditional areas (Palmer et al, 2011; Young, 2005; Watson, 2006).

One aspect the survey investigated was the level of investment the student applied to both their VET and HE course. The results indicated

that in both VET and HE the majority of students who responded did attempt to gain the highest grades possible therefore adding legitimacy to conclusions formed as a result of the empirical analysis. Despite the fact that the andragogy is supposed to be different at both levels, requiring a different level of application in association with different assessment methods, similar grades were achieved and the high correlation was present.

The substantial argument for the retention of grading within a CBT system was identified as being for selection into HE (Gillis, 2003; Williams & Bateman, 2007; Richards, 2014). With a positive correlation existing between VET and HE performance, the contention that grading in VET should be maintained for selection to HE purposes is substantiated for this cohort. This justification exists for both the learner and HE selectors. For the learner, grading does appear to act as a motivator (Williams & Bateman (2007)) in that students reported that they did attempt to get the highest grades possible and that their overall performance provides information regarding likely success in HE studies. However, it is acknowledged that this finding might be subject to potential response bias with students thinking that such a response casts them in the best possible light.

The survey results showed that the majority of students found the transition from VET to HE was 'easy'. However, this study was limited to students in one institution studying in one discipline. While research into transitioning students highlights the challenges of workloads, theoretical content and assessment methods (Harris, 2008; Harris, Rainey & Sumner, 2006; White, 2014), the current findings demonstrate the advantages of HE programs being delivered alongside VET programs. In this way, the issues of selection highlighted by Young (2005) and Palmer et al (2011) may simply be a case of universities housing their own VET programs and ensuring a smooth transition for those students who as Watson (2006) and Wheelahan (2009) claim may be from lower socio-economic groups and who traditionally default to VET studies. This may be required if Australia is to successfully achieve the target set by the Bradley Review.

The high level of reporting by VET students that VET studies had prepared them for their HE studies together with the high reporting that students found their transition from VET to HE to be 'easy', supports the findings

of Hosken, Land, Goldingay, Barnes and Murphy (2013) who found that students in this cohort reported through interviews that their TAFE experience 'strongly supported their learning in the university context' (p. 2). Similarly Griffin (2014) found students were comfortable with the transition.

## Conclusion

The current imperative of increasing the participation numbers in HE by VET graduates raises critical issues and contradictions. One important issue concerns the capacity for HE selectors and prospective students to get meaningful information that can assist with decisions concerning the likelihood of success in HE studies. HE selectors want to be able to determine realistic expectations as to academic success and potential for estimating the completion rates of prospective students and to be able to give reliable and truthful information to applicants.

For the VET student considering transitioning to HE, VET results can provide valuable information on par with the use of ATAR scores by school leavers. That student should be able to consider the effort they applied at VET and gauge some indication of their level of success at HE. This is important given the financial imperatives inappropriate choices at a particular time in their lives can have.

The supposed contradiction is that while HE selectors claim to use grades as a selection tool, many believe that studies using training packages (CBT) do not adequately prepare students for HE studies. This contradiction however was not supported by the findings of this study; grades from VET can indicate success at HE level.

While there are limitations to this research in terms of cohort and size, the findings suggest the need for further studies in order to confirm the legitimacy and usefulness of grading within a CBT framework in providing useful information to students considering HE studies and for HE selectors.

Future studies need be undertaken that involve a larger sample size and using students from dual sector institutions in order to substantiate these results and to determine the role played by dual-sector institutions in providing a less challenging transition from VET to HE for students.

While the writers acknowledge that there are limitations to this study in terms of its narrow focus utilising a convenient sampling approach, it is hoped that it will act as an ignition point for more in-depth studies

and discussion on the provision of meaningful information regarding the prediction of performance for students and institutions regarding transition from a CBT system to Higher Education.

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# A new education pathway for postgraduate psychology students: Challenges and opportunities

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*In Australia, the limited number of psychology postgraduate places, coupled with a high demand for mental health and psychological services underscores the need for new, innovative models of psychology training. The objectives of this paper are to describe the 5 + 1 internship pathway; why it was developed; the pedagogy employed and to stimulate debate regarding training models for Australia's future psychology workforce. Information outlined in this paper is drawn from the public domain and our collective experiences as fifth year coordinators and/or stakeholders in developing Australia's psychology workforce. The content of the fifth year program is applied and practical. Content is generalist as opposed to specialist, while pedagogical approaches employed are predominately experiential. The fifth year program lends itself to integration with other training*

*models. Perceptions that the training is inferior to specialist programs need to be challenged. Online offerings are a priority to ensure training is available for students in rural and remote areas or seeking flexible modes of delivery.*

***Keywords:*** *psychology training, graduate, employability, rural workforce*

## Introduction

In Australia, there are several pathways to becoming a psychologist. A relatively new pathway is the 5 + 1 internship program. This program refers to the fifth year of accredited tertiary study consisting of coursework, practica and skills training, followed by a sixth year (one year full-time or equivalent part-time) supervised practice internship approved by the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA). As of 2018, there are 16 5 +1 programs offered by public and private higher education providers (Australian Psychology Accreditation Council [APAC], n.d.) The purpose of this paper is to provide background and context about the development of the 5 + 1 program and present an overview of some of the features that are contributing to its popularity and success. Given the growing demand for mental health and psychological services across Australia (Health Workforce Australia [HWA], 2014), along with practitioner shortages in rural and remote areas (Hosie, Vogl, Hoddinott, Carden & Cormeau, 2014), it is timely to consider different psychology training models. We offer the 5 + 1 model as a core component of future Australian psychology training and provide suggestions for how it might be aligned with other proposed training models.

The authors of this paper are currently working as fifth year course coordinators and/or are stakeholders in developing Australia's psychology workforce. Our aims in writing this paper are several. Firstly, we aim to educate others (university providers, potential employers, supervisors and students) about the 5 + 1 pathway and contribute to current debate about how psychology students are trained now and in the future. Another aim, as stakeholders and program course coordinators, is to share and learn from our collective experiences, and

together start to identify some common themes and issues as well as possible future directions for our programs overall. The final, generic aim was to discuss generally how psychology students should or could be educated and why. The material presented in this paper is sourced from the public domain including higher education provider websites, the Australian Psychological Society (APS) website, the APAC website and from our collective experiences of various psychology programs. Along with providing a description of the 5+1 psychology program in Australia (including a description of the student cohort and graduate destinations), the specific questions framing this paper are:

- What is the rationale for the 5+1 psychology program?
- What are the pedagogical approaches employed in the program, and relatedly, why are these approaches employed?
- What are the challenges and opportunities when delivering these programs?
- The information is important, given the current demand for psychological services in Australia, which can be used to inform future developments of psychology training programs.

## Rationale

Currently, the high demand for psychological services in Australia is not being met. The high incidence of mental illness, requiring assessment, diagnosis, psychological consultations and interventions, is not being adequately serviced – instead there are extensive waiting lists and emerging use of alternative and what have been considered less qualified workers to fill gaps (Littlefield, 2016a). Although the size of the psychology workforce has increased substantially in recent years, geographical maldistribution of the profession remains and demand for services has also increased (HWA, 2014). According to the HWA (2014), increasing demand is expected to continue, due to shifts in community attitudes, the de-stigmatisation of mental health and government policies such as the Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative.

At the same time, the psychology profession has the longest duration of training (a minimum of six years) of all allied health professionals in Australia (HWA, 2014). As pointed out by Littlefield (2016a), the government continues to seek efficient training options to support a

psychology workforce that can meet the growing demand for mental health and other services. Littlefield (2016a) also highlighted ongoing government concerns regarding the lack of profession-specific content and work readiness among fourth year psychology graduates. Similarly, Kennedy and Innes (2005, p. 163) suggested that the first four years of psychology education 'alienated them [students] from the very subjects – people – they studied'.

Coupled with concerns regarding undergraduate training are ongoing issues in postgraduate training programs. Current student demand for masters programs, necessary for specialist endorsement, substantially exceeds the number of places available (HWA, 2014). Of greatest concern is that between 2006 and 2010, the overall number of APAC accredited postgraduate professional degrees decreased, with the closing down of 49 courses while only 11 were opened (Voudouris & Mrowinski, 2010). The number of people following the traditional 4+2 pathway to registration (4 year undergraduate degree followed by 2-year workplace internship) is declining, due to the administrative burden for supervisors and placement agencies in meeting registration requirements (HWA, 2014). This 'constrained education pipeline' may impact the number of students graduating and entering the profession and in the longer term, the number of people choosing psychology as a profession (HWA, 2014, p. 43). The urgency of providing suitable numbers of master's places to meet workplace demand is especially pertinent given that the APS and the Psychology Board of Australian (PsyBA) are actively advocating for Australian training standards to be raised to meet international benchmarks. This would see a minimum qualification of a master's degree for registration as a psychologist (Psychology Board of Australia, 2018; Voudouris & Mrowinski, 2010). Hence, increased demand combined with the current constrained specialist training pathway requires new ways of thinking about the training of Australia's future psychology workforce.

As well as various drivers emanating from the profession, other factors pertaining to the Australian higher education sector prompted the development of the 5 + 1 program. Given that government funding accounts for only 56% of their operating revenue, Australian universities need to be operationally efficient and financially viable (Berry, 2014). From 2006 to 2010, the costs of training per full time student in postgraduate programs exceeded the funding received by the

Commonwealth Grant Scheme (Voudouris & Mrowinski, 2010). One particular challenge in the current fiscal environment has been the 2010 APAC Standards which stipulate an 8:1 student staff ratio for specialist masters and doctoral psychology programs. While we appreciate that these requirements will be eased slightly in the future, the tension between meeting APAC accreditation requirements and ensuring that programs are economically viable will remain challenging. Thus, the fifth year with a more generous student–staff ratio of 15:1 is most attractive from a staffing and financial point of view.

## The 5 + 1 pathway; a paradigm shift

The 5 + 1 model trains fourth year psychology graduates in foundational professional capabilities to prepare them for a one year supervised internship that leads to general registration as a psychologist. It might be said that the 5 + 1 pathway provides an interim training opportunity, positioned as it is between the 4 + 2 model and the various two year specialist master's programs. We argue differently, and instead assert that the 5 + 1 pathway provides a unique and meaningful training opportunity in its own right, by providing an alternative for those wishing to develop generalist, practical skills rather than specialist practice or research competence, and thus is a viable training framework for meeting the increasing demand for psychologists with general registration in Australia. Opportunities such as online delivery including the use of technologies for facilitating synchronous and asynchronous interactions, and simulation strategies all provide the potential for enriching learning and making courses accessible to increased numbers of students, including those in rural and remote areas.

The 5 + 1 pathway covers eight core competencies, as outlined in the PsyBA national competency framework: knowledge of the discipline, ethical, legal and professional matters, psychological assessment and measurement, evidence-based interventions, research and evaluation, communication, collaboration and interpersonal relationships, working in a cross-cultural context, and practice across the lifespan. The first six of these competencies align directly with the core capabilities and attributes for postgraduate professional courses in psychology (APAC, 2010). Hence, content in fifth year programs contributes directly to the knowledge required for the National Psychology Examination.

Table 1 provides an overview of all current fifth year psychology training programs accredited by APAC. Sixteen programs were identified via a desktop search undertaken in 2017 (and updated May 2018). Information regarding the characteristics of each program were collated and summarised by two authors (see Table 1). An extraction sheet was developed to elicit and record information on: University; course name; full or part time offering; delivery method; number of units; link with any other master of psychology program; coursework unit description; and, details of the practicum component. These program characteristics were reviewed by three of the authors (AR, MD and SS), who were 5+1 psychology program coordinators. In combination with this review, a discussion and consensus approach was employed, based on the authors' in-depth knowledge of their and others' 5+1 programs, to identify and synthesise common pedagogical features across the 16 identified programs.

## Underpinning pedagogical approaches

Two main pedagogical elements frame the 5 + 1 program; preparation for practice, and generalist as opposed to specialised, training.

The 5 + 1 program has an explicit emphasis on the development of practical skills for professional psychology practice. As shown in Table 1, coursework units across the 16 programs align with the core competencies for professional practice, including a focus on ethics, psychological assessment, and psychological interventions across the lifespan. Additionally, the program emphasises the application of research to practice, by educating students how to locate, interpret, assess the quality of any given piece of research and on this basis, apply research to support their practice. Students are not required to conduct independent empirical research. As shown in Table 1, some but not all current fifth year courses comprise a separate research methods subject, in which the emphasis is on research skills for professional psychological practice such as treatment outcome evaluation and/or single case designs.

The overall emphasis on practice aligns with increased efforts within the Australian higher education sector to promote transferable skills from university to the workplace (Jackson, 2016). Work Integrated learning (WIL), defined as an 'umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within

a purposefully designed curriculum' (Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher & Pretto 2008, p. iv), has been identified as a key national strategy in the Australian tertiary sector (Universities Australia, Australian Chamber of Commerce Industry, Australian Industry Group, Business Council of Australia & Australian Collaborative Education Network, 2015). WIL approaches aim to offer valuable practical experience directly related to coursework, and thereby increase graduate employability, improve the transition from study to the workplace and positively impact productivity outcomes (Universities Australia et al., 2015). WIL has been shown to develop graduates' work readiness, professional identity and personal and professional self-efficacy (, Morrissey, Farrell, Ellu, O'Donovan, Weinbrecht & O'Connor, 2018; Trede, 2012). Moreover, learning within a workplace setting facilitates the acquisition of conceptual and dispositional knowledge, allows access to indirect and direct guidance from more experienced clinicians and offers opportunities for practice (Billett, 2016).

Within the context of the 5+ 1 program WIL may take the form of actual work experiences, structured around a specific competency (e.g. counselling and psychological assessment skills), and/or through assessment and teaching activities structured around real-life work scenarios. These learning opportunities are congruent with best practice WIL pedagogical activities that offer opportunities for students to challenge themselves with more complex tasks but in a controlled setting and with access to debriefing and support (Orrell, 2011).

Traditionally, concerns have been raised that the skills generated by practice-orientated education may become obsolete at a faster rate, even if in the short term it promotes an easier/faster transition into the labour market (Green, 1994). However, an emphasis on practice does not mean that students are necessarily primed in specific and potentially time limited vocational skills. Instead, in the fifth year, there is an emphasis on 'psychological literacy' (McGovern, Corey, Cranney, Dixon, Holmes, Kuebli, Ritchey, Smith & Walker, 2009), which promotes a critical, reflective stance, and in the tradition of Dewey (1938), involves learning how to think critically, especially in regard to students' clinical work with clients. This approach stresses a process-oriented, rather than outcomes-focussed, approach (Jackson, 2016) and encourages students to be proactive, agentic learners (Billett, 2016, Billett, 2009).

***Table 1:*** *Summary of characteristics of 16 APAC accredited fifth year programs in Australia*

| University | Course name | Offered full time/ part time | Delivery method | Number of units | Link with any other Master of Psychology program | Coursework units | Practicum component |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Australian Catholic University** | Master of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | Flexible delivery with evening classes and weekend workshops | 8 | No | Issues and skills in professional practice; Individual assessment: Psychological interventions; Practice across the lifespan; Evidence based practice for psychologists; Elective units: Forensic psychology; Advanced cognitive neuropsychology | Practicum 1–3 hours per week for 12 weeks in University-based clinic;<br>Practicum 2–3 hours per week for 12 weeks or equivalent. |
| **Australian College of Applied Psychology** | Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | On campus | 8 | May articulate into Master of Psychology (Clinical) with credit for up to 8 units | Counselling, communication and culture; Psychology, Health and wellbeing; Psychological assessment for professional psychology; Lifespan psychopathology: Adulthood and aging; Lifespan psychopathology: Children and adolescents; Psychology practice 1: Ethical, legal and professional issues; Research methods for professional psychology; Psychology practice 2: Working with clients | 300 hours practical/skills training |
| **Cairnmillar Institute** | Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology | FT only | On campus | 8 | No | Interpersonal process and workplace practices; Professional practice issues; Cognitive behavioural interventions; Psychological assessment. Diagnostic testing and interview competencies; Developmental psychopathology across the lifespan; Preparation for psychology practice; Research project | 300 hours supervised practice |
| **Charles Sturt University** | Master of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | Online only | 10 | 8 units in common with MPsych Clinical | Foundations of clinical psychology; Clinical psychopathology: Adult assessment; Adult interventions 1; Child assessment; Child interventions 1; Adult interventions 2; Child interventions 2 | 300 hours supervised training and practice in variety of professional settings |
| **Curtin University** | Master of Psychology (Professional) | FT only | On campus | 8 | 3 common units with MPsych Clinical/ Counselling | Professional practice in psychology; Psychological assessment theories and practice; Developmental interventions over the lifespan: Counselling and interpersonal processes; Special topics in psychology; Psychological theories and applications; Psychopathology and interventions | 40 days external placement + skills training logged from coursework units |
| **Deakin University** | Master of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | Offered at 2 campuses | 8 | No | Practice and ethics in professional psychology; Psychological assessment in practice; Psychological interview and intervention strategies; Psychological practice across the lifespan; Working with diverse populations; Applied methods for professional practice; | 40 days placement consisting of pre-practice workshops and practicum days within a relevant agency. |
| **Macquarie University** | Master of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | On campus | 8 | No | Counselling and professional practice; Psychological assessment and reports; Cognitive behavioural therapy and related techniques; Working with special populations; Working with children and families; Working with groups; Supervised practical placement; Research theory and practice for professional psychologists; 1 elective from Coaching and positive psychology; Industrial and organisational psychology; Additional therapeutic modalities | Supervised placement in one or more workplaces |

| University | Course name | Offered full time/ part time | Delivery method | Number of units | Link with any other Master of Psychology program | Coursework units | Practicum component |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Australian Catholic University** | Master of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | Flexible delivery with evening classes and weekend workshops | 8 | No | Issues and skills in professional practice; Individual assessment: Psychological interventions; Practice across the lifespan; Evidence based practice for psychologists; Elective units: Forensic psychology; Advanced cognitive neuropsychology | Practicum 1–3 hours per week for 12 weeks in University-based clinic;<br>Practicum 2–3 hours per week for 12 weeks or equivalent. |
| **Australian College of Applied Psychology** | Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | On campus | 8 | May articulate into Master of Psychology (Clinical) with credit for up to 8 units | Counselling, communication and culture; Psychology, Health and wellbeing; Psychological assessment for professional psychology; Lifespan psychopathology: Adulthood and aging; Lifespan psychopathology: Children and adolescents; Psychology practice I: Ethical, legal and professional issues; Research methods for professional psychology; Psychology practice 2: Working with clients | 300 hours practical/skills training |
| **Cairnmillar Institute** | Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology | FT only | On campus | 8 | No | Interpersonal process and workplace practices; Professional practice issues; Cognitive behavioural interventions; Psychological assessment. Diagnostic testing and interview competencies; Developmental psychopathology across the lifespan; Preparation for psychology practice; Research project | 300 hours supervised practice |
| **Charles Sturt University** | Master of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | Online only | 10 | 8 units in common with MPsych Clinical | Foundations of clinical psychology; Clinical psychopathology; Adult assessment; Adult interventions 1; Child assessment; Child interventions 1; Adult interventions 2; Child interventions 2 | 300 hours supervised training and practice in variety of professional settings |
| **Curtin University** | Master of Psychology (Professional) | FT only | On campus | 8 | 3 common units with MPsych Clinical/ Counselling | Professional practice in psychology; Psychological assessment theories and practice; Developmental interventions over the lifespan: Counselling and interpersonal processes; Special topics in psychology; Psychological theories and applications; Psychopathology and interventions | 40 days external placement + skills training logged from coursework units |
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| **Macquarie University** | Master of Professional Psychology | FT/PT | On campus | 8 | No | Counselling and professional practice; Psychological assessment and reports; Cognitive behavioural therapy and related techniques; Working with special populations; Working with children and families; Working with groups; Supervised practical placement; Research theory and practice for professional psychologists; 1 elective from Coaching and positive psychology; Industrial and organisational psychology; Additional therapeutic modalities | Supervised placement in one or more workplaces |

Notwithstanding the emphasis on skill development, there is still a requirement for students to understand and critique various research methodologies and outcomes. There have been many contested arguments about the relationship between science and practice in psychology (see for example, Gardner, 1992; Hoshman & Polkinghorne, 1992). According to Henriques and Steinburg (2004), these arguments stem from several factors; the difficulties associated with accruing and applying psychological knowledge, confusion about what constitutes psychology and how it is defined, and political antagonisms and competitions within the field, which seek to devalue the 'opposing side'. The 5 + 1 program has an unapologetic emphasis on the acquisition of practical psychotherapeutic and assessment skills. This emphasis on practice acknowledges that the role of the scientist and the practitioner are fundamentally different and where, in the words of Henriques and Sternberg (2004, p. 1059) the role of the practitioner is 'primarily to effect change, not describe it'. They continued by arguing that 'to the practitioner, psychological knowledge is not the end but a means to the end'.

This emphasis on practice is, we would argue, cognisant with a reflective and critical stance. For example, Empirically Supported Treatments (ESTs) are actively taught across courses, as a means of deciphering the most effective approaches and tools that psychologists might employ in their work with clients. However, in class discussions, the many problems associated with ESTs are also highlighted, including issues around treatment fidelity outside of controlled settings, and the multiple client variables that potentially impact outcomes. Such discussions aim to encourage reflection about the limitations of empirical evidence, commonly collected in randomised controlled trials, and the need to consider other forms of information and evidence, such as that which may be drawn from clients or other prior experiences. The importance of professional supervision is modelled throughout the program and actively promoted as a lifelong endeavour. Overall, given the lack of applied training in undergraduate psychology degrees (Jones, 2008) and the requirement for all fourth-year students to undertake a research thesis, this emphasis on practice is, we would argue, entirely appropriate for preparing graduates for the psychology workforce.

The second feature of 5 + 1 programs is its generalist nature. This generalist orientation responds to what has been called an 'identity' crisis within the psychology profession where there exists a great deal

of overlap amongst the specialisms (Henriques & Sternberg, 2004). For example, analyses of the curriculum and professional experiences offered across speciality programs in North America found that many such programs could incorporate aspects of other specialisms with as little as 10% alteration to extant course requirements (Cobb, Reeve, Shealy, Norcross, Schare, Rodolfa, Hargrove, Hall & Allen, 2004). Henriques and Sternberg (2004, p. 1057) continued:

> *... there is tremendous overlap in the basic foundational knowledge, skills and competencies, ethical systems, roles and eventual employment settings among the core practice areas [in psychology]. As such it makes good practical sense to train students in these general areas initially, and subsequently provide specialisation in specific areas.*

As proponents of the fifth year, we support that acquiring generalist competencies provides a sound foundation for future specialist learning for those wishing to undertake such a path. Simultaneously, providing generalist training for all will do much to meet the growing demand for a larger psychology workforce in Australia.

Given the practitioner focus and generalist nature of the courses, the pedagogical approach across the fifth year emphasises competency-based learning (Ericsson, 2009; Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014). Competency-based learning includes an experiential component, where students are encouraged to 'do it rather than just know how to do it' (Jones, 2008, p. 39). Given evidence for the effectiveness of simulated experience in the development of professional competence (Ericsson, 2009), students are provided, in class time and during professional experience opportunities, with 'authentic experiences' which start to 'build on the depth and complexity of their schema through the process of reflection due to the increased number of cues and pathways they establish with the vast array of subtle variables that present' (Jones, 2008, p. 41). Other adult learning principles are drawn on, in particular promoting autonomy and choice, collaborative learning and acknowledging that students bring with them various life experiences and knowledge that can be connected to the learning undertaken.

Much of this approach resonates with Gibbs' (1988, p. 9) suggestion that 'it is not enough just to do, and neither is it enough just to think. Nor is it enough simply to do and think. Learning from experience must

involve linking the doing and the thinking'. Skills-based learning is also aligned with the 'deliberate practice' approach (Ericsson, Krampe, Tesch-Römer, & Kintsch, 1993) that has been described in the field of expert performance (Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman, 2006). The acquisition of expertise begins from the learner's current skill level and occurs in manageable steps. Deliberate practice involves a repeating cycle of goal-setting, practice, feedback, reflection and so on until automaticity, or complex, fluid performance is achieved. For example, in one of the teaching activities undertaken in a subject taught by one of the authors of this paper, students first read several chapters related to integrative counselling. Skills are then demonstrated (e.g. by the lecturer or video) and students invited to consider key questions such as, 'How might you incorporate this skill into your own practice?' and 'In what way might you adapt this skill, and with which client groups?' Skills are practised in triads with one student assuming the role of the client, another the psychologist, and the third an observer/debriefer. In line with the deliberate practice approach, triad role plays may be recorded (using iPads or mobile phones), reviewed, and discussed by peers and the lecturer. Specific feedback is provided on key skills and concepts, in reference to initial readings. Practice occurs each week across the semester within class time, and learning is graded so that skills increase in difficulty (e.g., from minimal encouragers in Week 1 to complex reflections in Week 10). This emphasis on integrating knowledge and applied skill development is also closely aligned with competency-based models of supervision (Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014).

As shown in Table 1, there are various models for providing students with opportunities for skills training and supervised practice. These range from role-plays and other simulated experiences in class, to observation and supervised practice in on-campus training clinics and practicum experiences in external placement sites. Practical activities are integrated into the curriculum; for example in one course, students first learn about various vocational assessments and are then given an opportunity to provide vocational assessments to students at a local TAFE college and/or to prospective students on a university open day. Students are encouraged to discuss these 'authentic experiences' in scheduled class time and share their various experiences and learnings. Practical experiences are also supported by, and integrated with, a range of experiential assessment methods, including video-recordings,

vivas, case reports, reflective logs, and examinations. This integration of evidence, practice and reflection is the cornerstone of the teaching and assessment activities employed in the fifth year of the 5 + 1 program.

## The 6th year – internship

The internship year is the sixth and final year of training within the 5 + 1 pathway for provisional psychologists leading to general registration. The aim of the internship year is to consolidate the skills and knowledge developed during the previous five training years and apply them in a practical setting. The three components of the internship program are: (i) psychological practice; (ii) supervision; and (iii) professional development; all of which focus on the eight core competencies, and thus complement, extend and complete the training begun in fifth year. Sixth year internships are conducted outside of the university thus reducing financial and administrative costs for higher education providers.

A critical issue is whether students are paid during their internship year. A related issue is that some students may need to independently organise and pay for their own supervision and professional development. Drawing on students' experiences of internships across professions, Fink (2012) points out that internships can provide students with practice experience and professional connections. For employers, internships offer an opportunity to try out potential workers without incurring the expenses and legal obligations associated with formal employment (Fink, 2012). At the same time, unpaid internships may be exploitative, and exclude those who are not able to support themselves without a steady income. Some internships may offer little in the way of meaningful experience or skill development (Fink, 2012). Little is currently known about the experience of the sixth year psychology internship from the perspectives of employers, supervisors and students and this is a priority for future research.

## Who are our students?

Eligible students are those graduating from a four year APAC accredited sequence in psychology. Students are selected on the basis of their academic record, relevant practical experience, and referees' reports of suitability. Shortlisted applicants undergo an interview to ascertain

aptitude and suitability. Some applicants are those who were not competitive for, did not meet the requirements for, or were unsuccessful in gaining a place in specialist master's program. However, there is increasing evidence that the fifth year program is a valued option in its own right for prospective students who are keen to obtain general registration and work as a practitioner, do not wish to undertake further research or those who are not interested in or do not yet feel ready to complete specialist training. Many applicants include experienced, mature age practitioners (e.g. case workers, counsellors) wanting to upgrade their qualifications and obtain Medicare provider status, and recent fourth year graduates wishing to develop their practical skills. Given students' goal to become practitioners, many are highly motivated to secure employment after graduation and often use their placement experiences to network and acquire skills that can be transferred into other relevant, and sought-after practice settings.

Some students are able to articulate into a specialist master's program, with some programs having a designated 'pre-clinical stream' and another having an almost 100% rate of students transferring into a Master of Clinical Psychology following completion of the fifth year (see Table 1). Data in Table 1 shows that there is some commonality between units in some fifth year programs and Master of Clinical Psychology programs which will facilitate articulation or transfer, whereas other programs are completely independent. In these cases, students who wish to complete another master's program may not receive credit for study completed as part of their fifth year program.

## Graduate opportunities for fifth year students

The federally funded Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative enables people with a diagnosed disorder to access ten sessions of treatment per year from a range of mental health professionals, including psychologists. While the initiative has seen a dramatic increase in the demand and uptake of psychological services (Pirkis, Harris, Hall & Ftanou, 2011), it has also created a two tiered model of funding wherein clinical psychologists are afforded greater legitimacy, recognition, and status with a higher rebate per session and scope, than other registered psychologists (Di Mattia & Grant, 2016). According to the HWA (2014), approximately one third of psychologists are employed in private practice, which given the funding arrangements highlighted

above, is obviously best suited, on remuneration grounds at least, to clinical psychologists.

However, the demand for psychologist services is not exclusive to those provided under Medicare. Two-thirds of psychologists are employed elsewhere in primary care, community mental health services, rehabilitation, defence, schools and disability (HWA, 2014). The generalist skills promoted in the fifth year may be suited to a wide range of settings and roles working with individuals, families and groups, as well as program development. Given the relative newness of this program graduate destination data is still emerging. Nonetheless, from our experience, some graduates have paid employment in positions that are not specifically titled 'psychologist' for example, rehabilitation counsellor or child protection officer. In these cases, it is the responsibility of the individual student to negotiate with the PsyBA regarding alignment of their particular position description to the competences required for their internship year.

## Challenges and opportunities

While the psychology profession shows overall growth, rural and remote psychology workforce disparities remain (HWA, 2014). Attracting new graduates to rural areas by offering the sixth year internship may be an appealing option for employers that view a one year investment for a more skilled graduate, as opposed to a two year investment under the traditional 4+2 pathway. Another approach to growing the rural psychology workforce is to examine lessons learned from the 'rural origin effect' (Laven & Wilkinson, 2003), the decade long Rural Clinical School model placement and training in rural areas (Greenhill, Walker & Playford, 2015) and potential 'pipeline' programs (Durey, Haigh & Katzenellenbogen, 2015) where recruitment of rural health professionals starts well before tertiary level training.

Currently, only two accredited fifth year programs are offered in off-campus mode (see Table 1). Delivering the program online enables a diverse range of applicants access to professional psychology training, including those living in rural and remote areas and those who require a more flexible learning environment than face to face teaching provides (e.g. to accommodate child care and/or paid work). The challenge here is to ensure that students' online experience is equitable (if not

the same) to the experiences of on campus learning, especially given the experiential nature of the fifth year program. Another challenge is a requirement from APAC that each fifth year unit offered in distance mode includes an intensive or on campus teaching block. What these intensive schools might look like (e.g. whether they can be conducted in synchronous mode online, via chat rooms or similar) is yet to be resolved. Rigorous evaluation of learning outcomes for students accessing these alternate training modes is vital to ensuring high standards are maintained.

Another priority is to conduct ongoing destination studies of graduates that identify where students are employed, in what capacity and location (urban, rural or remote) and how much they earn. Such studies are critical to ensure that the courses are meeting the needs of the profession and ascertain possible employment routes and opportunities arising from these relatively new programs. Likewise, ongoing benchmarking across different providers in Australia will be important to promote quality and enhance good practice.

One challenge associated with the fifth year is the perception amongst some students (and possibly staff and employers) that the program is less valued or prestigious than specialist programs. There is a need to appropriately market programs and educate students, academics and potential employers about the fifth year and its value within the various training pathways available to students in Australia.

## Other training models

The European Certificate in Psychology (EuroPsy) is commonly referred to as the 3+2+1 model. This consists of a three-year undergraduate sequence with high psychology content, a two-year Master's degree in professional psychology, which includes a three-month internship and in the final phase, a one-year period of supervised psychology practice in the workplace. In the EuroPsy model, the honours year is not specified as a separate stage; instead the honours thesis is incorporated into the two generalist years. To make Australian qualifications comparable internationally, the APS is a strong supporter of such a model (Littlefield, 2016b). The APS suggests that this would mean redesigning the fourth year, so that it articulates into a master's degrees and becomes a common first year for training in the profession. The

current 5 + 1 program described here is well positioned to form part of this proposed training model and, in its present state, may be relatively easily integrated with fourth year honours programs.

Bond and Cornish (2016) pointed out that students graduating from the fifth year program and who wish to pursue a specialist course currently need to complete an additional two years specialist masters. They suggested that current specialist programs might be revised so that the first year is generalist (equivalent to the fifth year) and followed by a second year that provides additional specialist training. Again, the fifth year is well positioned for integration into such a model.

## Summary and conclusion

Others have urged for a complete overhaul and rethink of undergraduate psychology programs, where traditionally there has been a 'clear focus on developing the scientist, while the apprentice or developing practitioner has continued to be neglected' (Jones, 2008, p. 43). Without entering into the specific problems that might be perceived in the undergraduate years, we propose that the 5 + 1 model provides a sound opportunity for developing psychology practitioners, who are a much needed resource in Australia. A number of recent developments, emanating from the higher education sector and health workforce reform agenda, have brought significant pressures on current training models. Future developments need to be aligned with these reforms and drivers, while simultaneously maintaining high standards of education and training for the psychology profession that is responsive to workforce needs in the community. Grenyer (2016) argued that the psychology profession needs to reach a consensus regarding reform and future directions for training and education models. It is our hope that this paper provides some discussion regarding the value of the fifth year and provides some background as to how it might be aligned to other training models. Given the background of psychologists as 'scientist-practitioners' we are well positioned as a discipline to adapt and change with rigour, and on the basis of evidence.

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# It pays to prepare: The value of low-stakes tutorial preparation exercises to student performance

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*Engaging students in university classes is becoming an increasingly difficult challenge. One tool that can be utilised to enhance participation and engagement are low-stakes, low value, tutorial pre-preparation exercises. This exercise was trialled in the University of Technology Sydney Faculty of Law subject, Real Property over the course of 2017. This paper examines the results of the introduction of the task, in particular focussing upon the Expectancy Value Theory, and the relationship between a student's expectancy for success on the preparation task and the value attributed to that task. I found a strong correlation between student performance in that exercise and their subsequent performance on higher stakes assessments. Feedback demonstrates that this exercise increased engagement and performance in a course that had been perceived by the student body as challenging.*

***Keywords:*** *low-stakes assessment, high-stakes assessment, motivation, student performance, preparation, engagement*

## Introduction

The concept of a flipped classroom is a relatively recent concept that is based upon student-led learning and pre-class preparation of course material. (Elmaadaway, 2018; Roehl, Reddy & Shannon, 2013). Although there is no consensus on what precisely falls within the definition of a flipped classroom, some key elements include: the opportunity for students to cover content prior to classes; providing incentives for students to prepare for class; and in-class activities that focus on active learning (McNally, Chipperfield, Dorsett, Del Fabbro, Frommolt, Goetz, Lewohl, Molineux, Pearson, Reddan, Roiko & Rung, 2017). As Strayer (2012) notes, a flipped classroom model relieves the teacher from having to cover all of the material, instead allowing them to devote time to the topics upon which students require clarification or elaboration. The flipped classroom is particularly helpful in promoting deep learning as students are more likely to form connections between ideas and concepts compared with those involved in surface learning alone (Jamaludin & Osman, 2014). McNally et al (2017) argue that although some studies have found a positive relationship between flipped classrooms and improved grades, the findings of those studies do not provide adequate justification for the use of flipped classrooms in higher education.

As Wikhamn (2017) notes, one of the main challenges with the flipped classroom's student-centered approach is that teachers will tend to lose some of their authority as responsibility is delegated to students. One way in which teachers can alleviate such concerns is through the process of constructive alignment. Constructive alignment, as developed by John Biggs, is a key principle of course design whereby teachers focus upon what students should be learning and aligning learning activities to optimise students' chances of achieving those outcomes (Biggs, 1996). Biggs argues that it is through identifying the intended learning outcomes that teachers are able to identify authentic tasks that will actively engage students (Biggs, 2014). For example, memorising and paraphrasing are not reflections of understanding, however, recognising the application of a principle in a novel context is. Students will then need to be placed in a situation that is likely to elicit this required learning, and can then be assessed to see that their learning has matched the stated objectives (Biggs, 1996). One form of authentic assessment that can assist students in meeting intended learning objectives is that of low-stakes assessment.

There has been considerable research conducted in the higher education field as to the beneficial value of low-stakes assessment. Low-stakes assessment encompasses tasks that have minimal or zero impact upon a student's grade, and are designed to offer an opportunity for feedback and reflection prior to the completion of subsequent high-stakes assessment. Low-stakes assessment can give students confidence and an early 'win' before going onto high-stakes assessment (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 111). In particular, low-stakes assessment can offer students an opportunity to gain academic literacy without the fear that is generated by high-stakes assessment. (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 113). In this way, low-stakes assessment offers students the motivation to engage in the required learning for the course, and then demonstrate that learning through relatively simple tasks.

Much of the literature on the topic of low-stakes assessment focusses upon what is called the 'expectancy-value theory'. This theory posits the view that the motivation to participate in low-stakes assessment will depend upon expectation for success and the value placed upon the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 111). This is the theory on which this research seeks to build. Does the value placed upon this task increase student motivation to complete the task, thereby improving the student's overall performance, or do students attach a lack of interest and importance to the task? As many studies have indicated, one problem with low-stakes assessment is the difficulties associated with increasing student effort and motivation. Studies have shown that a significant proportion of students report giving little to no effort in low-stakes assessment tasks (Hoyt, 2001; Schiel, 1996). To deal with this problem, some studies have suggested that low-stakes assessment must be accompanied by consequences, with results showing that students faced with consequences as a result of the low-stakes assessment will perform better (Wolf & Smith, 1995, p. 232).

However, the consequences of any task must be balanced against the risk of the task becoming too mentally taxing (Wolf, Smith & Birnbaum, 1995, p. 349). If the task is too difficult, student expectations for performance will drop, resulting in a corresponding lowering in effort (Wise & De Mars, 2005, p. 3). If the difficulty of a task is proportionate to the value assigned to the task, then student performance will rise. One study has demonstrated that motivated students can perform up to 60% better than low motivated students (Wise & De Mars, 2005, p. 14). Factors that

can motivate student participation in low-stakes assessment include usefulness and importance (Cole, Bergin & Whittaker, 2008, p. 614). An additional method of improving motivation is through incentivising the task. The nature of the incentive provided to students can range from tangible rewards, such as food or movie passes, right through to students simply being given the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of their courses (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Wolf and Smith conducted a study in which participants were placed into one of two groups. The first group was told that their performance would be counted towards their grade, while the other group was told that their performance was non-assessable. The study demonstrated that the high-stakes group significantly outperformed the low-stakes group (Wolf & Smith, 1995, p. 238).

One potential way of encouraging motivation for low-stakes assessment is to frame the task for the students. This process involves explaining the purpose of the task and the reasons behind its inclusion in the course, as well as the potential benefits that may flow to students through completion of the task (Sundre & Moore, 2002, p. 8). The effect of framing the task in such a way has been to increase student motivation in completing the task, and thereby increasing their overall results in the assessment and the course overall (Liu, Rios & Borden, 2015, p. 89).

Despite a number of general studies, the application of low-stakes assessment to law schools has not received quite as much attention. Traditionally, law schools have favoured high-stakes final exams, which comprise a heavy component of a student's final score. However, such assessments can actively contribute to the high rate of anxiety amongst law students and the legal profession more broadly (Skead & Rogers, 2014, p. 566). Some research has suggested that the inclusion of low-stakes assessment in law schools may help to minimise performance inhibiting anxieties in law students, thereby improving their likelihood to excel (Cherem, 2011, p. 45). In addition, high-stakes law assessments, much like university assessments more broadly, will rarely re-test content that has already been assessed. Consequently, low-stakes assessments in law subjects offer students an opportunity to receive useful feedback prior to undertaking high-stakes assessments on the same content (Corrada, 2013, p. 319).

The benefits of low-stakes assessment to law schools are also greatly enhanced by the personality type of most law students. Law students

tend to be highly motivated, type A personalities and, therefore, low-stakes assessments are likely to succeed in law schools, as these students will have the requisite motivation to complete the task and thereby improve their overall grade (Duhart, 2015, p. 493). However, the success of the task can only be maximised if the format of the low-stakes assessment mirrors the format of the subsequent high-stakes assessment (Cherem, 2011, p. 45). For example, the benefits of a multiple choice low-stakes assessment are negligible if the final exam is to take the format of an essay response.

Low-stakes assessment is not without its criticisms in the field of law. One fear is that the anxiety-prone law student is likely to become obsessed with obtaining every mark possible on the low-stakes assessment. However, such fears can be allayed if the teachers are transparent about all aspects of the course and are consistent in their efforts to build a learning community (Duhart, 2015, p. 507). Yet, there has been some resistance to the introduction of low-stakes assessment to legal classrooms on the basis that a legal career carries real life consequences and therefore students should be prepared to operate under high-stakes conditions. This view ignores not only the mental strain that such constant high-stakes assessment places upon students, but also the wide variety of skills a lawyer requires, such as collaboration, interpersonal skills and metacognition (thinking about thinking) – all of which are equally important skills for a lawyer, and are more appropriately measured in low-stakes assessments (Black & William, 2003, p. 623).

## Context

Real Property is a core subject in the Bachelor of Laws degree and is one of the subjects identified by the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (commonly referred to as the Priestley Committee) as one of the 11 subjects students are required to complete to gain admission to practice as a solicitor in NSW (known as the Priestley 11).

At the University of Technology Sydney, Real Property is a stage two subject, meaning students have completed the equivalent of one full year of study equivalent to six law subjects. The subject is delivered in the traditional lecture/tutorial model, with two weekly lectures and one tutorial each fortnight. In the lectures students learn the overarching

legal principles, and are guided through the relevant legal authorities applicable to those principles. Each tutorial then focusses upon one area of property addressed in the preceding week of lectures; for example: leases, mortgages, easements or covenants. In tutorials students work through problem questions that require them to identify the relevant legal issues; state the applicable legal rule; apply those rules to the factual scenario provided and then provide a conclusion (commonly referred to as the IRAC model).

Prior to 2017 a lower than average number of students achieved grades in the distinction and high distinction grade bands in Real Property than in other stage two law subjects. However, there was no noticeable drop in attendance at tutorials during this period. The student feedback results for the subject demonstrated that students perceived Real Property as a very difficult subject, however, the anecdotal evidence of the teaching team in the course did not support a conclusion that students were applying an increased level of effort to cope with this difficulty. As a result, the teaching team sought to modify the assessment regime in an attempt to improve student motivation. Consequently, the subject comprised four assessments: a 10% quiz on native title and basic concepts, completed in the first fortnight of the subject; a 25% written advice assignment; a 50% final exam, and the final 15% for the new tutorial preparation tasks.

## Method

The tutorial preparation task was weighted at 15% of the final grade for the subject, and students could complete the task for whichever tutorials they wished. There were a total of 7 tutorials in the subject, and students were assessed on their best 5 submissions with each submission being accorded a weight of 3%.

The task was designed to address the following student learning outcomes:

- reflect, evaluate and improve their core skills in real property analysis
- evaluate the relative merits of different legal doctrines and strategies in assessing, advising and responding to simulated 'real world' legal scenarios

- analyse and monitor their own performance and implement strategies for developing their self-management, particularly time-management.

In undertaking the task, students were required to complete a worksheet (made available on the student Blackboard site). The worksheet was divided into each of the IRAC model steps: the legal issues; the relevant rules and principles; an application of the law and their conclusions (see Figure 1). Students would complete the worksheet in response to a nominated fictional problem scenario, and would be asked to advise their client on a particular issue or issues.

In structuring the assessment in such a way, students were required to address the student learning outcomes identified above. They were required to engage in analysis of the relevant legal principles applicable to the given scenario; assess the merits of each possible argument and advise their fictional client on the likely outcome. By giving students the opportunity to select which tutorials they would prepare answers for, students were also given the opportunity to manage their own time. They could select which classes they wished to prepare for, and in light of their performance on previous submissions, they could make amendments in subsequent submissions to improve their progress towards satisfying the intended learning outcomes.

***Figure 1:*** *Low-stakes assessment worksheet*

| **Student Name and student number:** | |
|---|---|

| **Tutorial Number:** | |
|---|---|

*State the person you are advising.*
*State what outcome does s/he/it wants.*
*Identify the practical outcome. [delete this instruction]*

| **A. Key legal Issues and Facts** | |
|---|---|

*You need to identify the key legal issues raised by this question that will be needed to answer determine the above outcome. Are there sub-issues? If so, set each out clearly, and in the order in which you intend to answer those.*

*Identify the key facts relevant to each of the issues and sub-issues above. Be specific, which facts go to which issue or sub-issue. [delete this instruction]*

| **B. Principles and Authorities** | |
|---|---|

*Set out the key legal principles and the cases and or/statutory authorities on which you will rely for each of the issues and sub-issues set out in A. Make sure to identify the actual principle, not simply say "this is like the case of x". [delete this instruction]*

| **C. Application** | |
|---|---|

*Briefly apply and/or distinguish the principles and authorities you have identified in **B** to the facts identified in **A** in order to resolve the issues identified in **B**.*
*Give context to your arguments. Begin by identifying the overarching aspect of the law that you are concerned with and then narrow your focus to the more specific issues that you have identified in **B.***
*Once you have applied the principles to the facts you might wish to bolster your argument with some case analogies. For example, your problem might be like the case of X. Be careful though. How similar are your facts to the case you wish to use? Have you read it carefully enough to be sure? In order to save space and time you may use dot points [delete this instruction]*

| **D. Conclusions, Remedies and Advice** | |
|---|---|

*Very briefly state your conclusions to the relevant issues. Remember to note the consequences of the conclusions that you have made, and how that would impact upon the party that you are advising. What remedy might be appropriate? Do you have any practical advice? [delete this instruction]*

Students were assigned a nominated problem question to respond to, and answers were limited to a maximum of two pages. The task was due for the entire cohort at 9 am on a Monday morning, and the worksheets were returned at the commencement of the following weeks tutorials.

Feedback on the task comprised a mark on the individual student's worksheet, along with a few general comments. More substantive feedback was provided in the tutorial itself. The tutor worked through the problem with students and provided them with a scaffold answer against which they could measure their own response. In Semester 1 2017, approximately 75% of students in the cohort received a pass mark for the assessment task (7.5/15 or over), and in Semester 2 2017 this figure rose to approximately 92%.

Each high-stake assessment focussed upon discrete topics covered in the course. The written advice focussed upon the leases topic, while the final exam covered the topics of mortgages and covenants. Each of these topics had also been covered in a tutorial lesson. However, the material covered in the tutorial preparation problem was not a mere repetition of the material that was to be assessed in subsequent assessment tasks. The tutorial problems for each topic within the course focussed upon one or two of the key issues covered within the lectures for that topic, and left the remaining issues for students to revise in their own time.

Although the same low stakes assessment task was utilised in both semesters, it is only possible to report the results for Semester 2 2017. The Semester 1 2017 final exam was written prior to the commencement of this project. The final exam question comprised one long form problem question, which required students to address several topics including leases, covenants and mortgages. As the topics were all included in the one problem question, and the exam was given a single overall mark. It was not possible to correlate the results of students with their results in the tutorial preparation tasks. However, the mid semester exam task results from Semester 1 2017 were able to be included, as that assessment task was confined to a single topic: Torrens Title.

To measure the effectiveness of the task, student results were divided into two groups: those who had completed the tutorial preparation task for a specific topic and those who had not. The standard deviation, mean and quartiles were then measured for each data set to provide measures of central tendency and dispersion.

Following completion of the final preparation task in Semester 2 2017, students were also asked to complete a voluntary survey made available via the online Survey Monkey platform. The survey asked four questions, which were rated on a scale from strongly disagree through to strongly agree. The final two questions were open-ended questions.

Question 1: The pre-preparation exercises contributed to my learning experiences?

Question 2: By pre-preparing question I felt more confident about my performance in the major assignment and exam?

Question 3: The pre-preparation exercises contributed to my overall learning in this subject?

Question 4: I think the weight given to this exercise as part of the overall assessment regime is appropriate?

Question 5: If the weight is not appropriate, what weight would you give the exercises and why?

Question 6: How, if at all, would you improve this exercise?

## Results

These results consider two discrete issues:

1. Student performance upon the high-stakes assessments;
2. Student feedback upon the task

### Student performance on high-stakes assessment

As noted above, students completed two high-stake assessments each semester. A written advice mid-semester assignment worth 25% of their grade. In semester 1, this assignment focussed upon the topic of Torrens Title. In semester 2, this assignment focussed upon the topic of leases. The students then completed a final exam worth 50% of their final mark. In semester 2, this exam covered the topics of mortgages and covenants.

In the written advice, there was a noticeable difference in grade distribution between students who did complete the preparation task, and students who did not. A similar trend was noticeable across both semesters. As figure 2 notes, in Semester 1 the average result of students

who completed the tutorial preparation task on Torrens Title was 1.3 marks (or 5% higher) than those students who did not complete the task. As figure 3 notes, in Semester 2 the gap between these results increased, with students who had completed the leases preparation task averaging results of 2.5 marks (or 10% higher) than students who did not complete the task.

***Figure 2:*** *Performance on high-stakes written advice by students in Semester 1 2017*

| | **Those who completed the tutorial preparation task on Torrens Title** | **Those who did not <u>not</u> complete the task** |
|---|---|---|
| Average (out of 25) | 16.5 | 15.2 |
| Standard deviation | 3.8 | 4.94 |
| Range | 7 - 22.5 | 3 - 21.5 |
| Quartile 1 | 13.5 | 11.9 |
| Quartile 2 (Median) | 17 | 15.75 |
| Quartile 3 | 20 | 20 |
| Quartile 4 | 22.5 | 21.5 |

***Figure 3:*** *Performance on high-stakes written advice by students in Semester 2 2017*

| | **Those who completed the tutorial preparation task on Leases** | **Those who did <u>not</u> complete the task** |
|---|---|---|
| Average (out of 25) | 16.4 | 13.9 |
| Standard Deviation | 3.94 | 4.5 |
| Range | 5 - 23.5 | 5 - 22.5 |
| Quartile 1 | 14 | 11.5 |
| Quartile 2 (Median) | 17 | 14.25 |
| Quartile 3 | 19.5 | 17 |
| Quartile 4 | 23.5 | 22.5 |

This trend was also replicated in the final exam for Semester 2 2017, which was completed by 212 students. On the first exam question on the topic of mortgages, 158 (or 75%) of students had completed the

corresponding preparation task, and 54 (or 25%) had not. Per **figure 4**, of the students who completed the corresponding preparation task there was a slightly higher average (11.22 to 10.27), and a higher median result.

***Figure 4:*** *Performance on high-stakes mortgages exam question – Semester 2 2017*

| | **Those who completed the tutorial preparation task on mortgages** | **Those who did not complete the task** |
|---|---|---|
| Average (out of 20) | 11.22 | 10.27 |
| SD | 3.66 | 3.83 |
| Range | 3 to 18 | 3.5 to 17 |
| Quartile 1 | 8 | 7 |
| Quartile 2 | 11 | 9 |
| Quartile 3 | 14 | 14 |
| Quartile 4 | 18 | 17 |

The second exam question focused upon covenants, which was the final tutorial topic for the semester. Of the 212 students who sat the final exam, 165 (or 78%) completed the task and 47 (or 22%) did not. As **figure 5** shows, of the students who completed the preparation task on covenants, there was a significantly higher average result (12.79 to 9.69), with the top 50% of students receiving a mark in excess of 13/20.

***Figure 5:*** *Performance on high-stakes covenants exam question – Semester 2 2017*

| | **Those who completed the tutorial preparation task on Covenants** | **Those who did not complete the task** |
|---|---|---|
| Average (out of 20) | 12.79 | 9.69 |
| SD | 3.15 | 3.22 |
| Range | 5.5-20 | 3-17 |
| Quartile 1 | 10.4 | 7.1 |
| Quartile 2 | 13 | 10 |
| Quartile 3 | 15 | 12 |
| Quartile 4 | 20 | 17 |

The final exam question focused upon Easements. Of the 212 students who sat the final exam, 161 (or 76%) completed the task and 51 (or 24%) did not. As **figure 6** demonstrates, there was also a higher average result amongst students who completed the preparation task (12.38 to 11.84), however unlike the previous questions the range of marks among those students was far greater: from 1 through to 19 out of 20. While it cannot be proven definitively, this variety of results may be attributable to question's placement at the end of the paper, with students having less time to adequately address the question.

***Figure 6:*** *Performance on high-stakes easements exam question – Semester 2 2017*

| | **Those who completed the tutorial preparation task on Easements** | **Those who did <u>not</u> complete the task** |
|---|---|---|
| Average (out of 20) | 12.38 | 11.84 |
| SD | 3.47 | 2.58 |
| Range | 1-19 | 4.5-15 |
| Quartile 1 | 10.9 | 10.5 |
| Quartile 2 | 13 | 12 |
| Quartile 3 | 14.6 | 14 |
| Quartile 4 | 19 | 15.5 |

## Student feedback

The voluntary student feedback survey received a total of 107 responses.

**Question 1: The pre-preparation exercises contributed to my learning experiences:** zero students strongly disagreed, 7.485 (n=8) students disagreed, 3.74% (n=4) students answered not applicable, 53.27% (n = 57) students agreed and 35.51% (n = 38 students) strongly agreed.

**Question 2: By pre-preparing question I felt more confident about my performance in the major assignment and exam:** 2.8% (n = 3) students strongly disagreed; 11.21% (n = 12) students disagreed; 15.89% of students answered not applicable (n = 17), 53.27% (n = 57) students agreed and 16.82% (n = 18) students strongly agreed.

**Question 3: The pre-preparation exercises contributed to my overall learning in this subject:** 104 students responded. Of those respondents, zero strongly disagreed, 5.77% (n = 6) students disagreed, 3.85% (n = 4) students answered not applicable; 63.46% (n = 66) students agreed and 26.92% (n = 28) strongly agreed.

**Question 4: I think the weight given to this exercise as part of the overall assessment regime is appropriate?** 106 students responded. Of those respondents, 1.89% (n = 2) students strongly disagreed, 20.75% (n = 22) students disagreed, 7.55% (n = 8 students) answered not applicable, 56.60% (n = 60) agreed and 13.21% (n = 14) strongly agreed.

**Question 5: if the weight is not appropriate, what weight would you give the exercises and why?** 60 students responded to this question. The most common suggestions were to increase the value of the task from 15% to 20% (n = 11). In addition, some students suggested increasing the value to 25% (n = 5) while others suggested lowering the weight of the task to 10% (n = 5). In addition, students supported increasing the weight of each individual submission from 3% to either 4 or 5%. Of the students who responded, many indicated that they felt the weight given to the task was appropriate (n = 16).

**Question 6: How, if at all, would you improve this exercise?** 71 students responded to this question. There were a range of responses to this question, many of which offered positive feedback from, "it forced me to study every week rather than leave everything until the last minute"; "I thought they were good encouragement to actually prepare for the tutorials and do some independent research. They were also a great opportunity to practice problem questions before the exam"; it "incentivised with a relatively small amount of marks, but enough to make it worth doing, and it really does help understand the content when we're made to go through it prior to the tutorial. A much more effective method than giving marks for class participation as people just talk for the sake of being heard"; and "I think the exercise in general was really great and strongly contributed to my understanding and success in this subject so far".

Those responses which dealt with improving the task noted that "tutorials could be better structured by discussing the previous week's tutorial problem after we have received our papers back, so that we

can individually see the errors we have made and then discuss them as a class to see which mistakes were made and why. I feel this would provide a more continual learning on all of the subjects and provide more opportunity for discussion". Several students also commented that they would like a scaffold or exemplar answer, "to show what excellent answers look like" and to "provide guidance on what separates a credit, distinction and high distinction worthy answer".

## Discussion

An important matter to consider is whether the introduction of the tutorial preparation task contributed to student performance in the subject overall, or whether it merely raised student marks by 15% as a result of the low-stakes nature of the task. As the results of the written advice and exam questions demonstrate, there was a noticeable difference in the grade distribution of students who had completed the corresponding preparation task, and those who had not. As noted above, this paper has focused upon the results of Semester 2 2017, but the same trend was also observed in Semester 1 2017 for the written assignment. The most striking example of all was in relation to the Covenants exam question, where the average result for students who completed the preparation task was 12.79 out of 20, while students who had not completed the task averaged a result of 3 marks or 15% lower (see: Figure 5).It should be reiterated that the covenants tutorial preparation task was not replicated on the final exam, and the problem considered in class differed greatly from the exam question. However, it is interesting to consider that although covenants are the final tutorial topic covered in the course, 78% of students still completed the preparation task for that class. This was noteworthy as, anecdotally, the teaching team was aware that in previous semesters student effort tended to drop toward the end of the semester. Yet, in this instance, students remained motivated to complete the task.

Across both semesters, students who completed the preparation task performed more strongly on subsequent high stakes assessment tasks. However, it must be noted that there can be no claim of a causal link between completion of the task and an increase in student performance. It is worth noting that the addition of the preparation task was the only change in the Real Property curriculum between 2016 and 2017. The assigned text, the other assessments, the format of the lectures and

tutorials and the lecturers delivering the content all remained the same. It appears that the task itself is also growing in its reputation amongst students completing the course. In Semester 1 2017, approximately 75% of students in the cohort received a pass mark for the assessment task (7.5/15 or over), and in Semester 2 2017 this figure rose to approximately 92%. While this could reflect an overall stronger group of students, some comments in the student feedback survey indicated that this heightened performance may have, in fact, been a result of students in the first semester encouraging students in the second semester to apply themselves to the task. Several students commented to the effect that, 'friends of mine who completed the subject last semester told me I should really work hard on these answers, and that they would really prepare me well for the final exam'.

The student feedback results were also helpful in determining whether the task as presently formulated is striking an appropriate balance between each of the elements of the Expectancy Value Theory. According to that theory, the amount of effort a student applies to a task, and their motivation to complete that task, is a product of their expected success with respect to the task and the value attributed to the task. The survey responses to questions 1 and 3, which asked students whether they felt the task contributed to their learning experiences or their overall learning experience in the subject, received overwhelmingly positive results. Of the 107 respondents, only 10 students disagreed or strongly disagreed with either statement. Some comments in response to questions 5 and 6 noted that they felt the task 'was not overly difficult', and were given enough marks to 'make it worth doing'. However, no students commented that the task was too difficult or challenging. Arguably this perception has fed into students' expectations for success both on the tutorial preparation task itself, and in the subject more broadly.

The feedback has also been useful in identifying how modifying the value of the task could enhance effort and motivation. As question 4 of the survey demonstrates, a far higher percentage of students felt that the value attributed to the task was insufficient. Of the 106 respondents, almost 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question that asked whether they felt the weight was appropriate. This was replicated in the open-form comments to question 5, where many students indicated that the effort required to complete the task required was not adequately reflected in its value. As noted above, a common figure, one expressly

suggested by 11 students, was to increase the task from 15% to 20%, while 5 students felt that the task should be further elevated to 25%. While a strong number did feel the weight of the task was appropriate, and some even advocated for a reduction, these comments from students indicate that the effectiveness of the task could be maximised by at least trialling an increase in the value of the task. However, increasing the value of the task must be weighed against the concern that increasing its value by too great a figure detracts from the benefits of low-stakes assessment, and simply evolves into an additional high-stakes assessment item (Wise & De Mars, 2005, p. 3).

The students' suggestions for improvement are also helpful, as they reflect the need for transparency with students as to the function and purpose of the assessment (Duhart, 2015, p. 507). As noted above, students felt that the tutorials could be better structured, and the effectiveness of the task enhanced, 'by discussing the previous week's tutorial problem after we have received our papers back, so that we can individually see the errors we have made and then discuss them as a class to see which mistakes were made and why. I feel this would provide a more continual learning on all of the subjects and provide more opportunity for discussion'. This comment is particularly illuminating. If the teaching team were to adopt the course advocated by this student, the tutorial preparation tasks could serve a dual role as an assessment as well as a rolling revision of the course materials. This would allow students to revise independently while completing the tutorial task, and then to revise again after they have had suitable time to reflect upon their answer to the previous week's task.

In implementing this task, one aspect of low-stakes assessment that has come to light that has been omitted from other studies on the topic is the sustainability of the model from the perspective of the teaching team. Ideally, the requests for additional feedback referred to above could be readily introduced to maximise the effectiveness of the task as a learning tool as well as to offer students additional opportunities to re-examine earlier content from the course. Yet, practically, there will be limits to the amount of class time that can be devoted to repeating content from previous lessons without diminishing the amount of time available to cover fresh content. In addition, the marking allocation of teaching team members will play a role in precisely how much feedback can be given for each task, and how much time can be spent marking each assessment

so as to leave staff with enough time in their allocations to also mark the high-stakes assessment tasks. These competing demands must be balanced against one another so that low-stakes assessment tasks remain low-stake for both the students as well as the teacher.

## Conclusion

The low-stakes tutorial preparation assessment implemented in the Real Property course has demonstrated a positive trend of improved student performance. In relation to student results there has been a positive link between completion of the low-stakes tutorial preparation task and a higher average result upon subsequent high-stakes assessment. Further, the student feedback results demonstrate that students consider the task to be contributing to their overall learning in the subject. However, the students felt that the task required an increase in value to further incentivise completion. This feedback demonstrates a strong relationship with the Expectancy Value Theory, namely, that student effort will rise in accordance with the value attributed to the task. Based upon this research, this author considers that low-stake tutorial preparation tasks could encourage greater participation in tutorials, and, in particular, could represent a useful form of assessment for inclusion in law school courses.

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# Critical reflection in the workplace and management competencies: In service of transformation?

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*Critical reflection is understood as a valuable exercise for the creation of new meanings and behaviours. This article argues that if the focus of critical reflection is too concentrated on performance, its strength in the work environment is weakened, in other words, its potential for creating changes diminishes. This is based on an interpretive qualitative study that aims to understand the meaning that critical reflection assumes in the work environment and how it relates to managerial competence regarding professional conduct. Using narratives from the managers of a financial organisation, events involving disorienting workday dilemmas are presented, revealing moments of reflection. The actions set in motion by these reflections, and when these actions became competencies for negotiating conflicts between individual desires and the transformation of their context, are then discussed. Finally, a warning is offered about the risk of weakening the concept of critical reflection in the workplace, as it is sometimes treated merely from the performance point of view in the literature.*

***Keywords:*** *critical reflection, development of competencies, workplace, managers, financial institution, narratives*

## Introduction

This research explores the meaning of critical reflection (CR) in the workplace and its relationship to competency development. Competency studies have a strong functionalist tradition that seeks individual and collective performance for reaching economic results (McClelland, 1998; Boyatzis, 1982). Other works dedicated to understanding competency development (Sandberg & Targama; 2007 Ruth, 2006) have also followed this tradition. Although this logic is predominant in the literature and the corporate environment, some researchers are calling attention to the need to think about competencies from another perspective, that of ethics and values (Sekerka, Godwin & Charnigo, 2014; Zarifian, 1999; Cheetham & Chivers, 1998), politics (Brunstein & Boulos, 2011; Burgoyne, 1993), and social and environmental responsibility (Hall & Wagner, 2012; Van Kleef & Roome, 2007). These studies question in whose service competencies are developed and what their importance is for minimising power asymmetries and building an ethical and responsible modus operandi in companies.

Competencies of an ethical, political or socio-environmental nature demand another conception of work and new behaviours capable of promoting them. Critical reflection (CR) can be seen here can be seen here as a trigger that contributes to their emergence (Tomkins & Ulus, 2015), since it is understood as a valuable exercise that engages adults in creating critical judgments. Such an exercise strengthens the review of presuppositions and premises in search of alternative modes of action by creating new meanings and behaviours (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1990).

However, examining both the academic literature and management experience, this article argues that the meaning of CR is sometimes only understood in terms of performance without searching for context transformation. This attitude diminishes the concept and causes it to lose its transformative power.

In order to support this argument, this research begins by showing how the literature diverges in terms of the meaning of CR directed at performance and at context transformation, and its relationship to competency development. Secondly, it highlights the use of narratives as a methodological strategy since narrative allows us to access human experience directly for a deeper understanding, determining its significance and identifying with it (Goosseff, 2014). Human experience is always constructed and re-constructed in narratives from the accounts of people

who have experienced a set of events. In this sense, it resembles a film in one's head, a symbolic representation of a sequence of events linked by the person for a specific period of time (Michelson, 2015; Riessman, 2005; Boje, 2001). Narratives offered to a researcher must be understood as a version of reality that we accept by convention and necessity, rather than by empirical verification and logical requirements (Bruner, 1991).

The question this study seeks to answer is: Does CR currently have the ability to spark significant changes capable of mobilising new competencies and generating contextual transformations in the workplace? The theoretical references connect the literature of Antonacopoulou (2010), van Woerkom (2004), Mezirow (1990) and Brookfield (1995) with competency theory. A research objective has been established to understand the meaning of CR in the workplace and its relationship to managerial competency in people's professional conduct. More specifically, the intention was to: (a) identify situations involving disorienting workday dilemmas based on managers' narratives, revealing moments of critical reflection; (b) describe and analyse the actions set in motion by this reflection; and (c) discuss where these actions became competencies.

Although there is a tradition of CR research in the educational environment, there are few works that aim to understand it within the workplace (Cotter, 2014; van Woerkom, 2004). Studies that seek to establish the relationship between reflection and competencies do not always debate it from the point of view of CR theory, or even use the term "critical." Cheetham and Chivers (1998), for example, have considered reflection as a "super" meta-competency in the professional environment, one that enhances or mediates other competencies.

This article aims to advance the debate by showing how CR does not currently spark significant changes that are capable of mobilising new competencies and generating contextual transformations, as most critical literature in the area suggests. Rather, reflections—when they exist —are more in service of performance for maintaining employability. These results bring elements to the discussion about the meaning and place of CR within a company.

## Relevance of CR and its relationship with competencies

To provide support for the argument this paper wants to address, the following aspects will be emphasized in the literature review: different

approaches on CR studies, studies on critical reflections in distinct professional areas, and the connection between CR and competence.

## Different approaches to CR Studies

According to Antonacopoulou (2010), there are various notions in the literature about what it means to "be critical," anchored, above all, in critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical thought. It shows, however, that notwithstanding the different epistemologies and ontological and methodological principles of these various schools of thought, a common presupposition about what it means to be critical is that it involves questioning reason and practices themselves. Considering Aristotle's description of the three modes of knowledge: (a) scientific (επιστημε–episteme),( b) technical (τεχνη–techne) and (c) what human beings acquire with practice (φρονεσης –phronesis), the author states that the first two are more familiar to management scholars, while the third is systematically ignored, despite its relevance as a basis for reflective criticism (Antonacopoulou, 2010). Phronesis is understood as relational knowledge, founded on the virtues and standards of excellence pursued on the path to perfection. As Antonacopoulou (2010) offers: "[It] is the knowledge that defines how intentions and the course of actions to reach them are formulated. It is the practical exercise of prudent judgments in the definition and pursuit of particular goals" (p. 7).

This practical exercise of prudent judgments has the potential to bring change, for it implies the capacity to decide not only how to act, but also to reflect on the actions and intentions that support judgment. Antonacopoulou (2010) also has argued that it is only through this reflective criticism, of a phronetic orientation, that it is possible to change the results of actions and intentions.

To better understand the CR process, it is necessary to return to some questions highlighted by Jack Mezirow (1990). A sociologist and adult education teacher, Mezirow suggested that reflection allows distortions in beliefs and errors in problem solving to be corrected. In the author's view, though such a broad definition reflects its common use, the term requires additional clarification to differentiate reflection from thinking or learning. Mezirow (1990) referred to CR as the act of evaluating the justification of one's beliefs, which is the process of rationally examining the presuppositions through which we justify our convictions. This allows a

person to be exposed to points of views different from those with which he or she usually deals (when faced with a disorienting dilemma), to review the specific presuppositions about him or herself, or others until these change (Mezirow, 1981). However, Mezirow (2004) argued for a certain politically neutral position, advocating that a more inclusive epistemology should be independent of ideological, political, religious, social, gender, or racial constraints – a view that led him to be widely criticised (Gambrell, 2016).

A politically neutral position moves away from the origins of CR discussions. To Reynolds (1998), the term "critical reflection" as a concept and approach relates to the writings of the Frankfurt School members, notably Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno. The ideas of these critical theorists were increasingly guided by the work of Jurgen Habermas (1971), in terms of reflection. To Habermas (1971), the ultimate goal of critical theory lies in confronting culturally dominant ideologies that perpetuate the status quo. He links the search for reflection with the emancipatory interests of autonomy, through a process in which knowledge and action coincide with the weakening of the dominant social order. His ideas influenced radical educators, who advocated that men and women would reach a more humane society in which they would have greater influence on social, political, and cultural processes. Critical theorists believe that CR is emancipatory, that is, distinct from the resolution of everyday problems. It refers to a social and political examination that is both historical and contextual (Reynolds, 1998). In this sense, it is important to distinguish between the notion of reflection, commonly oriented to daily tasks and to the resolution of problems of a technical and practical nature, and the idea of CR, which involves analysis of a social and political nature, power, and control (Cunliffe, 2004; Reynolds, 1998).

CR empowers openness to think of new forms of organisational life because it does not conceive of the organisation as a structure to be taken for granted – an approach that favours the creation of alternative organisation models (Cunliffe, 2009). From this comes the need for literature to create spaces for CR in organisations that are conducive to the emergence of what Cotter (2014) calls new beginnings. In this context, research increases the focus on how organisations can instigate the creation of reflexive processes that foster collective questioning of assumptions as part of their organisational policy (Boud, Cressey, & Docherty, 2006; Vince & Reynolds, 2009). However, not all studies on CR are anchored in this more political and ideological perspective.

## Studies on CR in distinct professional areas

Studies on CR can be found in distinct areas of professional activity such as nursing and health promotion (Tretheway, Taylor, O'Hara, & Percival, 2015; Zori & Morrison, 2009); safety research, especially fire departments (Childs, 2005) and organizations in general (Cotter, 2014; Rigg & Trehan, 2008). For nursing, Zori and Morrison (2009) discussed how the skills of the nurse manager led to successful outcomes in delivering high quality and patient satisfaction in the workplace. According to these authors, nursing managers should be able to think critically to deal with professional challenges. Along this same line of reasoning, Tretheway et al. (2015) argued that because of their position, these professionals need to take a leading role and create the changes to achieve positive results in health organizations through self-evaluations regarding their behaviors toward patients. That is, there is an ethical imperative on the profession that demands a movement toward the practices guided by CR. However, for the authors, this fundamental challenge was underdeveloped due to a lack of CR.

In the safety area, Childs (2005) has researched the applicability and importance of CR for fire-fighting, given the link between critical thinking and the conduct examination, as well as ethical dilemmas, these professionals experience. The author said that firefighting demands increasingly complex abilities and the CR concept can positively contribute to this activity, even if some hold that using CR can sometimes feel like an inquest on firefighters' ethical and professional conduct.

In the business administration field, studies have correlated CR with the capacity to generate organizational change. However, they have been criticized for considering the construct from a purely instrumental and excessively individualized perspective (Vince, 2002). Another criticism was established by van Woerkom, Nijhof, and Nieuwenhuis (2002), who argued that most definitions of CR are not operational in an organizational environment and often characterized by processes other than visible personal transformation. However, the application of the idea of CR in the workplace is difficult due to more complex power relations between multiple actors in the context. It is especially revealed in the tension between how the members of an organization see each other when they think critically (Rigg & Trehan, 2008). Nevertheless, reflection and reflective practices have gained relevance in recent years in the workplace (Cotter, 2014), particularly in examining professional conduct in decision-

making and, more recently, organisational development. Another problem stressed in the literature is that the definitions of reflection in business administration are inconsistent, which causes confusion, as van Woerkom (2004) has shown. Some authors have employed the terms "reflection" and "critical reflection," or even "critical thinking" indistinctly without differentiating among them. Another highlight in studies on CR within organisations is the role of emotions, which can favour or block CR, but they usually are ignored (Malkki, 2010; Rigg & Trehan, 2008).

What is important to stress in this context is that "being critical is not only about revealing inequalities or systematic reasoning" (Antonacoupoulo, 2010, p. 9). CR sometimes assumes a performance dimension in the workplace, while a political framework is not always considered, as Table 1 shows.

***Table 1:*** *Critical reflection notions on two dimensions*

| Dimensions | Notions |
|---|---|
| Orientation for workplace performance | • Practical exercise of prudent judgments;<br>• Change of results of actions and intentions;<br>• Openness to disciplined thinking;<br>• Skepticism towards arguments and suppositions;<br>• Questioning of existing perspectives;<br>• Examination of professional conduct;<br>• Assessment of workplace behaviours;<br>• Visible behaviours influenced by personal motivation and by characteristics of organisational work. |
| Orientation for context transformation | • Awareness of new behaviours or ideas;<br>• Changes in dominant ideological model;<br>• Social and political as well as contextual examination;<br>• Emancipation;<br>• Questioning of beliefs and values considered right;<br>• Focus on the social aspect (concern with the collective and not with the individual);<br>• Attention to power relations;<br>• Context reconstruction. |

*Note. Source: Authors, based on the literature*

It is evident that the literature questions reason and practice on two dimensions: one directed at workplace performance (from process operationalisation to the manifestation of new professional behaviours) and another directed at context transformation (a focus on dominant power relations and emancipation).

## CR and competences

Despite these distinctions and the conceptual imprecision of what CR means, the literature has long established the importance of reflection in competency development processes (Cheetham & Chivers, 1998; Sandberg, 2000). As Sandberg and Dall'Alba (2006) propose, "without reflection, . . . we cannot question the competency we are developing and the way in which we are developing the competency" (p. 113).

In the current work, competence will be understood by an interpretative approach, based mainly on the works of Sandberg (2000). This author has argued that there are two distinct ways to understand the concept of competence and its development processes. One approach, classified by Sandberg as rationalist, defines competence as constituted by a set of attributes derived from an individual's knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA). This triggers superior results in performance (Boyartzis, 1982; McClelland, 1998). The other approach, which he called the interpretive one, is based on a phenomenological perspective, showing that competence emerges from the meaning the worker gives to his or her work in the process of that professional activity. The attributes (KSA) are triggered according to the meaning the individual gives to his or her work, implying the development of competence.

Authors who depart from the rationalist perspective will emphasise the importance of experience and reflexive processes for the development of human capacity at work. This is because a competent professional applies his or her knowledge in uncertain and unpredictable situations, seeking a structural understanding of the phenomenon he/she faces and making decisions based on appropriate judgments (Illeris, 2011). Reflection is understood as a meta-competence (Cheetham & Chivers, 1998), and refers to a practical understanding of situations that builds on acquired knowledge and transforms it as it increases the diversity of situations faced by the professional (Zarifian, 1999). Therefore, competence manifests itself, or develops, as individuals encounter

unforeseen events, changing situations, dilemmas, and challenges (Illeris, 2011; Zarifian, 1999; Merizow, 1981). Mezirow (1981) explained that, after the individual faces a dilemma that triggers a reflexive process, this can provoke a whole mechanism of self-examination, evaluation of assumptions, exploration of new roles, relationships and actions, acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and planning of new courses of actions, among other things, which allows a competence to be built. No matter what, our reflexive processes emerge from the dilemmas and events we are going through, which will enhance the improvement of a competence we already had, or even the development of a new competence.

It is important to understand, therefore, that CR is not automatically activated in workplace performance. It is normally set in motion by an unexpected disturbance, event, or contingency (Mezirow, 1990). Such disturbances can range from minor distractions to great ruptures. However, CR also can occur voluntarily and deliberately when professionals seek to understand or improve their performance at work. In this case, they may be motivated by self-reflection, critical debates among colleagues, or participation in training or education programs. Whatever the case, it increases awareness about how work is understood and what it means to each individual (Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2006). In this sense, identifying the events that sparked CR is as important as understanding their content and the competencies they mobilised. That is exactly what this research seeks to analyse.

Considering the relationship between CR and competence in the workplace, the next section presents the methodological approach adopted in this research. It also explains the procedures used to reach the proposed objectives.

## Methods

This research follows the interpretivist paradigm, necessarily assuming a qualitative character (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). That is, it sought to observe the studied phenomenon and describe it based on the meanings attributed by the managers as study participants in the situations they experienced at the workplace.

To reach the proposed objectives, the research was conducted following the narrative study presuppositions (Michelson, 2015; Goosseff,

2014; Riessman, 2005), more specifically in thematic modality, which emphasizes what the interviewee said and how he or she said it (Riessman, 2005). The main data construction strategy was an in-depth, semi-structured interview, due to the interest in knowing what meaning CR assumes in the workplace and its relationship with managers' competency in their professional conduct. Ten people in a supervisory capacity were interviewed (three directors, three superintendents, and four managers), chosen for the variety of activity sectors present in a bank, with headquarters in Brazil. The following criteria were used to select the studied company: (a) a bank in the Brazilian financial system (a highly-regulated sector with pragmatic operational processes), undergoing a strategic transformative process in search of interests other than performance—greater relationship with employees and clients and (b) interviewees with experience in situations that revealed CR moments (a variety of professional experiences not limited to daily operational activities).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted that covered: what management meant to each interviewee, the person's professional habits, descriptions of one or more situations the interviewee had experienced, the moment in which that situation occurred, how the person reflected on the situation, if the behaviours he/she assumed after CR changed his/her relationship with the organisation's interest groups, if the workplace context changed, and what consequences this change had on his/her professional activity, and whether competencies were developed or not. The interviewees' and the company's identities were not revealed.

For data analysis, the thematic analyses proposed by Riessman (2005) were used. The context for analysis was the research subjects' reports of their experiences in everyday situations that generate reflections predisposing them to review behaviours in professional activity and/or transform the work environment. The analyses were divided into three guiding axes: (a) event-dilemma that triggered CR, (b) actions set in motion by reflection, and (c) development of competence. From each one of these axes, categories emerged allowing identification and analysis on how CR is manifested in actions and competencies, as shown in Table 2 below:

***Table 2:*** *Guiding axes of research emerging from event–dilemma/CR*

| Dilemmas that triggered CR | Actions set in motion by reflection | Competencies developed |
|---|---|---|
| Eminently Ethical | • Career rebuilding<br>• Firing or not firing<br>• Reviewing management style<br>• Refusing to act outside ethical principles<br>• Resigning<br>• Confronting organisational politics | • No new competency was set in motion in favour of context transformation<br>• Competencies aimed at personal performance<br>• Confrontational competencies for context transformation |
| Eminently Political | | |
| Ethical-Political | | |

*Source: Authors*

## Presentation, analysis and interpretation of results

### Part I - Dilemmas that triggered CR

The first axis deals with the meaning and management habits the managers reported, indicating the situation in which CR occurred and how it unfolded during a disorienting dilemma. Mezirow (1981) defined a disorienting dilemma as that which exposes the person to meanings that diverge from those with which he or she habitually deals, generating CR on specific presuppositions regarding self and others. Thus, considering these aspects, the present study identifies and presents situations involving the following disorienting dilemmas: (a) Eminently Ethical, (b) Eminently Political, and (c) Ethical-Political.

### Eminently ethical dilemma

Out of the total ten interviewees, three described eminently ethical dilemmas in their narratives (30%): two managers (M1 and M4) and a superintendent (S1).

Manager 1 (M1) narrated the experience of outsourcing to a credit call centre. According to this manager's report, the company president did

not really want to outsource the call centre, but rather to learn from the process of outsourcing. He wanted to discover the best outsourcing practices and apply them to his organisation. This was not ethical behaviour; after all, the president was bringing in the outsourcings to present their knowledge base, and that is not what would happen.

M1 revealed CR in his narrative by expressing the conflict between following management orders and deceiving others, which would put his professional image at risk. As to the nature of M1's CR triggered by his dilemma, it is evident that despite the managerial habit of following the dictates of his environment, he exercised prudent judgment (Antonacopoulou, 2010).

Manager 4 (M4) expressed another eminently ethical disorienting dilemma. She described a financial operation that tested her ethics. M4 had seniority in her role, working with elaborate financial products, and at that time was structuring an operation to serve a client. M4's CR occurred when her superiors pressured her to perform an illegal operation. She was aware that what she was being asked to do was not correct, that the operation could not be performed using an opportunistic interpretation of the law.

Superintendent 1 (S1) presented a different situation from the two managers. It involved an activity that monitored the quality of credit offer calls with clients and non-clients of a financial institution. It required an analysis of the recorded telephone contact between bank and client. On the occasion of analysis of the recording, it was identified that an employee tampered with the recording, lying about the credit granted, and benefiting from the system while maintaining performance. This was a departure from what S1 and his organisation considered an ethical principle and damaged the relationship between the organisation and the client. This situation did not lead the manager to reflect critically, that is, he did not change his assumptions. Despite the event, his belief remained that all employees must adhere to the pre-established ethical standards and rules that form the company's culture. In the narrated case the event is not observed as a trigger for RC from individual assumptions, but something that Mezirow (1990) calls an interpretation of experience through a meaning scheme by cause-effect relationships, or by a sequence of expected events.

## Eminently political dilemma

Four interviewees presented situations with disorienting dilemmas of an eminently political nature, revealing power asymmetries among members at higher and lower levels of given areas: Manager 3 (M3), Superintendent 3 (S3), Director 2 (D2) and Director 3 (D3).

Manager 3 (M3) had an experience that led him to examine his professional conduct, reflecting critically, while his power was questioned and threatened. The dilemma involved a member of his team. Hierarchically, a superintendent was above M3 with a team of 10 people below him. However, there was one employee who – no matter how much M3 insisted she make everything very clear regarding each person's roles and responsibilities – never respected the organisational hierarchy, going straight to the superintendent. The power asymmetry among the members at higher and lower levels of her area became a focus of attention and tension. M3's narrative exposes a CR process containing strong emotional pressure, described by the employee's feelings of "hatred". The presence of emotions in M3's critical reasoning reinforces the attention that authors such as Malkki (2010) give to the relationship between critical reasoning and emotions.

Another case involving an eminently political dilemma was the one narrated by Superintendent 3 (S3). His dilemma deals with balancing different interests in a bank merger. He reported that the moment of his CR occurred when his area participated in the merger between banks "X" and "Y". He described a more complicated management process, in which he had to balance different interests among various groups in the merger between these two banks: superiors, old team, new team, and expatriates from the foreign branch. His belief (presupposition) was that he should help others, without damaging himself within the organisation. Therefore, it is evident that in his personal dilemma, S3 was "invited" to change the way he worked.

Director 2 (D2) narrated a situation that took place when new management replaced his immediate superior. He reported that when a professional who had been his peer became his boss, his area began to experience problems. When the new superior took control of the area, he began to act according to his own interests and power, generating conflicts. One of the conflicts involved whether there would be team development or headcount reduction to attain faster financial results.

D2 reflected critically between doing the right thing based on his beliefs about valuing human beings, giving people the opportunity to develop, or obeying orders to maximise profit at any cost, as proposed by his immediate superior.

Another narrative reflecting an eminently political dilemma was given by Director 3 (D3). His immediate superior began to demand a much more political management style than what previously had existed at the organisation. They asked him to report to the bank's senior management that there were flaws in other areas of the organisation but not in his, even though this was untrue. D3 did not agree. The idea had been to expose the failings of others in order to hide the supervisor's own failings. D3's CR is revealed in the face of a dilemma involving a power game within the financial institution where he worked.

### Ethical–political dilemma

The circumstances that caused Manager 2 (M2), Director 1 (D1) and Superintendent 2 (S2) to reflect critically differ from those of other interviewees. While the others reported dilemmas that were eminently ethical or political, M2, D1, and S2 described situations involving dilemmas that were simultaneously ethical and political.

Manager 2 (M2) narrated a dilemma in which he questioned his posture as a manager. The dilemma was ethical–political as it contained a relationship between the manager's acts and the value system that guided those acts (Cheetham & Chivers, 1998, Zarifian, 1999). The situation was a conflict with an employee during an intense and stressful feedback process. M2 explained that the workload was intense, which was causing everyone in that department to be overburdened. The feedback session was the catalyst for a moment of aggression. He found himself shouting at his subordinate, questioning why she had not acted according to management rules to obtain results, instead making decisions on her own. He reported that at that moment he did not consider the existence of alternative ways of thinking and attaining results, or even the fact that people themselves are different. He acknowledged that he acted arrogantly at the time, that he did not respect others, and that he thought his subordinates had to obey his rules due to his powerful position. During feedback, an "emotional explosion" occurred and he saw himself lacking respect for his employee,

which led him to reflect on his professional competence and review the meaning of being a manager.

Director 1 (D1) narrated another case that reflects an ethical-political dilemma. She witnessed the extrajudicial liquidation of a bank, known here as bank "Z". This type of situation is uncommon and left a deep mark on her. She had been a retail operations director at bank "Z". Despite her own and her team's professional competence in building the bank, they became known as a fraudulent company due to the liquidation. Her employment prospects and her professional and personal image were damaged, along with the prospects and images of others who worked at that institution. The situation made her rethink her competence as a professional. Mezirow (1981) has stated that CR involves awareness of why we attach ourselves to the meanings we attribute to reality, especially regarding our roles and relationships. The situation Director 1 reported is not quite an eminently political dilemma, for her narrative does not express an explicit intention of balancing multiple interests, such as described by Holland, Ritvo, and Kovner (1997). Although the director has acknowledged that the bank's owner should be in prison, she said there are no other explicit ethical resentments linked to the fraud, revealing a superposition of personal values in the conflict.

In the event Superintendent 2 (S2) reported, CR was triggered by a more technical episode: tension between the financial results that a financial institution's commercial area expected in an exchange operation and the organisational control necessary to reduce operational risk. In exchange operations, which S2 managed, there is counterpoint between operation control, external to the financial institution, and the client who wants to send money abroad, and vice versa. The ethical-political dilemma lay in the following question: Up to what point is it necessary to delve into a client's life to restrict a commercial operation due to sector regulations?

## Part II – Actions set in motion by reflection

Considering the dilemmas above, this section describes the actions set in motion by reflection, summarised in Table 3:

***Table 3:*** *Actions set in motion by CR*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st | Career rebuilding (D1) |
| 2nd | Firing or not firing (S1 and S3) |
| 3rd | Reviewing management style (M2) |
| 4th | Refusing to act outside ethical principles (M1 and S2) |
| 5th | Resigning (D3 and M4) |
| 6th | Confronting organisational politics (D2 and M3) |

*Note. Source: Authors*

## Rebuilding a career

The initiative toward career rebuilding was one of the actions described, emerging in Director 1's speech as a personal transformation necessity following liquidation by the Brazilian Central Bank (BACEN). The disorienting event affected the interviewee profoundly, generating feelings of frustration, anger, and doubts about her own ability as an executive to deal with organisational challenges. The desire for self-fulfillment, linked to a questioning of presuppositions, seems to have been her central experience in the organisational environment. She reports how she began to change her behavior, learning to listen to people, becoming more humble, and starting to better analyse those with whom she was working. She sought, thus, to rebuild her career and her way of working somewhere else. Her report of personal transformation and changes of presuppositions (Brookfield, 1995) was individual and not collective. Personal transformation occurred as a positive effect of CR, directed at professional performance, efficacy, and belief in her ability to organise and perform her resources when managing conflict situations.

## Firing or not firing

The actions S1 and S3 set in motion related to a decision on whether to fire employees. S1 said a decision-maker must act quickly to resolve an unexpected event. His efforts were directed at following organisational rules so as not to be penalised. He believed he acted positively in the face

of the event: firing the employee, reinforcing efficiency in controlling the situation, and reinforcing his relationship with the organisation's interest groups. S3 also had to decide, during the merger, whether to fire the old team from bank "X", the new employees from bank "Y", or the expatriates who came from the foreign headquarters of bank "Y". In this case, however, he sought a balance between following orders for reducing staff (he even fired a few people), and simultaneously developing those who remained in his or other areas. Therefore, he was able to adapt to the merger between "X" and "Y" and maintain his employability. It is an example of how actions set in motion by CR ultimately present personal interest in the organisation's survival: conciliation between personal values and following the institution's rules, adapting to change.

### Reviewing management style

M2's disorienting dilemma, a conflict with an employee during a feedback session, altered his personal belief of what it means to be a manager. The action set in motion by CR materialises in a new approach to dealing with the team. He began to communicate differently with his group, stimulating cooperation and teamwork. In his opinion, this relationship with them improved and, consequently, so did the organisational climate. His report confirms van Woerkom's (2004) position that CR on presuppositions can lead to significant transformations in work organisation. Thus openness to new behaviors, challenging predominant modes of action, is reinforced (Brookfield, 1995).

### Refusing to act outside ethical principles

The action of refusing to act outside ethical principles in the reports of M1 and S2 was a priori an immediate posture of non-compliance with organisational guidelines. However, it also was an adaptation to the culture proposed by the organisation. In facing the dilemma, M1 reveals a behaviour different from what was expected of him as professional. Instead of following the order of the higher levels to get all the information from suppliers and outsourcers to the organisation, he continued to work with suppliers in a transparent manner, preserving the corporate image. Despite the discrepancy between the organisational culture and its personal values, there was no movement of M1 toward

the change in the organisational context (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1990). What happened was an adaptation to the situation for his own survival in the direction of professional performance.

With the event S2 reported, in the exchange operations, the ethical-political dilemma was rooted in the question: Up to what point is it necessary to delve into a client's life in order to restrict a commercial operation due to sector regulations? S2 reported how he sought to balance commercial demands and regulatory aspects without putting the bank at risk. He did so via direct communication with those involved, an approach that also minimised power asymmetries (Brunstein & Boulos, 2011). He also stressed that although he was working toward professional performance, trying to reach the commercial area's goals in harmony with the company's culture, he had refused to set aside his principle of reimbursing a client for an incorrect operation.

### Resigning

D3's and M4's reports reveal a sacrifice of employability in favour of self-preservation, materialised in the intention or act of resignation. D3's immediate superior began to demand a much more political management style than what previously had existed at the organisation. These changes consisted of imposing what should be done, acting without respect for others (both areas and people) and, especially, damaging other areas of the organisation. After reflecting critically, D3 left the organisation. M4 also described a situation involving a financial structuring operation that tested her ethics. In this instance, the pressure to follow orders from upper management clashed with what she believed to be correct: performing operations legally. The action set in motion by M4's critical reasoning was resignation. However, she reported that before she could put her decision into practice, the client gave up on the operation, to her great relief. Thus she was able to maintain her position at the bank.

Although in both situations the limits of management at any price were observed, the dilemma existing in the organization was not confronted. The action set in motion did not reveal personal transformation of presuppositions leading to actions and practices that were more adequate (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1990).

## Confronting organisational politics

The action of confronting organisational politics was identified in the reports of M3 and D2, who were being pressured to fire employees. M3 gave employees the opportunity to relocate and D2 paved the way for inclusion of older professionals in banking activity. This led to difficulties and changes in the relationship with immediate management, the team, and other areas of the organisation.

The sacrifice of employability in favour of team development, in D2's recounting, resulted from a behaviour directed at changing his context. He was fired for resisting established power in the financial institution. However, D2 influenced his team to rethink the direction the organisation was taking. D2's action relates to what Habermas (1971) has postulated about the link between the search for reflection and the emancipatory interests of autonomy and responsibility. Nonetheless, although the action D2 sets in motion differs from everyday problem resolution, as described, and although it does not seek to weaken the financial institution's dominant social arrangement (to increase results), a political–social (not firing) concern is evident. D2 considered the fate of other team members. Despite the price of this choice (having to leave the organisation), the strengthened belief is that things can be done differently in a financial institution, that there is more than one way.

## Part III – Discussion – Were Competencies Developed?

The third guiding axis of this research resides in the question: Up to what point did the actions set in motion become competencies capable of negotiating conflicts between individual desires and context transformation (Mezirow, 1990)? Did CR and the actions the managers set in motion in any way become competencies, whether directed at performance or context transformation? The first thing to consider is that the managers certainly mobilised resources, knowledge, and their relationship networks to find solutions for the events and dilemmas they faced. However, what was the result of all this?

a) Three situations are evident here:

   *No new competency* was set in motion in favour of context transformation (Narratives: M1, M4, D3 and S1). The moment they saw themselves faced with ethical and/or political situations

that clashed with their principles, or events that led them to interpret the experience through behaviours expected by the organisational culture, they did not show competencies of a social or collective nature. The exercise of reflection reveals an expanded awareness of the events experienced, but this did not translate into action.

b) *Competencies* aimed at personal performance (Narratives D1 and M2). Whether through career rebuilding after the bank's liquidation or changing the way of communicating with the team and creating a more cooperative environment by improving the organisational climate, here are narratives where CR and action set in motion competencies aimed at personal development and professional survival.

c) *Confrontational competencies* for context transformation (Narratives S2, S3, M3 and D2). Faced with ethical and/or political dilemmas, they stopped behaviours they considered inadequate despite management pressure; they sought to balance conflicting demands and chose not to obey firing orders they deemed arbitrary, thereby sacrificing their own job or adapting to organisational changes.

Not every reflection actually led to the development of a new competency. Many of the actions, although they revealed ethical and/or political dilemmas, were strongly motivated by job preservation and performance. Context may also not have contributed to competency development, as shown by authors such as Boud et al. (2006) and Vince (2002). Reflection in the work environment can be fostered or hampered by ethical, cultural, or managerial issues (levels of vigilance and power).

Nevertheless, the managers' reports also signaled a strong desire to think about management and perform it differently. What one can see, above all, is a desire for change. CR was not necessarily able to create new management competencies or even to overcome the problems and dilemmas that emerged, at least not in their totality. However, they motivated a significant shift in perspective, which when not harnessed to self-interest or personal preservation and performance, manifested itself as confrontation for context alteration. It was not enough, but positive nonetheless. It is possible to conclude that the more movements of this

nature that occur within organisations, the more change is generated. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage them.

It is important to highlight one last point. The analysed narratives reflect a reality limited to professionals of a financial organisation in contemporary Brazil. Although the results could be different in other contexts, such as varying historical periods or companies, this is a snapshot that helps us understand a social phenomenon expressed in the narratives. It also aids in finding clues about managers' reflections and actions when they are encouraged to think about dilemmas that provoked their CR. In addition, as McKenna (1999) has shown, it is not the stories themselves that are important, but the use we make of them in thinking about the development of individuals, managers, and organisations.

## Conclusion

The study's first revelation is that the reports always show dilemmas involving an ethical, political, or ethical–political question. The narratives expressed situations involving values and power, presented in emotionally-laden speech. This not only corroborates Malkki (2010) by speaking of the relevance of considering emotions in CR studies, but also shows the political and ethical struggles with which the professionals live. These struggles may be with themselves, as in the case of the manager who reviewed his behaviour when he saw himself verbally attacking an employee, or in conflicts with superiors and peers. Technical-operational work situations are not what the narratives present.

A second aspect, which unfolds from the first, is that the actions emerging from the dilemmas that sparked CR, despite being of an ethical and/or political nature, were not necessarily in service of higher ideals. Many of them, more than anything, threatened these managers' employability or their power; subsequent actions reflected the search for security, not a change in context (Mezirow, 1990). As a result, competencies—when they were developed—were directed more at performance and self-interest (Childs, 2005; Vince, 2002) than at context transformation for the collective (Brookfield, 1995; Habermas, 1971; Mezirow, 1990).

The CR experiences that generated rupture with given organisational practices, policies, or behaviors—and which did in fact become new competencies—were few, such as in the cases of confronting

organisational politics and balancing conflicting demands. This is because in these situations there was a fundamental transformation in the base that sustained the financial institution's business (alterations in strategy, structure, control systems, power distribution etc.) or in individual behaviour in the face of the situation.

There can be many explanations for this scenario. The experiences the managers narrated involved individual dilemmas, but not collective dilemmas, which means they were incapable of generating collective movement. Another explanation could involve the very strength of organisational structure and power structure, which often blocks change of any nature. Another factor could be that the managers did not possess a genuine desire for deeper systemic changes, since in many of the cases criticism and reflection were more in service of preserving their jobs than any intention to transform.

Regardless of the reasons that can be discussed here, the principal debate is about the place that CR assumes in the workplace. A question arises from this scenario: Is there space for reflection of this type in the context of companies, as Mezirow (1990), Brookfield (1995) and Antonacopoulou (2010) suggest? If there is, how can it be attained? What are its limitations and possibilities? How can it be strengthened? On the one hand, the most obvious answer seems to be that the results of such reflection are imprisoned by the power structure in companies and the fear of job loss, which prevent reflection from materialising into competencies for change. On the other hand, it is worth asking up to what point managers, individually and collectively, see themselves in the role of relevant actors who should not only reproduce and operate the system as context imposes it, but also produce qualitatively better answers for the organisation in total.

Finally, this work maintains that we run the risk of weakening the relevance of the concept of CR in organisations by reducing it to performance, which would merely place it in service of the status quo. When the focus is too concentrated on performance, the possibility of considering CR in the workplace for developing competencies for context transformation – its ultimate purpose – is greatly reduced.

The discussion initiated here could advance in future studies on the meaning of CR in the workplace from the standpoint of context transformation. There is a need to think about viable and interesting

ways to strengthen this type of reflection and its materialisation into actual competencies. This can be done both in the organisational universe itself and in business schools, instigating the capacity of future generations of businesspeople to think reflectively and critically despite all the structural constraints of the corporate environment. Above all, what is important is the belief that another type of management is possible, and that the exercise of CR can contribute to minimising the supremacy of mere self-interest.

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**Book review**

# Experience and education

John Dewey
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Reviewed by Dr Christine Schulz
Deakin University

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John Dewey was a philosopher, psychologist and educator. *Experience and education* was published to honour Dewey as the Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series' 'first and tenth lecturer' (p. ix). His discussion is contextualised within the American education system of the 1930s. He advocates a philosophy of education based on quality, authentic and related experiences which develop learner knowledge to inform decision making during future experiences. His belief in authentic, active, experiential learning is a seminal cornerstone to my construct of applied learning pedagogy. Subsequently in this review I purposely focus on pedagogical aspects which are crucial to turn experience into education.

Dewey begins by unpacking the binaries between traditional and progressive education. He refers to traditional education as imposing knowledge already known on learners in a context controlled by the

teacher, while progressive education leverages possibilities from what is not-yet-known and promotes learner individuality and creativity. In arguing for a progressive approach to education he does not reject everything represented by traditional education, instead he acknowledges the difficulties in determining the role traditional knowledge has in developing learning which optimises the benefits of experience. The solution to this problem he says is 'a well thought-out philosophy of the social factors that operate in the constitution of individual experience' (p. 9).

Dewey then goes on to discuss the need for a 'theory of experience' rather than learning which attempts to be progressive but operates 'blindly and in confusion' (p. 12). Dewey discusses some of the challenges he sees in education through experience and suggests how solutions might be formulated.

Among the challenges he identifies are challenging a belief 'that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative' (p. 13). Experience can easily become 'mis-educative' or a barrier to growth from experience. Likewise while an experience might be enjoyable this does not necessarily promote personal growth. Experiences that have no coherence or rational framework in which they are situated do not necessarily result in cumulative learning foundations for future learning. Subsequently while traditional schooling approaches may include learning experiences he is critical of their ability to connect to 'further experience' (p. 16).

He argues that 'the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of contemporary experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experience' (p. 17). These experiences are not random activities but thoughtfully constructed, taking into account content, teaching and learning approaches, logistics and the socio-cultural construct of the environment in which they will be undertaken. He emphasises that while traditional education might be seen as routine repetition of ideas and resources neither is progressive education 'a matter of planless [sic] improvisation' (p. 18).

Dewey then provides philosophical analysis to argue criteria, or principles, which impact on a theory of experience. His critical discussion compares and analyses the implications of traditional versus progressive approaches to education. He highlights the challenges in

defining a construct of growth as a result of experience due to the value of different experiences. He considers at length, through providing examples, the elements of interaction and situation which, he argues, are 'inseparable from each other' (p. 41). Interaction relates to both the interaction of the learner with their environment and also to the embedded cognitive interaction within the learner as experience changes and challenges the way the learner thinks and acts. Interaction also affects the philosophical element of continuity of learning; that is, how a learner's previous experience affects their future learning from experience. The principle of situation is a consideration because learning is an interaction between the learner and their environment (p. 41). The conditions which surround the learning experience will impact in some way on subsequent growth and continuity of learning. Teachers who use a theory of experience in their work have a responsibility to ensure the principles of continuity, interaction and situation are optimised for a 'worth-while' (p. 44, p. 51) learning experience to occur.

This section also considers the challenges and moral implications for teachers who need to ensure learner growth is positive without imposing control over the learners. In a model of education through experience, the teacher must be willing to establish a professional pedagogical relationship with the learner in which the educator might share, without imposing, personal insights and experiences. At the same time, it is necessary that teachers learn about the interests and needs of the learners who are in their care. Teachers need an ability to identify potential for learning outside the confines of classrooms and schools.

In the next section Dewey, although acknowledging exceptions to his reflections and the flawed nature of any attempt to propose generalisations, considers how social control might differ between traditional schools and progressive schools. He suggests that in traditional schools the need to maintain order may be forced on the teacher because the 'school was not a group or community held together by participation in common activities' (p. 60). It is more likely, however, that in progressive schools learning through experience is a 'social enterprise in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute' (p. 61). Subsequently individual responsibility is promoted which optimises the likelihood of the learners developing the ability to moderate their own social behaviour, or at least growing an ability to do so. The binary to this, he says, is that many young people who may have behaviour

difficulties might be enrolled in progressive schools 'as a last resort' (p. 62). However, even if progressive schools have high numbers of students with challenging behaviours he believes that a lack of social control might not originate from student behaviour. The more likely origin being a lack of thoughtful and informed planning of learning activities which takes into account the importance of continuity, situation and interaction while allowing for individual creativity and agency. Dewey again refers to the changed role of the teacher in learning through social experience by saying '[t]he teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities' (p. 66).

Having considered social control, Dewey then discusses the nature of freedom arguing that the two seemingly opposing forces are relational. He proposes that the 'alternative to externally imposed inhibition is inhibition through an individual's own reflection and judgement' (p. 75). He highlights that while the 'ideal aim of education is creation of power of self-control' (p. 75) the 'mere removal of external control is no guarantee for the production of self-control' (p. 75). The brief section provides a connector to the following one concerning the meaning of purpose.

Dewey says that impulse initially drives formation of purpose. However in determining a purpose first an assessment of the conditions and understanding of the *'significance'* (p. 79 italics in original) of the conditions is required. The assessment is informed by prior experiences. In order for students to assess conditions and understand the significance of learning Dewey continues to stress the role of the teacher to know students well so as to best support the development of an organised plan by a group of learners. In this way learning becomes 'a co-operative enterprise, not a dictation' (p. 85).

The book culminates in Dewey emphasising that to conceive education in terms of experience (p. 86) the subject matter must first 'fall within the scope of ordinary life-experiences' (p. 87). Then, in order to have continuity, the challenge for educators is to continually build on the original experiences in order to present 'new problems which by stimulating new ways of observation and judgment will expand the area of further experience' (p. 90).

Importantly Dewey asserts that challenging a traditional view of delivering education requires the education setting to have an 'articulate and coherent' (p. 18) philosophy of education. The setting cannot rely

on mindless abstract words to justify contemporary use of habitual and historical educative approaches and 'established routines' (p. 18) of teaching and learning. Neither is it acceptable to promote a learning program based on experience and merely argue that 'education is found in life-experience' (p. 53). The need for progressive education to have a 'philosophy of education based upon a philosophy of experience' is much more urgent than for traditional education providers.

Dewey warns that implementing an order of education based on new conceptions is challenging when it goes against the grain of well-trod paths. Eighty years after Dewey's address attempts are still being made to move away from the well-trod path of a mass initialised approach to schooling although there are signs of progress. For those familiar with the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) a senior years pathway in Victoria, it is clear that Dewey's thinking about experience and education has seminally informed the theoretical foundations on which the program is based. Additionally authentic learning approaches have made inroads into pre-school and early years' curriculum.

On a personal level, the thoughts and philosophies expressed in Experience and Education are vital ingredients in ongoing conversations with students and colleagues regarding learning through experience, what is learning and what is education. A book well worth re-reading or using as an introduction to the work of John Dewey.

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