Looking back and moving forward:
Celebrating 50 years

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The *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* (formerly the *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*) is an official publication of Adult Learning Australia (ALA). It is concerned with the theory, research and practice of adult and community education, and to promote critical thinking and research in this field. Its prime focus is on Australia, though papers relating to other contexts are also sometimes published. Papers in the refereed section of the Journal have been blind peer reviewed by at least two members from a pool of specialist referees from Australia and overseas.

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AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

Volume 51, Special Edition December 2011

Looking back and moving forward: 50th Anniversary Special Edition

3 Prologue
Dorothy Lucardie

5 Foreword
Sally Thompson

8 Introduction
Tom Short and Peter Willis

Refereed papers

17 Through the looking glass: adult education through the lens of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* over fifty years
Roger Harris and Anne Morrison

53 All over, red rover? The neglect and potential of Australian adult education in the community
Barry Golding and Annette Foley

72 Authenticity through reflexivity: connecting teaching philosophy and practice
Catherine Jenkins

90 Recognition of prior learning (RPL): can intersubjectivity and philosophy of recognition support better equity outcomes?
Jen Hamer

110 Scheherazade's secret: the power of stories and the desire to learn
Peter Willis

123 Communities of practice in a voluntary youth organisation: reaching for the sky and building social capital
Bill Chan and Tom Short

150 Launching a career or reflecting on life? Reasons, issues and outcomes for candidates undertaking PhD studies mid-career or after retirement compared to the traditional early career pathway
Tom Stehlik

170 The learning projects of rural third age women: enriching a valuable community resource
Glenna Lear

180 Is the use of video conferencing and supporting technologies a feasible and viable way to woo farmers back into farmer education?
Margaret Brown and Tom Fraser

Special conference papers

192 Arnold Hely and Australian adult education
Roger Morris

205 Art, disability, learning and the dance of my life
Faith Thorley

213 Looking forward: Community Gateways at Victoria University
Christine Mountford

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 51, Special Edition, December 2011

Prologue

Dorothy Lucardie
President, Adult Learning Australia

Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Adult Learning association (now Adult Learning Australia, ALA) and journal (the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, AJAL*) is an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved for adult learners over this period of time and what remains to be improved for the future. While Australia provides a comprehensive school, VET and university system, adults have the right to have access to a robust adult education system.

As a professional association, ALA provides a broad umbrella for adult educators, adult education organisations, community agencies and adult learners to come together to learn from each other and to provide advice to government on the issues and possible solutions that face adult learners in Australia. Members of ALA value the access to updated information through our newsletter *Quest* and online bulletins. They access professional development opportunities by attending our annual conference and participating in regular webinars, and are stimulated by the excellent *Australian Journal of*

Adult Learning, which publishes research and practice articles from Australia and overseas.

Through these mechanisms ALA links adult educators, who are often working in isolation, and enables the development of not only the individual members but also the programs and services that are delivered to adult learners in Australia. This special edition of *AJAL* celebrates fifty years of publishing many varied and diverse papers on adult education and continues to support our learning as adult educators.

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 51, Special Edition, December 2011

Foreword

Sally Thompson
Director, Adult Learning Australia

This special issue of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* contains papers relating to the fiftieth anniversary of the association and the journal, with the theme of 'Looking back and moving forward: celebrating 50 years of Adult Learning Australia'.

ALA's mission is for all Australians to have equitable access to lifelong and lifewide learning. By lifelong we mean learning that goes beyond school, including into the senior years. By lifewide, we mean learning that provides adults with meaningful work and livelihoods, but also learning that builds families and communities, a vibrant democracy and a society where all are valued, including First Nations people.

It is a broad and ambitious mission, and as with all ambitious missions, the path ahead will always look steep and the steps behind never quite far enough below. Nonetheless, for fifty years men and women of goodwill have pursued the goal of an Australia where lifelong learning unlocks the capacity for all to share our wealth and leave a better country for our children than the one we inherited.

In and of itself, our fifty-year journey is an achievement worth celebrating.

The writers in this edition are perhaps typical of the men and women who have made up our movement over the past fifty years, working as they do in universities and centres for adult education, in communities, farms and factories, in the military and in civil society organisations. What connects them is a focus on the learner rather than an exclusive focus on the institutional arrangements in which those learners are situated, and a belief that learning is inherently valuable and serves a range of purposes including vocational, civic, social and family purposes.

Current national policy for adult and community education is outlined in the 2008 Ministerial Declaration on ACE which recognises that in Australia ACE refers to both a set of not-for-profit providers of adult education and also to a set of programs that typically have no academic pre-requisites, are less formal and may or may not have a vocational outcome. ALA's formal policy position, adopted in 2010, is that we want both of these. We want high quality lifelong and lifewide learning programs irrespective of who delivers them, and we also believe that a network of strong, not-for-profit, community-managed organisations is essential to making sure that this occurs in every community, no matter how small, remote or diverse its population. We also think that not-for-profit ACE organisations including neighbourhood houses, community colleges, WEAs and centres for continuing education most effectively deliver lifelong learning because they combine informal learning opportunities such as community management and civic participation alongside more formal learning options. They are also able to adapt national and state policies and programs to meet local aspirations in a way that larger and more formal institutional models are not. It is a unique and powerful combination and one that we are proud to advocate to governments.

Our desire for both ‘programs’ and ‘providers’ is manifested in our policy statement ‘The Adult Learning Challenge’, which outlines the type of lifelong learning programs we want from Australian governments and the role that we see for not-for-profit ACE organisations. The six policy ‘asks’ are:family and community responses to Indigenous adult education

- the right to adult literacy education as an inherent part of the right to education
- learning opportunities that support an ageing population
- learning that builds civic participation and active citizenship
- non-formal lifelong learning opportunities for those Australians who miss out on them (usually those who are outside the workforce or in casual, low-paid jobs)
- a strong network of local, not-for-profit, community-managed ACE organisations.

As with all ambitious journeys we have many fellow travellers. Our diversity comes about because each subset of ACE providers arose organically through waves of social movements, the first of these arguably being the mechanics institutes, schools of mines and circulating libraries. These were essentially workers movements but workers movements that believed that the lives of working people could be enriched by fuller civic and social lives and that lifelong learning was the key to building these lives. I commend to you a sample of the writings of the current generation of thinkers and activists for lifelong and lifewide learning for all Australians.

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
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Introduction

Tom Short and Peter Willis
University of South Australia

This special issue of the journal, with its title ‘Looking back and moving forward: celebrating fifty years of Adult Learning Australia’, has this general historical theme in mind. It looks at where have we come from and how this has shaped our present and future: the present twenty-first century world with its changing technologies and social relationships and its challenge to adult learning methodologies. It covers current questions relating to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable practices for adult education providers; communities of practice; technologies and new learning; disability; health; environment; access and equity; and the ageing population. Finally the authors explore future trends and their challenges to adult learning provision: work-related learning; adult learning providers; TAFE and the private sector; VET in schools and the role of non-formal education and learning. This special edition of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* has refereed and special conference papers but no book reviews or other reports. The following provides a brief overview of the themes explored in the papers.

The themes of the papers

In the opening article, ‘Through the looking glass: adult education through the lens of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* over fifty years’, Roger Harris and Anne Morrison from the University of South Australia explore the history of adult education in Australia by examining the major themes that have emerged in the editions of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* in its various iterations over its long life. The authors also examine several articles that reflect on the nature of the journal itself. These articles are significant because they are primary sources of the day, unfettered by the perspectives, viewpoints and standards of later periods. Their analysis, being ‘postdictive’ rather predictive, tells us about the last half century more so than forecasting the future. Nevertheless, as the conference itself is striving to do, this paper serves as a looking glass through which we might be able to view more clearly the challenges in store for the adult and community learning sector.

The second essay in this edition, ‘All over, red rover? The neglect and potential of Australian adult education in the community’ by Barry Golding and Annette Foley from the University of Ballarat reflects on what they see as a neglected state of adult education in Australia in 2010 and paints a picture of how a different and potentially more positive future might be realised. They explore situations where adult education is seen to be lacking or missing for particular groups of adults, and emphasise research findings stressing the value of learning for purposes that are not immediately vocational. They show links reported in national and international research between lifelong and lifewide learning on one hand, and health and wellbeing on the other. Golding and Foley make a strong case for the parlous state of the adult education function of ACE unless education is seen as much more valuable than the sum of individual vocational competencies, and particularly unless it is also recognised, valued and supported as one of many valuable outcomes of social, lifelong and lifewide learning throughout the community.

According to Catherine Jenkins from the Centre for Adult Education, Melbourne, in her essay ‘Authenticity through reflexivity: connecting teaching philosophy and practice’, ten practitioners from Melbourne’s Centre for Adult Education explored the sticky questions of how their philosophies developed and how these philosophies interconnect with more recent notions of good practice. They were influenced by their own past experiences of learning and some of the broad traditions of adult education, yet arguably of greater interest was the finding that adult educators’ philosophies of teaching were also influenced by their current practice, their interaction with learners, and the challenges of the day-to-day learning context. The words and experiences of these practitioners demonstrate that deliberate engagement with educators’ beliefs may enhance authentic development of their teaching practice. This practitioner concern for dialogic engagement with learners and responding to their learning energy and direction is somewhat more nuanced than government policy for adult education, which seems focused exclusively on skilling a national workforce and naturally requires adult educators’ teaching practice to reflect this. What can be expected when this irresistible force meets the potentially immovable object of adult educators’ teaching philosophies?

In the paper ‘Recognition of prior learning (RPL): can intersubjectivity and philosophy of recognition support better equity outcomes?’, Jen Hamer from the University of NSW explores negotiated meaning and identity construction that can be discovered in the RPL process. RPL can accredit skills and knowledge that have evolved from diverse, informal learning experiences and cultural locations and is thought to be ‘a powerful tool for bringing people into the learning system’ who have otherwise become disengaged. Hamer’s essay draws on her research to show that current strategies to increase access to RPL in Australia have not always led to increased social inclusion. While RPL is on the increase in some quarters, there is still limited uptake by traditionally marginalised learners. After more than a decade of focused attention, the situation demands broader, less instrumental thinking in favour of a more relational analysis of the meaning of recognition assessment and a different conceptualisation of RPL overall. Using a philosophy of recognition and postmodern understandings of the discursive production of the self, Hamer explores the nature and effects of the assessment relationship as an intersubjective exchange within a wider, more fundamental 'struggle for recognition' as part of human self-actualisation. Her paper proposes a reconceptualisation of recognition assessment that can enhance access and equity in adult learning and education.

Peter Willis from the University of South Australia introduces the place of stories in adult educational practice in his essay 'Scheherazade's secret: the power of stories and the desire to learn'. Telling stories seems to be as old as human culture and humans have been referred to as 'storytelling animals'. Willis suggests that telling stories that capture the imagination and move the heart can be powerful pedagogy in inviting learning not so much to gain new information or skills, although this can often happen, but with a deeper transformative form of learning agenda where learners can be implicitly invited to recreate themselves and their way of seeing and acting upon the world. Stories can be used in education to pass on information (propositional pedagogy); to show how to do something (skilling pedagogy) and to invite learners to become different (transformative pedagogy). Many actual educational exchanges involve learners in more than one kind of learning where the educational event has elements of information and skills transfer, often combined at least tacitly with an invitation to become different. In this pedagogic context the existential capacity of stories to involve the learner can motivate the learner to embrace a range of changes in knowledge, skills and consciousness.

In their study 'Communities of practice in a voluntary youth organisation: reaching for the sky and building social capital' Bill

Chan and Tom Short from the University of South Australia's Aviation Academy and School of Education, respectively, examine the evolution of a loose network of volunteers engaged in a learning community that worked collaboratively and then developed further as a potential community of practice as an official member of a national youth organisation called the Australian Air League Inc in South Australia. This process involved sharing across boundaries in a way that was previously construed as undesirable, as local achievement was seen as more important than the development of the larger community. In part, this paper takes the form of a personal narrative and draws insights from observations and interpretations during 2009–2010. Highlighting issues arising from the complexity of developing collaborative models of practice across organisational boundaries and competitive entities, the authors delve into challenges around maintaining devotion to one's immediate unit while sharing experience and building capacity in the wider community. This includes gaining agreement to act, facing the fear of sharing diverse knowledge with new people, being found wanting, and working across organisational hierarchies in a setting characterised by uniform and a disciplined rank structure.

Why do adults undertake PhD studies later in life? What is the learning process like for them? What are the outcomes and the benefits to society? Tom Stehlik from the University of South Australia explores these questions his paper 'Launching a career or reflecting on life? Reasons, issues and outcomes for candidates undertaking PhD studies mid-career or after retirement compared to the traditional early career pathway'. The Commonwealth government provides fee exemption for any Australian who undertakes a PhD. This policy is presumably based on the 'clever country' assumption that an educated population will develop and contribute to social and economic capital. Enrolment numbers therefore continue to increase and a PhD is no longer an elite qualification. In addition, the characteristics and demographics of PhD students are changing. In the School of Education, University of South Australia, a significant number of PhD students are not early career researchers or recent honours graduates, but mid-to-late-career education practitioners and retirees, and the majority are women. These mature-age and third-age candidates are undertaking doctoral research not to launch their career, but in most cases to reflect on it, with many experiencing transformative learning in the process. This question has relevance to the next article.

Glenna Lear, a recent PhD graduate at the University of South Australia, explores her learning and those of other third age rural women in her article 'The learning projects of rural third age women: enriching a valuable community resource'. As a third age PhD candidate with a passion for learning, Lear wanted to explore the learning of other rural third age women who live on the Lower Eyre Peninsula (LEP) of South Australia. Her heuristic inquiry required her to have a passionate interest in the phenomena under investigation. She chose six very influential women over fifty years of age who have transformed their rural communities into vibrant 'can do' societies better able to cope with the economic, environmental and social changes of the last two decades. She wanted to know how these women adjusted to lifestyle changes in their middle years, after their children left home, a stage in life sometimes referred to as the third age after the stages of childhood and early maturity. She sought to understand how they adapted to the social and economic changes in rural life, and what they learned as community change agents and leaders of community organisations, boards and community development committees. The narrative method gave them the opportunity to reflect on their autobiographies as co-researchers during informal conversations about their learning. At different stages in their lives, these midlife women intuitively realised that they needed to do something for themselves in the wider world, independent of the farm and their family, which required them to learn and change. They are passionate lifelong and lifewide learners, continually searching for something that challenges, excites and extends them. This paper discusses their lifewide learning and personal development in community activities and formal educational institutions, which has been personally rewarding and enormously beneficial for community viability and wellbeing. Although the numbers are low and the women come from a small remote region of South Australia, there are similar women of action in almost every community, both rural and urban, who continue to make a difference.

The paper from New Zealand AgResearch scholars Margaret Brown and Tom Fraser entitled 'Is the use of video conferencing and supporting technologies a feasible and viable way to woo farmers back into farmer education?' looks into various efficient and relatively inexpensive ways of getting up-to-date information to rural farmers. Brown and Fraser report on their study called 'FeedSmart', which looked into the ways farmers preferred to learn. Three small-scale trials investigated the viability and effectiveness of generating and delivering information to farmers via a video-conferencing-based learning approach. This study showed that e-learning of this type has potential as a learning approach for farmers and is worthy of further investigation.

Arnold Hely (1907–1967) was a most significant figure in the history of adult education in New Zealand, in Australia and internationally. In his essay, 'Arnold Hely and Australian adult education', Roger Morris from the University of Technology, Sydney revisits his life and work in promoting adult education. Hely, a New Zealander and Director of Tutorial Classes (later Adult Education) at the University of Adelaide from 1957 to 1965, was the prime mover in the establishment in 1964 of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and was, until his untimely death in 1967, its General Secretary. Previously, as an impartial newcomer/outsider, he had played a leading role in the formation in 1960 of ALA (then called AAAE). In this paper Morris focuses on Hely's efforts to bring Australian adult education into the mainstream of world adult education and explores the context of Australian adult education in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 'Art, disability, learning and the dance of my life', Faith Thorley from the University of South Australia describes how she came to use her passion and skills as an artist to live with disabilities resulting from brain tumour surgery. The 'artvantages' of this approach have been improved self-esteem and a greater sense of wellbeing. On reflection and after revisiting the experiences of her healing, Thorley feels that she now knows when this journey began and that she has come to recognise its beginning as the onset of her personal transformation. Her aim in this paper is to explain this personal transformation which occurred after brain tumour surgery and to describe the transformative learning process that followed. Thorley supports these explanations with valuable insights gained from research in adult education and her involvement with others with disabilities and introduces her interpretation of a phenomenon that she calls 'arts-based resistance learning'. This has been a major phase in her personal transformative journey and the subject of her current PhD inquiry. It has uncovered new ways of using art to enhance life, which gives hope, and may inspire and so assist other like afflicted people, health professionals and concerned individuals.

The final paper, entitled 'Looking forward: Community Gateways at Victoria University', is from Christine Mountford from the same university. She describes the development and implementation of the Community Gateways project, which attempts to take the university into the community by providing career education and counselling, skills recognition, recognition of prior learning, workshops and short training opportunities to engage the community 'on their own turf', and to support their access and success through career-aligned course choice. Community Gateways has utilised a cooperative approach to engage with over forty community organisations, including community centres, neighbourhood houses, local councils, youth centres, libraries, and ACE and ACFE providers. A resurgence of interest in values associated with community, social cohesion and cultural diversity has provided the platform for these relationships to develop. The project seeks to strengthen access to learning and employment in the region for many people who currently are unsure of how to access education and training opportunities. Through the provision of career counselling at no cost, community members are encouraged to consider their career options as the basis for making appropriate training or further study decisions.

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
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Through the looking glass: adult education through the lens of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning over fifty years

Roger Harris and Anne Morrison
University of South Australia

In this paper we review fifty years of articles published in Australian Journal of Adult Learning in its various iterations. We examine the different roles of the journal: to illuminate the history and trends of adult education authors; to be the flagship of the adult education profession in Australia; to reflect on significant national events; and to mirror the changing knowledge base of the discipline. We analyse the authorship of the articles over fifty years, and determine patterns in contribution to the journal by gender, location, institutional affiliation and author numbers. We also examine key themes that have surfaced in the writings on adult education. The articles published in the journal are significant because they are primary sources of the day, unfettered by the perspectives, viewpoints and standards of later periods. Our paper serves as a useful looking glass through which we might be able to view more clearly the shifting research interests of the past and the challenges in the future for the adult and community learning sector.

Introduction

Content analysis of publication activity can tell us much about a given field of study, as publications reflect the knowledge base of a discipline. The field of adult education in Australia has been well served by its national association, (now) Adult Learning Australia, and its two key 'voices': the annual national conferences and the journal. The five decades of the association have been succinctly summarised in volume 50(3) of the journal and, though this provides a contextual backdrop for this paper, the focus here is rather on the journal, currently entitled the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*.

The journal has just witnessed fifty years of publication (it was first published in July 1961). It is one of the longest running journals on adult education in the world: we believe that it may be the third most durable, after the *Indian Journal of Adult Education* starting in 1939 and *Adult Education Quarterly* in 1950. For example, *Studies in the Education of Adults* (UK) began in 1969, *Studies in Continuing Education* (Australia) in 1978, while the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* and the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (UK) both commenced only in 1981. The Australian journal has, therefore, played a crucial and sustained role in the promotion of adult education in this country over a long period, and as such merits closer examination.

What role has this journal played?

Adult education in Australia has consistently been in desperate need of a voice. Hanna wrote in an early issue of the journal:

> Adult Education is regarded as a marginal activity stuck on to our education system somewhere between our leaving primary school and our going senile; we have to run it with meagre budgets, leftover facilities and other people's spare time … Though the situation is improving slightly all the time adult education has not achieved a recognised standing in this country. (1965: 3)

Hanna lamented the lack of recognition given to adult education in the Martin Committee report (1964) on tertiary education in Australia, and the lack of research to that time into adult education, methods of teaching adults and the adult learners themselves, despite the growth of adult education in the postwar period. Fast forward to the 1990s and there was a rosy glow of optimism following the Senate Inquiry of 1991, *Come in Cinderella*. This was the first national account of adult education since Duncan (1973 [1944]) and formally recognised ACE as the fourth sector of education. The Senate's follow-up report, *Beyond Cinderella: Towards a learning society* (1997), recommended an unequivocal commitment by government to the concept of a lifelong learning society, and the bringing together of the national ACE policy and VET policy. However, not much has actually happened since, and the celebratory fiftieth annual conference of Adult Learning Australia late in 2010 was still earnestly inquiring: Where has Cinderella gone?

Yet the journal (as well as the association and its conferences) has persisted as the voice for the field in striving to build its status and credibility. The very title of the journal provides a glimpse of the metamorphosis of the discipline over these fifty years. There have been only two changes of name, with the journal title mirroring the changing name of the association—from *Australian Journal of Adult Education* commencing in July 1961, to *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education* in April 1990 and to *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* in April 2000. These changes have reflected at least two significant shifts over this time—the first from education to learning, the second from emphasising the association to emphasising the field. We suggest that these re-alignments mirror quite accurately the discipline's changing focus on *learning* as core business.

Significant in the continuing life of the journal have been its editors. There have been seven main editors (Table 1). Across half a century, they gave birth to and nurtured the journal, providing 'a regular, informative and spirited publication … and have therefore left a legacy about which adult and community educators in Australia today can feel justifiably proud' (Harris, 1997: 56). For example, Hely gave us 'a journal which … we could proudly send overseas' (Crowley, 1968: 42) and, under Shaw and Allsop, the journal 'became an adult education publication of high repute internationally, … of high standing, … the publication of which has always been recognised as one of the main reasons for [the association's] existence' (Crowley, 1976: 60). This standing has continued to this day, as evidenced by its high status accorded under the former Excellence for Research in Australia regime's journal ranking system.

Table 1: Editors of the journal

1961–1963	Arnold Hely	Adelaide University
1963–1965	Des Crowley	Adelaide University
1965–1970	John Shaw	University of NSW
1971–1973	John Shaw/Joan Allsop	Universities of NSW and Sydney
1974–1976	Joan Allsop	University of Sydney
1976–1978	Series of guest editors (Barrie Brennan, Chris Duke, Alf Wesson, Jack Mason/Jack McDonell, Doug Robertson)	University of New England, Australian National University, Preston Institute of Technology, Monash University
1979–1983	Nicolas Haines	Australian National University
1984–1989	Barrie Brennan	University of New England
1990–2012	Roger Harris	University of South Australia

We contend that the journal has played at least four significant roles. First, it has illuminated the history, trends and patterns of adult education authors in Australia (and even beyond) across half a century. Second, it has been the most visible, accessible and lasting voice of the adult education discipline in Australia—the flagship of the profession. Third, it has provided a reflection on significant national events and trends. And fourth, it has been a mirror of the knowledge base of the discipline and its issues, and how they change over time. The analyses in this paper provide evidence for each of these four roles.

Durston noted as early as 1968 that 'The *Australian Journal of Adult Education* is probably the most tangible proof of the Association's stated concern for encouraging inquiry, research experiment and publication in the field of adult education' (1968: 79). Twenty years later, continuing this theme, Brennan concluded that 'One of the other important services to members, and adult educators generally in Australia and overseas, was the [journal] … Working from Adelaide, Hely ensured that the new journal from a new Association would make an impact' (1988a: 34–35); and 'Publications continued to be significant in the service of members. The journal … continued to serve Australian and overseas readers in the tradition set by Hely and Crowley' (1988b: 28).

The policy and purpose of the journal (usually stated on the inside front cover) has not changed markedly over the years, continuing to emphasise its key functions of advocacy, research and knowledge generation:

> 1961: To provide a forum for discussion on adult education matters.
>
> 1973: To describe and discuss activities and developments in the field of continuing education for adults; to publish accounts of investigations and research in this field; to provide a forum for the discussion of significant ideas about the education of adults; and to review relevant books, reports and periodicals.
>
> 1984: It should be of a quality that will command respect in Australia and overseas. It should provide substantial original information and views on the practice of and research into adult education in Australia and overseas and the reporting of original research of significance to Adult Education.

> 1990: It aims to provide information and analysis on the theory, research and practice of adult and community education …; and to promote critical thinking and research in this developing and increasingly significant field; … [Its] prime focus is on Australia, though papers relating to other contexts are also published.

In this paper, we analyse authorship of papers over fifty years, and determine patterns in contribution to the journal by gender, location, institutional affiliation and author numbers. We also examine key themes that have surfaced in the writings on adult education. A non-refereed journal until April 1999, double-blind peer review was introduced in that year for the majority of submissions, which increased both rate of flow and quality of content. However, all articles are informative in studying the history of a profession and its journal. They are significant because they are primary sources of their day, unfettered by the straightjackets of later periods' perspectives, viewpoints and standards. So often we are prone to judging the past using our present-day lenses/frameworks/paradigms. In the final analysis this paper is 'postdictive' rather than predictive, and therefore tells us more about the last half century than what is likely to happen in the future. Given the brevity of this paper, our analysis spanning fifty years is, by necessity, a broad sweep. Nevertheless, we believe the paper serves as a useful looking glass through which we might be able to view more clearly the shifting research interests of the past and the challenges in the future for the adult and community learning sector.

Methodology

We have analysed the journal's content over this fifty-year span—a sizable task. Most content analyses of academics embrace only a decade. Previously in this journal, Durston (1968) reviewed the first seven years, Long (1983) studied 'preoccupations' through ten years, and Harris (1997) examined various aspects of the journal during its initial ten years. In relation to adult education journals internationally, Taylor (2001) examined all submissions, both accepted *and* rejected, to the American *Adult Education Quarterly* from 1989 to 1999; Moreland explored in the British *The Vocational Aspect of Education* (now the *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*) 'some of the recurrent and emergent issues which have occurred in the journal, particularly in the last 10 years' (1992: 3); while Long and Agyekum wrote their 'reflections of a changing discipline' (1974: 99) by analysing the journal *Adult Education* (the forerunner of *AEQ*) from 1964 to 1973. An example of a twenty-year analysis was Dickinson and Rusnell's study of *Adult Education* between 1950 and 1970, 'to ascertain trends and patterns in the contents of the journal as indications of the development of the discipline of adult education' (1971: 177).

We have not identified any attempts in adult education at journal content analysis over a fifty-year span. Two instances we have found in other disciplines are in sociology and training and development. Shanas (1945) analysed the *American Journal of Sociology* through fifty years in the first half of the twentieth century, while Galagan celebrated fifty years of the American 'magazine' *Training & Development* by presenting a brief sampling of some issues, ideas and people over the second half of the twentieth century: 'From the no-nonsense idealism of the 1940s and 50s, through the social consciousness of the 60s and 70s, to the bottom-line thinking of the 1980s and 90s, *Training & Development* magazine has been the voice of the profession' (1996: 32).

Our process in analysing the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* has involved hunting down back copies of the journal, a difficult task given changes in storage over fifty years and the absence of electronic access for much of that period. There were a few issues that we could not locate, but most were obtained. We compiled an inventory of all the articles, both refereed and non-refereed. Decisions needed to be made on what to include: we defined the term 'article' as a reasonably substantial paper, and we omitted editorials, comment pieces, book reviews, research abstracts and eulogies. We experienced considerable difficulty in tracking down details on such matters as author gender, institutional affiliation and geographical location, since early issues often did not record such information (e.g. the early preference for author initials did not provide gender clues). Some missing details were identified through alternative sources (e.g. electronic databases or other writings) but a few could not be identified at all. The most difficult task and one that required considerable discretion was deciding on the major theme(s) in each article. We allowed a maximum of four theme allocations per article. We minimised distortion by using two researchers working independently, and any discrepancies were resolved by negotiation. We consolidated and checked themes, tabulated data using Excel, compiled tables and graphs (and standardised wherever possible with the vertical axis to 30%), and undertook analysis and interpretation, searching for trends, explanations and surprises. Some early themes that received few allocations were collapsed into others, and we finished with 22 themes. In total, our analysis covered 143 issues, 1100 authors and 844 articles over the fifty years!

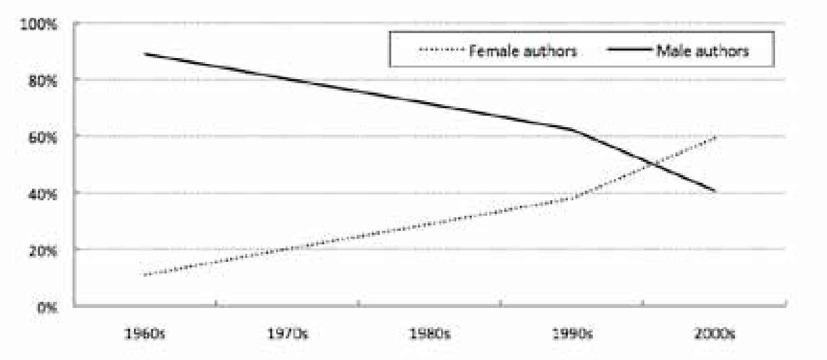
Trends in authorship over fifty years

The first key role of the journal is that it illustrates the history of writers on adult education in Australia (and even beyond) over half a century. Below we have analysed authorship by gender, location, institutional affiliation and numbers of writers.

Author gender

Over the fifty years there has been a dramatic reversal in the proportions of men and women publishing in the journal (Figure 1). While in the 1960s, 90 per cent of the authors were male, by the 2000s that proportion had more than halved to only 41 per cent. Thus, female authors currently outnumber male authors. This trend is consistent with findings of other journals (e.g. the *Adult Education Quarterly*, see Taylor, 2001: 329).

Figure 1: Gender of authors, by decade



Location of author(s)

Three quarters of all authors publishing in the journal have been located in Australia. However, the proportion of international authors has been gradually increasing, from 14 per cent in the 1960s to 30 per cent in the 2000s (Table 2). Despite the name of the journal specifically referring to Australia, it has always encouraged contributions from overseas, and as the press to publish has increasingly been felt worldwide, so too have the numbers of article emanating from international writers increased.

Table 2: Location of all authors, by decade

	1960s	**1970s**	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**	**Total**
Location of authors	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Australia (*n*=831)	86	75	84	79	70	76.6
International (*n*=254)	14	25	17	21	30	23.4
Total (N=1085*)	100	100	101	100	100	100

*The locations of 15 authors in the early years could not be verified

Within Australia, authors from New South Wales have been in the majority (37% overall). However, the trend has been for proportions from that state to decline (46% in the 1960s to 27% in the 2000s), as have those for Western Australia (13% to 5%). The proportions in each of Victoria, South Australia and Queensland have correspondingly increased, while those in the other three smaller jurisdictions have remained relatively constant (Table 3).

Table 3: Location of Australian authors, by decade

	1960s	**1970s**	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**	**Total**
	(*n*=87)	**(*n*=114)**	**(*n*=155)**	**(*n*=219)**	**(*n*=270)**	**(*n*=845)**
Location of author	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
New South Wales	46	51	40	36	27	37
Victoria	16	13	12	17	24	18
South Australia	12	5	10	22	14	14
Queensland	4	-	20	13	17	13
Australian Capital Territory	5	15	7	-	6	6
Western Australia	13	10	5	3	5	6
Tasmania	5	4	4	5	4	5
Northern Territory	-	1	3	4	3	2
Total	**101**	**99**	**101**	**100**	**100**	**101**

Of special interest in these jurisdictional publishing patterns is the peaks in particular decades. Many factors may account for this pattern, but one that stands out is the location of the journal editor at any point in time. Comparing Tables 1 and 2, we find that the editorship of the journal was largely in NSW during the first three decades, when the percentages of contributions in that state were higher than in the last two decades. The peaks in SA in the

1960s, and again in the 1990s and 2000s, may also be explained in this way, as with the ACT in the 1970s and 1980s. This is a very interesting phenomenon. We are not suggesting that this is evidence of favouritism (and it could not be anyway once blind peer review was introduced), but it could be explained by the presence of the editor raising regional awareness of the journal, perhaps through seminars in local universities or by procuring local review writers.

International authorship exhibits some interesting patterns (Table 4). Published contributions have come from 37 countries around the world. Two countries show a marked increase in contributions over time: India (overall 16.5%) and Nigeria (overall 13%), possibly due to an awakening to the importance of (and even pressure to produce) publications, and to the focus of the journal on adult community education which remains critically important in those countries. It should be noted that no distinction has been made in the analysis between refereed and non-refereed (practice) papers—if there had been, the patterns may have been rather different. Overall, the patterns in published articles from the USA, Canada and New Zealand are similar (around 12%), though the proportion coming from the UK has been surprisingly small (5%) given the similarity between the adult education sectors in Australia and the UK.

Table 4: Location of international authors, by decade

Location of author	1960s (*n*)	1970s (*n*)	1980s (*n*)	1990s (*n*)	2000s (*n*)	Total (*n*)	Total (%)
India	-	4	1	15	22	42	16.5
Nigeria	-	3	1	3	26	33	13.0
USA	1	11	-	10	9	31	12.2
Canada	1	1	7	9	12	30	11.8
NZ	2	7	8	3	10	30	11.8
UK	4	3	2	2	2	13	5.1
Sweden	-	-	1	-	10	11	4.3
Fiji	-	-	-	7	-	7	2.8
Germany	2	-	2	-	3	7	2.8
PNG	1	3	1	1	1	7	2.8
Others	2	5	7	8	21	43	16.9
Total	**13**	**37**	**30**	**58**	**116**	**254**	**100**

Institutional affiliation

Two-thirds of all authors work in universities, not surprisingly given publishing is one of the core business activities for staff and higher degree candidates (Table 5). This proportion has remained fairly constant over the fifty years, though it has risen to just over three quarters in the past decade. This increase can be accounted for by the recent press by universities to have their higher degree students publishing both during their candidature and after completion. This would not have been so urgent in the first three decades. The importance of publishing for staff in colleges of advanced education is reflected, especially as their institutions moved towards university status, in the rapidly increasing figures of publications in the 1970s and 1980s. The apparent fall away from the end of the 1990s is due to their change of status, resulting in their research productivity being subsumed under universities.

Table 5: Institutional affiliation of authors, by decade

Institutional affiliation of author	**1960s** (*n*=100) %	**1970s** (*n*=152) %	**1980s** (*n*=185) %	**1990s** (*n*=277) %	**2000s** (*n*=386) %	**Total** (N=1100) %
University	64	60	36*	65**	77***	64
Adult/community education organisation	22	13	14	10	7	11
Other HE institution (e.g. college of advanced education/teachers college/ institute of technology)	2	13	21	1	1	6
VET/TAFE	-	3	10	5	2	4
Research institute	-	-	1	3	2	2
Private (including retired)	1	3	4	4	2	3
Government dept. (e.g. education, agriculture, health)	3	6	13	9	5	8
Other	8	3	2	2	3	3
Total	**100**	**101**	**101**	**99**	**99**	**101**

* Includes 4 HDR (higher degree research) students (where indicated)
** Includes 15 HDR students (where indicated)
*** Includes 61 HDR students (where indicated)

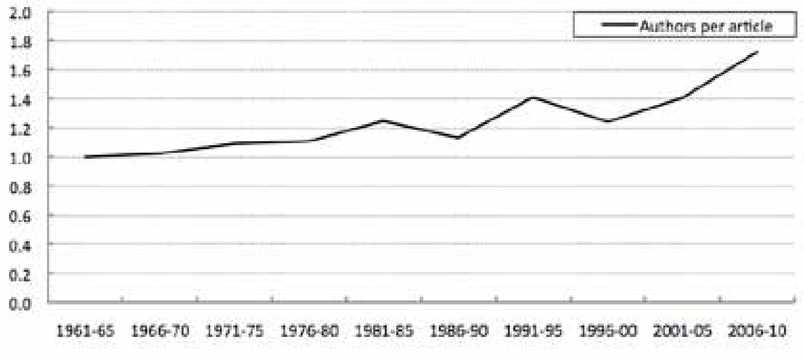
It is noticeable, and disappointing given the journal specialises in adult learning, that the proportion of articles being published from adult education organisations has reduced by one third (from 22% in the 1960s to 7% in the 2000s) over the fifty years. It would appear that this sector is being squeezed by the number of contributions from the higher education sector, but also from government departments and to a lesser extent from the VET sector. Those who work in adult and community education are inclined to practice, rather than publish, especially as the quality of published work continues to rise steadily.

The introduction of a more structured and enlarged TAFE system after the Kangan Report (TAFE, 1974) is reflected in these figures, with no TAFE articles published in the 1960s but 3 per cent in the 1960s and 10 per cent in the 1980s. The increasing 'vocationalisation' of tertiary education, especially from the mid-1980s, probably accounts for the percentages from the VET/TAFE sector declining from around that time. Furthermore, those authors in the sector undertaking higher degrees would have been counted in university figures (according to their article's institutional affiliation by-line).

Single/multiple authorship

Over fifty years, this journal illustrates a marked trend towards multiple authorship. No doubt this is as much indicative of the more collegial, collaborative and intensified work environments in educational institutions nowadays, as it is symptomatic of the 'publish or perish' syndrome. Figure 2, which shows the ratio of the number of authors to the number of articles, reveals that papers were usually sole authored in the 1960s, while multiple authored papers were more common by the 2000s (with a mean of 1.7 authors).

Figure 2: Number of authors per article, in five-year periods



It is interesting that multiple authorship continues to rise, despite some universities implementing recording systems that reduce an individual's publication productivity according to the number of co-authors specified on a given article. In this way, university 'counting' regimes actually work *against* collegial and collaborative practices—even though in reality the processes of obtaining research grants, conducting research projects and publishing from such activities are most appropriately, and becoming necessarily, carried out in teams.

Key themes in the journal

A summary of the 22 key themes analysed in this study, and their frequency across the 844 articles, is presented in Table 6. 'Students/learners' was the most frequent theme, occurring in one quarter of articles, followed by 'philosophy/theory' and 'vocational education' in one fifth of articles.

Table 6: Frequency of themes in the journal over fifty years, 1961–2010

Key themes across 844 articles	**Allocations**	
	Number*	**%**
Students/learners	208	24.6
Philosophy/theory	170	20.1
Vocational education	163	19.3
Lifelong learning/education, continuing education, later-life learning	151	17.9
Adult and community education	147	17.4
Teachers/educators/teaching	146	17.3
International	136	16.1
Evaluation	127	15.1

Key themes across 844 articles	**Allocations**	
	Number*	**%**
Informal/non-formal learning	118	14.0
Higher education	117	13.9
Literacy/basic skills	66	7.8
Rural/regional	63	7.5
Methods/methodology	61	7.2
Historical	57	6.8
Formal learning	56	6.6
Curriculum	54	6.4
Technology	52	6.1
Gender (female/male/general)	34	4.0
Indigenous	32	3.8
Bridging/foundation education	27	3.2
Competency	18	2.1
Environment	15	1.8

* Up to four themes were allocated to each article

Having discussed the patterns in authorship, we now briefly discuss each of these themes in the sections that follow, structured according to the remaining three roles of the journal (voice of the discipline, reflection of significant events and trends, and a mirror of the knowledge base).

Voice of the adult education discipline

The second role of the journal is that it has served as the most visible, accessible and lasting voice of the adult education discipline in Australia—the flagship of the profession. As the voice of adult education, it is informative to examine the proportions of articles focusing on philosophy/theory, lifelong learning/education, history and international matters.

Philosophy/theory (20%) and lifelong learning/education (18%)

Philosophy/theory has always been a focus in the journal, though the decline from the mid-1970s is an interesting and concerning trend (Figure 3). To a certain extent this may be explained by the greater emphasis on research-based articles, rather than relying merely on theoretical viewpoints and opinion pieces. Durston noted in an early review of the journal that

> there has been an emphasis on inquiry and publication but very little research and experiment ... the fact remains that there are exceedingly few studies which meet the canons of adequate research. There has been little systematic attempt to isolate and investigate particular problems scientifically. (1967: 5)

The decline may also reflect the vocationalisation of the field, especially the vocationally oriented nature of adult education within the newer universities primarily concerned with development of post-school educators. This can be contrasted with the first few decades, when the discipline was intensely debated as the association established itself, as it became very involved with international adult education developments, and as articles were written by academics in departments of adult education whose core business was the study of the discipline. As Brennan reflected, '[t]here were many heated arguments in the early days on what "adult education" was and therefore what it was that was being advocated' (2001: 377). Rossell, like many others of this time, lamented the neglect of adult education in the Martin Report of 1964, and succinctly summarised the disappointment in this way:

> The challenge faced by adult education today is in fact to bridge the gulf between the theory of continuing education and practice; if we fail to bridge the gulf, then we deserve the obscurity with which the Martin Report has shrouded us. (1966: 13)

Smith, for example, believed that ‘the term “adult education” has tended to be used almost exclusively for general enlightenment, hobby and recreation classes and non-vocational studies … [and that] this is far too narrow a concept’ (1968: 69). A year later, Duke, in claiming that ‘adult education has been dubbed “therapy for normals”’ (1969: 105), compiled a remarkable piece of prescience:

> But so long as immediately needed information or techniques appear more necessary than teaching how to think, I fear that continuing education will take the form of short-term technical instruction in a wide range of fields, with old-style adult education as a kind of social and personal fringe benefit. It will probably be only after bitter experience of redundancy, unemployability, employee and managerial inflexibility in the face of innovation, and of the economic and social costs of these, that the need for continuing education rather than just for *ad hoc* shots of reinstruction will be recognised. (p. 106)

But even by 1978, Rooth could lament the decline in the study of adult education as a discipline:

> the formal study of the theory and practice of continuing education is regrettably missing in the Australian scene … It must be acknowledged that in Australia continuing education is still in the process of emerging both as a discipline and as a profession. It lacks some of the definitive concepts and precision that give form to a discipline. (1978: 39–40)

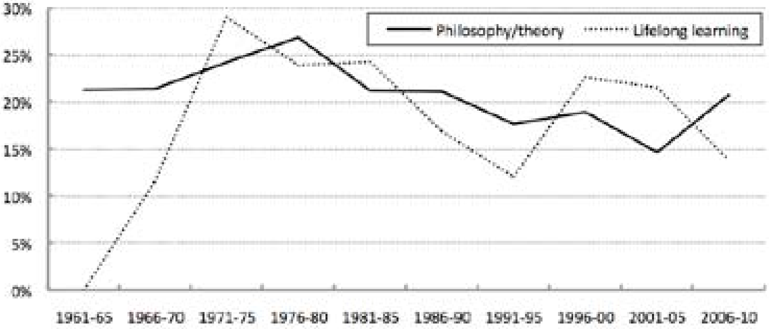
Around this time, with specific reference to learning theory, Corson pronounced that ‘any mention of learning theory in adult education can produce miscarriages amongst female tutors and premature impotence amongst the males’ (1976: 73–74)! Debates over the very nature of adult education have continued unabated, with Smith still asking in 1983:

> What exactly *is* adult education; who does it; how do they do it; who do they do it for—and why? An appeal to adult educators

> (whoever they may be) to close ranks and stop bickering does little to help them to answer this almost impossible question. (1983: 19)

The view of the situation this century was neatly encapsulated by McIntyre, who wrote that 'adult education was defined as the negative other of vocational worth—as non-award, non-vocational, non-accredited learning for "leisure and personal enrichment"' (2001: 65).

Figure 3: Percentages of articles on philosophy/theory and lifelong learning/education



One prominent and tangible expression of the philosophical approach is the trend in publishing on lifelong learning/education. The clear peak in the first half of the 1970s illustrates the intense focus at that time internationally on the notion of lifelong education, promoted in the publication *Learning to be* 'as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries' (Faure et al., 1972: 182) and energetically fostered by UNESCO. Emphases on the importance of the individual learner and learning occurring in a wide variety of contexts and settings were especially appealing to adult educators. Encapsulated in this notion were such principles as: 'Every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his [sic] life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society' (p. 181) and 'Education should be dispensed and acquired through a multiplicity of means. The important thing is not the path an individual has followed, but what he [sic] has learned or acquired' (p.185). In this country, the Kangan Report (TAFE, 1974) shortly after was strongly imbued with this philosophy.

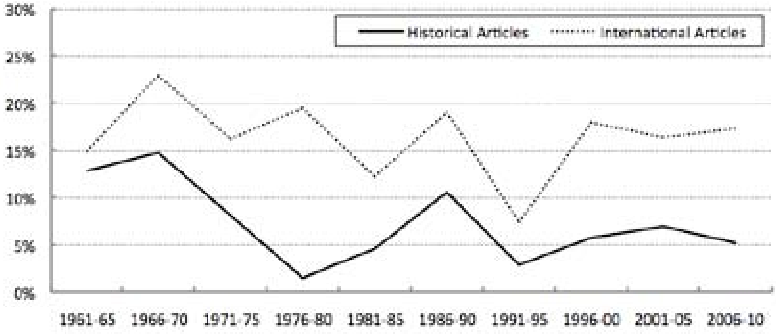
The notion of lifelong learning has been resurrected in recent years, though more strongly with an economic flavour. As Brown wrote, 'until very recently, the second wave of the lifelong learning debate concentrated almost entirely on the economic benefits of education reform' (2000: 12). Some writers in the journal have taken a critical approach. Clark, for instance, warned that 'in the contested ground of lifelong learning, there are real risks when one interest group gains hegemonic ascendency' (2000: 144), and Sanguinetti believed that 'A kind of missionary zeal exudes from the idea that lifelong learning will solve the individual, national, economic and social problems of our time' (2000: 1). Cruikshank continued the debate over the economic predominance in the concept:

> We must challenge the current focus of the new economy and the way that lifelong learning has been shaped to fit into this economy. Lifelong learning must be more than a 'competitive advantage' in a job search, and a means for displacing others in the job market. It must benefit both the whole person and the broader community. We must re-think the value of lifelong learning as it is currently constructed and work toward promoting lifelong learning policies and practices that will improve the quality of life for people—as workers and as citizens. (2003: 20)

International matters (16%) and history (7%)

The journal has always maintained a keen interest in international matters, evident in the proportion of articles focusing on international themes (Figure 4). Such interest was greatest, not unsurprisingly, in the early days of the journal, when those in the fledgling association often looked overseas at initiatives and developments in other countries and as the Australian adult education leaders played a significant role in international adult education activities. Such a focus on international matters is an important indicator of the health of the journal, in that it demonstrates that it has not been overly localised in its interests and has continued to accept articles from overseas writers informing Australians of educational activities and trends in other regions.

Figure 4: Percentages of articles on international and historical issues



The fluctuating pattern of publishing on historical matters reveals a number of peaks of interest over the half century. There were many articles in the founding years (1960s) of the association and the journal, then another resurgence in the latter half of the 1980s when training reform was beginning to be debated seriously following the Kirby Report (Kirby, 1985) and the announcement of the CBT imperative by ministerial decree in 1989, and the Senate (1991) inquiry into the ACE sector stimulated publishing interest.

A reflection of significant national events and trends

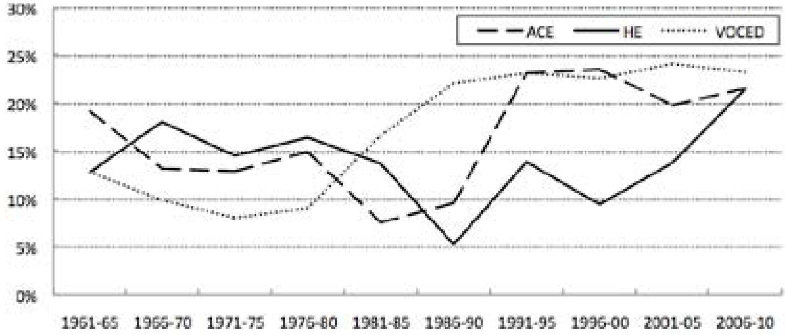
The third role of the journal is that it has provided a reflection of significant national events and trends. We can see this, for example, in the histories of the three post-school sectors, and in many of the issues embraced in the publication such as literacy/basic skills, regional/rural matters and technology.

The three post-school sectors (voc. ed. 19%; ACE 17%; and HE 14%)

Figure 5 illustrates the proportions of articles published in the journal that relate to the three post-school sectors of adult and community education (ACE), higher education (HE), and vocational education and training (VET). The early dominance of publications on HE demonstrates the pre-eminence of the university sector in adult education in the 1960s and early 70s. The Australian Association of Adult Education was established by staff in departments of adult education in these universities. Since then two significant trends become evident in the figure. One is the increasing number of articles on ACE especially in the second half of the 1980s as the two Australian associations for adult education and community education grew closer and ultimately amalgamated in 1989 to become the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (this change being reflected in the new name of the journal) and highlighting the strength of involvement of the community and neighbour house movement at that time. This flurry of activity was reflected in renewed publishing. The second marked trend is the increasing 'vocationalisation' of the tertiary sector (including adult and community education) from the early 1980s so that the proportion of articles with a vocational education flavour rose sharply, peaking in the mid to late 1990s. By the beginning of the new century, Merlyn could write concerning:

> the pervasiveness of the funding pressures on small community organisations to vocationalise their curricula. Indeed, adult education has had the ground under it shifted so far into the vocationalist camp, even those who align themselves with the status quo are beginning to realise that with the loss of ethical practice, critical development and learner volition, liberal democracy itself is under threat. (2001: 309)

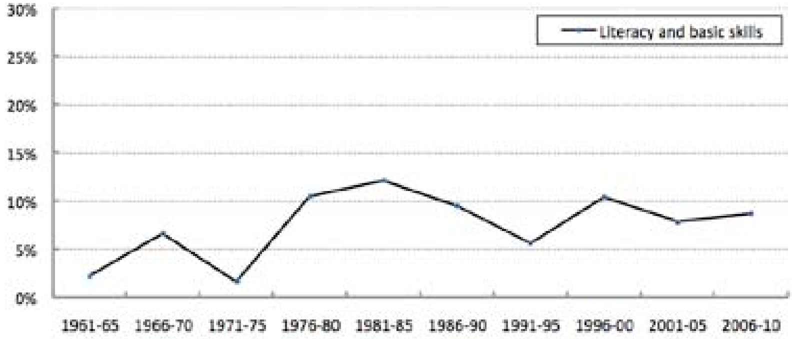
Figure 5: Percentages of articles relating to the three post-school sectors



Literacy/basic skills (8%)

From the mid-1970s, there was a marked rise in the proportion of articles published on literacy, and another smaller increase from the early 1990s (Figure 6). This trend corresponds with the expansion of TAFE following the Kangan Report (TAFE, 1974), with its emphasis on development of the individual and the growth in community colleges, and subsequently with federal government policies requiring literacy programs to be included as an essential part of retraining and upgrading existing skills—for example, the National Policy on Languages in 1987, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy in 1991 and the National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy in 1993. The consequence of such emphasis was ‘a reframing of adult literacy and numeracy programs away from literacy for social purposes towards literacy for productivity, for national economic goals’ (Castleton & McDonald, 2002: 5).

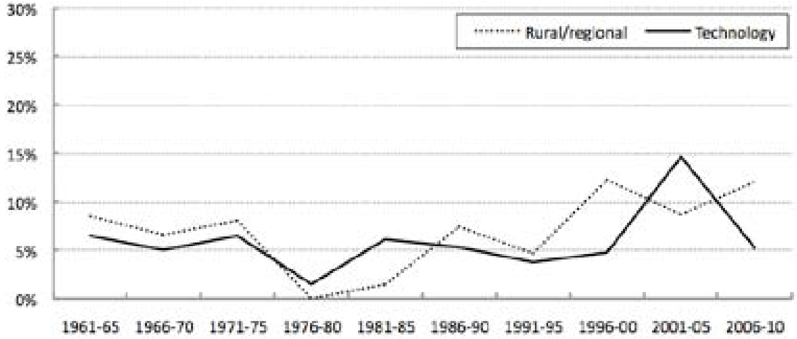
Figure 6: Percentages of articles relating to literacy and basic skills



Regional/rural issues (8%) and technology (6%)

The pattern for publications on regional and rural matters is a steady stream, with increasing interest from the 1990s (Figure 7). From early writings on such subjects as agricultural extension and rural adult education, the focus shifted later towards rural health issues and learning communities in regional areas. This rise corresponds with increasing political interest in regions, as well as the increase in international articles, particularly from countries like India and Nigeria where rural issues were understandably topics of intense research interest. A special issue on the Murray-Darling Basin in November 2009 also generated an increase in the number of articles in this category.

Figure 7: Percentages of articles with a focus on regional/rural and technology issues



Interest in technology has also been steady over the life of the journal, with a peak in the early part of this century. Naturally, what counts as technology has changed markedly over time. Early concepts of technology were concerned with radio, audiovisuals and television. While Krister acknowledged that 'the selection of media for teaching is a task surrounded by mystique and uncertainty', this same author, commenting on the role of technology in adult education, observed that 'a bad lecture is still a bad lecture no matter how many technological gadgets it uses' (1980: 24). Gradually, computer skills (often for later-life learners), computer-based learning, satellite technology, the internet, podcasting and online learning environments became important topics for discussion.

A mirror of the knowledge base of the discipline and its issues

The fourth significant role of the journal has been to act as a mirror of the discipline's knowledge base and its issues as they change over time. What has been the pattern of publishing over the fifty years on its core areas of learning, teaching, evaluation and curriculum? The following graphs provide insights into these themes.

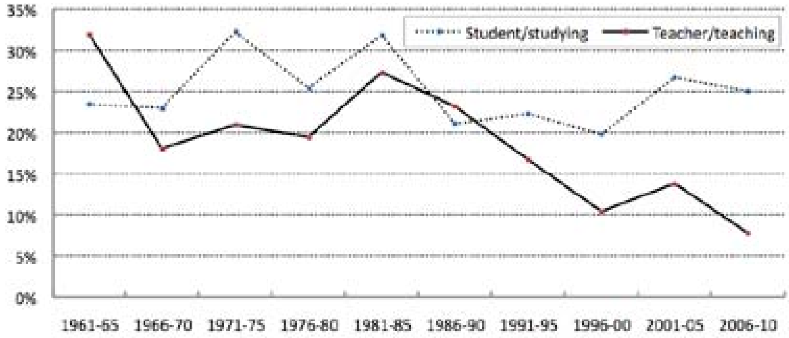
Teachers (17%) and learners (25%)

Understandably, given the nature of adult and community education, high proportions of articles have focused on teachers and learners (Figure 8). In the 1960s, the emphasis was on the educators rather than the learners; Wendel lamented in 1974

> our inadequate understanding of how people learn. We have not yet closed the gap between our views of teaching method and our understanding of what actually occurs in learning … what is needed in adult education is a learning method, *not* a teaching method. (1974: 4)

For the next twenty years, these two themes began to follow remarkably similar trajectories. However, by the later 1980s, learners had clearly become the key and sustained focus, to the point where currently three times more articles concentrate on learners than teachers. This shift over the past two decades may well be linked to a greater focus on equity groups and their learning needs, as well as on the learning approaches most appropriate for those studying within competency-based programs. The roles, characteristics and capabilities of educators have received decreasing interest, especially with the advent of competency-based programs and with the predominance of the Certificate IV (in training and assessment) that has been deemed to be sufficient training for educator roles.

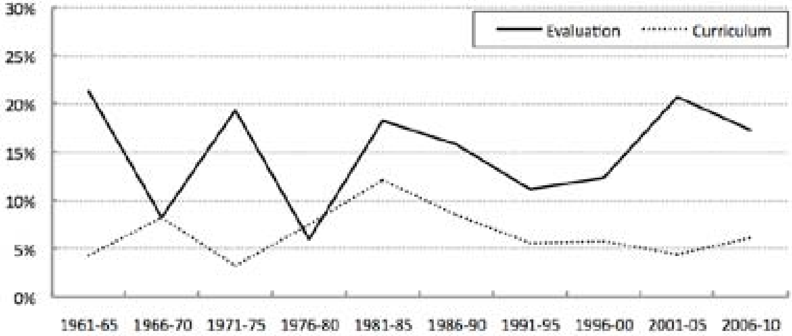
Figure 8: Percentages of articles on teachers and learners



Evaluation (15%) and curriculum (6%)

The evauation theme exhibits a fluctuating trend with, interestingly, higher interest than curriculum (Figure 9). The gradual rise from the early 1990s no doubt can be explained by the increasing press for accountability in education generally, and in particular in this context in the adult and community education and vocational education sectors. The demand for evidence of outcomes has been felt strongly in these sectors. In contrast, there has been a steady interest in curriculum over the half century. The height of writing on curriculum was in the late 1970s and in the 80s, and what is most striking in the trend in Figure 9 is the drop in articles dealing with curriculum from the late 1980s. This coincides exactly with the introduction of the National Training Reform Agenda with its emphasis on competency-based training and the development of competency standards, and from the mid-90s where emphasis was on training packages in place of curriculum. Those publishing papers gravitated to these topics rather than curriculum *per se*.

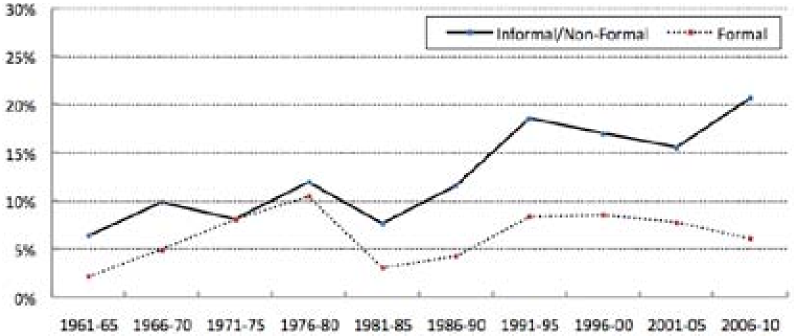
Figure 9: Percentages of articles with a focus on evaluation and curriculum



Formal (7%) and informal/non-formal learning (14%)

The discipline has seen a marked rise in interest in informal/non-formal learning, stimulated by research into, *inter alia*, the notion of situated learning, workplaces as learning sites, and learning in non-formal organisations. This rise has been reflected in literature and research. The pattern for this journal confirms the popularity of publishing in this area vis-à-vis formal learning (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Percentages of articles on formal and informal learning

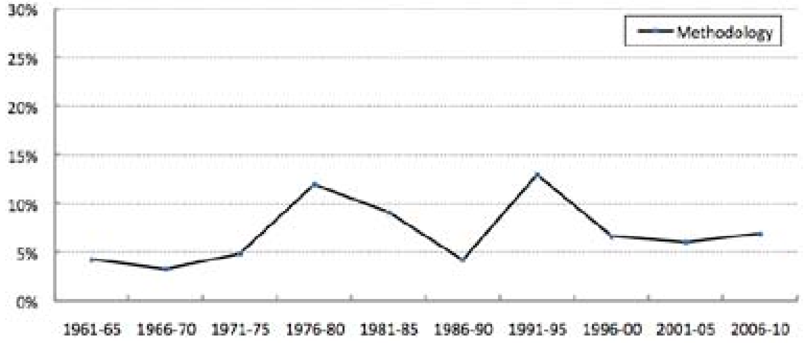


Blakely thought in the mid-70s that 'non-formal education is an idea whose time for implementation has come, though the scholarly framework needed to propagate and extend that idea is lagging' (1976: 11), and certainly during the 1980s the proportion of articles rose substantially. At century's turn, Clark identified that 'the view that the only "real learning" is accredited, competency-based and vocationally focused has been under challenge for some time' (2000: 143). Yet the jury appears to remain out on its value and credibility. Mason and Randall lamented that 'few adult educators have been able to convince governments that non-formal adult education provides vocational and life skills and should be as well supported as formal vocational education and training' (1992: 179). Some years later, Whyte wrote in similar vein that 'generally speaking governments do not regard non-formal, informal, or non-credit education as priorities' (1987: 6). Still by 2009 the view could be articulated that 'informality in the context of education and particularly adult learning is currently undervalued in economic terms' (Golding, Brown & Foley 2009: 48).

Methods/methodologies (7%)

While not a sustained pattern of interest, there were two distinct bursts on this theme (Figure 11). The first was in the second half of the 1970s; this was an era when self-pacing was at its height, self-enhancement groups were popular as a method, maths methods were being debated, and open learning and personalised learning were beginning to be much discussed. Articles appeared on all these topics. The second flurry was in the first half of the 1990s, with papers published on feminism and inclusive methodologies, using metaphors, suggestopedic methods in language courses, managing organisational change, RPL methodologies and team teaching. Some of the papers on this topic related to research rather than teaching.

Figure 11: Percentages of articles on methods and methodology



The five themes least published (referred to in Table 6) all have relatively flat patterns over the fifty years (and so figures have not been included here for space reasons). However, they do reflect some interesting trends, though minor in terms of numbers of published articles.

Gender (4%). The pattern for papers concentrating on gender issues reveals a relatively late interest. There was a steady rise from the early 1970s, a sharper rise during the 80s and a peak in the first half of the 90s. Such increasing interest is probably linked to the increasing proportions of women authors and the increasing social and political awareness of gender issues. The peak reflects a guest-edited, special issue on gender in April 1994.

Indigenous issues (4%). The volume of publishing on Indigenous issues has remained surprisingly low, through relatively steady, with minor peaks of interest in the late 1960s and again from the 80s. These rises no doubt reflect such events as the official recognition of Indigenous Australians in 1967, the interest surrounding the *Mabo* case in 1992 and the increasing interest in and intense concern for Aboriginal education and health through the 1980s and 90s.

Bridging/foundation education (3% of articles). This topic has not generated much interest among those publishing in this journal. Two productive periods were in second half of the 1970s and first half of the 2000s. Papers were published on bridging programs at the University of Newcastle and University of Western Sydney in the earlier period, while a guest-edited, special issue on enabling education in November 2004 helps to account for the rise in the second period.

Competency (2%). This theme was another late developer, with little to no interest in publishing on this theme until the early 1990s. Following some interest at this time as the reform agenda focused debate on the nature of competence, the number of articles fell away in the later 1990s and early 2000s as these issues became more embedded and fascination with debating competency-based training waned. Later, concerns over the much publicised skills shortages and financial crises from the mid-2000s regenerated some interest in articles related to skills development.

The environment (2%). Interest in publishing on environmental issues is an even later phenomenon than for gender. No papers prior to the 1990s were categorised as having a focus on this theme; there were a few through the 90s, and since the early 2000s there has been increased publishing activity, corresponding to the greater emphasis in society and government on green issues. A guest-edited special issue on the Murray-Darling Basin in November 2009 explains the sharp rise at that time.

Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed four key roles of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* over its fifty years of history, and illustrated the shifting patterns over this period in authorship and content. Analysis of authorship reveals a dramatic rise in the proportion of female authors (from 10% to 59%), a lift in the proportion of international contributors (from 14% to 30%), a sustained high level of authorship from New South Wales (average of 37%), an increase in the percentage of contributors affiliated with universities (from 64% to 77%) and a marked trend towards multiple authorship (from 1.0 to 1.7 authors). Analysis of the 22 content themes illustrates how the prime focus has been, appropriately for this type of journal, on students/learners (25%), followed by philosophy/theory (20%), vocational education (19%), lifelong learning (18%), adult/community education (17%) and teaching (17%).

The journal has continued to make a substantial contribution to the cause of adult education in this country, providing a mouthpiece and conduit for the association and its profession which has:

- linked adult educators, both intellectually and in terms of communication, who were otherwise geographically scattered and numerically thin, and
- contributed to the legitimating of adult education as a discipline in Australia.

It has provided the opportunity for many to have their first paper published in an academic journal. Furthermore, the journal has served as a form of professional development for adult educators across the country, encouraging debate about goals and how to achieve them, acting as 'a medium for vigorous, independent thought about adult education and its problems' (Durston 1968: 81) and providing valuable information on national and international initiatives and developments.

While debates have continued to rage over the very nature of adult education and its changing role in society, and while authors over time have lamented its shortcomings (as well as celebrated its successes), the editors' toil has not been in vain. Their efforts, combined with those of all the 1100 authors over this time who contributed what they perceived as significant in each decade, have left a powerful legacy. From Hanna claiming in the early years that 'adult education [had] not achieved a recognised standing in this country' (1965: 3), Morris was able to pronounce 45 years later that 'the story of adult education, in Australia as elsewhere, has been characterised by a fight for formal recognition' and that 'such recognition … has now largely been achieved' (2010: 556). In this 'fight', the journal has played a significant part, as the evidence in this paper suggests. However, the future can never be assured. Brennan, a former editor, had written a decade earlier that

> Organisations like the ALA [Adult Learning Australia] are not guaranteed a future. There is little point planning for the 50th birthday—although if it does arrive, let's hope the records of the organisation will be available for the newer members to consult and read about. (2001: 388)

That fiftieth birthday has now passed, and the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* continues to play its role in providing one essential form of record for posterity.

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All over, red rover?
The neglect and potential of Australian adult education in the community

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Consistent with the 'looking back, moving forward' conference theme, in this paper we undertake a critical, research-based appraisal of the current, arguably neglected state of adult education in Australia in 2010, and proceed to paint a picture of how a different and potentially more positive future might be realised. Firstly, we emphasise situations (including states and territories) in Australia in which adult education is seen to be lacking or missing for particular groups of adults. Secondly we emphasise research evidence confirming the demonstrable value of learning for purposes other than those that are immediately vocational. We identify links between lifelong and lifewide learning on one hand, and health and wellbeing on the other. Part of the paper involves international comparisons with other forms of adult learning that Australia might learn from, adapt or borrow. We make particular reference to research underpinning the recent Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning by NIACE in the United Kingdom. Our *first main conclusion has to do with equity. Adult and community education (ACE) in Australia is currently seen to be least available or accessible to those Australians with the most limited and most negative experiences of school education, but the most need to learn in non-vocational domains. These groups include older Australians, some men and women, people not in paid work, and rural, isolated and Indigenous people. Our second main conclusion is that, to realise adult learning's future potential, we need changes to government policies, research and practice that acknowledge and actively support the broader nature and value of learning for life across all age groups. To paraphrase research from Belgium by Sfard (2008), based around Beck's (1986) exploration of reflexive modernity, the adult education function of ACE is in dire straits, unless education is seen as being much more valuable than the sum of individual vocational competencies, and particularly unless it is also recognised, valued and supported as one of many valuable outcomes of social, lifelong and lifewide learning throughout the community.*

Introduction

There has been widespread agreement for the past two decades, in a wide range of national and international research and policy literature, that there is a need for and value of ongoing lifelong and lifewide learning by adults of all ages for a wide range of social, vocational, community, economic and cultural purposes. However in 2010 there is no national policy consensus in Australia about what forms the adult and community education (ACE) 'sector' currently takes (or should take) beyond the existing higher education and vocational education and training (VET) sectors, or what roles national, state or territory governments should play in its policies, provision or funding.

In this paper we seek to explore the concerning gap between an increasing need for all adults to keep learning through life, and governments adopting a ‘she’ll-be-right’ approach to adult learning (Milburn, 2010). We identify an increasing abrogation of the responsibility for adult learning provision to the accredited vocational education and training ‘market’ and by default to the voluntary, community or third sector. This is occurring parallel to a research-based acknowledgement of an increasing proportion of ‘hard-to-reach’ (Nechvoglod & Beddie, 2010) and reluctant learners (Wallace, 2008).

Consistent with the ‘looking back, moving forward’ theme of Adult Learning Australia’s 50th conference, we undertake a critical, research-based appraisal of the current, arguably neglected, confused, patchy and fragmented state of adult education in Australia in 2010. While we identify evidence of an ongoing demise of the ACE sector (however it is conceived), we proceed to paint a picture of how a different and potentially more positive future might be realised.

The good news is that there is no shortage of recent, national policy exhortation. Harris identified six such major reports since September 2008 ‘on issues of relevance to adult learning’ (2010: 5). The Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, for example, identified the need for future Australians to develop ‘greater technical, social and cultural skills and knowledge … to adapt to changing circumstances’ (2009: 5). Even if only a narrow, vocational purpose is chosen as the criteria for analysing the misfit between policy and practice, there is a complete mismatch between the ‘[a]lmost 90 per cent of jobs [that] now require some type of post-school qualification … [and] at least half of Australian workers [who] do not have these qualifications or have not even completed secondary school’ (Milburn, 2010: 15).

International benchmarking by national survey of a range of adult literacies in Australia confirms that most Australians have such low functional literacies that they are likely to be struggling with many important aspects of life aside from work. The Australian Bureau of

Statistics (2008) has identified that around one half of Australian adults have literacy levels below those considered adequate by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009 ‘to meet the complex demands of work and life in modern economies … The implications of these figures are profound for our economy, businesses and individuals’ (Skills Australia, 2010: 35).

At such low literacy levels, adults would have difficulty accessing accredited training programs above Certificate 2, let alone participating and successfully completing them.

What is adult education in Australia (and why bother about it)?

Accounts of the origins of adult and community education in Australia such as within the first Senate report, *Come in Cinderella* (Senate, 1991: 1) tend to refer back to the development, from the second half of the 1800s, of Mechanics Institutes in Australia (formed originally in Scotland), Schools of Mines, Schools of Arts and circulating libraries as well as transplantation to Australia of the Workers Educational Association from England just prior to the First World War. Vestiges and descendants of each of these prior organisations exist in Australia 150 years hence, each of which is now seen as comprising part of a very diverse adult and community education (ACE) sector.

The *Come in Cinderella* report examined ‘existing policies and practices in adult and community education’ (Senate, 1991: iii), and prided itself as ‘the first national account of adult education since the 1944 Universities Commission Report by W.G.K. Duncan’ (1991: 3). Duncan framed his report in the context of a need, towards the end of the Second World War, to reconstruct a new Australian postwar economy. As Duncan put it in 1944,

> A new economy has to be built, involving drastic changes … people have to be given new skills, but more than that, they have to be shown the reasons for the large-scale shifts in occupations, and be prepared for repeated shifts in the future. In a word, adults have

> to be 'educated for change' … [N]ew inventions are likely to render old skills redundant. (Duncan, 1973 [1944]: 141)

Two thirds of a century after Duncan's report, these imperatives still ring true. What greatly exacerbates them is research into two factors operating internationally at different ends of the lifespan on older people and mothers: population ageing and infant mortality. Global population ageing is what Gayondato and Kim characterise as '[o]ne of the greatest social challenges of the twenty-first century … the ageing of human society … So profound is this demographic revolution that every aspect of social life and society is affected' (2007: 13). Older adults (50+) in Australia, typically after several shifts in individual work occupations, are living much longer and risk becoming further isolated through not being educated and/or working during the information and communications revolution of the past two decades. And yet there is evidence from recent, empirical, national research that for older men 'adult and community education (ACE) tends to be missing, less accessible to or appropriate' (Golding et al. 2009: 66).

What has made lifelong and lifewide learning absolutely essential in the same two decades is improved knowledge of the interaction between education and the social determinants of health. As the World Health Organization concluded, the 'evidence is compelling that business as usual is increasingly unfeasible … Yet policy-making all too often appears to happen as if there were no such knowledge available' (2008: 27). While there is compelling international evidence of the link between average infant mortality rates and education levels of mothers, arguments about maternal wellbeing are rarely, if ever, mentioned in adult education policy discourses in Australia. Meantime ACE is known from international research 'to be particularly effective in enhancing *the wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens*. Any government that ignores this evidence is open to serious criticism' (Field, 2009: 36).

A review of policy on adult education in Australia

Come in Cinderella implored the government to:

> recognize that a commitment to the 'clever country' and 'lifelong learning for all' requires a willingness to embrace a larger vision of how people get their education and training in Australia. If we as a nation are serious about economic and social justice goals we must get serious about adult education. (Senate, 1991: 160)

The *Beyond Cinderella* report that followed identified 'a conceptual inadequacy which haunts present policy and funding mechanisms in adult education and training' (Senate, 1997: 3), specifically the 'insistence on differentiating between educational programs on the grounds of their perceived or declared vocational orientation' (p. 3). The conceptual problems caused by education policies based on vocational differentiation were sown several decades before within Myer Kangan's (TAFE, 1974) report *TAFE in Australia*. While the national government gave an 'unequivocal commitment to the concept of lifelong learning and the promotion of a learning society' (Senate, 1997: 3), programs in ACE without a vocational orientation have been at risk ever since.

By 1980, Kangan (1980: 10) had retrospectively recognised that his report had been framed in 1974 in a more receptive climate of full employment, interest in alternative lifestyles, and a questioning of economic growth for its own sake. In setting up TAFE (Technical *and Further Education*: added italics), Kangan had deliberately widened the prevailing International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNESCO economically oriented definitions of technical and vocational education to include 'further education'. Aside from education for vocational qualifications, Kangan identified the need for Australian adults also to seek or acquire through TAFE the 'knowledge or skills for secondary, additional or supplementary occupational purposes, or for the purpose of personal enrichment, or to use leisure creatively'

(TAFE, 1974: 5). Kangan saw that the acquisition of this latter type of knowledge and skills usually occurred in courses that ‘are usually less formal and described as adult education’ (p. 5), including those held in technical colleges.

Kangan’s *TAFE in Australia* report in 1974 identified and separated six types of educational options ‘usually’ found in TAFE from those ‘usually’ found in adult education. Kangan’s vocational typology (with apprenticeships at the apex), has persisted in aggregated vocational and education and training data for more than a third of a century. Of particular relevance to ACE, the TAFE course typology relegated preparatory or bridging courses ‘usually’ found in adult education (but with ‘obvious’ overlaps) into the fifth type towards the bottom, just above ‘courses of an informal kind and varying in length from a number of years to quite short periods in any aspect of technology, science, liberal studies, self expression, home handicrafts and cultural expression’ (TAFE 1974: 5).

Even in the original vision of TAFE in 1974, Kangan recognised the tendency for ‘all forms of education … [to] become more closely related to employment, modifying the concept of education as intellectual development for its own sake’ (TAFE, 1974: 5). Five years later Kangan (1980) lamented the way in which the subsequent economic downturn had moved his broad vision of TAFE even closer to the purely vocational, and led to ‘a backswing of the social pendulum’ away from adult and further education for its own sake. He belatedly urged TAFE authorities to ‘proclaim that they are educational authorities, not manpower employment departments’ (Kangan, 1980: 12).

Research into Australian adult and community education

Campbell and Curtin identified that ‘differing definitional, contextual and financial structures of ACE in each State and Territory, and the blurring distinction between vocational and non-vocational programs, make it very difficult to determine the full extent of ACE provision' (1999: 9). Attempts by survey to measure adult and community education nationally or even within states are beset by a widespread lack of brand recognition of ACE. Even where there is provision, it is not often recognised by learners as ACE. Previous attempts to sieve out the ACE component of nationally aggregated VET data say as much about which states (mainly Victoria and New South Wales) and which types of providers (mainly TAFE) contributed the data and very little about the nature or diversity of ACE. Some forms of widespread and regular accredited learning and training by volunteers, such as through community-based fire and emergency service organisations in all areas of Australia, is seldom recorded in national collections either as VET or ACE. Similarly, many other organisation types involved in regular informal learning, such as the growing number of community men's sheds across Australia, remain beyond the reach of most data collections typically based on enrolled learners.

Two decades since *Come in Cinderella* the remaining vestiges of further education retained within the TAFE acronym are now very small. More than half of ACE provision counted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in 2010 is accredited vocational education and training. The policy and funding commitment to non-vocational ACE in the most populous Australian and previously strong ACE state, New South Wales, has greatly reduced and fragmented in recent years. In Victoria, the last Australian bastion of ACE as a statewide, government-supported network of community owned and managed providers, the new emphasis in ACE is on 'pre-accredited training' as part of a 'vastly reformed vocational education and training system' as part of the '*Securing jobs for your future - Skills for Victoria* package discourse' (ACFE, 2009: 5). Even the research discourse on 'what works in reaching and keeping' hard-to-reach and reluctant learners in Victoria (Nechvoglod & Beddie, 2010) is peppered by multiple exhortations from the ACFE Board for reluctant ACE providers to 'operate effectively in the new funding environment' (2009: 6), by adopting the competitive, new student 'entitlement model', originally recommended for ACE by Campbell and Curtin (1999: 86) that funds the student rather than the provider.

One hundred and fifty years since the original Mechanics Institutes were founded, many places across Australia (beyond Victoria and parts of urban New South Wales) retain only the Mechanics Institute building and no ACE provision. While there have been periodic national ACE policy releases framed as visions, goals and objectives by the national government, typically as part of federal election cycles, it is state and territory governments 'who have primary responsibility for the provision of ACE' (Campbell & Curtin, 1999: 84). Most states and territories have similarly produced policy documents and occasionally research purporting to support the small amount of remaining community provision as part of election cycles. A 2002 Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education (MCEETYA, 2002) was effectively only a declaration and was not followed up. A 2008 formal review of the 2002 declaration showed that none of the consistent, two-decades-long research effort on the impacts and benefits of ACE had been translated into nationally coordinated action.

The state of Australian adult education post 2005

Much of the recent (post 2005) evidence for the value of adult learning has been generated through NCVER-commissioned research as part of national adult literacy strategies (eg Balatti, Black & Falk, 2006; Perkins, 2009) or through an interest in training and retraining older workers with a recognition of our ageing society and workplaces (e.g. Martin, 2007; Lundberg & Marshallsay, 2007; Ryan & Sinning, 2009; Skinner, 2009). Most of this recent research is oriented towards vocational skilling and only makes oblique links to the ACE sector.

Some other research and policy evidence has been developed since 2005 by peak stakeholder bodies such as Adult Learning Australia (Choy, Haukka & Keyes, 2006; Bowman, 2006; ALA, 2007; Holmes, 2009; Bowman, 2009) in a last ditch attempt to state an evidence-based case for learning that goes beyond policy rhetoric, that is lifelong and valuable but not necessarily vocational. As Holmes put it:

> After several decades, the merits of and necessity for lifelong learning have been dutifully intoned by policy makers and elsewhere. In practice, and sadly more so in Australia than in many comparable countries, the pursuit of lifelong learning has been honoured more by the breach than the observance. (2009: 1)

It is possible that future historians may perceive these recent flurries within the policy and research literature as the last throw of the ACE dice.

The first Senate report, *Come in Cinderella*, closely examined ACE across Australia by state and territory. It concluded that involvement 'tends to be peripheral to their major areas of concern—schools and TAFE' (Senate, 1991: 23). Since the 'largest formal provider of adult and community education in every State and Territory' (p. 37) was found to be TAFE, it is arguable that ACE should be treated more as a segment of TAFE than as a stand-alone sector. As Campbell and Curtin put it, in the case of several states such as Western Australia, 'There is little if any provision for the ACE sector to have an identity other than in terms of its capacity to contribute to the VET sector' (1999: 70). The observed differences by state and territory in the 1991 Senate report ranged from 'significant formal involvement' in Victoria (1991: 24) to no comprehensive policy in South Australia and no formal administrative structure in the Northern Territory. These differences were found to reflect different government approaches, degree of responsiveness to community pressures and the ways in which ACE had evolved historically.

The patchy and partial nature of ACE across Australia painted by the 1991 Senate report, repainted a decade later by Campbell and Curtin (1999: 66–74) as well as by Choy, Haukka and Keyes (2006: 51–54) has not improved. The conceptual inadequacies identified in the *Beyond Cinderella* (Senate, 1997) report as a definitional tear in the ACE canvas have their origins in the ongoing tensions between ACE perceived as education delivered within an institutional setting, and adult learning as experienced in diverse community settings. This remains somewhat similar two decades later in 2010. As Golding, Davies and Volkoff summarised, there is a difficulty reconciling the

> two different perceptions of ACE. On one hand ACE is a diverse adult and community learning network whose essence is not amenable to simple definition or boundary setting. On the other hand, ACE is at least in part, a publicly funded form of educational provision and for the purposes of rationing of public funding, requires definition and boundaries. (2001: 57)

In essence, ACE as a form of government-supported, community provision beyond Victoria remains restricted to some cities and towns in parts of New South Wales and some parts of South Australia and Western Australia. In 2010, as at the time of the first Senate report (Senate, 1991: 59), the most numerous group of community-based providers operating across the country, still mainly for and by women, are likely to be neighbourhood learning centres, houses or community centres.

Bardon (2006) prepared a Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) discussion paper anticipating the national reform of Australian community education. It included an ‘ACE capability framework’, which grouped providers under tiers by approximate size and vocational orientation and which helped inform a new Ministerial Declaration on ACE (MCEETYA, 2008). The 2008 declaration had four goals, all of which were strongly vocationally directed. Each of Bardon’s tiers, as Bowman (2009: 4) observed, presupposed that ACE providers would need to ‘move up the capability tiers’ towards accredited training in order to implement the MCEETYA (2008) Ministerial Declaration on ACE. While Sanguinetti, Waterhouse and Maunders (2004) had independently created a framework for ACE pedagogy for the Adult, Community and Further Education Board in Victoria by identifying ‘many roads to learning’, the vocational road was now the government-sanctioned, official highway. All the policy roads and official discourses pointed towards vocational learner choice and neo-liberalism at both federal and state levels. While Bowman (2009) used a broad scan of pertinent research to identify roles for ACE beyond the vocational straightjacket contained within the 2008 ministerial declaration, it was ‘all over, red rover’ for ACE in a government sense as Victoria began to follow New South Wales’ neo-liberal ACE capitulation.

The potential of Australian adult education

While the picture of ACE as originally envisioned in *Come in Cinderella* is over, the need for and benefits of lifelong and lifewide learning for *all* adults beyond compulsory schooling and in early phases of life remain and are now better understood through research. We understand in 2010 that difficult early lives tend to be persistent and debilitating to both individuals and families, and often become inter-generational. Schuller and Watson, in their summary of the inspirational suite of research undertaken as part of the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning in the UK, recently asked:

> [W]ould we think it a strangely skewed health system if it subordinated to a large extent the needs of younger age groups to those at the end of their lives. Yet this is broadly a mirror image of how we organize our education and training, concentrating hugely on the initial phase and neglecting the subsequent ones. (2009: 7)

We now know, most recently from experiences of the Global Financial Crisis, that the market, as a mechanism even for money and its derivatives, let alone education, is imperfect. We also know through research as well as from several of the Nordic countries that there are other, arguably better ways of organising and valuing adult learning through and for the community, aside from the vocational value of learning acquired through or for paid employment. The diversity and goodwill of adult education is fundamental to its success and contribution to community health and wellbeing. This contribution needs government acknowledgement through policies that nurture and recognise the value in individual and community enhancement (Foley, 2005).

Australia would be wise to heed John Field's words and place 'wellbeing at the centre of our education goals, and rather than focusing narrowly on one specific set of skills and qualifications, we should value a broad and generous range of adult learning' (cited in Schuller & Watson, 2009: 33).

Discussion

In hindsight, it is obvious that Cinderella 'came out' in 1991 (Senate, 1991) as neo-liberal governments began to shut down the ACE ball. Pusey in the same year identified that the previous notion of the 'social good' had become marginalised or a 'buried discourse' (Pusey, 1991: 166), to be replaced by what Welch described as 'a new economistic rhetoric of individual rights, and ideologies of "efficiency" and "choice"' (2010: 244). In Welch's words, this marginalisation of progressive 'social policy by positivist economics' in Australia, in this case adult education, has been achieved through 'a radical hollowing out of traditional state functions', to reveal 'a very different policy landscape, the contours of which have only deepened since' (2010: 244–245). The loss of the Board of Adult and Community Education in New South Wales and the gradual erosion of the roles of Adult, Community and Further Education in Victoria are recent evidence of this marginalisation of ACE at different times for similar reasons in all Australian states. 'In the process, whole programs, and specialist units and agencies designed to focus on marginal groups, disappeared' (Welch, 2010: 245).

There is little doubt that as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century, 30 years since the publication of the Cinderella report, little remains of the original vision of ACE. This however need not preclude different visions of ACE now and into the future that recognise the potential contribution of ACE through engaging and achieving equity in their access to learning, for both preparatory education and skills development programs and more broadly through programs related to community connections and engagement that promote health and wellbeing through lifelong learning. We have highlighted the lack of ACE funding and in turn ACE provision for members of our community that are its most vulnerable. These members include Indigenous, older people, men and women who are not in paid work, young mothers, early school leavers and disengaged youth. Some of these 'missing' members are identified as having negative experiences of school and formal education (Golding et al., 2009) but they have the most need to learn in non-vocational domains to support their diverse needs and wellbeing throughout life. We need policies that recognise the value of ACE's flexible and equitable non-vocational approaches that give other arguably more important outcomes such as health and wellbeing benefits for the community. These policies could well borrow from the European model where the importance of lifelong learning for all European citizens is stressed as a priority.

Conclusion

The Commission of the European Communities have put forward an action plan for adult learning that incorporates a focus on 'those who are disadvantaged because of their low literacy levels, inadequate work skills and/or skills for successful integration into society ...

these could include migrants, older people, women or persons with a disability' (2007: 3).

- The commission's approach starts from the premise that the need for a high quality and accessible adult learning system is no longer a point of discussion, given the challenges Europe has to meet in the coming years. The Commission's Action Plan on Adult Learning includes the following priorities:To address the problem of the persistent high number of early school leavers … by offering a second chance to those who enter adult age without having a qualification;
- To reduce the persistent problem of poverty and social exclusion among marginalised groups. Adult learning can both improve people's skills and help them towards active citizenship and personal autonomy;
- To increase the integration of migrants in society and labour market. Adult learning offers tailor made courses, including language learning, to contribute to this integration process. (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 3)

The Australian adult education system is currently patchy and partially funded at best. Adult education policies in Australia need to recognise that an appropriately funded and accessible adult education system has the capacity to provide essential and equitable opportunities that promote healthy, connected citizens from all age groups and backgrounds who benefit from the flexibility afforded by ACE approaches. Australia would do well to look to Europe to develop policies that include agency around the discourses of equity, inclusion, health and wellbeing, and not just a de facto education system that is valued only for vocational outcomes and competencies.

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Authenticity through reflexivity: connecting teaching philosophy and practice

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Adult educators have strong beliefs. This will surprise no-one, but where do their beliefs come from, and how do they influence future development of their teaching practice? Drawing on my PhD research, I explore the multi-directional relationship between teaching beliefs and practices, considering the influence of past traditions of adult education and personal philosophies of teaching. Through interviews, journaling and a focus group, ten practitioners from Melbourne's Centre for Adult Education explored the sticky questions of how their philosophies developed and how these philosophies interconnect with more recent notions of good practice.

Some research suggests that teaching practice is fundamentally shaped by beliefs that are stable and resistant to change, yet these practitioners revealed a dynamic, multi-directional relationship between teaching beliefs and practices. They were influenced by their own past experiences of learning and some of the broad traditions of adult education, yet arguably of greater interest was *the finding that adult educators' philosophies of teaching were also influenced by their current practice, their interaction with learners, and the challenges of the day-to-day learning context. The words and experiences of these practitioners demonstrate that deliberate engagement with educators' beliefs may enhance authentic development of their teaching practice.*

Current directions in government policy for adult education are firmly fixed on skilling a national workforce, and naturally require adult educators' teaching practice to reflect this. What can be expected when this irresistible force meets the potentially immovable object of adult educators' teaching philosophies?

Introduction

The Centre for Adult Education (CAE), like many educational institutions, has experienced great change over the past thirty years. A Melbourne icon since its inception in 1946 the CAE has mirrored and sometimes driven the different understandings of adult education held by the education community and broader society. Early conceptions were concerned with supplementary education, individual fulfilment, community development and democratisation, and led to the catchcry 'lifelong learning', now grown beyond the education sector to become an integral part of contemporary social discourse (Haugen, 2000: 577). Today the CAE continues to be the largest single provider of adult and further education (ACFE) courses in Victoria.

Government funding is now attached primarily to programs that deliver formal qualifications for adults such as the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Vocational Education and Training (VET) traineeships; and programs that develop literacy, numeracy and job readiness skills. Education for the purpose of work is in the ascendency, and the concept of civic and community benefit for the common good as the core rationale of education and training has taken a back seat. These developments have not proceeded uncontested. Kell (2001) claimed that this shift occurred in the context of nation building towards a preoccupation about efficiency, effectiveness and conformity to the principles of the market, and away from notions of public ownership. The emphasis on collective and democratic notions of the purpose of education has been displaced by exchange relationships between a purchaser and provider where educational futures are guaranteed by ensembles involving capital (2001: 244).

What is the role of teachers in this context? Despite earlier fears (or hopes), new technology will not be replacing adult educators any time soon; in fact their spaces are spreading beyond classrooms to workplaces, business meeting rooms and virtual campuses. 'Good teaching' is recognised by government, traditional education institutions, other Registered Training Organisations and learners as a vital component in adult education, yet calls for changes to the practice of adult educators suggest that a mismatch is perceived. Given the importance of teachers to education, it is worth knowing whether their practices, and the factors that influence their practice, are consistent with the paradigms that shape government education policy. However, while the priorities of government and funding bodies are relatively clear, the educative purposes of adult education teachers are less well known, indeed rarely heard. The extent to which adult educators at the CAE share the educative purposes of government and whether their teaching practice reflects these purposes were unknown.

My research project centred on adult educators at the CAE in Melbourne, and explored with them the underlying philosophies, beliefs, values and practices that influenced their individual teaching practices in this adult education environment. My purpose was to examine the relationship between these adult educators' personal philosophies of teaching and their teaching practice, exploring the influence of their beliefs, as well as the influence of current, external notions of good teaching. I anticipated that participants sharing diverse understandings through reflective discourse might contribute to a supportive culture of professional growth.

Teaching philosophies as a construct

Within the paradigms of each age and society, philosophy provides a system of beliefs about the things that concern us and a way of exploring that yields meaning. Philosophies can be the result of explicit questioning, where all assumptions, biases and perceptions are rigorously interrogated, or they can be implicit, the result of unexamined but influential experience. Every group, profession or society has rules, mores and conventions. These may define for each entity, and for outsiders, its ideals and purpose; or may work at a subliminal level where behaviour and perspectives are shaped by socialisation, culture and experience. One's personal philosophy has traditionally been understood to refer to a set of beliefs that reside internally as thoughts and feelings, or as a professed set of interrelated beliefs that motivate action. Increasingly it is also understood to incorporate action itself in the external world.

O'Connor and Scanlon claimed that a professional philosophy 'forms a significant part of an individual's professional self and enables one to negotiate the moral and ethical implications of one's daily work' (2005: 1). Research about beliefs sheds light on the factors that contribute to the development of teaching beliefs, the different categories of teaching beliefs, and their openness to change. The literature suggests that beliefs about teaching develop early since most people experience formal learning and observe teaching though schooling. Individual philosophies of teaching seem likely to be stable, and only change slowly, more as a result of an individual's experience, rather than in response to external and imposed change.

The literature about adult educators' personal philosophies of teaching suggests that although they are unique, and subject to individual development, philosophies are also constructed within social contexts and are exposed to the shifts in prevailing social and political purposes accorded to educators' work. From a historical perspective, personal philosophies of teaching are also developed within a relatively stable framework of discourses and theories about adult education, reflecting particular pedagogical assumptions and traditions that are often longstanding and slow to change. Thus, Elias and Merriam (1995) described five philosophical traditions that are generally understood to underpin adult education: liberal, progressive, behaviouristic, humanistic and radical traditions. According to Bradshaw (1995) all educational traditions carry within them visions of individual and social goods, and good practice is that that realises those goods. Diversity of teaching philosophies is consistent with a plurality of notions of good teaching, yet the literature warns of a narrowing of official understandings of good teaching. The interrelationship between the individual teaching philosophy and teaching practice, its social construction, and its influence are clearly demonstrated through the literature. These considerations suggest that philosophies of teaching should be taken into account in professional development and other methods of developing teaching practice. The connection between these concepts in the world of adult education was where my research interest lay. I was interested in the personal philosophies of teaching of adult educators, in particular the internal and external aspects of these philosophies. In addition I explored their relationship with the broader philosophies of adult education that may define and influence the practice of adult education in today's settings.

What is the relationship between adult educators’ philosophies of teaching and their teaching practice? Some research suggests that teaching practice is fundamentally connected to adult educators’ personal philosophies of teaching, shaped by beliefs that are stable constructs and resistant to change. However, the particular influence of adult educators’ teaching philosophies remains largely unknown. What can be expected when adult educators’ teaching philosophies and official notions of good teaching practice meet on the ground? In this context the connection between philosophy and practice would appear to be central, yet it remains largely unexplored.

In a narrowing education debate where training for employment holds sway, the literature suggests that some teaching philosophies will be out of step with the dominant paradigm. In these situations, how are we to understand the influence of teaching philosophies on teaching practice? There is little evidence of policy makers engaging with educators to understand their beliefs better. However, research suggests that professional development that fails to take into account teachers’ philosophies of teaching is doomed to disappointing results. With this in mind I argue that it is appropriate to use personal philosophies as a construct through which to explore the decisions that teachers make in their teaching practice, and as a potential construct for enriching professional development. The research questions that framed this study emerged from the literature review, specifically:

- What are the different philosophies that adult educators at the CAE use to conceptualise their educative work?
- How do these philosophies develop?
- What is the relationship between these teaching philosophies and teaching practice?
- How do these philosophies interrelate with official notions of ‘good teaching’?

- What are the implications for current and future developments for teaching practice?

Methodology

Because the literature revealed that the voices of adult educators are seldom heard, the prime focus of this study was to make space for some of these voices to emerge. The nature of the research questions aligns primarily with an interpretive qualitative methodology, which favours the internal reality of subjective experience for each adult educator participant. As a consequence I used individual interviews, individual practice journaling and focus group interviewing in order to give prominence to individual teachers' voices. Individual interview questions were open ended and the findings were reported making detailed use of the participants' own words in order to see how the world of teaching adults is experienced from the perspective of each participant. I used action research methodology, in which the participants see themselves as autonomous and responsible people acting in a world of human relationships, in my decision to use participant journaling of their teaching practice as an opportunity for participants to reflect on their interview responses and their teaching practice. In doing this I anticipated that sharing diverse educational understandings through reflective discourse might contribute to building a supportive culture of professional growth.

Teaching philosophies

On first reading, it appears that the philosophies that these CAE adult educators use to conceptualise their educative work are, for the most part, individual collections of idiosyncratic beliefs, devoid of a common philosophical framework. Some participants feel that their lack of polished and articulate philosophies is shameful; a tacit acknowledgement of the clarion call in the literature to know one's teaching philosophy as an essential facet of belonging to the profession. For other participants, however, an elegant declaration of one's philosophy is of minimal importance: beliefs sincerely and consistently held are what counts.

Connections with the broad philosophies of adult education that have shaped and reflected public and academic debates about adult education over time also seem largely absent at first glance. However, following Pratt's (2002) advice to look below the surface, the influence of a number of adult education philosophies become evident. While no participants used Elias and Merriam's terms to describe their teaching philosophies, yet in many ways they were consistent with progressive and humanistic adult education traditions. There were many examples of common belief strands, particularly those concerning the purposes of education for adults, how adults learn and roles for teachers. Education was seen as a worthwhile thing in itself, as well as for the broad enrichment it offered individual learners and society. Responding to learners holistically and recognising the integral contribution they bring to the learning exchange were common beliefs with particular ramifications for their roles as teachers. In addition, all participants saw themselves as learners, open to new understandings in the learning exchange, and evolving their practice in response to learner needs.

There is general support in the literature for the notion that knowing one's teaching philosophy is desirable, and the benefits of this knowledge are well explored. The participants in this study also explored their own rationale for their teaching beliefs, often uncovering connections and recognising disjunctures, and revealing the particular normative beliefs that shaped their epistemic and procedural beliefs. While these were not articulated as fully developed philosophies, they were certainly suggestive of the internal consistency and congruence that Pajares (1992) identified as crucial to making sense of adult educators' beliefs.

Other sections of the literature suggest that beliefs that underpin teaching philosophies develop early in life. Such beliefs were difficult to ascertain in this study as few participants saw early life experiences, including experiences of schooling, as influential. Likewise, beliefs reflecting the participants' world view were not proffered as influential in the development of their teaching philosophies, although this may be attributed to the difficulty in recognising and articulating the influences that form underlying paradigms. Some participants recignised formal pedagogical knowledge as influential. However, in the main, its influence had become diluted over time, whereas formal epistemic knowledge remained a stronger influence. Foley (2000) claimed that adult educators are interested in formal theory only if it illuminates their practice and helps them act more effectively. Taylor (2000) concluded that most adult educators probably learn to teach adults while on the job and gain little in the development of new beliefs from graduate programs in adult education.

Most significantly, participants nominated their adult experiences, sometimes as an adult learner, and especially as a teacher of adults, as the primary influences on their teaching philosophies. Their experiences of teaching, in particular their interactions with students and colleagues, strongly shaped and informed their beliefs about learning, sometimes challenging long-held epistemic assumptions, and encouraging them to develop new understandings of what it means to be an adult educator. They presented these past teaching experiences as a continuing source of influence on their current teaching philosophies, very much in the here and now.

Connecting teaching philosophy and practice

Amid the different contributions to the literature that explore the central relationship between the internal framework of beliefs and external teaching behaviours, congruency between personal beliefs and practice leading to authenticity is deemed desirable. The general agreement in the literature—that the connections between beliefs, whether consciously or unconsciously held, can provide insights into the decision making and action that are part of the daily work of adult educators—is supported by the findings of this study:

> So knowing it on paper is one thing but putting it into practice is quite challenging and being OK with that, living with that discomfort, and I think that's where your philosophy affects your reality, whether we are conscious of it or not. I think the more conscious of it, the more effective our teaching can be. (Frances)

Underpinned by claims in the literature that an individual's philosophy of teaching is significant because of its relationship to teaching practice, this is a key area of interest in this study. The findings demonstrate that this strong relationship is at the heart of the way these adult educators make meaning in their practice:

> I guess if you believe in empowerment then you've got to treat people in such a way as a learner that they are empowered. So that means not too much hand holding, support, but not hand holding, and challenging them to do things they normally wouldn't. (Oliver)

This relationship was expressed in diverse ways, from finding philosophy to be indistinguishable from practice, to a mutually informing relationship, to a deeply conflicted and uncomfortable tension when philosophy and practice are perceived to be at odds. This tension also inspired creative ways for teachers to incorporate their own beliefs into the mandated programs: 'I've managed to mould my philosophy into the course. That's because I have firm beliefs; it's not because I'm doing what I'm told' (Jess).

However, the nature of this relationship remains complex. The main findings raise questions rather than answer them about the degree of influence between philosophy and practice; which beliefs are prominent in decision making; the effect of tension between incongruent teaching philosophy and teaching practice; and the influence of unconsciously held beliefs. What can be said is that any attempt to influence practice must not be indifferent to this deep and complex relationship.

Several participants found that this research process itself helped them gain insights into the decision making and action that are part of their daily work. Initial interviews brought their philosophies into the foreground. Journaling provided an extended opportunity to reflect on their practice, challenging them to explore the connections and disjunctures between their philosophies and their daily teaching practice in an ongoing way: 'My philosophy about education in general seemed to come through. It [journaling] made it clearer for me' (Oliver).

> Just being able to talk about it, like we have today, and the short time I've been keeping the journal has been really valuable. So reflecting on teaching practice which we don't really do, we don't have time for. And we don't meet as a team of teachers very often to talk about teaching practice. It might be good to meet with a wider group to do that. (Jess)

Teaching philosophies and official notions of good practice

The academic literature argues that no single view of good teaching should dominate. Different philosophical perspectives in the adult education field wax and wane, often interrelating as well as competing, and it is not surprising that expectations of the sector are diverse rather than uniform (Figgis, 2009: 17). The notion of good teaching is embedded within each particular educational philosophy, primarily aligned with the educational purpose, and demonstrated through decisions and actions concerning content, methodology and learners in the learning exchange.

Notions of good teaching are also embedded within each personal philosophy of teaching. Since most participants' philosophies were more consistent with humanistic and progressive traditions, their notions of good teaching were along these lines. Participants' notions of good teaching practice also aligned strongly with descriptions of their own teaching philosophies and practice, while they acknowledged that they were open to learning new ways and that they ‘don’t get it right all of the time’ (Jess). These features of good teaching were not discrete; rather they were understood to have strong interconnections and implications that formed an overall purpose that made sense to each participant. Expressed in various ways, they suggested a plurality of understandings rather than a particular orthodoxy, always grounded in the local context of ‘what works’. The primary features of good practice were associated with content expertise; positive relationships with learners based on knowing and respecting them as individuals; recognising the learning needs and contributions of the students in their specific situations; and continuing to improve one’s teaching practice.

Beyond academic debate and individual notions of good teaching practice, however, government priorities ensure that one paradigm of good teaching, complete with inherent educational philosophy, will dominate at any given time. Policy, financial and human resourcing, and research are tilted towards this philosophy while others receive less attention. The government’s current dominant paradigm reflects a largely behaviourist educational philosophy, ‘based on the assumption that there is a direct relationship between workplace performance and human competency’ (James, 2001: 303):

> VET is delivered through CBT characterised by pre-specified training and assessment outcomes together with their expression in competency-based standards on which training programs are based. Industry involvement in this process is also a feature, thus aligning educational goals with industry requirements. (James, 2001: 301)

Many participants in this study resisted notions of good practice that they perceived to belong to this dominant paradigm. They were often required to teach in ways inconsistent with their own beliefs or purposes, leading to anger, frustration and resistance; and some reported feeling marginalised: ‘To me it’s a nonsense; my ability to allow students time is constrained considerably, fun disappears, we are teaching for assessment, we are not teaching for learning’ (Kathleen).

As predicted in the literature, most participants did not see themselves as a contributing part of the larger debate influencing current adult education policy directions, but rather as at the dead end of the chain of command: ‘It was regarded by managers as almost frivolous to want to think about the educational rationale’ (Cindi). ‘There’s not enough emphasis on what’s best practice. I don’t think we’re on the same page; we don’t talk about it enough, even with each other. I feel teachers are largely ignored’ (Oliver).

Participants experienced the constraints of the regulatory frameworks and felt discouraged from engaging in debate or discussion that examined more nuanced notions of good teaching. This view was further entrenched by the official acceptance of Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as a sufficient qualification to deliver VET programs. Such perceptions lessened the likelihood of participants recognising any connections between their own philosophies and official notions of good teaching practice. Nevertheless, many notions of good practice espoused by participants were also consistent with recent government-sponsored reports outlining the types of knowledge and skills required of VET teachers within a CBT framework. Figgis (2009) reported trends in contemporary good practice, some of which draw from humanist and progressive notions of good teaching, and that the spread of such practice draws from VET practice rather than regulatory frameworks or lists of desired knowledge and capabilities. This suggests an underappreciated connection that can be further enhanced.

Implications for current and future developments for teaching practice

All participants saw continuing development of their teaching practice as part of their professional duty, indeed integral to their teaching philosophies. However there was widespread dissatisfaction with their current or recent experiences of professional development, which were largely perceived as controlling and irrelevant to their teaching practice. In contrast, many participants reported that they found their involvement in this project valuable in working with teaching colleagues, in developing their practice and in reviving past practices of journal keeping. Through their participation they demonstrated that exploration of one's personal philosophies of teaching and learning may contribute to further examination and development of one's teaching practice, and that doing this actively with one's peers can be an effective mode of professional development.

Strong implications for future development can be drawn from all of the preceding research questions. First, participants are open to developing their practice further when they perceive authentic need and opportunity. Second, while the relationship between philosophy and practice remains complex, enough is understood to recognise that engagement with teachers' philosophies and beliefs is essential in authentic professional development and participation in debates about teaching practice. These implications suggest the need for more targeted time and support for workplace professional development, and a move away from top-down modes of change implementation. Beyond this, a more nuanced approach is required, one that recognises a multiplicity of philosophies of teaching and notions of good teaching, rather than the simple but ultimately self-defeating approach of a single paradigm. Tthe findings of this study have strong implications for future development of teaching practice, perhaps more than anticipated by the literature. The clearest implication is that participants' teaching philosophies may well be stable, but they are not frozen in time. Indeed teaching philosophy appears to be an evolving interplay of beliefs and practices of teaching, influenced by adult experiences of learning and teaching, and supported by a philosophical disposition to see oneself as an eternal learner.

The participants found the processes of exploring their personal philosophies of teaching to be valuable in several ways relevant to their professional development. When coupled with reflective journaling this encouraged new insights and, for some, led to further development of their teaching practice. In addition, some recognised the power of constructing new understandings through purposeful conversation with their teaching colleagues. These open the way for more structured peer learning projects and active experimentation within the local context through participatory action research.

The implications for those who work with educators to develop their practice are also encouraging. The individual and diverse nature of teaching philosophies and the tenacity with which they are held present a formidable challenge. However, this also presents an opportunity to engage with teachers in supportive and democratic, rather than directive, ways. As predicted in the literature, imposed notions of good teaching practice are likely to be presented as simplistic and misplaced. However, longer term engagement that values a plurality of understandings and fosters a deeper level of exploration is likely to be welcomed. Based on assumptions that teachers have voices, strengths and resources for their own empowerment, group-led and negotiated approaches, such as action research, and peer coaching and mentoring, can successfully nurture good teaching in adult education contexts.

Further research

Implications and opportunities also exist for future research. The limited scope of this project means I have necessarily paid less attention to some related areas of knowledge, while the findings expose gaps in other areas. Qualitative research, which has formed the backbone of this project, continues to be the most suitable approach in extending this area of study. However, particular research methodologies, some of which are akin to the professional development models suggested above, are also indicated.

The complex relationship between teaching beliefs, and the connections between philosophies and teaching practice, are far from clear, and would benefit from deeper, more robust probing, continuing the qualitative approach of this study. In particular, these same participants could be invited to examine more closely their beliefs that appear to be contradictory, and to discuss which beliefs they give priority in different problem-solving practice contexts. Their perceptions that official notions of good teaching have no connection with their own notions of good teaching could also be investigated more directly. Further investigation of teaching practice beyond self-reports would also qualify conclusions drawn about this relationship. Data collection could involve video and digital recording of different aspects of teaching practice, especially interactions between educators and learners, and between educators.

The focus within this project was largely on the individual adult educator. However, the literature review and the findings of this study suggest that philosophies and practices of teaching are socially constructed. I also recommend further research that focuses on group rather than individual construction of teaching philosophies. If undertaken using group research methods such as focus groups, this would also address some of the concerns of participants that they need more group opportunities to examine their practice.

Given the participants' disposition to change and actual reporting of change to their practice during this project, participatory action research would appear to be a suitable methodology that could sustain a longer time frame of research. Within this approach, deeper levels of belief examination, and investigation of actual teaching practice, as discussed above, would be supported by a more concrete focus on developing new approaches to practice problems as identified by participants. The potential of collaborative journal writing and reflection in terms of professional development of practice could also be further investigated within this research methodology.

The enthusiasm of participants before and during this project suggests that the divide between researchers and adult educators is permeable. Participatory action research presents an apt framework through which adult educators might construct knowledge and contribute to debates about good teaching practice in more active ways, and gain experience as researchers. In these ways they could begin to redress the disconnectedness from the adult education world that many participants reported. Beyond these research participants, similar methodologies could also be adopted on a larger scale, to test the generalisability of these findings to cohorts of adult educators in other CAE teaching departments, and other ACE sites. Success in this larger-scale research need not be limited to generalisability, however, as participatory action research methodologies are also likely to generate solutions to local teaching practice problems, especially when associated with longer time frames.

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Recognition of prior learning (RPL): can intersubjectivity and philosophy of recognition support better equity outcomes?

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The formal recognition of prior learning (RPL) has long been lauded and even, one might suggest, doggedly pursued as a tool of social justice and equity within education sectors across the world (Harris, 1999; Wheelahan, Miller & Newton, 2002; Castle & Attwood, 2001; Cleary et al., 2002). It can accredit skills and knowledges that have evolved from diverse, informal learning experiences and cultural locations and is thought to be 'a powerful tool for bringing people into the learning system' who have otherwise become disengaged (Hargreaves, 2006: 2). Many strategies have been identified to increase access to RPL in Australia, including targeted promotion, reduction of bureaucratic procedures, and creative evidence-gathering and assessment techniques. But the fruits of these efforts are not sufficiently realised in increased social inclusion. The data indicate that, while RPL is on the increase in some quarters, there is still limited uptake by traditionally marginalised learners, such that more RPL overall does not necessarily lead to better outcomes *for equity groups (Misko, Beddie & Smith, 2007). After more than a decade of focused attention, I believe this situation demands broader, less instrumental thinking, in favour of a more relational analysis of the meaning of recognition assessment and a different conceptualisation of RPL overall.*

In this paper I draw on qualitative research in progress to explore the meaning of RPL to candidates and the significance of the candidate–assessor relationship as a site of negotiated meaning and identity construction (Hamer, 2010). Looking through the lens of a philosophy of recognition (Honneth, 1995) and postmodern understandings of the discursive production of the self (Chappell et al., 2003; Benhabib, 1992), I ask questions about the nature and effects of the assessment relationship. I invite considerations of this relationship as an intersubjective exchange within a wider, more fundamental 'struggle for recognition' as part of human self-actualisation (Honneth, 1995). I will use emerging data to illustrate the meaning and effects of RPL within this theoretical framework and propose a reconceptualisation of recognition assessment that aims to enhance our efforts towards access and equity goals.

RPL: The underachiever?

Towards the end of 2010, after more than a decade of attention, it is now frequently acknowledged that incentives and technical supports to increase and widen the reach of RPL to disenfranchised learners have not achieved our optimistic expectations (Hewson, 2008; Misko et al., 2007; Smith & Clayton, 2009; Smith, 2004; Bowman, 2004). A simple online search for 'RPL materials' or exploration of most education department, VET quality or industry skills council websites will return a multitude of RPL instruments, models and assessment guides that are designed to assist in making the process streamlined, accessible and educationally valid.

There have been efforts to address assessors' professional development needs (Mitchell et al., 2006); strategies to increase the confidence of assessors (Booth et al., 2002; Mitchell & Gronold, 2009) and more recently analyses of assessor attitudes and values concerning RPL (Hewson, 2008). In addition, the essential qualification for all VET assessors, the newly titled Certificate IV Training and Education (TAE 40110) has been significantly reviewed and upgraded to respond to concerns for increased rigour, consistency and quality of training and assessment practices in general. The National Quality Council now recommends a comprehensive, national effort bringing together a range of strategies to improve VET assessment (NQC, 2009a, 2009b). Yet still we find that within VET 'real progress for disadvantaged groups and systemic change to achieve universal access [including to RPL] have been slow and patchy … implementation is failing to translate into real change' (NVEAC, 2010: 6).

What do we imagine to be the reasons for this underachievement of RPL? In a study of 100 VET teachers and educational leaders Hewson (2008) found that concerns regarding the quality of assessment and learning within RPL, and differing views about the fundamental purpose of skills recognition, hindered implementation. This led her to conclude that rather than mostly instrumental barriers there are in fact pedagogical reasons for assessors' avoidance of formal skills recognition. In other words it is confusions and concerns regarding the reliability and consistency of assessment judgements, the nature of evidence requirements and evidence collection methods, and the quality of the learning experience for the candidate that holds practitioners back from implementing more RPL. A concern that RPL does not allow time and space for formative assessment or a meaningful relationship with the learner in their educational journey compounds the misgivings of many assessors. Hewson proposes cultural change involving closer collaboration between assessors, RTOs and industry to address this lack of confidence in RPL.

Researching the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) in a university setting in the UK, Peters (2005) used a more epistemological lens, looking at types of knowledge and how they are presented. She argued that recognition assessment can tend to focus more on the *form* in which the student presents their learning and experience rather than on the content and context of their knowledges. APEL is the point where the outside world and the academy intersect 'discoursally' (p. 277) and there appears to be limited flexibility from the establishment in adapting preferred ways of describing knowledge, in order to accommodate experiential learning. APEL assessors are thus interested in how well the learner can 'match' their experiential learning to that already articulated within the university and are perhaps not adequately equipped to consider the merit or equivalence of alternative knowledges. This view mirrors earlier research findings (Wheelahan et al., 2002; Cameron, 2005) that successful RPL candidates are those who can 'translate their professional or vocational practice discourse into the academic' (Wheelahan et al., 2002: 13) and underlines the potentially exclusionary effects of RPL for those who do not meet the prevailing normative criteria (Andersson & Fejes, 2005; Hamer, 2010). In Peter's analysis, APEL assessors appear to the students to be more anxious about gatekeeping a formal qualification in order to preserve its quality and integrity than they are interested in recognising the validity of alternative skills and knowledge. The APEL candidates reported that they did not view the assessors as 'having their best interests at heart' and saw them 'at best as people whose requirements they would have to adapt to and at worst as people who would *probably not understand them*' (2005: 282, emphasis added). Of interest here is that the candidates expressed worry *not* that the assessors would not understand the information or the knowledge they presented, but that they would not understand 'them'. This implied that they thought the assessors lacked interest in or acknowledgment of the students as situated and embodied actors in a world beyond the university and as a result could not perceive their skills.

Peters concluded from her study that a non-rigid and non-mechanistic assessment has to include *negotiation*, such that a dialogue regarding knowledges can occur and the candidate has some agency in securing understanding and validation:

> If the assessment process is not to be mechanistic and rigid, thereby excluding a range of forms of knowledge and ways of expressing it, an element of negotiation needs to be brought into the equation, with candidates themselves as well as external experts being given the opportunity to argue their case. (Peters, 2005: 284)

In accord with Hewson, she recommended collaborative assessment whereby external stakeholders such as industry experts and non-university educators can participate in interpreting the experiential learning to 'bridge the gap' between the 'outside world' and academic discourses.

Identity, learning and assessment

A number of different and productive critiques of skills recognition can be discerned within this brief scan of examples from the literature. Instrumental critiques suggest there are inadequate tools, processes and promotional practices in place to engage learners or make RPL a sufficiently streamlined process for candidates and practitioners alike; pedagogical critiques contend there is an absence of diverse learning and assessment methodologies tailored to the specific needs of marginalised groups; and epistemological critiques question to what extent alternative knowledges can be embraced or negotiated through RPL. Each analysis sheds light on questions of why a significant number of practitioners tend not to embrace RPL fully and why it continues to be accessed mostly by individuals who are already successful within the formal learning system. One approach that responds on all three levels of critique is to draw upon theories of the self and identity. Using notions of individual and group identity, various authors have considered from different angles the relationship between learning, assessment and identity construction (Falk & Balatti, 2003; Chappell et al., 2003; Guenther, 2005, 2008; Wallace, 2008).

In particular, Wallace (2008, 2009) addressed social inclusion and equity issues within VET from the perspective of learner identities. In her consideration of how to support effective engagement of non-traditional learners in formal processes of learning and assessment she focused on learners from social groups that are proportionally under-represented in adult education. Her research found that understanding and acknowledging learner identities was an important element of tailoring learning programs to meet the needs of marginalised students. She pointed out that there is often a 'discontinuity' for many students between, on the one hand, family and community identity and, on the other, school identity (2008: 6). In her view, schools may fail to take account of the meanings within and expectations of the student's life outside the classroom such that there may be 'conflict' between learner identity and community belonging. Wallace invoked both pedagogical and epistemological analyses—in the first case by indicating that what is needed is the development of 'pedagogies in partnership with community members' (2008: 13). In other words, collaboration and negotiation of teaching and assessment practices could include community experts in order to resolve this tension between identities by being able to 'recognise and integrate students' realities' (p. 7). And in the second (epistemological) case she recommended negotiating what knowledges are valid and relevant to community values, needs and contexts: 'This [proposed] approach reinforces rather than threatens or displaces student knowledge and identities ... Students are then offered opportunities to maintain their integrity while negotiating other forms of knowledge, literacy and identity on their terms' (2008: 14).

It is notable that assessment practices appeared to be an important element in whether the formal learning process was accepted by study participants. Wallace observed that ‘being tested by people who are not known, trusted or recognised as expert’ was something that prevented people from completing study or participating fully in a learning program (2009: 42). However, including other, respected stakeholders in the teaching and assessment processes brought a different meaning to the learning for students and their communities, thereby resolving the identity conflicts. The participants emphasised the importance of *who* was assessing them, their status within the community and the meaning of their judgements in relation to the students.

The meaning of RPL

My own research-in-progress is a qualitative project to investigate the meaning of RPL for adults in the VET system. I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with nine RPL candidates at various stages of their assessment process, namely prior to commencement, immediately after receiving their assessment result, and six to nine months following completion. I also included interviews with their assessors and workplace managers, to enable triangulation of the findings. The cohort consisted of a diverse range of candidates, all in current paid or volunteer employment, seeking a qualification through whole or part RPL assessment. Their ages spread from 18 to 58 at the beginning of the research. There were six women and three men: two Aboriginal Australians, five non-Indigenous Australians, one non-Indigenous South African and one non-Indigenous New Zealander.

Their previous highest formal qualifications ranged from no qualification at all, to one person with a Masters degree. A fuller description of the research participants and methodology will appear in a later publication. What is emerging from the data at this early stage of analysis is a kaleidoscope of issues and motivations. Through assembling a common set of key elements, the kaleidoscope rotates into focus to create a unique configuration for each individual. The timing of assessment, life circumstances and personal values influenced the overall pattern of meaning to each person. Four consistent themes constituted the meaning of RPL to participants:

1. **Healing past hurts, past mistakes and self-doubts about competence**. This entailed a perception that the RPL process and subsequent formal qualification resolved questions for participants about possible lack of ability or lack of intelligence. This overcame regrets about past decisions or opportunities missed and reassured them of their skills.
2. **Occupying a place in society through professional identity and credibility**. The RPL candidates felt affirmed in their 'worthiness' and value to society either through a shift in how they could appreciate themselves or from the idea that others who did not know them could reliably 'see' their skills and trust in their professional abilities. They could also see themselves contributing more through gaining a formal qualification that conferred a professional title.
3. **Safety for external validation within a meaningful assessment relationship**. The RPL process and assessor–candidate relationship constituted a safe context for assessment. Candidates could risk judgement and allow themselves to be measured in ways they had not previously been prepared to expose themselves to through anxieties, fear of failure or active refusal of the value of formal learning.
4. **Enabling options for preferred futures**. RPL offered a pragmatic pathway for professional and career development.

All participants expressed one or more of the above themes as core to their RPL experience. What follows is a small 'taste' of the data to illustrate their significance:

'Julie'

Julie came from an Anglo-Australian, working-class background and explained that in her family there was no interest in educational achievement and a low expectation of career success. When she started her RPL process she was 55 years old and had worked for over 25 years as an unqualified youth worker, in mainly residential settings. She had a long pattern of engaging positively in formal learning, being motivated by good teachers, interesting people and relationships with inspiring colleagues and friends. However, she had not completed most of the accredited courses that she commenced. She remembers that she loved high school because of the people and friendships but she left before she finished Year 12. She 'always, always, always wanted to go to university' and was drawn to the idea of learning and challenging herself and being the first in her family to have a tertiary qualification. Yet when she eventually enrolled in a degree course as a mature student in her thirties and did well, she 'left in a terrible state' at the end of her second year, having struggled with perfectionism and a fear of failure that seemed to create a paralysing anxiety. She felt bad about not seeing through any of her studies and said her fears make her avoid completion. She explained that throughout her life she has been 'butting up against … my own insecurities around failure and success'. Her motivations for doing the RPL were 'tied in with self-esteem' and to gain a stronger feeling that she has 'a place in society'. 'I think it's about proving that I am not stupid' and 'it's something about completion … it's always scratching away at me'. At the time of the RPL process she had emerged from a stressful period of workplace bullying that had undermined her confidence and left her self-esteem 'in my boots'. 'Part of my going for recognition is I lost recognition of myself because of that bullying process and this is a very concrete way of regaining … that'. Her RPL diploma required written portfolio evidence and telephone interviews to ascertain her level of skill and knowledge. The process took almost 18 months to complete, being delayed by workload pressures, the assessor's absence and her own 'procrastination demons'.

In the follow-up interview some eight months after receiving her diploma Julie viewed the RPL process from a broad perspective; it was part of a collection of events that were triggers for change in her life. She felt she was ready for and seeking this change but did not know how to make it happen. The methodical and 'stepped out' nature of the process used by the RTO helped make this change a reality for her. In following this clear process within a supportive assessment relationship she rediscovered her confidence. Instead of her work identity feeling 'fragmented' she believed she had successfully rebuilt her professional self. It had become 'a tidying up', a positive resolution of a long-lived self-doubt and unfinished business: 'I really enjoyed the process … it's given me a taste of … I guess my own capabilities again'.

She spoke of herself at this stage as 'an equal player' professionally, having repositioned herself in relation to others, in particular with her supervisor whom she greatly admires: 'I always felt a bit "less than" with her and I no longer feel that … I don't feel like I am being taught by her anymore'.

> [After the bullying] … I had to rebuild my identity as a worker and I think that doing the diploma that way, through recognition of prior learning, was a great way to get to … recognise in myself that I have a professional identity and that's made up of those competencies.

The 'internal battle' she wages with herself about whether or not she is a good practitioner has been in some ways resolved by the process of self-reflection, the external validation of the formal assessment and the awarding of a qualification. She identifies for herself that recent changes such as her professional confidence, seeing a pathway forward and making things happen in her life are set within a long history of wanting to change and achieve successes academically. The changes cannot be attributed directly or solely to RPL since the variables in her life are multiple and overlapping. But she was clear that it has been part of a package of things that enabled her to 'tidy things up' and, in her supervisor's words, 'claim the territory' of professional competence. The timing, the process and the substance of the assessor–candidate relationship cohered to assist Julie in achieving some 'steps forward' in these longings to resolve her self-doubts.

In this sense RPL might be viewed as a trigger, or part of a chain of events and interactions. It is not positioned in a cause–effect relationship with these changes, but rather as an influential component of gradually accumulating and emerging realisations. Julie has gained a 'taste of [her] capabilities' that becomes stronger, clearer and embodied so she is finally putting to rest questions about failure, stupidity and fear. In the words of her assessor, 'she hasn't become anyone different; she's just become more'. She reflected on how she had been struggling to 'to re-invent myself' for some time and how the RPL process helped make this possible: 'It's been a profound experience … it was a healing process.'

In this small slice of the data there are echoes of the four key themes mentioned above. What is also apparent is the hope Julie has for confirmation of a worthy, socially valuable self. As someone who has hitherto remained outside of credentialed learning and often not managed to complete formal assessment processes for fear of failure, Julie (and indeed others in the study) have struggled with self-doubt. They have questions about their value in society: Who am I? What am I? Do I measure up? Do people take me seriously? Am I contributing well? If these are the uncertainties that some RPL candidates implicitly bring to the assessment process, how then are we responding as assessors? I am often left with a sense that we tend to skirt such concerns and place ourselves in danger of engaging on a largely instrumental plane. This carries the potential of objectifying individuals, positioning the assessor as an observer and leaving RPL candidates feeling disconnected and alienated.

Another participant, Lilly, illustrates something of this concern. Lilly experienced her combined RPL and learning process as 'fragmented' and 'confusing'. She felt that no-one had time to care about how she was progressing or show interest in her skills. 'I have no sense of any of my past working life … being relevant or valued … it doesn't make me feel good'. Although in the research interview her assessor clearly expressed admiration for her abilities, expecting her to gain the qualification easily, Lilly had no awareness of this. She said: 'I've lost a bit of confidence I suppose' and the process had 'reinforced my feeling of being out of step'. Fortunately academic success earlier in her life and her current level of professional self-confidence appeared to absorb the potentially negative effects of this. She reflected: 'if I was young … I would have felt insecure … I would have felt uncared for.'

These examples reveal, to my mind, not so much issues of knowledge claims, pedagogy or competence: rather than a desire for 'ontological security' (Billet, 2010: 4). In other words they demonstrate how some RPL candidates bring questions about the meaning of 'being' in the world (after Heidegger, 1962) and the meaning of 'self' in relation to others. This requires an analysis that is arguably more grounded in notions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity than is generally canvassed in the literature.

A philosophy of recognition

To shed some light on this potential within RPL, I have explored philosophical theories that examine subjectivity and meaning. Theories of recognition have their roots in the nineteenth-century Hegelian philosophical tradition. One of Hegel's significant propositions was that the self is formed within a relationship of acknowledgement by the other; that is, individual autonomy remains abstract unless enacted through mutual recognition (Hegel, 2007). Further, 'struggles for recognition' underpin individual and social conflict, ultimately giving rise to social progress (Hegel, 1977). Van den Brink and Owen (2007) noted that the concept of recognition has since been elaborated in multiple ways and the rise of identity politics in the second half of the twentieth century has given new impetus to critical theories that look further than the distribution of material resources as a source of conflict and means of social justice. Hierarchies of class, income and occupation may thus no longer be seen as the sole, defining features of social conflicts but, within recognition theory in particular, it is the social sanctioning and validation of individuals' and groups' identities that contribute to notions of justice and subjectivation (Thompson, 2006).

Axel Honneth is a prominent recognition theorist who has built upon Hegel's intersubjective theory of the self, extending it in particular through reference to Mead (1934) and Winnicott (1965). He has articulated a theory of recognition that supports progress towards an ideal state of 'mutual recognition' and thereby social justice (Honneth, 1995). In Honneth's terms, a 'just' society is one in which every person achieves the recognition they deserve in order that they can fully and freely self-actualise, thus becoming ethical agents, capable of 'moral' action: 'The justice or wellbeing of a society is measured according to the degree of its ability to secure conditions of mutual recognition in which personal identity formation, and hence individual self-realization, can proceed sufficiently well' (Honneth, 2004: 354).

Honneth suggested that humans need one another in order to form a self that is more than 'instrumental' and 'atomistic'. That is, he had a view of human agency that was driven by more than isolated self-interest or seeking to improve individual material circumstances. Further, it is only through the recognition of others that we develop self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem and these are essential for self-actualisation (Honneth, 1995). Self-actualisation is, in turn, crucial to successful practices of social inclusion and social justice:

'What social equality should be about is enabling the formation of personal identity for all members of society ... it is the enablement of individual self-realization that comprises the actual goal of equal treatment of all subjects in our societies' (Honneth, 2004: 356).

Particular 'patterns of recognition' support the development of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. These patterns are love, rights and social esteem. Love underpins the development of self-confidence through practices of emotional support, friendship, concern and so on that affirm the independence of the other and provide reassurance of ongoing care. Rights support the development of self-respect through the individual knowing they have equal legal rights and responsibilities with others by virtue of their personhood and by recourse to the law to affirm those rights. Social esteem (or solidarity) supports the development of self-esteem through shared community values that enable regard for an individual because of their unique abilities. Society acknowledges an individual's contribution to collective goals and valued practices.

Honneth (2004) proposed a 'plural theory of justice' in which these three forms of recognition constitute normative principles of justice, namely affective care, legal equality and social esteem. When fulfilled, these principles provide the conditions for a just society. Where such forms of recognition are withheld or where misrecognition occurs (such as disrespect or humiliation) the development of self-actualisation and subsequent ethical agency are interrupted, leaving individuals or groups feeling excluded and unjustly treated. Misrecognition can be perpetuated by power relations within society. If power operates to exclude some individuals from exercising agency or control over their role and status, this can lead to an internalised sense of 'inferiority' or powerlessness, maintaining these individuals in an 'appropriate place in the margins' (Van den Brink & Owen, 2007: 2). The antidote to this misrecognition is the practice of 'positive' patterns of recognition. Upholding dignity and avoiding humiliation are concrete practices of social justice, shifting away from the redistribution of material resources as the core element of a just society. The struggle for recognition thus drives social change, being a vehicle for identity claims and claims to social status that gradually affirm individual value and reconfigure social relations.

It appears that Honneth has an optimistic view of this struggle, seeing it as inexorably improving conditions of equality and justice towards an ideal end state. Whilst he has indicated that there are social and historical factors influencing modes of implementation of recognition (Honneth, 2003) he is criticised for claiming a fundamentally universalist perspective on the development of the human subject and the inevitability of social relations emerging from individual psychology, without an adequate analysis of power (Fraser, 2000; McNay, 2008; Bader, 2007).

Complex philosophical debates surround contemporary articulations of recognition theory and my own project does not attempt to engage fully with these (note for example Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Thompson, 2006; Honneth, 2008; McNay, 2008). Although it is not my intention to apply Honneth's theory comprehensively to RPL, or to address his explanation of the progress of human societies, I do believe discussions of the politics of recognition in the twenty-first century offer a useful conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics and effects of RPL assessment. Honneth's high profile work provides an effective starting point for this and invites us to examine our practice from a fresh angle.

Recognition theory and assessor skills

Some key tenets of Honneth's recognition theory that have bearing on skills recognition can be summarised as follows:

1. Mutual recognition is an essential underpinning of self-actualisation, enacted through the experiences of care, social esteem and access to legal rights.
2. Fully realised self-actualisation for all members of society is the antecedent to social justice.
3. Recognition is intersubjective and reciprocal in that *both* parties to recognition are affected and the nature of the relationship between the two parties is significant in the development of each.
4. Recognition is a dynamic, relational process, entailing an ongoing sequence of acts rather than a one-off, one-way acknowledgement.
5. Recognition can be through institutional as well as personal relations.

This framework can be used to examine the qualities and conditions of the assessor–candidate relationship. A formal skills recognition process presents opportunities to embody acts of mutual recognition, or indeed acts of misrecognition through disengaged or perhaps overly instrumental practice. My contention is that if we are effectively to connect with and ‘draw in’ disenfranchised learners, a mode of RPL that incorporates recognition of the *person* in a manner that supports ontological security is required. Previously I have argued for assessors to learn basic therapeutic and cross-cultural communication skills and supported the notion of appreciative inquiry to encourage this approach (Hamer, 2010). These techniques may not be critical for all RPL candidates; however, for someone who has not seen formal educational pathways as a suitable or effective means to achieve desired social and economic outcomes, or for whom the process is culturally alien, the prospect of being assessed against unfamiliar norms through perceived exclusionary processes is not attractive. The data from my own research-in-progress points to the need for intersubjective engagement that attends to the ‘who’ of both the candidate and the assessor. Understanding that there is an ontological purpose to skills recognition and applying skills to demonstrate care, respect for individual rights and social esteem shifts us from a one-way act of normative judgement that risks constructing inadequate selves or further alienation from the formal education system, towards a fundamental acknowledgment of human value. This is a way to 'see and be seen'—to construct assessment relationships where the candidate is acknowledged and valued whilst the assessor and assessment process is, in return, valued and found to be credible. In this manner increased confidence in RPL assessment can evolve from both the candidate and assessor perspectives and wider implementation across currently marginalised populations may ensue.

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Scheherazade's secret: the power of stories and the desire to learn

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In this paper I use a story to introduce the idea of stories in adult educational practice. Telling stories seems to be as old as human culture. MacIntyre referred to humans as 'story-telling animals' (1981: 201). The secret is the ways in which this storytelling capacity can be used in a holistic humanistic pedagogy.

Education, the process of assisting others to learn, can be pursued by seeking to pass on information (propositional pedagogy); by showing how to do something (skilling pedagogy) and by inviting learners to become different (transformative pedagogy). Many actual educational exchanges involve learners in more than one kind of learning where the educational event has elements of information and skills transfer, often combined at least tacitly with an invitation to become different.

In this paper I suggest that the telling of stories that capture the imagination and move the heart is a powerful pedagogy in inviting

learning not so much to do with gaining new information, although this can often happen, nor transferring skills, which again can also occur, but with a deeper transformative form of learning, which is really more about learners changing their identity, their way of seeing and acting upon the world.

Introduction

The title of this paper goes back to the mythical Arabian Nights when a legendary king used to take a new wife and after one night would order her killed and would take another. Scheherazade, one of the available young women, offered herself to the king and held him in thrall with her stories so that he delayed her execution, and slowly modified his approach to life as he reflected on the mystery, excitement and grandeur of her tales and allowed them further purchase on his soul. He ceased his murderous practice and eventually married her. Scheherazade's secret was to evoke a response from the king's hitherto undeveloped capacity for wisdom and compassion through her use of imaginal and archetypal stories, which were based not so much in historical fact as in the human capacity to be struck and transformed by accessible truth and wisdom. Other evocative stories are based more in historical reality but, in a way not dissimilar to Scheherazade's performance, real incidents are then represented and interpreted in a story that makes their implications and messages visible and challenging.

It is the use of stories in fostering learning that is of interest here. Stories and learning have multiple dimensions, which I will discuss briefly after giving a real example of the pedagogic impact of a story drawn from real life. This is the story of John Howard Griffin, the white man who dyed his skin black and lived for more than a month as a black itinerant worker in the southern states of the USA. Griffin's restrained and vivid story, told in his book *Black like me,* created a strong learning ferment among black and white American readers.

His realistic story, which caught his readers up in his portrayed experience, convinced them to accept the inhumane reality of their divided American society where whites excluded, humiliated and oppressed their black neighbours, which either they had denied or of which they were actually ignorant. Let us begin with the white activist John Howard Griffin and his story of racial adventure in the deep south of the USA.

Black like me

In 1956 John Howard Griffin, a white Christian social justice activist and journalist, carried out a social experiment in the southern states of the USA. He dyed his skin black and spent more than a month as a black man travelling in the south of the USA in search of work. He told the story of his 'black' experience in his book *Black like me*, published in 1961. From the moment his experiment started and he had become 'black', he could not believe his exclusion from familiar citizen activities. He tells of walking for miles in search of work, being refused a seat in cafes, refused service at bus stops, and excluded from public toilets unless they were specially designated for blacks. He was ignored and sometimes abused in public places by white people. This upright, well-regarded citizen started to keep a low profile to avoid being the butt of white violence, knowing that the law would not protect him. He noted the strength of his distaste, fear and distress. He also pointed out, more analytically, that the racist behaviour of individual whites was condoned, if not encouraged, by mainstream American and Christian culture. He saw that he and many other so-called good white Americans were unwittingly compliant.

Griffin's book became a bestseller. He was feted and threatened at the same time. His black/white story became a catalyst for the 'white awareness' movement, leading to current culture where black voices have replaced their white interpreters and amplifiers. To read this book now is to hear an aesthetic and cultivated person confronted with an inhuman social regime pursued in the southern region of the USA under his nose. He began to realise that the form of egalitarian and respectful Christian whiteness practised by him and his family was often not the one in common use. He felt wretched; images of black degradation and neglect stayed with him; his analytical mind was spinning as he tried to understand how a nominally Christian country could condone or even promote such rejection and subjugation. He concluded that much of this neglect was not known and certainly the experience of such disdainful exclusion was not understood. He decided to tell his story to white America of what, even to the small extent of his experience, being black is like: what he saw and felt, how his mind spun in confusion and his heart felt in disarray. His skilful, objective, journalistic writing invited his readers to dwell on the facts rather than his understated response. Many readers felt themselves walking the same hot, dusty road with no access to drinks and food for sale. They were beside him as he applied in vain for labouring work, was turned away from cheap accommodation and forced to stand in the overcrowded black section of a half-empty bus. They were shocked, ashamed, angry and became persuaded to work for social reform.

The question here is in what ways narrative like this can generate learning. This needs a brief look at learning and then at narrative. Learning is 'the active process through which people consciously [and sometimes unconsciously] pay attention, perceive things, remember them and think about them' (Little, McAllister & Priebe, 1991: 51). I explore it in four modes. Storytelling, in general terms, is the way a person describes events in a time sequence (Rimmon-Kenan 2006: 10). I examine it here as a special form of structured human communication.

Learning in four modalities

John Heron (1992), a phenomenologist of human communication, suggested that the experience of human knowing and learning involves four interconnected modalities. The first modality encompasses forms of ‘embodied sensation and feeling’. This leads to the second modality, experienced as ‘metaphoric, intuitive and heartfelt image creation’. The third modality involves ‘conceptual analysis and critique’, which leads finally to ‘praxis or reflective action’. Kasl and Yorks (2002) have developed Heron’s ideas, as I have in the following. It is Heron’s basic insight rather his specific elaborations that I have found helpful.

The first mode of knowing and learning, ‘embodied sensation and feeling’, is generated in the initial awareness of a new sensation or feeling.

In Heron’s second mode of knowing and learning, the ‘imaginal’, the learner sees and dwells on the initial sensations or feelings presented through the first mode in a metaphoric and narrative way. This mode is often linked to significant personal change, which the learner produces as a metaphoric or imaginal presentation of the power and reach of the learning experience. Imaginal knowing (Hillman, 1981; Corbin, 1969) is not the same as the workings of the imagination, which are much broader and full of real and unreal possibilities. Imaginal processes are not concerned with fantasy; they are linked to images through which people consciously or unconsciously represent and value things and experiences seemingly instinctively and often without full awareness. These, according to Hillman (1981), are supported by ‘generative’ images that hold the imagination and move the heart, the influence of which is somehow present deep in the person’s psyche. This imaginal approach suggests further that these personal generative images and ideals are influenced by powerful more or less hidden images, which Jung (1968) called ‘archetypes’, located in the unconscious mind. Following a general Jungian line, Hillman suggested that, with varying degrees of self-awareness, people build and develop their own images and self-stories through which they create their own style, values and personal myths.

Thus, this imaginal representation of an experience of transformative knowing and learning is linked to human mythopoesis (Macdonald, 1981; Bradbeer, 1998; Holland & Garman, 2008), which is the creation of significant life-interpreting and life-guiding stories. This metaphoric and imaginal representational process is usually carried in colourful, immediate stories.

The third mode of knowing, 'conceptual analysis and critique', is the foundation of logical rational approaches to knowing and learning. This is the radical moment of intellectual appraisal when chaotic and disturbing questions are in some way confronted.

Finally the fourth mode of knowing and learning is 'reflective action', sometimes called 'praxis'. This final mode refers to the feedback from chosen action. There is an implicit suggestion that much thinking, feeling and imagining leads to new knowledge and ways of being in the world, and takes on yet another dimension when put into action in the context of embodied life with others. These four themes are abstract categories that are not necessarily realised neatly in real knowing and learning where one mode can be seen to co-exist with another.

What follows is the second theoretical excursion into the nature of narrative and narrative knowing.

Stories and narrative

Rimmon-Kenan (2006: 10) referred to his early and noticeably essentialist definition of narrative: 'someone telling someone else that something happened' with the suggestion that this definition needed to be modified to account for media forms of narrative, which do not have a simple teller. He suggested that two significant characteristics of narratives remain. The first characteristic is that it is a 'longitudinal sequence of events' and the second is that this 'sequence of events is told by a teller'.

Arthur Frank (2000: 354) suggested that narrative is an abstract term for the structure of a story rather than its full reality, which is contained in the actual idea of story. For him stories re-affirm and re-construct relationships; they can provide a kind of healing; they are more than data for analysis and they are told to be heard, to be listened to, to capture the imagination and move the heart and to find others who will answer their call for a relationship. For him story has pedagogic dimensions in its agenda to shape and create relationships. Flowing on from this, Bochner's ideas (2002: 80) suggest that stories have four common elements. First of all people are represented as *characters* in the story. Secondly there is some kind of *plot* with a critical moment that resolves the dramatic tension. The third element is *time*; stories place things in temporal order. Finally, stories have to have some kind of *point*, which tends to have a pedagogic dimension.

Manfred Jahn (2005: N2.2.2) suggested that narratives need to be separated into fictional and nonfictional forms. Fictional forms present an imaginary narrator's account of a story that happened in an imaginary world. It is appreciated for its entertainment and educational value and for possibilities that could possibly occur. Nonfictional or factual narrative presents a real-life person's account of a real-life story where there is a claim that the described events actually happened, although it is understood that such 'real' events in a story have become *represented real events* under the perspective and concerns of the storyteller.

Baumeister and Newman (1994: 679) explored the agenda of stories. They distinguished two general categories: firstly stories aimed at *affecting* listeners in some way and secondly stories whose main objective is a way of *making sense* of experiences. It is useful in narrative research to be aware of the kinds of narrative motivations being pursued by the teller of a story as well as the kind of knowledge she or he is seeking to create.

Reflecting on stories concerned with interpreting and making sense of experience, Reissman spoke of this kind of narrative research as a way that people 'impose order on the flow of experiences to make sense of events and actions in their lives' (1993: 2).

Stories will often have these affective and rational elements seeking to capture the imagination and move the heart of the listeners. The more the story works to evoke the imagination and the heart the more it can be seen as focusing on imaginal knowing, Heron's second modality of knowing and learning mentioned above. The more these themes have a certain gravitas concerned with major themes of life the more such stories become linked with mythopoesis (Macdonald, 1981; Hillman, 1981; Bradbeer, 1998).

Narrative mythopoesis: the storyteller, story and telling

Mythopoetic stories resonate with great 'mythic' themes in human life: birth and death, youth, maturation and decline, war and peace, enmity and friendship, love and sexuality, conflict and resolution, work and achievement, work loss and anomie. Under most circumstances, you cannot have a narrative imaginal story about a mundane shopping excursion or going to the football—unless of course such events for some are not mundane but are infused with excitement and tribal passion.

Imaginal stories carry a certain gravitas and contribute to mythopoetic life. They are shaped and their authority endorsed by the teller, who needs to have or claim some narrative authority over the listeners. This can be because of the office of a person like priest, professor or judge, or it can be a claimed authority from a person playing an authoritative role in a drama. Narrative imaginal stories when used as pedagogy need to be told with as much leverage and credibility as possible in order to endorse the dramatic invitation to another but still relevant world.

A second element is *appropriate literary artistry* since narrative imaginal stories seek to capture the imagination of the listeners and maintain a kind of enchantment and suspension of judgement. The audience has to feel and be caught up in the invitational undertones of different kinds of imagery and media.

A third element is *dramatic form*. In some cases the dramatic form can be the simple, well-crafted text. In others, the imaginal, pedagogic narrative with its tacit challenges is given aesthetic strength by music, poetry and drama. As Hamlet (*Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2) said in an aside to the audience before the performance of a play that he had modified to expose the wrongdoing of his uncle, the newly crowned king: 'The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.'

Dramatised stories were used by Morey (2010) and by August Boal (1992, 1995) and collaborators in his work on the 'drama of the oppressed'.

A fourth element is *delayed and dramatic denouement*. Narrative imaginal pedagogy seeks to create dramatic tension and delayed resolution of the themes and plots at play in the story being told. This is where the tacit element in this kind of narrative pedagogy emerges. The element of surprise is designed to increase the impact of the contradictions that are hinted at originally and perhaps made visible during the body of the story, between what people say they do in following espoused customs and beliefs and what they may actually do from time to time without being consciously aware of deviation from espoused ideals.

Imaginal narrative pedagogy, with its various cultural vehicles, is designed to catch the conscience of others similarly placed and to create a clarifying mythopoetic and moral experience to sharpen and renew a blurred moral stance.

Narrative links with four modes

A carefully wrought story can integrate Heron's four modes of knowing in representing the texture and appeal of a learning episode. The storyteller, who may or may not be the learner, often begins by mentioning a raw and troubling event or events that the learner has encountered. Its gravity can be represented by describing the learner's responsive awareness and bodily responses. The storyteller can then move to more expressive representation by using metaphors from her or his repertoire to represent the raw impact of the event. These metaphors tend to be drawn from archetypal images in the storyteller's culture. The story picks up intensity in this imaginal mode; it displays with colour and urgency the texture and impact of the challenging event on the learner.

The storyteller then shows how the learner appraises the event, seeking analytical categories to which it might belong, its causes and finally what action is required in response. The quality of this third, more logical and rational mode of knowing and learning tends to be more rational and measured. It tells of the analytical reflection and considered choice for action rather than a more impulsive response. The story then moves to praxis, the fourth modality of learning, where the learning is validated in action.

In this praxis mode of learning, the storyteller can report on the learning that took place when the chosen responses to the unsettling new situation were put into practice. In the challenge of personal and social change this final mode of reflective action is a specific kind of learning. Its impact is linked to what it was actually like when the chosen change was implemented. What actually happened? How did it feel? How did others react? Were there unexpected side effects? What did it achieve? Was it actually the right thing to do?

This overall narrative agenda with its links to the four modalities of learning has influenced the approach to education and learning being explored here. John Howard Griffin's disturbing story of his anti-racist awakening, which I summarised at the beginning of this paper, highlights the dimensions of learning in action. His story of becoming and changing carries significant elements of Heron's four modes of learning.

His representation of his heightened bodily awareness of the black experience—hearing the sound of patronising white voices and fearful black voices and his other bodily experiences of 'life as black'—form much of the initial power of his book. His story of his life as a black itinerant worker goes further. He reveals not only his initial bodily reactions and feelings but metaphorically his initial 'un-reflected upon' imaginal awareness of being black in America. He felt images of himself as dirty, feral and vulnerable under the hostile white gaze and images of himself as welcome and acceptable under the inclusive black gaze.

Griffin's story then dwells on the shocking images that he saw and registered as he struggled to find analytical categories to understand the racist regime with which he had to admit that, as an unaware and non-resistant white, he was at least to some extent complicit. With these disturbing images fresh in his mind he then reflected on the weakness in America's unequal and demeaning version of western democracy. He also revealed and challenged the racial blindness of his own powerful Christian religion which, for reasons he struggled to understand, had not condemned racism and promoted equality and inclusivity. His analytical reflection also pointed to possibilities for reform in American democracy. He pointed to its constitution and its acceptance of the power of individual citizens under free speech to reveal injustice and to mobilise public opinion against it. His transformative experience, with its images and analytical critique, led to his enlightened choice for action. He spent much of the rest of his short life campaigning for civil rights for blacks and made a major contribution to subsequent changes in American society.

Conclusion

This paper has introduced stories used in imaginal narrative pedagogy as elements in Scheherazade's narrative secret which combined her capacity to capture the listener's imagination with the imaginal power to precipitate moral reflection. By understanding and catering for the fourfold nature of human knowing and learning, John Howard Griffin's nonfictional narrative and Scheherazade's fictional narrative pedagogy are revealed as powerful sources of learning and transformation for holistic educators.

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Communities of practice in a voluntary youth organisation: reaching for the sky and building social capital

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The study is situated within a national youth organisation called the Australian Air League Inc (Air League). We examine the recent progress of the Air League in South Australia, starting as a loose network of volunteers engaged in a sporadic array of activities, to become a learning community that worked collaboratively and then developed further as a potential community of practice. This process involved sharing across boundaries in a way that was previously construed as undesirable as local achievement was seen as more important than the development of the larger community. In part, this paper takes the form of a personal narrative and draws insights from observations and interpretations during 2009–2010. Highlighting issues arising from the complexity

of developing collaborative models of practice across organisational boundaries and competitive entities, we delve into challenges around maintaining devotion to one's immediate unit while sharing experience and building capacity in the wider community. This includes gaining agreement to action, facing the fear of sharing diverse knowledge with new people, being found wanting, and working across organisational hierarchies in a setting characterised by uniform and a disciplined rank structure.

Introduction

The Air League is a national uniformed organisation for aviation-minded boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 18. Formed in 1934, and entirely self-funded, the organisation has continued successfully for over 75 years and is proud to have the Governor-General of Australia as its patron. The Air League aims to encourage physical and social development, promote aviation and build qualities of citizenship among its members. Meeting for just one night per week, the officers and cadets study a wide range of educational topics, participate in community service events, complete the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and take part in air activities such as gliding and flying experience. The Air League markets itself as the ‘primary school of aviation’. The foundational unit is a squadron, normally named after a local town or suburb where the unit is situated. Squadrons vary in size from ten to fifty members and each is led by a team of volunteer officers. In organisational terms, two or three squadrons are administered as a wing and in each state two or more wings make up a group. Each group is managed by a small team of staff officers. Presently the national organisation has 1200 members, plus 300 associates including parents and supporters. Volunteer officers come from all walks of life, but historically the organisation has attracted adults with prior service in the defence forces, or those people who are familiar with working in a uniformed environment such as police officers and security guards. However, in recent times, the Air League has attracted volunteers with little or no experience of what it means to serve in a discipline-based organisation, where command and control management techniques still prevail.

The Air League has a chequered history in South Australia and in mid 2009 the Chief Commissioner challenged local leaders to renew their efforts and increase membership through community engagement and collaborative partnerships. The conduit for this change in direction came from a new leadership team who encouraged squadrons to grow and develop by focusing on learning as a major opportunity. A concerted effort to attract more adult volunteers achieved a 90 per cent increase in membership. Part of this growth came from an unexpected alliance with the University of South Australia's Aviation Academy where student pilots aged between 18 and 25 were required to undertake thirty hours of community services as part of their degree program. Air League and UniSA Aviation Academy leaders quickly realised the mutual benefit from engaging these students. Coincidentally, some had prior experience in similar youth organisations overseas and quickly saw an opportunity to continue with their passion for aviation while at the same time becoming involved in a local youth organisation. It is known that overseas students who are displaced from their normal home environments take time to integrate into a new community (Handy & Greenspan, 2009) and the Air League provided a safe and structured place where the students could contribute and belong.

In this paper we review how the adult leaders in South Australia focused on growth and in doing so became part of both formal and informal learning communities, bound together by a keen interest in aviation and a willingness to help young people. Furthermore, we consider organisational development models and learning theories, with a particular focus on the concept of learning communities. We examine the organisational structure, function and culture of the Air League and take into consideration the literature and theoretical ideas on learning communities to determine how they influence the development of a community of practice.

Embedded within this paper is a personal narrative, written from the perspective of a student/trainee pilot who became involved in the Air League while studying at UniSA. Following seven years of experience in a similar youth organisation in Hong Kong, the student volunteered to share his passion for aviation with local youngsters and help the organisation to grow in South Australia. Drawing from personal observation and self-analysis of the environment over a six-month period, the narrative is presented using the Air League as a case study. Together with the co-author, who was also involved as the leading change agent within the organisation, this report draws insight from the current literature on socially constructed learning, social capital and in particular the texts on communities of practice to compare these findings within those found in the organisation. Finally, we consider how learning gained within the Air League could be transferred to an aviation environment where aircrew and flight teams may engage in communities of practice as a means of professional and personal development.

Method and approach

We have used an interpretive approach in this paper, since the study was primarily concerned with perceptions and experiences. An interpretive approach is based on the view that people socially and symbolically construct their own organisational realities (Berger & Luckman, 1967). It construes knowledge as being gained through social constructions such as language, shared meanings and documents. Thus the individual is cast as 'a central actor in a drama of personal meaning making' (Fenwick, 2001: 9). In this way, individuals are understood to construct their own knowledge through interaction with environments.

Using the Air League organisation in South Australia as a case study, we report on our personal experience and adopt a qualitative perspective. Drawing on a review of the literature on organisational theory and socially constructed learning, observations through frequent immersion within the organisation and reviewing documents that detail accounts of recent history, we examine and interpret information in form of a scholarly narrative. These techniques are most commonly employed in case studies where the researcher seeks to engage with and report on the complexity of social activity in the area under investigation (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

In using this approach, we decided to present an account of our shared experiences, taking a diverse perspective because of our different ages, occupations and cultural backgrounds, but finding common ground as professionals working in Australia for a specified period of time and with prior experience of serving in similar youth organisations overseas. This paper differs from other qualitative studies in that those observed were not formally interviewed, nor have any identifiable units of analysis been addressed by name, other than their association with South Australia. In choosing this methodology we have avoided the need for a detailed ethics submission since no individual was identified or singled out for attention. Predominantly, in this paper we present a reflective account of events from the main author who became involved in the organisation to further his career in aviation. The report is based on an analysis between September 2009 and September 2010, taking previous information from organisational documents and artefacts.

About the organisation

Essentially, the Air League organisation is structured on traditional lines with an operating style drawn from classical theories made popular by Henry Foyol and Max Weber (Robbins & Barnwell, 1994). Several of these ideals are embedded in the organisation and include:Work is divided through an operational structure of specialised appointments in administration, education, physical activities and air activities.

- Authority and responsibility are distributed through a hierarchical rank structure at squadron, wing, group and federal levels.
- Members are expected to follow the rules of the organisation, where good discipline is seen as the result of effective leadership.
- Junior members receive instructions from senior officers.
- The interests of the group take priority over the needs of an individual.
- Decision making is centralised and proportional to rank and/or appointment.
- Communications follow a chain of command.
- The organisational culture values stability, order and control.
- Detailed procedures, rules and policies create a uniform and idealised bureaucracy.
- High turnover of personnel is seen as inefficient and impedes performance.
- Team spirit or *esprit de corps* is promoted to build harmony and morale within the organisation.

Dealing with changing times

Firstly, it is well known that despite the continuing presence of classical management ideologies, especially in larger or public sector organisations, there has been a significant shift in thinking in recent years, not only in the approach to traditional organisational theory, but also about how organisations have become places of education or learning communities (Senge, 1990). Not only do modern organisations adopt ideas from later theories (such as the human relations school of management and contingency approach) where organisational needs are balanced with those of the individual members (Fulop, 1992); but, more recently, organisations have transformed into places where power is shared, workflow is flexible, people are less focused on position and professional development is seen as an imperative. The significance of these developments can be seen in the education sector. When schools drifted more towards bureaucracy, the hierarchical power-based relationships tended to alienate teachers, parents and students from each other. Conversely, schools that were effective in terms of student achievement and behaviour management exhibited qualities that focused on relationships and values as well as academic achievement. These schools built a 'sense of community' (Merz & Furman, 1997).

Secondly, the Air League is caught up in many tensions between the strong influence of its classical origins and contemporary ideology. In recent years, these changes in how people relate to their organisation have presented several problems and impacted seriously on the Air League's success. In South Australia, current challenges included a failure to attract, motivate and retain new members, particularly younger adult volunteers, commonly referred to as Generations X and Y (MacLeod, 2008). Presently, adult membership is largely polarised into two distinct groups: male officers over the age of 50 (former cadets who remained in the organisation or returned after a period of service in an aviation-related career) and younger male officers under the age of 25 (who have continued as adult members after reaching the upper age limit for cadets). A smaller population of officers between the ages of 25 and 50 are made up from an increasing number of women who are mothers of cadets.

Thirdly, in this 'age-polarised' environment, older members retain many of the classical management behaviours and fall back easily on these traditions when dealing with day-to-day problems. This notion is confirmed by Warr, Miles and Platts (2001) who found that older adults were less outgoing and less change oriented than younger adults—who were more familiar with contemporary values such as flexibility, multi-tasking and the acceptance of change. In the Air League, this situation resulted in an unsettling environment characterised by:

- **Polarity in values**: In a world of increased egalitarianism and individualism, fewer adult volunteers had either the time or inclination to become bogged down with hierarchical control and bureaucracy. Many existing adult volunteers worked in successful commercial organisations that had made great progress in promoting employee democracy, flatter organisational structures and decentralised decision making. Accordingly, some adults resented being told what to do and found it personally challenging to deal with heavy-handed policy, rules and procedures that, in their minds, defied common sense and did not assist in promoting operational effectiveness at the ground level.
- **Falling interdependence**: In the Air League, each squadron is ultimately responsible for its own performance and survival, yet many day-to-day problems could be resolved through working in partnership with adjoining squadrons. However, this level of cooperation failed when adult volunteers did not build collegial relationships and became polarised. In South Australia, several developments contributed to a breakdown in the interdependence of squadron personnel. First, an acquisition program during 2006 (from another similar youth organisation) created a power division in adult staff between those who were prepared to accept the change and those who were not. South Australian ‘air-minded’ youth organisations have a history of adult leaders splitting away from their parent organisations to form defector regimes when they cannot agree with organisational policy or cannot work with the senior leadership of the new organisation. Secondly, the organisation in South Australia was affected by the creation of a new unit, where the adult volunteers chose to operate independently of the other two squadrons.

- **High staff turnover** brings a range of challenges to complex voluntary organisations such as the Air League including a loss of tacit knowledge, perpetual training, uncertainty about being able to operate with sufficient numbers of adult staff, failure to process paperwork and an inability to raise funds. Furthermore, the presence of less predictable work patterns, self-employment, working families and the uncertainty of secure employment meant that adult volunteers were less able to make a firm commitment to attending each week, preferring to keep their options open and remain flexible. This situation created a staff shortage and was exasperated in late 2008 when the commanding officer of the South Australia Wing relocated to another part of the state and became unable to provide the leadership sorely needed. As an emergency measure, administrative leadership was provided by a high ranking officer based in Victoria.
- **Unreliability among the younger members**: The dwindling number of older adult volunteer officers meant that the organisation was becoming increasingly reliant on its younger members. Research shows that older people are more reliable and conscientious than youngsters and are motivated to complete tasks (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004), but the younger adult volunteers in the Air League were proving less reliable due to participation in higher or vocational education, part-time employment and a preferred lifestyle predicated by flexibility, multi-tasking and keeping options open. For senior volunteers this unreliable behaviour became a source of tension and meant that administrative and organisational workloads inevitably fell back on the older shoulders.

A problem in need of resolution

Against this background, there was an urgent need to change the culture in South Australia to prevent the organisation from dwindling away. Fortunately the presence of at least one successful squadron meant the Air League had a firm position in one suburb north of Adelaide. In mid 2009 three opportunities emerged that would pave the way for a major transformation in how the organisation functioned.

Firstly, a new adult volunteer joined the Air League with over three decades of knowledge and skills in a similar youth organisation overseas. Following a short period of time in a probationary role this individual was quickly placed in command of the squadrons in South Australia. In addition to extensive experience of working with 'aviation-minded' youth organisations, this volunteer had expertise in human resource management and organisational development. The arrival of this officer set in place a change management strategy that would eventually place learning at the centre of the organisation; one where the organisation became less bound by bureaucracy and more organic in the form of a learning network where information and innovation could flow freely (Morgan, 1989). This was achieved first through the introduction of a project-style organisation and later through encouragement to become an integrated learning community.

However, the starting point of the change process was to engage adult volunteers in what Jones and May call 'techniques of managerialism' (1992: 388). In what was later referred to as 'tilling the soil' in the texts on communities of practice (Wenger & Snyder, 2000: 143) these techniques adopted a 'visioning framework' used in organisational excellence concepts (Oakland, 2004: 64) and included:

- developing a mission statement to clarify the purpose of the organisation, its goals and objectives
- developing a written plan and strategy to communicate the organisation's vision and values and take into account local environmental considerations
- putting in place a formal review process to monitor overall performance

- defining key indicators of performance and critical success factors
- targeting resources towards a strategy of growth and success
- setting in place mechanisms for communication, structured problem solving and training, and
- aligning progression and promotion with one's personal contribution to the organisation.

Secondly, in early 2010, an unexpected alliance developed with the local university's Aviation Academy, where overseas undergraduate pilots were undergoing training in commercial aviation as part of a degree. A component of the academic program involved each student working for at least 30 hours in a community-based organisation, helping the students to integrate into Australian culture. Fortunately, many of these students were visiting from Hong Kong and had previous connections with similar youth organisations overseas. After a short period of negotiation, a cohort of eight students ranging in age from 17 to 22 was encouraged to join the Air League as trainee officers—immediately increasing the number of adult volunteers with a keen interest in aviation and also helping to lower the average age profile of staff. One student said:

> As a Civil Aviation student at the University of South Australia, one of the course requirements was to gain volunteer experience through community services. Joining the Australian Air League was suggested by the program director since it is a national voluntary aviation-related youth organisation. The process of joining, visiting a local squadron and meeting with the officers awakened my memory of being an air cadet in Hong Kong for the previous five years of life.

Thirdly, a succession of formal and informal public relations activities sparked a renewed interest from the parents of cadet members, resulting in a further increase in both uniformed officers and associate members.

Using learning to build a positive community and innovative culture

The result of these strategies was highly effective but a small number of people became polarised. A vast majority of the adult volunteers supported the changes and were motivated by the renewed leadership actions, but a few individuals felt misaligned with the process, out of place (Short, 2009) and subsequently left the organisation. Wenger and Snyder (2000: 143) refer to this effect as 'loosening the weeds' before sowing the seeds of a community. The collective result of these initiatives was a 90 per cent increase in adult staff and a 60 per cent increase in new cadet members in less than twelve months. These increases led to the creation of a new officer training unit, a new squadron in the southern suburbs of Adelaide, and a range of education and training programs to equip new officers with the relevant knowledge and skills. Many existing officers chose to attend the training, thereby refreshing their skills and helping new members feel part of the emerging community. In less than twelve months the Air League redefined its position in South Australia and it is currently progressing to becoming a larger group in 2012. In addition to a large growth in membership, other measures of success have emerged such as increased fundraising, staff retention, inter-squadron cooperation on activities and the development of a new squadron. This progress involved adult participation a number of major changes, not least in the volunteers' approach to leadership, communication and seeing learning as a vital component of success. Importantly, one major success has been the emergence of a consolidated learning community. Attributed initially to the German sociologist, Tönnies, communities have since been classified as existing in three basic forms: communities of place, kinship and of mind (Hough & Paine, 1997: 194; Merz & Furman, 1997: 14):

- **Communities of place** are where people live, work and share the lives of other community members.

- **Communities of kinship** are bound by relationships, such as families, extended families and groups of friends.
- **Communities of mind** emerge from people coming together with common goals, shared values and shared conceptions of being and doing.

Not surprisingly, all the above types of community are relevant to how the Air League has developed and overlap in the way members gain meaning, identity and a sense of belonging from the organisation. However, a community is also associated with fellowship (Webster, 1989) and adult volunteers in an organisation such as the Air League can be involved in multiple communities of fellowship; existing not only in the organisation itself, but also in the wider community, which may intersect or be completely separate. One form of community can take a leading influence over the others, but this can change over time, or according to personal circumstances and levels of motivation among those involved. How people interact with each other and build goodwill into the group is the essence of social capital (Dekker & Uslaner, 2001; Adler & Kwon, 2002). A key question for this study is the extent to which the behaviours exhibited in the Air League during 2009–2010 not only reflected the characteristics of these three learning communities and built social capital, but also extended to incorporate the elements of a community of practice.

Communities of practice

According to Wenger, McDermott and Snyder communities of practice (COPs) are ‘groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis’ (2002: 4). People within a COP may not work together on a regular basis and their collective passion can be drawn from almost any discipline; the key driver is the commonly shared values of group members and their commitment to learning as a group. Other characteristics of a COP include the voluntary nature of membership and absence of formal structure or process. Group members can join a COP for a limited amount of time, be passive or active participants, be internal or external members of the host organisation and choose to contribute at a level appropriate to their knowledge and experience (Mitchell & Young, 2002). What binds the group together is a shared interest in the topic, eagerness to learn and desire to improve. It is easy to understand from these definitions how the Air League could provide a rich environment for a COP, provided the environment was cultivated for a COP to grow and develop. Communities of practice can be as variable as the environment in which they can thrive. However, cultivating an environment for a community of practice that serves a specific purpose requires organisational support and a clear purpose. If the environment were considered toxic, people would soon become reluctant to participate for fear of retribution. Examples of toxicity might include, but not be limited to, lack of management support, domination of the agenda for political gain, members unable to find a voice in the group, an expectation of high performance and disinterest in innovation. Wenger et al. (2002) suggest there are seven principles on which an organisation can be evaluated to ascertain if it has become 'alive' to the potential of becoming a COP. These are considered below with examples drawn from Air League.

Design for evolution

The main role of the design elements is to encourage the evolution of an add-value community (Wenger et al. 2002). Due to the dynamic nature of a community, to design for evolution is to provide guidance rather than crafting the community from ground zero. The foundation of a community is built on personal networks that are already in existence. Therefore, the community design elements should act as catalysts to help the community develop as opposed to imposing a structure like most traditional organisation design. It often requires fewer elements at the beginning compared to an organisation design. Although the Air League is hierarchical and structured, there are three ways in which the organisation can be considered to be designed for evolution.

Firstly, as the Air League is a voluntary organisation, members come from all walks of life with different cultural backgrounds, life experiences and expert knowledge, which adds value to the whole organisation. Bringing in new perspectives and ideas veers the group in the same direction towards a common goal by discussing and implementing the best practice as agreed by the members of the group. Most of these new members come from backgrounds somehow related to the aviation industry, which gives a broad spectrum to other members involved and also encourages learning through communication and sparks new interests. A few examples would be having members involved in the Royal Australian Air Force, the UK Air Training Corps, Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, the Defence Science and Technology Organisation and the Scouts of South Australia.

Secondly, because the Australian Air League has been established in South Australia for many years, networks and connections with the local communities have been built over time. Events and activities such as citizenship ceremonies, Anzac Day parades and fundraising barbeques improve the relationship with local councils, Returned Service League clubs and the community. The full extent of this involvement led the South Australia Wing to obtain usage of a state museum as a meeting place for one of its squadrons. Furthermore, a growing external relationship with the University of South Australia opened doors for the SA Wing to take part in a major promotional opportunity in the form of a national educational exhibition in Adelaide. The Air League exhibited over two days, increasing public awareness of the organisation and also attracting several new members. Thirdly, aviation is central to the Air League's mission and the arrival of a new officer and private pilots who were also a members of a local flying club provided a gateway for members of the

South Australia Wing to participate in air activities such as gliding and introductory flights.

Throughout the past twelve months, conferences and meetings have been held to set clear goals and align the officers' mindsets so that they are all working towards a common objective rather than working against each other. In order to work collaboratively in an effective and efficient fashion, different strategies in different areas of expertise were set to achieve a common goal which allowed and encouraged the formation of smaller groups of expert officers from all units within the bigger establishment of the wing. In doing so, some of the members also filled a key role as facilitators for the smaller groups, which was needed to add value to the bigger group. Despite the hierarchical structure that was in place within the organisation, all members were encouraged to speak up and express their views, which created a culture of trust and openness.

Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives

The second principle claims that the perspectives of the core members of a community are invaluable to the understanding of community issues, while new members or members who are not involved in or part of the community often shed new light on topics on which existing members may have become blinded by shared perceptions. In the SA Wing in 2009 there were a number of core members running separate units who formed the pillars of the organisation and these members had been involved for almost ten years serving the Australian Air League and its predecessors. Each of the core members carried forward the solid experience of how to run the organisation, but also understood the restraints that prohibited change or progression.

Near the end of 2009 and the start of 2010 a number of new volunteers from outside the South Australian circle joined as officers and were able to bring their own experiences from serving in similar organisations to the Air League. They all worked on different levels within the organisation and instigated change by sparking off new ideas within the parameters that the constituted policy would allow. These included how the wing would be run as a team, as opposed to being individual units, in order to create a more organised environment and structure in which the leaders of the wing could work. Additionally, the creation of a new wing council drew all the key people within the wing into one single meeting to discuss strategies and rectify problems; as a result, SA Wing could run more efficiently and effectively. Training programs that were not known to the SA Wing before were adopted to enhance the quality of education for the young members, such as the introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and the two Australian Air League Diplomas. Operational methods and techniques borrowed from other groups interstate also provided reference points on how the wing could be run.

Moreover, placing a younger trainee pilot from Hong Kong in one of the estranged squadrons as the education officer resulted in an overall improvement in the performance of the squadron and a shift of mindset from self-governing to increasing involvement in the greater wing community. Setting education plans and programs tailored to the squadron while aligning it with the Air League Diploma requirements provided a time frame and a goal for the members to look forward to. There was also a sense of achievement for those who took part and followed the schedule that was laid out. The new instruction timetable also provided the squadron with more structure to the parade nights as every member knew what was in place and what to expect, which slowly formed a routine in their mindset so as to enhance the efficiency of the operation and the effectiveness of the programs. In the process of aligning the training programs with the Air League syllabus, the squadron transformed from a self-centred unit to a more open unit by participating in more South Australia Wing activities and functions such as visits and flying days. It also saw the need to establish better connections with local community groups which created an understanding of mutual support between the squadron and the other groups such as local pipe and drum bands and Returned Service League clubs.

Invite different levels of participation

As memberships in communities of practice are voluntary, participation involved many factors. Time, interest, commitment, motivation, ability and skill levels were normally taken into consideration when making the decision to participate in a community of practice. The community also had to be inviting in a wide range of ways in order to attract a diverse range of members. Members of the community participated on different levels at different times on different topics. There were also non-members who had an interest in the community. Community members drifted to different levels of participation from time to time. For example, in the Air League formal membership is segmented into three levels, namely officers, branch members and cadets. However, informally broader participation included parents, school teachers, local authorities, community groups and the business community.

Developing public and private community spaces

In keeping with the ideas of Wenger et al. (2002), we found the Air League to be a special place where members gathered, as formal or informal networks, to further the interests of the organisation. A range of public events, such as parades, sports activities and air shows, allowed parents, friends and the uniformed members to mix and build collegial relationships. Invariably, the main topic of conversation was directed towards the shared interest (the Air League), but these adults also exchanged knowledge, insights and experience on a wider range of topics. In an organisation where the safety and care of cadet members is paramount, it was important for parents to know their kids were in safe hands; so private and informal community networks helped to build trust and confidence. Away from the public setting, the same people kept in touch in smaller groups or networks to continue their work. It was not uncommon to see adults dropping in on other squadrons to collect documents, talk about plans for a forthcoming event or simply meet to bounce ideas around over a drink. These informal and private community-based activities acted as a kind of adhesive to hold the other events together and often provided the right environment for sparking off innovative ideas or creating new strategies. However, downsides to this community-generated energy emerged in the form of frustrating clashes with policy constraints and chaotic planning as new ideas were implemented without full consideration of previous arrangements.

Focus on value

One of the key developments in August 2009 was the re-establishment of a new wing structure. Prior to this time, the three squadrons had reported separately and directly to the Air League headquarters in Victoria. As a result of this action, the requirements for local commanders to deal with Victoria was effectively removed and replaced with an intermediate layer of management. For the people on the ground, the value of this new layer of management was not immediately apparent and some feared the structure would add a new layer of complexity to an already bureaucratic system. Moreover, within this new wing structure, three new officers were appointed into key positions with no first-hand knowledge or experience of recent events in South Australia—so the potential risk of rejection among the existing personnel was high.

The risk of rejection was offset by a number of actions designed to promote the value of the new structure. To begin, a meeting of all adult members was convened to discuss issues and allow members to ask questions, thereby enabling people to gauge the knowledge and experience of the new staff. Later, the new staff consulted widely, helped out at the local level and took a lead role in organising a major activity that was previously considered an organisational headache. Finally, the new officers arranged much larger events and demonstrated leadership by taking on strategic issues at the federal level. These activities all added value by encouraging the emerging community to develop confidence in the new officers and realise the community was growing.

Combine familiarity with excitement

One important characteristic of an Air League squadron is the local meeting hall where members can feel at home and have a sense of ownership of the environment. The meeting hall is a special place where members enact their nominated roles, free from other commitments such as home, work or school. Some units hire or own their meeting hall while others use local facilities in schools or community centres made available through goodwill.

Throughout 2010, the squadron meeting halls became vital hubs, in which new activities emerged such as informal activity days, drop-in evenings for games and sports, and special project meetings. Where access was readily available, the organisation moved from being a once-per-week event to a perpetual arrangement of meetings, discussion forums and activities. When the meeting halls could not be opened, the members simply moved elsewhere and found another place to conduct their activities—so the meeting places become less important for a while.

Creating a rhythm for a community

The use of traditions, rituals and routines in a team setting is a tried and tested process for building harmony and purpose, and passing on the culture (Martens, 2004). When people became involved in a vibrant community of practice a rhythm soon developed that generated a steady flow of information and ideas that promoted not only a sense of belonging, but feelings of inclusion and involvement among the members.

In the Air League, this rhythm was created by a blend of formal and informal traditions and new routines introduced by the emerging community. For example, weekly parades, staff development training days, briefing communications and organised cadet training activities were complemented with joint fundraising efforts, regular email information sharing, coaching sessions between more experienced adult staff and new members, plus special activities where people could recall enjoyable times spent in each other's company. Wenger et al. (2002) referred to these social events as milestones that punctuate the regular rhythm of the community.

Transition to the commercial aviation environment

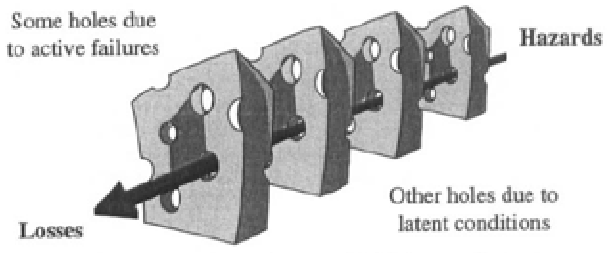
So how can some of these insights on socially constructed learning and COPs obtained from the Air League be transferred to the world of civil aviation and what learning points can be usefully applied to pilots working in an aircrew environment? As the aviation industry is constantly evolving, new management systems have been developed over the past few years with a main focus on safety. Most came to the realisation that the development of a safety culture and community was of the utmost importance for a system to work.

One such system can be found in a simple model developed by a group of civil aviation students studying the implementation of effective safety management systems for a well-established international air race in 2011. Using a simple acronym, WINGS, shown in Table 1, the students identified five characteristics of a safety culture. Most organisations in the aviation industry are planting the seeds of a just and safety culture which encourages people to make their concerns known and to report accidents and incidents willingly in an honest and truthful manner so that the others working within the same environment will be able to learn from the events and avoid similar occurrences by using more advanced technology or developing better procedures.

In a community of practice, participants share the same interest or focus, and volunteer their effort to add value on the issue concerned. A good example of COP in the aviation industry would be the Aviation Confidential Reporting Scheme (REPCON) or the Aviation Self-Reporting Scheme (ASRS). A REPCON report may be made by anyone who observes or becomes aware of a reportable safety concern. By implementing such schemes, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) has created an environment where people's concerns about aviation safety can be freely expressed, thereby cultivating the results of the schemes which generate new tools for enhancing safety through a network where people willingly share their concerns with integrity.

As a community of practice cannot be built, the safety and just culture that most organisations in the aviation industry are instilling into their employees may be the means of creating the environment for communities of practice to flourish. The willingness of management to allow such a growth is crucial as it may save costs, reduce accident rates and most importantly save lives.

Figure 1: The 'swiss cheese' model (Reason, 1998)



In the aviation environment, errors provide critical lessons to be learnt by others in a similar situation. The Reason model (Reason, 1998), shown in Figure 1, illustrates how accidents occur when gaps in defence mechanisms (represented by the cheese slices) become aligned. Alignment of the holes can be created by active failure such as human error and/or a range of latent conditions. By learning from the mistakes made by others, the industry is able to develop more effective measures to prevent mishaps. We know from Wenger et al. (2002) that different levels of participation are important to the growth of a community of practice as concerns can be viewed from different perspectives and angles in order to create a balance between prevention and production, which keeps the organisation operating in a safe but profitable manner.

Table 1: Comparison chart of aviation security in relation to communities of practice

	Aviation industry safety culture principles	Alignment with communities of practice
W	Willingness: Willingness of employees to report accidents and incidents. Willingness of management to promote and adopt a safe and just culture.	Participation in a community of practice is voluntary and relies heavily on each person making a meaningful contribution to the learning (Van Winkelen, 2003).
I	Integrity: Levels of honesty in reporting. Upholding a degree of self-discipline towards safety such as accurate reporting, withholding of evidence, trust and transparency.	Members of a community of practice are bound together, and foster a sense of common trust and common purpose among each other (Wenger & Snyder, 2000: 139).
N	Enhancement: How to improve the current system continuously and make the environment safer.	Communities of practice focus on adding value in a continuous cycle of learning and improving productivity (Mitchell & Young, 2002).
G	Generative: Coming up with new ideas and technologies to tackle issues that may arise from safety concerns.	Communities of practice provide the practitioner with access to new knowledge and come up with innovative new ideas and technologies to tackle issues that are of common concern (Mitchell & Young, 2002).
S	Sharing: Collegial and collaborative communication processes among stakeholders build a safety culture and raise awareness of emerging hazards, risks and possible solutions.	Having a shared vision ensures that all members of the community can share in, and respond to, future opportunities (Armstrong, 2003).

Projecting forward

As commanders of aircrafts, pilots are in charge of not only flying the aircraft but also the lives of everyone on board. Therefore, pilots must maintain a certain level of interpersonal relationship with both crew members and passengers to ensure the safe operation of a flight. Externally, pilots also need to connect with other aircraft and traffic controllers in order to gain crucial information for the sake of safe flight. Amidst these networks, socially constructed learning occurs throughout pilot training as students often discuss their flying amongst themselves informally during their free time outside formal briefing sessions. From such conversations, individuals learn about what actions were taken and what could be done better. This habit carries through to their career as flying is almost their sole interest and passion. Although this type of social learning may not be a community that is cultivated by an organisation, it is considered a broad, worldwide community of professionals. Flight crew travel all around the world and work with a variety of people and potentially a different crew every time they take to the skies.

Conclusions

In this paper we have discussed how the value of learning is shaped by organisational culture and how the implementation of modern management practices can be used to focus effort and bring about a systemised process of change. Though much learning can exist in traditional or classical organisational structures, such as the Air League, the implementation of modern management practices was found to assist in aligning diverse groups of people with the characteristics of a unified learning organisation and in doing so paved the way for socially constructed learning communities, such as communities of practice, to develop. Central to this transformation was the role of a new leadership team, who enabled fresh communities to emerge in an unpredictable and sometimes unstructured way. Mitchell, Wood and Young found that the importance of situated learning was defined by learning that 'occurred in certain forms of social co-partnering' (2001: 4). As the Air League volunteers built a new culture of learning, they enjoyed being part of an organisation that was full of support, information sharing and participation at all levels. This level of motivation contributed significantly to improvements in performance and growth during 2009–2010.

Moreover, we have compared practices found in the Air League against seven principles defined by Wenger et al. (2002), and concluded that much evidence can be found to support these principles of socially constructed learning. In regard to the significance of building social capital, we also reflected on how we, as participants in the organisation, might benefit from our involvement. For one author, the personal learning journey was a new experience and he discovered that the concept of a socially constructed learning group was relevant to his professional development and learning opportunities in the wider aviation industry. Importantly, we found that volunteers who work in community organisations readily assimilate and commute their new learning to many aspects of their lives and this is an essential facet of building social capital.

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Launching a career or reflecting on life? Reasons, issues and outcomes for candidates undertaking PhD studies mid-career or after retirement compared to the traditional early career pathway

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The Commonwealth government provides fee exemption for any Australian who undertakes a PhD. This policy is presumably based on the 'clever country' assumption that an educated population will develop and contribute to social and economic capital. Enrolment numbers therefore continue to increase, and a PhD is no longer an elite qualification. In addition, the characteristics and demographics of PhD students are changing.

In the School of Education, University of South Australia, a significant number of PhD students are not early career researchers or recent honours graduates, but mid-to-late-career education practitioners and retirees, and the majority are women. These mature-age and third-age candidates are undertaking doctoral *research not to launch their career, but in most cases to reflect on it, with many experiencing transformative learning in the process.*

In this paper I will explore why people undertake a PhD later in life, what the learning process is like for them, what the outcomes are, and the benefits to society.

Introduction

The Commonwealth government, through the Research Training Scheme, provides fee exemption for any Australian who qualifies to undertake a higher degree such as a PhD. This policy is presumably based on the 'clever country' assumption that an educated population will develop and contribute to social and economic capital. Enrolment numbers therefore continue to increase, and a PhD is increasingly becoming common currency in terms of credentials, no longer an elite qualification for the chosen few. In addition, a traditional research career pathway that involves a young honours graduate progressing to a higher degree and then perhaps to an academic or research career is no longer the norm—the characteristics and demographics of PhD students are changing.

At the University of South Australia, for example, the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences currently has over 400 enrolments in its doctoral programs. The average age of this cohort is 45. In the School of Education, a significant number of PhD students are not early career researchers or recent honours graduates, but mid-to-late-career education practitioners and retirees, and the majority are women. These mature-age and third-age candidates are undertaking doctoral research not to launch their career, but in most cases to reflect on it, usually through narrative, auto-ethnographic and interpretive approaches, with many discovering and experiencing transformative learning in the process.

Based on the author's involvement in managing and teaching in higher degree programs and initial data from a small-scale survey of doctoral students, in this paper I will address the trend for candidates undertaking research training later in life and pose a number of questions, including:

- Why do people undertake a PhD later in their life and career?
- What are the outcomes professionally and personally for these people?
- How is the learning process understood and experienced?
- What are the benefits to society?
- What comes after the PhD?

Background: the PhD as currency

A doctorate is a research-based higher degree offered by universities and a very few accredited higher education providers. However, it is interesting to note that the term doctorate originates from the Latin *docere* (to teach), and that teaching licences or *licentia docendi* were originally issued by the church in Medieval Europe (Latin Dictionary, 2010). While a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is certainly regarded as necessary academic currency in modern universities, it is increasingly seen as a pathway and a training program into the world of research rather than the world of teaching; and the fact that almost every university in Australia requires new academic staff who may already hold a doctoral award to undertake a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching suggests that it is certainly no longer a program that 'teaches people how to teach'.

The introduction of the professional doctorate—for example the Doctor of Education (EdD)—goes some way to addressing the more practice-based requirements of professional practitioners who are less interested in pure research than in applied practical solutions to specific issues in their profession; but that is by no means a teaching qualification either. With their coursework component, similar to the US model of a doctoral program, professional doctorates are becoming increasingly popular among international students and professionals who do not have a research background or an honours degree. However a professional doctorate still requires the same amount of time in candidature as a PhD (4 years full-time or 8 years part-time) and also attracts federal funding under the Research Training Scheme for Australian residents and citizens. It also requires the production of a thesis/portfolio of about 80,000 words, similar to the thesis requirements for a PhD (UniSA, 2010).

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has reported that the PhD is one of the fastest growing higher education qualifications in Australia, with the number of graduates almost doubling between 1996 and 2007 (Edwards, Radloff & Coates, 2009). However in a review of the ACER report, Moodie has noted that 'Almost 10 per cent of doctorate graduates who were not studying full time in the year after their graduation in 2007 were not working, which was higher than for graduates of bachelors and postgraduate coursework degrees' (2010: 22).

This seems to show that a doctorate is not necessarily achieving vocational or professional outcomes to the extent that other university programs are, prompting the suggestion that there are other reasons for, and outcomes from, undertaking higher degree study. While a PhD may be strong in terms of intellectual currency therefore, it is not necessarily of equal value or currency in the job market and even in universities, where a doctorate is highly valued, completing one does not automatically translate into a higher salary and position—one still has to apply for promotion based on other metrics including teaching quality and research output.

However, the argument that I explore in this paper is that the notion of 'currency' in this context is more related to current ideas, understandings and meanings around topics of research that are important and relevant not only to the doctoral researchers themselves but to wider society in general, rather than in terms of economic currency. The prevailing view of the contribution that higher degrees might make to knowledge is still largely linked to the economy and the world of work:

> As the developed world becomes more reliant on knowledge as a vital part of economic growth and development, the importance of highly skilled workers who can create, disseminate and use new knowledge becomes integral. The role of those with the skills and competencies provided through higher research degrees is therefore of increasing importance to the future development of the Australian economy. (Edwards et al., 2009: ix)

The focus in this quotation on ‘highly skilled workers’ tends to exclude those who are not in the workforce, and/or are not likely to create, disseminate and use new knowledge in the workforce; yet are nonetheless contributing to the knowledge economy—or what could be termed ‘gross national knowledge’—and supporting the broader ideal of a clever country. Furthermore, one of the five stated objectives of the Commonwealth Research Training Scheme is to ‘Ensure the relevance of research degree programs to labour market requirements’ (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation, 2008: 23). This further highlights the questions: What is the relevance of research degree programs to requirements *other than* the labour market? And in fact is the link between research degree programs and labour market requirements that clear?

A more recent federal government discussion paper, *Meeting Australia’s research workforce needs: A consultation paper to inform the development of the Australian government’s research workforce strategy* (Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, 2010), discusses inter alia the ageing profile of the research workforce, but also reinforces policy aspirations to increase significantly the number of higher degree by research

(HDR) completions in Australia, as they are seen to be critical to the development of a globally competitive research workforce. However, the paper has been critiqued as short on detail:

> What is not clear from the evidence presented in the paper is: exactly who is critical to the future research workforce [and] whether industry shares the government's enthusiasm for expanding R & D and employing research-qualified individuals and is willing to offer competitive employment options and remuneration appropriate to researchers' knowledge and skills. (Bell, 2010: 1)

Furthermore there is an apparent disjunction between the expectation of competitive salaries for doctoral research graduates and the paucity of government funding to support doctoral candidates during their years of study. One of the challenges facing tertiary students in Australia is not only the accrual of debt from course fees, but also the need to provide living expenses while studying. For most undergraduate students this means finding part-time work while undertaking full-time study, sometimes with a negative effect on their studies.

For HDR students this is also a reality and, while a number of scholarship schemes exist, they are highly competitive, disadvantage those who have not come through an honours pathway, and are generally set at a level that for most people would not even pay the rent. The stipend for an Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship (APA) is currently set at $22,500 per annum, which the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations has noted is 'below the poverty line' (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation, 2008: 76). This is particularly untenable for attracting mid-career professionals into full-time study from the workforce where their lifestyle and commitments would rely on a salary of three or four times that amount:

> The majority of postgraduate research students are over 30, and are subject to the commitments that typically accompany the middle decades of many peoples' lives … Postgraduate research students have partners, children, mortgages, debt repayments, employment commitments, and aging parents. (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation, 2008: 91)

If Australia is to be globally competitive in developing the knowledge economy, then lessons could be learnt from Germany and the Scandinavian countries where higher education is fully funded and PhD students are 'paid a salary equivalent to a junior academic level, in recognition of the skills required to be accepted for doctoral studies' (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation, 2008: 87). The Standing Committee, reporting in 2008 on the issue of adequate funding for research training, included Recommendation 15: that the APA stipend value be increased by 50 per cent. However, at the time of writing, this has not yet translated into policy.

Who is undertaking doctoral studies in Australia?

While it is difficult to obtain accurate demographic information on current national doctoral enrolments, the 2009 ACER report does detail the supply, demand and characteristics of the higher degree by research population in Australia in terms of those already holding such an award, based on 2006 census data:

> Almost half of the population with a doctorate degree are aged 50 or above (47.2 per cent) and three quarters of these people are aged over 40 (74.0 per cent). Only four per cent of the population holding a doctorate are aged below 30 … The age distribution of the doctorate population is shown to be notably older than the general distribution of professionally employed people in Australia. (Edwards et al., 2009: 33).

In addition to the age distribution, what is also interesting is that in 2006 about two-thirds of the Australian population with a doctorate were male. Yet the trend shows that by 2007, there were more females actually enrolled in doctoral programs at 50.4 per cent, compared with 44.4 per cent of doctoral students in 1998 (DETYA, 1999, cited in Edwards et al., 2009: 34).

This is significant in the social sciences and particularly in education, which has traditionally been a discipline and a profession with a higher proportion of female participation compared with the natural and physical sciences. Of the 200 or so HDR candidates enrolled in the School of Education at the University of South Australia, there are around three times as many women as men. This is reinforced by the sample of sixteen HDR candidates invited to respond to an online survey investigating reasons for undertaking a doctoral degree; of this cohort of sixteen only three were male.

Furthermore, doctoral enrolments in the field of education are smaller in terms of overall numbers, judging by the number of completions in 2007: less than 7 per cent in education compared with nearly 25 per cent in the natural and physical sciences. This highlights the concentration of females compared with males in the discipline compared to all disciplines where the ratio, as cited above, is around 50:50.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation received a large number of submissions to its 2008 inquiry into research training and research workforce issues in Australian universities. The committee's report noted: 'Certain professional sectors, such as teaching and nursing, argued that their research postgraduate student profile tends to comprise mid-career professionals with a practical or clinical background' (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation, 2008: 94). Particular individual submissions were quite scathing of the way in which research training policy tends to focus by default on a model of participation that does not recognise changing demographics and cohort diversity, characterised as:

> a monocular policy focus on younger, full-time, scholarship holders 'preparing for work' which is blind to the needs and potential of the many candidates who are older and often mid-career, part-time, salaried and in a good job … We believe that diversity is a strength of Australian doctoral education and we call for policy that eschews homogeneity and which values diversity and flexibility. (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation, 2008: 91)

Access to HDR study has been highlighted in the previous section as determined by economic considerations, and the limitations for mid-career professionals of forgoing salary for four years while completing a higher degree. Therefore, those who are able to undertake doctoral studies in Australia appear more likely to be demographically at either end of a career trajectory (i.e. early career or late career/retired), or undertaking part-time HDR study while trying to juggle a work–life balance.

Finally, the geographic spread of Australians with doctoral qualifications is also interesting—they are disproportionately concentrated in the major capital cities, in particular Melbourne and Sydney: 'These two cities and the other capitals … all have an over-representation of people with a doctorate degree in comparison to the general population spread' (Edwards et al., 2009: 36). This concentration is linked to the availability of suitable employment for people with such qualifications in large urban centres. However it highlights one of the issues associated with equity of access to higher degree participation by under-represented groups such as Indigenous, rural and regional Australians. The availability of study by distance education has increased the possibility of participation by these groups; however several respondents to the survey noted that their geographical isolation was a reason for them being unable to undertake higher degree studies earlier in their careers.

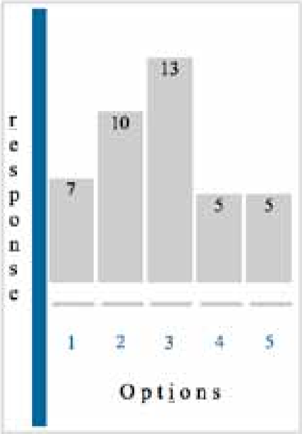
Why do people undertake a PhD later in their life and career?

A small-scale survey addressed this question to sixteen doctoral students in the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of South Australia. In one sense the respondents were a convenience sample as they represented students who were older than 45 and were known to the author through their enrolment at UniSA and/or through their connection with a research project or a particular academic or research group in the division. In another sense the sample was random as these students are enrolled by choice at the university, some with APA scholarships. They ranged in age from early 50s to late 70s.

A link to an online survey was sent to their student email address with an invitation to participate, noting that the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Fourteen people completed the survey, a response rate of 87.5 per cent, with several respondents sending a separate email indicating interest in the topic and the resulting paper. Respondents were asked to list one or more reasons why they had undertaken doctoral studies at this stage in their career:

> **2. Question:** Please list one or more reasons why you have undertaken doctoral studies at this stage in your career
>
> Option 1: Career advancement
> Option 2: Personal development and interest
> Option 3: The time was right
> Option 4: Challenge myself
> Option 5: To prove that I can do it

Figure 1: Reasons for undertaking doctoral studies



All except one acknowledged that 'the time was right', while 'personal development and interest' was the next highest reason chosen by ten respondents. Of interest to the theme of this paper is that only 50 per cent considered 'career advancement' as a reason.

When asked to expand on their responses to this question, a number of comments were particularly salient:

> I felt that it was an opportunity to draw a number of threads in my life experience together, my experience in many walks of life, that could when integrated form a satisfying account of my life learning in relation to my area of interest.
>
> As I approached the end of my active career path I decided to devote time to examine what was the most valuable lesson I learnt about a special professional activity. There was an urgent desire to find the how and why of a vocational life in the form of a thesis.
>
> My children were at Uni themselves so I no longer had school fees to pay, so the time was right. When I was offered a scholarship, the time was really right! Also I have been a lifelong writer and reader, so doctoral studies allows me to follow these passions.

> As someone from a background (gender, ethnicity, class) who had not seen university as an option when I was younger, this was a way of developing myself and feeling as though I could make a valid contribution to society at the same time.
>
> All of the reasons were elements of my thinking. My work challenged me in new ways and at the same time I felt the need to make sense of what should/could be done. It had a lot of practitioner practical concern about the inquiry. Personally I saw the doctoral studies as providing some legitimacy in my explorations.
>
> From having worked in education settings my entire career I wanted to gain a theoretical understanding of my practice. Why did certain beliefs underpin my practice no matter what setting I was working in?

Perhaps the standout comment in relation to reasons for undertaking higher degree studies was: ‘Learning for me is like a disease which doesn’t go away.’ The underlying driver for many candidates like this one is a lifelong engagement with learning in its various forms, and doctoral study allows them the space to explore aspects of learning in depth, for example, as others claimed, ‘to gain a theoretical understanding of my practice’, as ‘a vehicle for a new vocation’, or to ‘allow me to follow the passions of being a lifelong writer and reader’.

What are the benefits to society?

Particularly where candidates are pursuing some form of methodology based on a narrative or life history approach (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Ellis, 2009), doctoral studies really do encourage deep self-reflection, personal growth and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009) or, as one respondent put it, ‘providing some legitimacy in my explorations’ of what could be seen by others as individual, esoteric or even irrelevant.

The contribution to the knowledge economy of a thesis based on one person’s exploration of a single case study in an obscure aspect of education, for example, could be queried; and indeed there was a moment in Australia's recent history when the federal Education Minister personally criticised thesis topics that he thought were irrelevant and obscure (Gill, 2004). Pointing out that the training and development of the researcher is just as important as their thesis or findings could just attract the criticism that 'older' researchers—especially those who are no longer in the workforce—are not likely to contribute very much to society as individuals despite their elevated level of wisdom.

I therefore asked respondents to discuss the extent to which they believed their doctoral studies might contribute to knowledge generation and social capital. Their responses ranged from the pragmatic:

> I think [my study] is readable and accessible enough for it to be read every now and again and not gather dust on a shelf.

To the policy-oriented:

> My research will raise awareness beyond the child protection arena and bring this issue to the forefront for educators and policy makers by providing much needed research evidence.

To the general observation:

> Older doctoral students have more diverse and wider life experiences and may choose to study different topics than a younger person; therefore their contribution to knowledge generation and social capital may be quite different, but equally valuable.

In relation to the last comment, my central argument in this paper is that the 'different but valuable contribution' older doctoral students might make is in relation to their ability to reflect on, analyse and make sense of their life and career experiences, providing rich data for consideration by future generations. 'I hope that the knowledge

I am generating by this study is helpful in promoting interest in the profession that is/was my working life.'

In other words, and especially for baby boomers, a working life is often something taken for granted, not necessarily planned, and the initial professional training might have provided the *what* and *how* but not the *why* of the profession. As one respondent put it, 'the tight knit between theory and practice is very powerful', and reflecting on this appears to be more powerful for those with significant experience to reflect on. If these considerations are available to early career practitioners who have the theory but perhaps not the practical experience then there are potential intergenerational benefits.

Not all respondents were sure that their study would have an immediate impact on or contribution to the knowledge economy:

> I am less certain about this—I don't think I have contributed yet. I naively thought that my employer and others would somehow be interested/concerned about my study ... The challenge is will anyone ever read/consider my work? I think it has the potential—I need to find a forum.

The forum for promulgation and discussion of research findings is often limited to academic journals, conferences and seminars. Access by the general public is quite limited and, unless research findings are taken up by policy developers or government agencies, they are destined to be read by a narrow audience or at worst to 'gather dust on a shelf'.

How is the learning process understood and experienced?

I asked respondents to consider the extent to which their doctoral studies had contributed to their learning and development, both personally and professionally. Their responses revealed a mixed range of experiences, with personal development often benefitting at the expense of professional progress.

On the plus side, it was noted that

> My capacity to engage in critical thinking has certainly developed as have my problem-solving abilities.

And:

> It has been one of the most valuable professional experiences I have ever undertaken. It is intellectually stimulating and it is hard to quantify just how much I believe I have learnt—but it is a great deal!

And furthermore:

> Doctoral studies are a wonderful gift that keeps on giving. I never expected it to be so rewarding and the personal growth and development are beyond my wildest dreams. I have discovered sides of myself that I never knew or suspected and I have developed a deeper understanding of my life and of other people. It has given me a sense of completeness and wholeness. I'm a much better person than I was when I started.

However, the 'down side' was also expressed:

> In some ways it has been very frustrating … Doctoral studies are very lonely.

And one respondent qualified the benefits with the consequences:

> I have achieved more than I ever thought possible, met some amazing people and participated in events that a few short years ago I would have considered off limits to me. At the same time, it can complicate the different events/factors in my daily life, particularly when new ways of thinking and seeing the world clash with my previous thinking and with those around me who are not in any way interested in academic life.

The 'complications' mentioned are consistent with the type of disorienting dilemma that Mezirow (2009) discussed in his development of transformative learning theory. For these mature age learners a transformation in world view or meaning making was characterised as: ‘A hard slog … challenging my own long believed, hard earnt beliefs/attitudes’. And the view that:

> Through doctoral studies a new world opened and every step I take leads me to new learning challenges, new people and opportunities that make me question why I should be there.

Challenging long-held beliefs and views can often translate into major upheavals in the personal lives of mature age students. These profound changes also lead to the question of what comes next in a mature age person’s life after completion of doctoral studies, which may have taken eight years of their life, ‘many highs and lows’, and in some cases personal struggle and sacrifice. There is a feeling amongst some candidates that completing and graduating will leave a big hole that was previously filled by the all-consuming PhD, and also suddenly break the link with the academic community that has been formed through enrolment at a university.

One respondent to the survey sees herself as unemployable: ‘because I am too old to be a “graduate” yet have no experience within the new “profession” so I am really concerned on what to do’. There is a moral question for universities then, in taking on late career or retired PhD candidates who might become ‘all trained up with nowhere to go’; over-qualified and over-educated with no opportunity to apply or further develop their higher learning.

Finally I asked respondents to the survey whether they could or would have completed doctoral studies earlier in their life and career. Responses centred around three issues:

1. Family/work commitments, isolation and/or opportunity mitigated against the reality of undertaking doctoral studies earlier in life.
2. The confidence to feel able to achieve studies at a higher degree level was not there until later in life.

3. As a younger person without significant life experience and practice to reflect on, a doctorate would have been very different, and probably even in a different field.

   I started Honours when I was in my 20s and found myself feeling quite intimidated and not quite ready intellectually or emotionally. It was as if I didn't have the life experience yet to ground it. Having said this I believe it may be different in more quantitative or scientific studies which may not draw on life experience as much. My thesis really reflects a culmination of my life's work up to a certain point and I would not have been able write a thesis at that level as a young person.

   I often wonder about this question and would I have wanted to or achieved this level of study earlier and I doubt it. I've come to the conclusion that my priority was a family and I consciously chose not to return to work until they were independent. There were fewer opportunities or role models for young women in the 1960s. Until distance education became available it was not an option where I lived.

   If I had pursued doctoral studies after my honours degree it would have been in science. Life would have been very different ... Then online external studies became available and I could manage a family, partner a primary production business, work full-time in a school AND study part-time. My part-time study opened up the possibility of pursuing doctoral studies. In one way I wish I had pursued them in the 1970s but I did not have the information I needed. Marriage and family life are important, and I could not have coped with doctoral studies when the children were younger.

   This has been the right time to complete my studies for me. I am practice rich and so playing with the theory has been a joy. I could put a practical context to the theory.

Conclusion

It is with these insights that the mature-age PhD needs to be seen as a very different experience, and undertaken for different reasons, to the traditional early career researcher pathway. These reasons can be summarised as follows:

- reflecting on and theorising practical/career experience
- drawing together various threads of personal and professional life experience
- taking the opportunity presented by circumstances
- making a valid contribution to knowledge and society
- providing academic legitimacy to lifelong learning and interests.

As argued in this paper, these do not easily align with accepted and traditional views of doctoral studies as linked to labour market requirements and economic outcomes. Outcomes for mature age doctoral graduates would appear to be more philanthropic than pragmatic, more inspirational than aspirational, and more holistic than strategic. It would appear that such doctoral studies are aligned more closely with recent trends to point university education in the direction of moral and social enterprise and away from the prevailing view of universities as factories that train workers. Professor Steven Schwartz, Vice Chancellor of Macquarie University in New South Wales, has been championing this view in recent lectures and through his institution's focus on 'practical wisdom' as a legitimate focus of study:

> In last year's Vice-Chancellor's oration, I argued that education should be about more than preparing graduates for their first job after university; education should be a moral enterprise.
>
> I explained how Macquarie University is 're-moralising' by implementing a new curriculum that is aimed not just at the state of the art but also at the state of our students' hearts … I want to show how we hope to set our students on the road to practical wisdom. (Schwartz, 2010: 8)

The process of formal lifelong learning in later life seems to resonate with the notion of 'wisdom', a construct that goes beyond notions of knowledge construction to involve a more holistic, integrated world view and process of meaning making and understanding. The 'getting of wisdom' is something that can be learned through both informal and formal lifelong learning, universities can encourage this, and certain disciplines such as education are more likely than others to be able to facilitate it.

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The learning projects of rural third age women: enriching a valuable community resource

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As a third age PhD candidate with a passion for learning, I wanted to explore the learning of other rural third age women who live on the Lower Eyre Peninsula (LEP) of South Australia. This reflects the methodological stance of heuristic inquiry, which requires the researcher to have a passionate interest in the phenomena under investigation, and in this case includes my tacit knowledge as a third age learner and long-term resident of the region. I deliberately chose six very influential women over 50 years of age who have transformed their rural communities into vibrant 'can do' societies better able to cope with the economic, environmental and social changes of the last two decades. I wanted to know how they adjusted to the lifestyle changes in their middle years, after their children left home, their third age, how they adapted to the social and economic changes in rural life, and what they learned as community change agents and leaders of community organisations, boards and community development committees. My research methodology *gave them the opportunity to reflect on their autobiographies as co-researchers during our two informal conversations about their learning. I discovered that, at different stages in their lives, these midlife women intuitively realised that they needed to do something for themselves in the wider world, independent of the farm and their family, which required them to learn and change. They are passionate lifelong and lifewide learners, continually searching for something that challenges, excites and extends them. This paper discusses their lifewide learning and personal development in community activities and formal educational institutions, which has been personally rewarding and enormously beneficial for community viability and wellbeing. Although the numbers are low and the women come from a small remote region of South Australia, there are similar women of action in almost every community, both rural and urban, who continue to make a difference.*

Since I left my farm in the small community of Edillilie on the Lower Eyre Peninsula (LEP) in 1988, rural communities have changed considerably throughout Australia. One of the most significant changes is the emergence of women as community leaders and change agents who transformed their communities and themselves.

As learning is my passion, I wanted to understand the changes and to explore the learning of third age women who had participated in their community regeneration on the LEP. This is reflected in the methodological stance of heuristic inquiry, which requires the researcher to have a passionate interest in the phenomena under investigation (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985: 40; Moustakas, 1990: 14–15), and in this case includes my tacit knowledge as a third age learner and long-term resident of the LEP (Polanyi, 1969: 141). In this project, the third age for women is defined as the midlife period after 50 years of age when their children are independent and they have the time and freedom to take on new roles and build new independent identities.

Five of the six women, aged between 58 and 71, who were invited to participate in this project, are involved at different levels in transforming their rural communities into vibrant ‘can do’ societies better able to cope with the economic, environmental and social changes of the last two decades. I asked how they adjusted to the lifestyle changes in their middle years, their third age, how they adapted to the social and economic changes in rural life and what they learned through their community activities as change agents and leaders of community organisations, boards and community development committees. The research methodology gave them the opportunity to reflect on their autobiographies as co-researchers during our two informal conversations about their learning. Rural women tend not to talk openly about personal matters and my research offered a rare opportunity to share and explore our mutual experiences as rural women and third age learners (Coakes & Bishop, 1998: 265).

Community voluntary work was always an important responsibility for rural women but they were principally relegated to supportive community ‘housekeeping’ roles, responsible for fundraising, refreshments and the maintenance of services and facilities. Life was very different and, like previous generations of farm women, they were relatively invisible and their work was unrecognised (Shortall, 1992: 441; Alston, 1995: 13, 1998: 27; Rickson, 1997: 94; Teather, 1998: 210; Bock, 2006: 1). Although many were partners in the family business, that gave them very little status as it was generally assumed by professionals and outsiders to be solely for tax advantages (Alston, 1995: 18–19). In addition, they were not recognised by banks, stock agents and other business people as having any farm or business involvement or knowledge (Alston, 1995: 132). Although there were few avenues to earn essential off-farm income (Alston, 1995: 116), apart from teaching and nursing, most jobs were low paid, low skilled, temporary and part time (Alston, 1995: 6; Jennings & Stehlik, 2000: 65).

During the early 1990s, the last of the bank branches withdrew from Cummins on the LEP and, as in other rural towns, many businesses closed, technicians and tradespeople transferred to larger centres and most of the young people left for further education and employment in the cities. Rural disadvantage increased and the communities were struggling to maintain services. Many of their shops and business premises were empty and run down and suicides increased (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005: 437, 441; Hall & Scheltens, 2005: 350–351; Tonts & Haslam-McKenzie, 2005: 192–193).

To address the socioeconomic problems government rural policy promoted local responsibility, competitiveness, self-reliance and local entrepreneurship (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005: 437; Tonts & Haslam-McKenzie, 2005: 197–198). Women were specifically targeted to increase rural productivity and provide local leadership for economic development, capacity building and community renewal (Rickson, 1997: 100; Grace & Lennie, 1998: 364; Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2001: 48; Pini & Brown, 2004: 169; Shortall, 2006: 19). Since then they have transformed their communities into thriving, prosperous centres and challenged the traditional patriarchal social structure.

Three women have always lived in the same locality, two came from elsewhere in the state in the 1960s and early 70s and Marian arrived in the late 1980s. They all have a strong attachment, commitment and a passion for the lifestyle, their communities, the people and the institutions. Yet most are virtually unknown outside the region, although they have won national and state awards for their contribution to their communities.

I discovered that, at different stages in their lives, these midlife women intuitively realised that they needed to do something for themselves, independent of the farm and their families, that would require them to learn and change. Rather than a single catalyst, for most women it was the crystallisation of a number of issues or causes of discontent (Baumeister, 1994: 288). Sarah and Esther returned to work while their children were toddlers, causing considerable public comment and disquiet, but when Louise returned to her career a few years later it was more acceptable. Martha said she was drowning under the heavy workload when her sons came home from school wanting to go farming.

The women's voluntary community involvement has provided them with some exceptional learning opportunities as managers, leaders and historians. Currently, women are heavily involved in million-dollar-plus projects to upgrade their community recreation amenities and local medical facilities. Before applying for government funding, they have to market their concepts to the wider community, gauge community support for increased debt, source local funding, determine community views and needs, and negotiate with interested parties including architects and contractors.

Women became involved in the formation and leadership of the Cummins and District Enterprise Committee on the EP in the mid 1990s. It has given the community a unified voice and has been instrumental in driving changes and transforming the social fabric of the region. It has become an umbrella organisation responding to community concerns for essential and emergency services and sponsors other committees to address those issues, manage projects and fundraise. It has enabled the women to develop leadership and organisational skills and to learn about people management, project management, marketing, writing submissions, sourcing funding, applying for grants and negotiating with governments, businesses and service providers.

One of the first projects of the Cummins and District Enterprise Committee was to create and manage a small caravan park to provide much needed accommodation. However, their most significant project was the establishment of a community bank, from which 50 per cent of the profits are returned to the town and distributed to various groups and organisations, with about $40,000 a year going to the local hospital. Women are on the local board and it has provided them with opportunities to learn about the banking industry, corporate governance, media reporting, financial management and legal responsibilities. The committee has also been involved in establishing and managing a number of small community businesses such as craft and op shops, which also contribute to the hospital.

By the beginning of the new millennium, there was a renewed sense of optimism and community pride and in 2002 Cummins won the state and national 'Can-Do Community' award. The signs are proudly displayed at all five entrances to the town. As in other rural towns, new businesses were developed, old ones rejuvenated and the town is thriving, revitalised and prosperous. People are retiring locally and young people are returning with their families. Now the town is making headlines for its ingenuity, creativity, social cohesion and can-do attitude.

Health issues have always been a primary concern for rural women and the provision of health services and amenities unite the whole community. Previous generations of women were instrumental in establishing the hospitals that provide a valued service to the scattered populations and are critical for the retention of their general practitioners. When they opposed government initiatives to downgrade community hospitals in 2004, they realised that they had to become more proactive and work together to retain their primary health and medical services. They are learning to prioritise sustainable services, work with other hospitals, and negotiate with government ministers and bureaucrats. Unlike the past, women outnumber men on the boards and it is providing them with new opportunities to have their voices heard and to make a difference. The majority of community fundraising goes into upgrading the health facilities, staff training and services at the hospital, and doctors' professional and private accommodation. They also work hard to provide a good quality of life for the elderly and infirm who are very much part of the whole community.

Raising funds for the hospital, aged hostel, medical services, and other social and sporting amenities are opportunities for creativity and developing organisational skills. In recent years, Cummins organised a Kalamazoo Classic event using the double railway track through the centre of town as a race track for the rail workers' old rail trolleys, which are manually operated with a pumping action. In addition, they have held the Cummins Under Canvas, Wildeloo Rock Festival, an air show and music hall evenings. Each major event involves the whole community, attracts several thousand visitors from far and wide and raises about $10,000 for the hospital, health infrastructure and staff training. Changing the focus every few years encourages the participation of the next generation of midlife people, relieves the pressure on the older members and maintains wider community interest and support.

The devastating bushfire at Wangary in 2005 was a learning opportunity for the whole region and Martha described it as 'a real wake up call. Suddenly some things became reality and one was danger and death' and we learned that we needed each other. However, it enabled Marian to take on a significant management and leadership role in the recovery process and she enjoyed the responsibility and found she was good at people management and counselling. As the operation closed down, her responsibilities extended to distributing the surplus donated goods, which brought her into contact with diverse groups and an international organisation. The experience gave her the confidence to nominate for state and then national leadership positions in an international service organisation. She believes that as a 'little country girl' she can expand her organisation into regional areas and provide leadership and social opportunities for other rural and regional women.

Most of the women's learning is experiential through everyday involvement and social interactions and, unless their attention is drawn to it, they do not see it as learning. Community organisations and committees are learning organisations (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 2001) where members learn informally from each other, by giving something a go or finding someone with the expertise or skills they wish to acquire, which are the most common forms of learning in rural communities (Schubert, 2005: 229). The women's experiences opened their eyes to a wider world view. They became more observant and more critical as they noticed deficiencies, made comparisons with other communities and argued their case for change.

Two women returned to secondary education as the first step towards developing new interests during their third age. After Helen passed her Year 12 exams she was offered a temporary position teaching some courses until a qualified teacher became available. Martha studied Year 11 ancient history externally and then joined a creative writing group and became the local historian. In the 1980s she compiled several local history books during the celebrations for Australia's bicentenary and the state's 150th Jubilee. She encourages others to write, continues to collect local historical material and stories for future generations, and has written family histories for her children and grandchildren. Each year she encourages schoolchildren to become town ambassadors and takes a busload on a tour of the town's historical sites, describing what it was like for the people who lived and worked there in the past. As many of the local families have lived in the area since early settlement their history is all around them and family and local histories are of popular interest for many women.

Although these women number only a few and come from a small remote corner of South Australia, there are similar women of action in almost every rural community, who continue to make a difference. They are passionate lifelong learners, continually searching for something that challenges, excites and extends them. For rural women learning is personally rewarding and has provided them with opportunities to develop an independent identity, achieve recognition, make a difference and contribute significantly to community viability and wellbeing.

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Is the use of video conferencing and supporting technologies a feasible and viable way to woo farmers back into farmer education?

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North Dakota State University (USA) have been using video conferencing as a delivery mode for farmer education for about twenty years and report that their farmers find this delivery method both practical and worthwhile. With the number of New Zealand farmers attending learning events decreasing, due mainly to time and cost, maybe it is time to use different approaches to engage farmers in learning. A study called 'FeedSmart', which looked into the ways farmers preferred to learn, identified that e-learning is worth further investigation as a learning delivery approach. In this paper we report on three small-scale trials that investigated the viability and effectiveness of generating and delivering information to farmers via a video-conferencing-based learning approach. This study showed that e-learning of this type has potential as a learning approach for farmers and is worthy of further investigation.

Introduction

North Dakota State University (USA) have been using video conferencing as a delivery mode for farmer education for about twenty years and report that their farmers find this delivery method both practical and worthwhile. With the number of New Zealand farmers attending learning events decreasing, due mainly to time and cost, maybe it is time to use different approaches to engage farmers in learning. Therefore, this study investigated the question: is video conferencing, supported by other technologies, a feasible and viable learning approach for members of the New Zealand farming community?

New Zealand providers of farmer education are currently finding it difficult to attract farmers to learning events. Anecdotal information from farmers and findings from a recent large (845 respondents) survey on farmer learning needs (MacKay & Bewsell, 2010), indicate that, while there is a plethora of learning events offered to farmers, few of these actually meet farmer-identified needs. Farmers report that they want to attend learning events that have direct relevance and application to their own needs, contexts and particular farming issues. They also report that they prefer to learn with and from other farmers.

FeedSmart, a Meat & Wool New Zealand and Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) funded research program, was charged with identifying the most effective learning approaches to use to assist farmers across New Zealand to learn to feed plan more effectively. Initial research directed the development of a series of five different face-to-face workshop styles for delivery to a range of targeted audiences. During the course of this study to identify farmer learning needs and preferences with regards to feed planning, e-learning was identified as a possible delivery mechanism that that farmers might be interested in using and therefore worthy of further investigation.

This finding led to exploration of possible e-learning delivery modes that would cater for the farmers' identified learning preferences for small-group, social, interactive and hands-on learning that is related directly to the farmers' levels of knowledge and expertise, interests and their own farming systems and local context. To this end, video conferencing was identified as a technology that had the potential to deliver the type of social learning program the farmers reported they preferred. At the time of this work (2006), the New Zealand Ministry of Education was promoting and co-funding the installation of video-conferencing facilities into many of our high schools, and in particular into rural high schools. This assistance came with the proviso that, whilst the facilities were primarily for classroom teaching and learning, the facilities were also to be made available to interested community groups. The research team made an application and were successful in gaining agreement from the Ministry of Education to approach schools to request permission to use their video-conferencing facilities throughout the country.

To prepare for using video conferencing as a learning delivery mode for farmer groups, Margaret Brown, the leader of the FeedSmart project, spent time at North Dakota State University (USA) learning about and being part of interactive video-conferencing farmer learning sessions. Thus, the stage was set for the design and delivery of the FeedSmart e-learning trials.

The FeedSmart e-learning trials

The purpose of the FeedSmart e-learning trials was threefold. We wished to:

- investigate the viability and feasibility of using e-learning as a learning approach for members of the agricultural community
- investigate whether it was possible to translate an interactive, participatory, face-to-face workshop format into a distance format based on video conferencing supported by other technologies, and

- investigate the use of different technologies to support and enrich the video-conferencing learning sessions.

It should be noted that these trials were conceived of as a scoping, exploratory study to investigate whether carrying out a larger, more robust study was warranted. To this end, we planned only one trial originally, evaluated that, explored technological difficulties and then planned the next trial with the lessons learnt. To date we have carried out three FeedSmart e-learning trials. Each trial has consisted of groups of eight to ten farmers travelling to their local high school for three or four 2-hour sessions, held at approximately three-week intervals. The farmer groups using the VC equipment in the schools have been connected to a feed planning specialist at another location.

According to Garrison and Anderson (2003), e-learning should always be directed by well-defined pedagogy that gives direction to the technology rather than the other way around. To this end, we took the content and design of the face-to-face FeedSmart workshops, which had been carefully designed on adult learning principles, and adapted these structures and activities into a series of interactive discussions and hands-on tasks. The farmers played a large role in deciding the direction, content, form and pace of their learning. Because of the trial nature of this project, a parallel program of summative and formative review was built into the program.

Trial findings and discussion

The trial findings and discussion are presented in the following five sections:

1. Design of interactive video-conferencing sessions
2. Farmer participation, enjoyment and learning
3. Use of video-conferencing technology and supporting technologies
4. Presenter challenges

5. Value and feasibility of the video-conferencing-based delivery approach.

1 Design of interactive video-conferencing sessions

As stated above, the video-conferencing sessions were based on the format and content of the face-to-face FeedSmart workshops, which were founded on identified learner readiness, recognition of learner prior knowledge, expertise, farming context and system, and farmer interests (Knowles, Horton & Swanson, 2005). The workshops had also been carefully constructed to provide a balance of information presentation, discussion and hands-on tasks (Ota, DiCarlo, Burts, Laird & Gioe, 2006). The challenge for the program designers was to translate these activities into a design suitable for the distance video-conferencing environment. At the video-conferencing sessions, this was achieved through the use of PowerPoint presentations, whiteboards, breakout discussions and use of the document camera.

As with the face-to-face workshops, we found it necessary to vary the presentation of information sessions with discussion sessions to maintain high levels of involvement and engagement. We found that two forms of discussion worked well. The first form involved the facilitator, at another location, being either an active member of the discussion or just an observer of the discussion that was self-led by the farmer group. We also found that giving the farmer group a discussion activity that they had to self-lead while the facilitator was totally turned off and not contactable for 10–20 minutes worked particularly well.

We used the document camera to recreate the workshop interactive activities such as sorting grass matter that had been brought in by the farmers. The hands-on tasks, which at the face-to-face workshops had been carried out in a nearby paddock, were recreated by having the farmers carry out tasks between sessions. This involved taking photos and videos of themselves carrying out prescribed tasks on their farms (e.g. taking pasture measurements and samples). These photos and videos were brought into the next video-conferencing session and streamed back to the facilitator for comment and discussion.

It had been our intention to introduce the farmer groups to the use of Moodle (an electronic data storage and communication tool) as a way to share and store information, but to date we have not done this in any of the trials. This is because the facilitator has struggled with the IT challenges and felt that he was not ready for an additional challenge. It is still our intention to assess the readiness of both the presenter and the farmers to use this learning support technology in our next trials.

We are also now looking at the possibility of offering farmer groups the option of using webinars in between video-conferencing sessions. We envisage farmers, either individually or in twos or threes, connecting to the webinars from their home computers. Use of webinars will both reduce farmer time off farm and also further enhance the blended type of learning approach we are seeking.

2 Farmer participation, enjoyment and learning

The farmers entered the project with a high level of excitement and interest in both the FeedSmart content and the use of the technologies. This high level of interest could be attributable to the novel nature of this trial and the fact that these farmers were the first to be involved in a trial of this nature in New Zealand. This excitement and interest translated into a sustained high level of participation and interaction over the length of the trial. The farmers reported that this level of participation and interest was created and sustained primarily through the small size of the group (8), which enabled them to contribute, ask the questions they wanted answers for, and set the direction of the sessions to cover the topics they each wanted to know more about. The farmers also reported that having the course content tailored to their own needs, expertise, context and issues greatly enhanced their learning level and enjoyment of the course. They also stated that the shorter, repeated sessions (the face-to-face workshops had been one-off events of 3.5 hours) had allowed them to reflect more on their learning, try suggested actions and then to come back and discuss and share their findings and/or queries, which the usual one-off workshop does not allow. The farmers said they particularly enjoyed the interaction with the presenter, even though he felt at times he was not engaging particularly well with them. The farmers also reported that the homework tasks, like the pasture measurement and analysis exercises with the video cameras in between the video-conferencing sessions, kept up and added to the interest of the program without being onerous. All of the farmers reported that they would like to be part of another e-learning course of this nature so that they could try other new technologies.

3 Use of technologies

The use of the video-conferencing system presented us with a number of challenges, namely problems with passwords, compatibility and connections between the Ministry of Education and AgResearch's video-conferencing systems, and access to HELP facilities outside of the Ministry of Education's work hours. These difficulties showed us that, while we had hoped that it might be possible to build up farmer and eventually farming community capacity to use the video-conferencing equipment and support technologies like document cameras, it appears that at least for the first trials, if not all trials, it is going to be necessary to have IT expertise on hand at each site. This is necessary not only to train the farmers in use of the equipment but also to attend to such things as connection difficulties and sight and sound problems as they arise.

4 Presenter challenges

The FeedSmart scientist presenter/facilitator was a very experienced and highly regarded presenter of face-to-face workshops, having presented a large number of the FeedSmart face-to-face workshops.

However, he experienced a number of challenges with this new style of delivery. In particular, he felt that, as he could not read the body language of his ‘class’, he was not able to engage and interact with them fully. As noted above, the farmers did not feel this way about the interaction he had had with them. The presenter also felt hampered by not being able to move around as much as he would have in a face-to-face workshop. These challenges highlighted the point that e-learning via video conferencing requires a different presenter approach which is based on more frequent direct questioning and individual and group tasks than is necessary in a face-to-face environment to maintain interest and engagement. It appears that input from the presenter needs to be interspersed with frequent group questioning, responses and interactions approximately every five to ten minutes to maintain full audience engagement throughout a one-and-a-half hour session.

The trials also showed that, to enable the presenter to move freely from the computer to document camera to whiteboard or smartboard, it is preferable to have a technician present who can train the video-conferencing camera on the presenter and so free them up to move unhindered and more naturally between the pieces of equipment. These trials also illustrated the importance of presenter training even if the presenters are already very experienced face-to-face presenters. While the FeedSmart presenter received this training from the Ministry of Education, AgResearch is looking to train more video-conferencing presenters who in turn will be able to build industry personnel capacity if e-learning based on video conferencing becomes a widely used learning approach for members of the agricultural community.

5 Value and feasibility of the video-conferencing-based delivery approach

The results of the formative and summative evaluation of the trials showed that all members of the farmer groups found the trials interesting and of high value as they had increased their knowledge of feed planning and, in particular, gained answers to their own feed planning issues. As one farmer said, ‘I have learnt more about feed planning from this than any of the other things I have been to.’ Another farmer commented: ‘The best part has been getting Tom to answer my questions about my place … not just general stuff, my place.’

All farmers reported that they would like to be involved in further learning events that are based on the use of these e-learning technologies. They also reported that the event had been made more valuable to them because we had listened to, and delivered on, all their identified preferences for small groups, travel distance, length of session, and flexibility around days and times of sessions.

Despite the challenges the presenter experienced, he still sees value in the video-conference-based delivery approach. He has made the point that it is important that we commence training other presenters in this style of delivery if we wish to grow this form of technology transfer as it is not easy to move straight from being a face-to-face workshop presenter to presenting via video conferencing.

With regards to the feasibility of this delivery approach from a commercial point of view, we need to investigate the full cost of this approach to both the farmer and the service provider. We also need to look at ongoing access to the Ministry of Education’s video-conferencing facilities and the schools that own these and we also need to investigate the ongoing cost of this service. While this approach is going to be feasible for farmers who live within thirty to forty minutes of schools with video-conferencing equipment, it is not going to reach farmers who live in more remote areas. However, it is possible that in the future, with better internet connections, webcams and technologies like SKYPE and webinars, it might be feasible to translate the video-conferencing sessions into interconnected, blended SKYPE/webinar sessions for the remote farmers.

Conclusions

For the farmer participants and from our position as designers and deliverers of the total FeedSmart learning package, these trials have been both successful and valuable as they have identified several important findings about the design and delivery of e-learning programs. Firstly, they have demonstrated that it is possible to design and deliver e-learning programs that truly reflect the adult learning principles of student-centred, participatory, interactive, small-group learning based on goals and expectations that are both important to and set by the learners. Secondly, they have demonstrated that it is possible to translate the hands-on content of face-to-face workshops into distance formats using such technologies as document cameras, video cameras and digital cameras. We also see potential to enrich future e-learning programs with the use of other technologies such as smartboards, webinars and computer-based course management systems (e.g. Moodle) to handle course information and facilitate participant engagement and interaction between sessions.

These three trials have also demonstrated that e-learning based on video conferencing supported by other technologies such as document cameras and flip-videos can successfully deliver an interactive learning program that caters directly for farmer learning style preferences and farmers' need for learning to be social and tailored to their own interests, experience, context, and farming systems and issues.

To continue our research about the use of video-based learning supported by other technologies, it is our intention to build on the findings of these trials. We are in the process of planning a fourth trial, which will involve connecting two groups of farmers with the presenter to facilitate three-way sharing and generation of new information. We are also planning a fifth trial, which will involve joining two or three groups of women farmers together with one or two presenters.

Throughout further trials we intend to look for ways to enhance and build community IT capacity within the groups we work with. It is our aim to leave each group with a set of skills that will allow them not only to engage in future e-learning opportunities to build up their farming knowledge, but hopefully will add to the set of IT skills they use in other aspects of their lives and businesses. Building on what we have learnt and the success of the three FeedSmart trials, we have commenced using this video-conferencing-based learning approach with other groups of farmers who are learning about climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

In conclusion, the findings of these three trials have demonstrated that e-learning based on video conferencing and the use of supporting technologies appears to be a viable alternative to face-to-face workshops for generating and sharing information within the New Zealand agricultural community and it may in time woo some farmers back into learning programs.

Acknowledgements

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Arnold Hely and Australian adult education

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Arnold Hely (1907–1967) was a most significant figure in the history of adult education in New Zealand, in Australia and internationally. Arnold Hely, a New Zealander, Director of Tutorial Classes (later Adult Education) at the University of Adelaide from 1957 to 1965, was the prime mover in the establishment in 1964 of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and was, until his most untimely death in 1967, its General Secretary. He previously had played, as an impartial newcomer/outsider, a leading role in the formation in 1960 of ALA (then called AAAE). In this paper I will focus on Hely's efforts to bring Australian adult education into the mainstream of world adult education. In telling Hely's story I will explore the context of Australian adult education in the 1950s and 1960s.

Introduction

At a ceremony held on 17 November 2009 three adult educators from Australia and New Zealand were inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. They were Arnold Hely, Sandra Morrison and Michael Newman. The International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame was founded in the mid 1990s to recognise leaders in the field of adult and continuing education. The inaugural induction took place in 1996. Since that date some fourteen annual 'classes' have been inducted. Today the Hall of Fame membership consists of some 180 living and some 48 deceased members. The official home of the Hall of Fame is the University of Oklahoma's Centre for Continuing Education in Norman, Oklahoma. The virtual Hall of Fame can be found at www.halloffame.outreach.ou.edu

Arnold Hely, a New Zealander, Director of Tutorial Classes (later renamed Adult Education) at the University of Adelaide, since 1957, played a leading role in the formation of ALA (then called AAAE) in 1960. Later he was the prime mover in establishing the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and was, until his most untimely death in 1967, its General Secretary. In this paper I will focus on Hely's efforts to bring Australian adult education into the mainstream of world adult education. (Please refer to Appendix A for a brief outline of Arnold Hely's life and his career in adult education.)

Some background

The 1950s was a period of some uncertainty in Australian adult education. More and more it was becoming obvious that not all stakeholders were happy with the predominant position held by the universities within the field. This position of the universities is favoured by the 'great tradition view' of adult education. Derek Whitelock presented the most complete exposition of the great tradition interpretation of the development of Australian adult education in his book, *The great tradition: A history of adult education in Australia* (1974). In his study, Whitelock strongly emphasised the continuity in the Australian context of the nineteenth-century English educational ideal that the liberally educated person, the cultured adult, was the ultimate outcome of successful adult education. Matthew Arnold, J.H. Newman and Albert Mansbridge were cited as the major intellectual influences on the development of adult education in Australia as well as in Britain. Of course, such adult education was not necessarily without important social and other purposes. However, there was a heavy insistence that the major purpose must be a liberal one and that adult education should be non-vocational and non-credit and pursued on the basis of the learner's own volition. Advocates of the great tradition point of view liked to distinguish between 'adult education', as a particular type of narrowly defined educational provision, and the 'education of adults', which was described as being merely educational activities engaged in by adults. While it has been argued (Morris, 1991) that this point of view presents an incomplete picture of the history of Australian adult education, broadly defined, it does present a reasonably accurate picture of the development of the university-delivered adult education in Australia at that time.

Australian universities and adult education in the 1950s

At the end of the 1950s, Australia had less than 10 universities—basically one per state, except for NSW, and the national university. All of these were public institutions. A number of new universities were planned or then under construction to cope with the rapidly growing population and steadily rising educational expectations. In three states (Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania) the universities no longer participated in adult education. In these states, there were now governmental authorities (boards or a council) that operated, at least initially, along the lines of the propositions advanced at the 1944 conference 'Future of Adult Education in Australia' (Duncan, 1973).

Even among those universities that were still active providers of adult education (Sydney, New England, Adelaide and Western Australia), there was little common ground in terms of basic ideas and programs.

The WEA only survived in two states (NSW and SA) and it was only with the University of Sydney that the WEA maintained its traditional form of relationship and mode of operation. The University of New England was developing a strong but non-radical community development thrust in its rural hinterland. The University of Adelaide was building a strong and pragmatic program, while maintaining many traditional features, in cooperation with a broad range of voluntary associations including the WEA. The University of Western Australia ran a most successful annual festival of the arts, which incorporated a superb summer school. The Australian National University was thinking about establishing an adult education division or department.

In 1960, the first national association—the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE)—was formed at a conference convened in Hobart. A leading player here was the Director of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide, Arnold Hely, a New Zealander who been appointed in 1957. He played a major role, as a 'newcomer' and perceived honest broker, in helping to make this happen. However, all was still not well in the world of Australian adult education. The new national association had grown out of the meetings that had been regularly held over the years between the heads of the university departments of adult education, the secretaries of the WEAs and the senior officers of governmental bodies concerned with adult education. The prolonged series of meetings held in order to decide the form of the national association and the constitution finally adopted by the AAAE reflected the mutual suspicion, the fear of direct democracy and the fondness for feud that had long characterised Australian adult education at the organisational level (Duke, 1984).

This then was the situation at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Some thoughtful observers of Australian university adult education were becoming convinced that the use of an inappropriate imported English model had retarded the development of adult education in Australia. Instead of evolving sound indigenous forms and modes of operation, organised adult education had frittered away the energies of its enthusiasts in petty jealousies between providers and on bitter personal rivalries (Alexander, 1959). However, on a more positive note, there was growing interest across the field in knowing and understanding more about the practice of adult education in nations other than the so-called white dominions of the British Commonwealth.

The formation of ASPBAE

This growing interest, indeed eagerness, among Australian adult educators to be more involved internationally culminated in the UNESCO Regional Seminar on Adult Education, held in January 1964. The leading player here again was Arnold Hely. In 1960 he had attended with Colin Badger, the Director of the Council of Adult Education in Victoria, the Second World Conference on Adult Education organised under the sponsorship of UNESCO.

In addition to the main UNESCO conference, which was held in Montreal, six other international meetings concerned with the education of adults were held—including the Sagamore conference, which focussed on university adult education. Hely also attended this meeting—the other invited Australian delegate, J.L.J. Wilson of the University of Sydney, did not attend. During the Montreal conference, Hely convened a meeting of delegates who lived in Asia and the Pacific. This meeting included representatives of the most and least populous nations in the world. The idea of forging closer links among the adult educators of the region had been strongly raised in the Australian context at the national adult education meeting held in Adelaide not long before Hely had left for Canada.

The International Conference on University Adult Education (to give it its correct title) was held at Syracuse University's idyllic woodland Conference Centre, Sagamore Lodge, 3–8 September 1960. Here, Hely took a prominent role. He presented a very well-received paper on remedial and fundamental adult education and the university. He became a member of the ongoing committee, which went on to found the International Congress on University Adult Education (ICUAE). He made some important and influential friends, including Dr Alexander N. Charters, Dean of the University College and Vice President for Continuing Education at Syracuse University and a prominent US supporter of UNESCO.

Hely used his involvement with ICUAE and other international bodies, such as the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) and eventually his membership of the UNESCO International Committee for the Advancement of Adult Education (from 1963), as well as his network of international contacts to press the claim for an Australian organised regional Asia-Pacific seminar on adult education. The task was a very difficult one. The region had very many poor nations. Eventually Hely was able to gain the necessary approvals and put together a funding package for the seminar, which was held from 18 January to 1 February 1964 at the Women's College, University of Sydney. The theme of the seminar was a dual one: 'The role of schools and universities in adult education'.

According to John Lowe (1966), Director of Extra Mural Studies at the University of Singapore, who participated in the seminar, if the aim of the seminar was to interest Australian adult educators in Asia, then it was successful. However, on other fronts it was less than successful. There were no communist or pro-communist nations present. Neither were the leading neutralist nations—Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos—present. Indeed, according to Lowe, the spread of nations represented was a little bizarre—Southeast Asia, plus Japan, Hong Kong and India, plus some US Pacific territories, plus Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, the splitting of the seminar into two parallel commissions—one to focus on the role of schools and the other on the role of universities—while understandable, was unnatural and unhelpful. There was a domination of the proceedings by the English-speaking 'experts', among whom there appeared to be little real understanding of the region's needs and potentialities. However, Lowe thought that the product of the universities component of the seminar was very sound and quite useful because it provided a general statement on how universities should participate in adult education and was not specifically tied to the Asian region.

The most lasting and important outcome of the seminar was the formation of a regional adult education organisation—the second oldest such regional organisation in the world after the European Bureau of Adult Education, which has since been renamed the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). The founding meeting of this Asia-Pacific regional adult education organisation was held on 30 January 1964. This meeting adopted three resolutions:

- The first had to do with what were to be the activities of the proposed body.
- The second named the organisation the South-East Asian and Australasian Bureau of Adult Education.
- The third appointed a small interim executive committee of seven members: Ang Gee Bah (Malaysia), Siva Dutta (India), Robert Gibson (South Pacific), Arnold Hely (Australia), Leuan Hughes (Hong Kong), U Kyaw Khin (Burma) and Artemio Vizconde (Philippines).

The interim committee met on 31 January and prepared three recommendations to go back to the full meeting:

- fixing the annual membership fee at 5/- (i.e. 50 cents)
- suggesting two additional members for the executive committee (representing Japan and Indonesia respectively)
- proposing that the name of the organisation should be the Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE).

The founding meeting was reconvened on 1 February 1964 and adopted the recommendations prepared by the interim executive committee, and the 33 foundation members of ASPBAE were enrolled.

ASPBAE: the early years

Shiva Dutta of India was the first President and Arnold Hely was the first Secretary of ASPBAE. Hely was assisted in carrying out his role in maintaining the ASPBAE secretariat by Dulcie Stretton, another significant adult educator of the time who played leading roles in the CAE, the AAAE and international adult education. The first decade and a half of the organisation's life was most difficult and it barely survived Arnold Hely's death in 1967. There were no real funds and only very limited regional activities were possible, usually in conjunction with, and as an add-on to, an activity organised and funded by some other body. In 1972, the then new Director of Continuing Education at the Australian National University (ANU), Dr Chris Duke, became the Secretary of ASPBAE. He was assisted by Dr Joan Allsop of the University of Sydney, who edited the bureau's newsletter (the *ASPBAE Courier*). Joan Allsop is another significant figure in the story of Australian adult education: she is generally regarded as the first Australian to gain a doctoral qualification in the field of adult education.

In 1977 Chris Duke (2003) attended a meeting of adult educators in Teheran. Here he held extensive discussions with Bernd Pflug of the DVV (the German Adult Education Association). The DVV was an important part of the process of postwar civic and socio-educational reconstruction in Germany. While its main emphasis was on adult education at home it had a strong international cooperation and aid arm—the IIZ (the Institute for International Cooperation). Helmuth Dolff, Secretary-General of the DVV, had been one of the invited international experts at the 1964 seminar in Sydney. From 1978 the IIZ/DVV provided support for the work of ASPBAE, largely by means of the medium-term commitment of core funding. Almost simultaneously things also began to move on the organisational front.

In 1976, ASPBAE had been represented at the first ICAE (International Council of Adult Education) World Assembly in Dar es Salaam. The Canadian adult educator Roby Kidd, following the Third UNESCO International Adult Education Conference held in Tokyo in 1972, had formed the ICAE in 1973. Early on, it had been decided that the ICAE, whose members were national adult education associations, should recognise and would work with and through the regional adult education bodies such as ASPBAE and the other bureaux: the European, the African, the Caribbean, the South American and the Arab. So now ASPBAE was on much firmer ground both organisationally and financially. Duke continued in the role of Secretary until 1985 when he left ANU to accept a senior position at the University of Warwick in the UK. With the assistance of the DVV, ASPBAE continued throughout the 1980s and 90s and into the new century its steady and solid growth.

ASPBAE today

In 2004, ASPBAE celebrated its fortieth birthday with a revised/updated constitution, a general assembly conducted electronically, and a festival of learning held in Indonesia. In 2003, ASPBAE and the IIZ/DVV marked 25 years of cooperation with a most successful seminar hosted by the CAEA (the Chinese Adult Education Association) in Beijing on the theme of international cooperation for adult education. In 2007, to reflect its concern with fundamental or basic education, ASPBAE changed its name to the Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education but kept the same acronym ASPBAE. Currently, ASPBAE has some 200 member organisations in 40 countries. As well as being the second oldest, it is by far the largest (including as it does both China and India among its members) of the regional bureaux of adult education. However, its membership also includes some of the world's smallest and poorest nations. It operates with a small but highly effective secretariat located in India and a small number of regionally based staff, all under the direction of the Secretary-General, Maria Lourdes Almazan-Khan. ASPBAE is governed by its General Assembly, which meets normally once each four years. In between General Assemblies the organisation is governed by the Executive Council and led by an elected President. There are four sub-regional groupings within the region: South Asia, East Asia, South-East Asia and our own, the South Pacific.

Conclusion

Today we can look back on the history of ASPBAE and reflect upon its origins in an Australia, and a world, much different from our world today. ASPBAE's steady and solid development has not been easily achieved. Indeed, at many points in the course of its life, the end seemed imminent. But it did survive, largely through the very practical assistance provided by the IIZ/DVV, but also through the efforts of those adult educators of the region, like Arnold Hely, who believed that adult education and learning had the potential to build a better world across the boundaries of ethnic, cultural and political diversity.

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Appendix

Arnold (A.S.M.) Hely, BComm, MA (1907–67)

1907	Born Birkenhead, England, 17 November
1918	Family migrated to New Zealand, father a sea captain
1920s	Left school and became a seaman
1930	Married Madeleine Chaillet
1931	As an out-of-work (because of the Great Depression) seaman, he began to take WEA classes in Auckland
1932	WEA Scholar, Auckland University College, Bachelor of Commerce (later completed BA and then MA)

1937	WEA Auckland City Organiser with specific responsibility for building trade union affiliations and working-class participation (a one-year special appointment)
1938	Tutor-Organiser for Adult Education WEA, Wellington District (later Senior Tutor-Organiser) until 1947 (broken by military service 1943–45)
1947	Director, Department of Adult Education, Victoria University Wellington
1957	Director, Department of Tutorial Classes, University of Adelaide, South Australia. As an 'outsider/newcomer' played the leading role in forming the AAAE, overcoming deep divisions that had prevented the formation of a national inclusive adult education association in Australia
1960	Represented Australia at the Second UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education in Montreal, Canada and later at the founding meeting of the International Congress of University Adult Education in Syracuse, USA
1963	Became a member of the UNESCO International Committee for the Advancement of Adult Education
1964	Leading participant in the UNESCO Regional Seminar, Sydney, on the 'Role of Universities and Schools in Adult Education', which he had been principally responsible for organising. A founding member (indeed the founder and Secretary until his death) of ASPBAE
1965	Returned to New Zealand as Secretary of the National Council of Adult Education
1967	Died 17 December in Wellington aged 60

Source: Arnold Hely memorial issue of *Adult Education*, 12(4), 1968.

About the author

Dr Roger K. Morris *was, until he retired in 2005, an Associate Professor at UTS, where he taught in the area of historical and social foundations of adult education. From 1987 until 2008 he was a member of the Board of AAAE and AAACE and was Adult Learning Australia's President from 1997–1999, and for most of the balance of his time on the board he was its secretary. He was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame at a ceremony held in September 2006 at the University of Bamberg, Germany. On Australia Day 2008 Roger was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to adult, continuing and community education.*

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Art, disability, learning and the dance of my life

Faith Thorley
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I use my passion and skills as an artist to deal with my various disabilities resulting from brain tumour surgery. The 'artvantages' of this approach have been many: improved self-esteem and a greater sense of wellbeing, to name just two. On reflection and after revisiting the experiences of my healing journey, I now know when this journey began. Today I've come to recognise its beginning as the onset of my personal transformation. My aim in this paper is to explain how I believe my personal transformation happened after my brain tumour surgery and to describe the transformative learning process that followed.

I will support these explanations with valuable insights that I've gained from research in adult education and my involvement with others with disabilities. Next, I will introduce my interpretation of a phenomenon that I call 'arts-based resistance learning'. This has been a major phase in my personal transformative journey and the subject of my current PhD inquiry. I am strongly committed to

my research inquiry because it is uncovering new ways of using art to enhance life, which gives me hope, and may inspire and so assist other like afflicted people, health professionals and concerned individuals.

My name is Faith Thorley and I am an Adelaide-born artist and art therapist with an acquired brain injury. The injury followed brain tumour surgery in 1990. I am also a student doing my PhD in Education at the University of South Australia.

My painting *The dancing irises*, reproduced here, is the inspiration for the title of this paper. I created *The dancing irises* in 1992, and now see it as an important illustration of the subject of my PhD inquiry: ‘art-based resistance learning in rehabilitation’. Later in this paper I will explain how I believe this work has contributed to my rehabilitation.

This will not be just another ‘survival’ story. Indeed, research for my Masters back in 2000 has made me well aware of the growing genre of stories about survival. All forms of the media continue to bring us such stories, for example, the incredible saga recently of the miners in Chile, yet another example of triumph over adversity, where the human spirit seems to soar! Please do not misunderstand me. I too, am inspired by stories of survival and, because of my own journey, can empathise with the individuals concerned. I can truly appreciate the cathartic value that comes with the retelling of one’s story again and again. I very much admire demonstrations of perseverance and courage. However, my motivation to write this paper and undertake my PhD research goes beyond just retelling my story for my personal therapy. My motivation for retelling and analysing my story is threefold, with each reason being interconnected with the others.

Simply put, the reasons are:

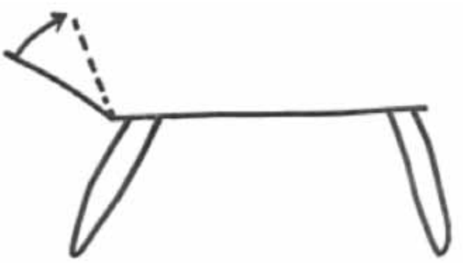
1. because I *want* to
2. because, I am *able* to do so and
3. because, I *can*.

Firstly, I *want* to retell my story to inform others and so hopefully assist people with disabilities, and their carers, health professionals, educators and concerned individuals, with the knowledge and strategies that have helped me to recover and renew my life after brain surgery. The ways that I have been doing this, in addition to my PhD thesis, include being a mentor with the Brain Injury Network of SA's (BINSA) 'Reconnect and Transition' program for recent brain injury survivors, and conducting 'art for embracing change' workshops with various community groups.

Up to now, I've identified three explanations for my altruism in spite of being an individual recovering from a major illness. They are:

1. My experiences in intensive care after my surgery triggered off what Mezirow (1990) has described as a transformative learning process. For me, the process led from a vocation in education to one where I could use my art making as therapy for myself and at the same time assist and perhaps inspire others undergoing rehabilitation. I made a drawing of a barouche while in intensive care. I used it to 'ask' for my bed head to be adjusted and so alleviate my neck's discomfort after brain surgery. I believe this drawing, which drew a response from a nursing staff member to help me and adjust my barouche, was the trigger for my 'transformative learning'.
2. My altruism is another expression of my spiritual vocation.
3. As Arthur Frank described in his book *The wounded storyteller*, I am a storyteller on a 'narrative quest' (1995: 115). That is, I am an ill person with 'the belief that something is to be gained through the experience' of the illness and one

> ‘who accept[s] illness and seek[s] to *use* it’. According to Frank, others are tellers of the ‘chaos narrative’; ‘the sufferers’ own story’; the ‘restitution narrative’; and stories ‘about the triumph of medicine’.



Faith Thorley’s drawing of a barouche while in the Royal Adelaide Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit, post brain surgery in 1990

My second reason to retell my story is because I am now *physically able* to do so. As mentioned earlier, my acquired brain injury followed brain tumour surgery. My tumour was an epidermoid or *pearly* tumour, sited at the brain stem and had been slowly growing from birth to the size of a large orange. Because it was at the brain stem, its removal resulted in mostly motor-related disabilities such as impaired hearing and tinnitus, a paralysed vocal cord, facial palsies, impaired coordination and balance, and ongoing fatigue. Fortunately, over the years I have been able to manage many of these physiological disabilities with various therapies, technological aids and a large serve of perseverance. The psychological disabilities that resulted from the surgery have responded to a different set of strategies. More about them later.

My academic background is in education, the arts and science and because of the motor-related nature of my disabilities, I believe, the body of knowledge that I have amassed over the years has remained intact. Successful completion of an autobiographical Masters in Education in 2006 was reassuring confirmation of this, and encourages me now towards achieving any future goals that I might set.

Thirdly, I am motivated to retell my story because I *can* now and I have the opportunity to use the vehicles of my PhD and my ongoing art making to promote my research findings. The aim of my PhD research is to delve more deeply and to describe the transformative learning process that has occurred during my rehabilitation. In particular, I am striving to create new knowledge by identifying the ways that I have used my art making to resist and overcome the oppression that I have experienced throughout my rehabilitation.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe my personal transformation and subsequent transformative learning began with the drawing of the barouche. Thereafter, art making became my vehicle of communication and connection with the outer world. I called art my 'saving grace'! On reflection, assisted by my colleagues and friends and informed by my research, I now recognise that it has been my art making that has enabled me to resist the oppression that I have experienced since my brain surgery. The oppression I have felt relates to my physical disabilities—impaired hearing and tinnitus, poor voice quality, fatigue and so on—and the psychological disabilities that have 'danced' along with them, such as low self-esteem, sense of social exclusion and sense of invisibility.

Interestingly, my supervisor Dr Peter Willis sowed the seed of 'resistance learning' when I first began my PhD. He did this when he cited a conversation between Bishop Desmond Tutu and UniSA Professor Emeritus Basil More about oppression. Bishop Tutu's response was 'we are not oppressed; we are resistant!' At the time, I did not relate to this story. I was telling myself 'I'm not feeling oppressed!' And like Desmond Tutu I had been resisting—with my art making!

Since starting my PhD research, my literature review has revealed very little about the topic of 'resistance' except with matters electrical, medical or related to the performance of dance. There has been some work in human resources management and in psychotherapy, mostly acknowledging its existence and noting its effects in various situations. Within the field of education there is Piaget's related work and more recently Mike Newman with his book *Teaching defiance* (2006).

Accordingly, noting an opportunity to make a contribution to adult education and the community at large, I am aiming with my research to propose an alternate view of 'resistance'. This view has helped me and might be of help to others undergoing rehabilitation. My proposal is an 'art-based resistance learning' process, whereby experiences that are oppressive and occur during rehabilitation are identified and resisted. My contention, informed by my lived experience, is that 'art-based resistance learning' occurs when these oppressive experiences are resisted and then positively transformed using visual art media.

Further to this, I believe my 'art-based resistance learning' occurs during the making of my artwork and then continues as the art is revisited. The healing and benefits of this kind of learning, I suggest, have a 'ripple effect' as other individuals interact with me and my artwork.

Finally, I'll return to my painting *The dancing irises* to explain how I believe 'art-based resistance learning' has occurred for me in this work. My creation of this painting began in 1992 at the Ruth Tuck Art School in an eastern suburb of Adelaide. It was a still-life study of a bunch of freshly picked, delicate and fragile purple-blue irises. As I sketched them on the thick watercolour paper, I found myself interacting with their images, as I do when creating cartoons. My experience of the irises was of them as lively, animated, 'dancing' beings—strutting, posturing and connecting with each other and me with wispy finger-like tendrils. The choice of their bright colours and of the radiant yellow background seemed appropriate at the time to reflect their strong, dynamic personas.

On revisiting this work, with the new knowledge that I am amassing, I now see this painting very differently. According to Winnicott, in his book *Playing and reality* (1971), a child uses his teddy bear as a 'transitional object' and so exerts control over his outer world. I contend that I too was taking control of my outer world, at this early stage in my recovery, by creating art images that were paradoxical, that is, I was creating transformed images of the irises, living through them and imbibing myself with their newly acquired strength and vitality. In hindsight I believe this was one early example of 'art-based resistance learning' where I used an 'art of paradox' to bring about learning. I have since discovered other strategies to achieve this form of learning.

To conclude, I would like to share an acronym that I have just designed that identifies the stages that I go through in my process of 'art-based resistance learning': NECTAR (food of the gods/*nectar protector*).

N—name it (identify the experience or disability that is oppressive, e.g. feeling of fatigue, low self-esteem)

E—explain it (how the oppression affects you)

C—create it (create an image or representation of what the oppression 'looks' like to you)

T—tame it, transform it (tame and transform the image or symbol into a form that is positive and life enhancing)

A—action it (act out the new you portrayed in your artwork)

R—revisit it (revisit your artwork often and revel in the new experience that you have created for yourself)

'Art-based resistance learning' experiences, I believe, have enabled me to rebuild my self-esteem and independence, which are steps towards renewing my life. The knowledge that has led to this insight has been gained in the dance of my life—a dance of art, disability and learning. I now wish via my PhD and art to help others learn the steps and be enlivened by their new dance!

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Looking forward: Community Gateways at Victoria University

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The mission and values of Victoria University provide the underlying criteria for the development and implementation of the Community Gateways initiative, which aims to transform the lives of those living in the west of Melbourne through the power of further education. Community Gateways takes the university into the community by providing career education and counselling, skills recognition, recognition of prior learning, workshops and short training opportunities to engage the community 'on their own turf', and to support their access and success through career-aligned course choice.

To be truly effective in the community, Community Gateways has utilised a cooperative approach to engage with over forty community organisations, including community centres, neighbourhood houses, local councils, youth centres, libraries, and ACE and ACFE providers. A resurgence of interest in values *associated with community, social cohesion and cultural diversity has provided the platform for these relationships to develop.*

Community Gateways strengthens access to learning and employment in the region for many people who currently are unsure of how to access education and training opportunities. Through the provision of complimentary, professional careers counselling, community members are encouraged to consider their career options as the basis for making appropriate training or further study decisions. In this paper I will explore the development of the program and share the learning and achievements to date.

Introduction

The mission of Victoria University is to transform lives through the power of further education, vocational and higher education, and research. We work collaboratively to develop the capabilities of individuals, enterprises and communities within the western Melbourne region and beyond to build sustainable futures for ourselves and our stakeholders.

Victoria University is a multi-sector university with integrated further education, vocational education and higher education (through course work and research) and is located in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne. With eleven campuses, four of which are in the central business district of Melbourne with seven located across the western metropolitan area from Newport in the south to Melton in the North West, Victoria University is well placed to provide tertiary education in the region.

Victoria University has both a global and local presence and remains committed to providing education to the western region of Melbourne, with half of its students residing in the region. The multi-sector nature of the university provides advantages in course design and delivery and study pathways that provide unique opportunities for cross-sectoral development and delivery.

The western suburbs of Melbourne are being reshaped by rapid growth, gentrification and housing development. The local economy and labour markets have been influenced by the departure of its former manufacturing strengths and the development of new industries such as transport and logistics. As with all areas that experience periods of rapid growth there is a mismatch in the region between the demand for and the supply of services, facilities and amenities.

Victoria University's Community Gateways

Victoria University's Community Gateways was proposed as a collaborative initiative. The strategy is part of VU's mission to reinvent and enhance VU's delivery of education in the western region and to create partnerships with an alliance of local interests to 'build the west together'. VU also regards the Community Gateways initiative as an opportunity to complement the state government's 'whole-of-government' initiative by working with government departments and local communities to achieve a seamless approach to educational delivery.

The population of western Melbourne is characterised by high numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and low socioeconomic status (SES) people. VU Community Gateways focuses on programs and services to attract and engage non-traditional university entrants, many of whom are young and disengaged, mature aged and/or recent arrivals to Australia.

Community Gateways strengthens access to learning and employment in the region for many people who currently are unsure of how to access education and training opportunities, by taking the university out into the community space. A range of services are provided, including careers counselling, assistance with recognition of prior learning and skills recognition, as well as programs that will enable the community to experience education in a setting close to their homes, in partnership with other community providers and businesses. Through engaging with the community 'on their own turf' with learning and service provision, Community Gateways supports individuals' engagement with education and training in their local setting, and provides support for their access and success through career-aligned course choice.

To be truly effective in the community, the Community Gateways initiative has utilised a community development and capacity-building approach to engage with over forty community organisations, including community centres, neighbourhood houses, local councils, youth centres, libraries, and ACE and ACFE providers. While each local government area in the west and north-west of metropolitan Melbourne has been engaged with Community Gateways, further development will occur in 2011 to ensure all ACE and ACFE providers have had the opportunity to become part of the Community Gateways initiative.

A resurgence of interest in values associated with community, social cohesion and cultural diversity has provided the platform for these relationships to develop. The goodwill developed through Community Gateways has nourished the development of partnerships that will enable the creation of pathways between the university and community providers. These partnerships enable us to work together to develop the capabilities of individuals, enterprises and communities and has generated much interest and enthusiasm with ACE and ACFE providers.

Community Gateways will provide three levels of primary services that reach further into the communities, better preparing and equipping individuals to enter education. These comprise:

1. career education through group workshops and individual professional careers counselling, advice on study pathways and course information, and referrals to appropriate education and training providers
2. recognition of prior learning, skills assessment through Skills Stores, English language and numeracy assessment, and referral to gap training courses within the community or at Victoria University
3. short courses, and general and further education programs with referral through pathways to VU and other partner providers.

Community Gateways is collaborating with local communities utilising three models for delivery as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Community Gateways delivery models

The Portable The portable booths can be set up in shopping centre malls or other community spaces, and are equipped with electronic and other resources. They provide professional career counselling for individuals.	Talk to us now

The MGV—Mobile Gateway Vehicle

Mobile access is provided through a state-of-the-art classroom housed in a ten-metre-long truck, the Mobile Gateway Vehicle, referred to as the MGV. It can be used as a flexible delivery space, and it is equipped with computers and lecture chairs or tables. The wheelchair lift ensures access by all to a range of delivery options that can occur within the community space.

In Situ—VUHQ

Located on Flinders Street in Melbourne's CBD, the in situ Community Gateway is spacious and modern and has been developed in the VUHQ space shared with Student Services and VU International.

Evaluating the effectiveness of Community Gateways

The use of online systems has enabled Community Gateways to record data on all interactions with individuals and community organisations from the implementation of the program. Early indicators provide evidence of the success of Community Gateways, with over 800 career counselling sessions conducted with individuals in our community through one of the flexible delivery models described above. Currently there are 40 active and developing relationships with community organisations, adult community and further education providers and government agencies, and confirmed activity schedules to the end of January 2011.

An evaluation strategy was developed at the commencement of the Community Gateways program, and achievements against the key performance indicators were reported to the university community in September 2010. This has measured the effectiveness of the Community Gateways program during the initial year of operation against its objectives, which include:

- improve access of community members from the western and north-western region to information that can assist their decisions on future career, education and training needs
- provide workshops and short courses through the mobile or in situ gateways
- provide public spaces that are recognised as being open and inviting and offer high quality career counselling opportunities
- build active engagement with selected networks of adult community and further education providers and government agencies
- develop partnership schedules with a select number of enterprise/business stakeholders, and
- develop an effective and efficient service model that provides sufficient return on investment to VU.

A range of qualitative and quantitative measures are used to ensure the continued effectiveness of Community Gateways, including qualitative surveys to assess the satisfaction of career counselling clients. Follow-up online surveys are used to determine successful outcomes of these interactions, or the requirement for further support.

Table 2: Evidence of community connection to Community Gateways as at 1 July 2010

Counselling appointments	730
Enrolments to semester 2, 2010 (annual KPI for 2010: 10%)	88 or 12%
Career education workshops conducted	22
Community centre staff workshops	6
Community organisations working with Community Gateways	45
Identified opportunities for faculty use of MGV	23

Currently over 800 individuals have received a minimum of one hour of professional careers counselling, some with more than one session where it has been required. To ensure future provision, career education workshops are offered with client groups at individual community centres to enable participants to commence the career education journey prior to their individual career counselling appointment. This approach has been well received by the individuals and the community centre staff, who have indicated a desire to develop their own skills to a level where they can support this initial stage in career education. This valuable work is attributed to the passion and community spirit of the small but dedicated Community Gateways team.

Victoria University College is now planning a professional development opportunity for community centre staff early in 2011 in collaboration with the regional ACFE network and the community providers. This will enable the community centre staff to have the knowledge, skills, delivery plan and exercises to be able to provide the career education workshops themselves, and offer a 'triage' role prior to the professional career counselling sessions undertaken at their centres.

Community collaboration

Through the provision of Community Gateways services in community settings, strong collaboration is developing with particular community and business organisations. The GPT Group, which provide centre management for the Highpoint Shopping Centre, have been a partner of the Community Gateways program since its inception. The GPT Group provided six weeks of prime retail space within the malls of the shopping centre, enabling the Community Gateways program to reach many clients in the western region, and to provide over one hundred career counselling sessions per week. In conjunction with the Business Enterprise and Small Business Management staff in the Faculty of Workforce Development, business breakfasts and other workshops will be conducted for store holders and staff within the Highpoint Shopping Centre. Negotiations are currently underway that will hopefully bring a new and innovative approach to the provision of Community Gateways in early 2011.

A partnership with Westpac through the Western Region Managers' Network has provided opportunities for the distribution of Community Gateways information into all communities in the west through the branch network. In addition, Westpac has offered financial sponsorship for the program and support for the delivery of financial literacy programs through the flexible delivery approach provided by the Mobile Gateway Vehicle.

The services offered by Community Gateways have provided the foundation for collaboration with adult community and further education (ACFE) providers in the Werribee and Melton regions. Partnerships are developing which will lead to formalised pathways between the community providers and courses within the university. This is evidenced by the developing cooperative arrangements with the Werribee Community Centre and Djerriwarrh. While at an early stage, it is envisaged that pathways will be formalised providing benefit to both the university and the community provider.

The benefits of Community Gateways partnerships

Community Gateways has facilitated the development of partnerships with a range of community providers and organisations where they had not been formalised previously. As the initiative evolves beyond its early implementation phase, further relationships and partnerships with community and business organisations will develop that will be of mutual benefit to all parties involved.

Community providers are able to enhance the employment possibilities for their clients through Community Gateways professional careers counselling, providing more focused course choices for their clients, leading to successful retention, completion and focused employment opportunities. Through this process unmet demand for programs can also be identified which will be of benefit to the community provider as well as the university. Early discussions with the ACFE providers indicate that they are particularly interested in opportunities to develop pathways with the university and this will continue to develop and be formalised in 2011.

Community Gateways makes a very real and robust contribution to social inclusion, by offering opportunities and support for students who come from backgrounds of educational disadvantage and who may have had prior barriers to education, be potential early school leavers or be vulnerable to early attrition. Community Gateways will continue to contribute to the improvement of social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability of the enterprises and communities with which it works.

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NOTES FOR INTENDING CONTRIBUTORS

1 Papers are to be sent to the Editor, Professor Roger Harris, Adult and Vocational Education, School of Education, University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Boulevard, Mawson Lakes, South Australia 5095. Phone: 08 8302 6246. Fax: 08 8302 6239. Email: roger.harris@unisa.edu.au

2 Submission of an electronic copy of a contribution is preferred, with one paper copy posted, against which the electronic print-out may be checked for accurate layout.

3 The paper should not exceed 5,500 words in length. The paper (and its title) is to be clearly typed on one side only of A4 paper.

4 Authors are also to submit, *separately* from the paper:
   (a) the title of the article (repeated), name(s) of the author(s) and your institutional affiliation(s);
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5 Any complex tables, figures and diagrams are to be supplied in camera-ready copy, on separate sheets with an indication of the appropriate location in the text.

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for books:	Athanasou, J. (ed.) (2008). *Adult education and training*, Terrigal, NSW: David Barlow Publishing.
for articles:	Hamer, J. (2010). 'Recognition of prior learning—Normative assessment or co-construction of preferred identities?', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 50(1): 98–113.
for chapters:	Newman, M. (2009). 'Educating for a sustainable democracy', in Willis, P, McKenzie, S & Harris, R (eds.) (2009), *Rethinking work and learning: Adult and vocational education for social sustainability*, Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer: 83–91.

7 Papers are accepted on the understanding that they are not being considered for publication elsewhere. Authors of main papers accepted for publication in the *Journal* will receive one copy of the *Journal* and five reprints of their paper. Other authors will receive two reprints of their contribution.

8 Brief research reports and book reviews (of approximately 800 words) relating to adult learning would be welcomed.

9 Some issues of the *Journal* are thematic. While papers published in a particular issue are not restricted to the theme, intending contributors are encouraged to submit papers on themes announced from time to time.

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AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING
Volume 51, Special Edition, December 2011

3 Prologue
Dorothy Lucardie

5 Foreword
Sally Thompson

8 Introduction
Tom Short and Peter Willis

Refereed papers

17 Through the looking glass: adult education through the lens of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* over fifty years
Roger Harris and Anne Morrison

53 All over, red rover? The neglect and potential of Australian adult education in the community
Barry Golding and Annette Foley

72 Authenticity through reflexivity: connecting teaching philosophy and practice
Catherine Jenkins

90 Recognition of prior learning (RPL): can intersubjectivity and philosophy of recognition support better equity outcomes?
Jen Hamer

110 Scheherazade's secret: the power of stories and the desire to learn
Peter Willis

123 Communities of practice in a voluntary youth organisation: reaching for the sky and building social capital
Bill Chan and Tom Short

150 Launching a career or reflecting on life? Reasons, issues and outcomes for candidates undertaking PhD studies mid-career or after retirement compared to the traditional early career pathway
Tom Stehlik

170 The learning projects of rural third age women: enriching a valuable community resource
Glenna Lear

180 Is the use of video conferencing and supporting technologies a feasible and viable way to woo farmers back into farmer education?
Margaret Brown and Tom Fraser

Special conference papers

192 Arnold Hely and Australian adult education
Roger Morris

205 Art, disability, learning and the dance of my life
Faith Thorley

213 Looking forward: Community Gateways at Victoria University
Christine Mountford