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From the Editor's desk

Tony Brown

This issue of AJAL examines adult learning in relation to six of the most topical issues of the early 21st century – the environment; mass literacy in a developing country; Indigenous education in Australian universities; workplace learning; developing independent research skills; and spiritual discovery.

Researchers here present their work on the skills needed in transitioning to a low carbon economy; the learning involved in environmental activism around coal seam gas protests; a mass literacy campaign in South Africa; Indigenous education in two Australian university programs; three more theoretical papers on workplace learning;

developing graduate students research skills; and a phenomenological study of a group of travellers journey on the Camino de Santiago walk.

New jobs will be created in the transition to a low carbon economy and they will require what is being referred to as ‘green skills’. Other jobs will continue but will inevitably be impacted upon by the changes associated with moving away from fossil fuel reliant economy. **Mike Brown** reports on research based on twenty interviews from participants involved in the formation and or deployment of green skills. Through a series of vignettes the paper highlights the types of enablers and obstacles to developing and using green skills, as well as the different motivations involved. The paper concludes by suggesting there is a need for larger scale research into this area of skill formation and deployment.

Achieving the transition to a low carbon economy requires a multi-faceted approach that includes data informed argument, advocacy, organizing and campaigning. One of the more prominent forms of activist campaigning has been the on-site protests against coal seam gas exploration especially on the east coast of Australia. In their paper **Tracey Ollis** and **Michael Hamel-Green** investigate the learning dimension of the coal seam gas protests that took place in Victoria’s Gippsland region. They describe a coalition of ‘circumstantial activists’ comprising farmers, local residents and ‘tree changers’ who came together to oppose and resist the exploration. Drawing on key concepts from Pierre Bourdieu’s writing on ‘habitus’ and ‘field’ to analyse the data, they outline some of the activists’ learning practices through their involvement in this campaign, and the knowledge and skills they gain. Then using Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘doxa’ and ‘Ilusio’ they explore some of the contradictions of the protestors’ identification as activists.

Norma Romm and **Mpho Dichaba** from the University of South Africa assess the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign of the Eastern Cape by way of a developmental evaluation approach. The paper is based on focus groups conducted with volunteer educators and past learners in the Campaign from 2013 and 2014. The paper presents the evaluative purpose as incorporating a social justice agenda in that it was aimed at strengthening literacy initiatives as a human right. It concludes by presenting the notion of catalytic validity as a criterion for judging research practices, and as a justification for 'activating further options for literacy initiatives to contribute to personal and community development'.

Over the past few years the Journal has carried a number of articles that address the emergence of tertiary enabling and pathway programs for adult learners entering higher education, especially among those considered to be 'non-traditional' or under-represented students. In this issue **Lisa Hall** from the Northern Territory's Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education evaluates a program designed to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve success. The paper first presents the background to the targeted program and then explores the 'stories of transformation' by providing the insider accounts as told by the students themselves. The program is still in its infancy and some of its limitations are canvassed but the initial conclusion is that students are completing the program and continuing with their studies, and therefore this makes a new contribution to the research data on enabling programs.

In the first of three contributions from researchers at the University of Wollongong, **Colleen McGloin** also looks at Indigenous studies in an Australian university. The paper investigates an undergraduate seminar on Australian Indigenous Studies and utilizes the concept of 'critical allies'. She argues that both teacher and learner are challenged to think about their position as racialised subjects and this requires undertaking 'effective listening and hearing practices' in order to 'consider, imagine and engage with experiences and worldviews other than their own'.

The dilemmas involved in applying the Communities of Practice concept for work-based researchers is the subject of **Andrew Sense's** paper. His starting point is that a Community of Practice (COP) can add significant value to the situated learning development of adults in any context. From there the paper 'analyses the challenges faced in facilitating the development of a COP involving part-time work-based researchers'. The paper's focus is on a collaborative research network of five industry organisations and a university, and its aim is to conceptualise a researcher COP involving part-time work-based post-graduate students; examine the dilemmas faced by the students in developing a supportive social learning environment; and pose some challenges for university and industry organisations in facilitating and nurturing such learning structures.

Continuing with the challenges involved in motivating and enabling postgraduate students to develop research skills is the subject of **Grace McCarthy's** paper. Her attention is on how adult students undertaking coursework masters degrees overcome their apprehension about undertaking research projects. The paper presents an alternative approach to the individual master-apprentice model. She uses Self-Determination Theory to consider motivational needs, as well as self-efficacy and incorporating good practices in feedback. She outlines a way to make the process of learning how to do research more engaging, and drawing on the responses from a survey of students from 2012 she concludes that the approach offers a useful way to help adult learners develop research skills.

In the final paper **Kyung-Mi Im** and **JuSung Jun** from Korea examine the journey involved in the pilgrimage to the Camino de Santiago in Spain. The pilgrimage has attracted a lot of attention in popular culture in recent years, from David Lodge's 1995 novel *Therapy* to recent feature films by Emilio Estevez (*The Way* 2010) and the impressive documentary *Walking the Camino*: *Six Ways to Santiago* (2013) to various websites on how to, and how not to, walk the Camino. It has enjoyed a contemporary revival of its ages old journey of physical and spiritual discovery. Kyung-Mi and JuSung's interest is in the meaning of learning that can be found through exploring the lived experience of travellers on that journey. Their study involved eight travellers and used a hermeneutic phenomenological method to examine biographical and spiritual learning and the concept of autopoiesis, or the process of reproducing and maintaining oneself.

To complete the issue **Heather Wallace** reviews *Men learning through life*, an edited collection from Barry Golding, Rob Mark and Annette Foley.

And finally, I would like to record my thanks as Editor to ALA's outgoing CEO **Sally Thompson**. Her support for AJAL has been strong and unflinching. Sally has been the Association's sixth full time Director or CEO. It wasn't until the early 1990s that the then AAACE (Australian Association of Adult and Community Education) was able to employ a full time Director and Alastair Crombie ably steered the transition to ALA's emergence in 1998/1999. In that time Sally has become the second longest serving Executive after Alastair and leaves the organisation in a better state than when she arrived, which is one of the hallmarks of a successful leader. She leaves ALA to take on a national leadership role with the Australian Education Union (AEU) and I, along with the Association Executive, and members wish her all the best.

Tony Brown

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Developing and using green skills for the transition to a low carbon economy

Mike Brown
LaTrobe University

One of the strategies being advocated in response to climate change is the need to transition to a low carbon economy. Current projections show that within this transition, new jobs will be created, some eliminated and most others subjected to change. This article reports findings from interviews with a selection of twenty participants who are involved in the formation and/or deployment of green skills. The participants were asked about their perceptions of (1) how jobs are changing in the transition to a green economy (2) how are adult learners developing and using green skills, and (3) what are some of the main drivers and blockers to the development and use of green skills. The data are presented as vignettes from various positions of supply and demand within the emerging green economy. The findings of this study report that the organisations and the training providers are motivated to develop and/or deploy green jobs and green skills for a range of different reasons. These include the making of a favourable business case, environmental beliefs about conserving the finite resources of the planet and, for health and wellbeing reasons. Some blockers that have been identified are the initial capital outlay for any changes, and the need to address some inconsistencies that arise over time in the financial arrangements when trying to work *out the business case. This has led the designers and contractors working in renewable energy to call for a level playing field with those who provide and utilise finite resources and non-renewable energy. Overall transition to a low carbon and green economy is shown to be supported and occurring with some limited success. However there is a need for further larger scale research into this area of skill formation and deployment.*

Keywords: *Skills for sustainability, green skills, low carbon economy, green jobs, education for sustainability*

Introduction

The evidential basis for climate change has been well summarised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007 & 2013), with social scientists like Giddens (2011), Lever-Tracey (2011) and Baer (2013), providing analysis and discussion of the politics. One of the main strategies advocated for in the debates around mitigation of climate change is to drastically reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions by transitioning to a low carbon economy. This transition has substantial implications for adult learning in contemporary society. This study reports on stakeholder perceptions of the development and deployment of green skills and greener jobs as they are arising across Victoria, Australia, in the context of transitioning to a low carbon economy.

Aligning with the bigger picture of transition to a low carbon economy is the argument for the introduction of a green economy. This is explained as consisting of greener jobs and green jobs utilise green skills. Green jobs are consistently described in the literature as having two components. First they are decent, fair and meaningful jobs, and second, they are jobs which reduce negative environmental impact. Subsequently, green jobs are defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as jobs that '*help reduce negative environmental impact ultimately leading to environmentally, economically and socially sustainable enterprises and economies. More precisely green jobs are decent jobs that, (1) Reduce consumption of energy and raw materials; (2) Limit greenhouse gas emissions; (3) Minimize waste and pollution; and (4) Protect and restore ecosystems*, (2012: 1).

Hatfield-Dodds, Turner, Schandl & Doss (2008) report that there are significant gaps in our knowledge and that there is a distinct lack of evidence around skill requirements in what they call ‘the green collar economy’. This current study stands to address this lack of evidence as it reports the qualitative findings from interviews with a selection of twenty industry and community stakeholders ascertaining their perceptions of emerging green jobs and the formation and deployment of green skills across the state of Victoria, Australia.

The design of the study is guided by the argument from Green (2013) that the understanding of skills within the labour market involves appreciation of two interacting markets, one that is centred on skill deployment (demand) and the other on skill formation (supply). This study investigates stakeholder perceptions of (1) how jobs are changing in the transition to a green economy; (2) how adult learners are developing and using green skills, and (3) what some of the main drivers and blockers are to the development and use of green skills.

Setting the scene

In 2007, the Australian government developed its strategy paper in response to the United Nations (UN) Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) titled ‘*Caring for our future*’. This was followed up two years later with the release of the National Action Plan called ‘*Living sustainably’*. In this, Education for Sustainability (EfS) is acknowledged as equipping all people with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to make decisions based upon consideration of environmental, social and economic implications.

The principles for EfS are explained as, transformation and change; education for all and lifelong learning; systems thinking; envisioning a better future; critical thinking and reflection; participation and partnerships for change (pg. 9). Provision of EfS is reported in the National Action Plan as being variously facilitated through government departments, educational institutions at all levels, industry bodies, community groups, zoos, botanical gardens, national parks and environmental education centres. Strategy 2 in ‘*Living sustainably*’ argues for the need to ‘reorient education systems to sustainability’. The strategy covers all levels of education and it states, ‘the Australian government is committed to using education as a critical resource to prepare Australia for the emerging social, economic and environmental challenges of the 21st century. A transformative approach to education is needed, involving whole of institution engagement, innovative teaching and learning and changes to curricula', (pg. 21). This article reports on how adult work-related learning programs are, and need to be re-orientated to support the transition to a low carbon and green economy.

For many, climate change has become the flagship issue within sustainability (National Sustainability Council 2013). Part of the response to climate change in Australia has included efforts to align the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector to assist individuals and businesses to contribute towards a sustainable low carbon economy. In 2009, the federal government released the National VET Sector Sustainability Policy and Action Plan. This detailed four key areas to concentrate effort. These were, develop a workforce with skills for sustainability, provide VET programs that support skill formation for sustainability, encourage the development of values and attitudes amongst VET leaders and educators that are conducive to sustainability, and reduce the carbon footprint of VET institutions.

This was closely followed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) when they ratified the implementation of the national Green Skills Agreement (GSA) in December 2009. The four aims of the GSA directly relate to aspects of the VET sector and subsequently form part of the policy context for this study. These goals have been summarised as, the development of national standards, upskilling the VET workforce, the revision of Training Packages, and supporting the transition of vulnerable workers. As yet though no public systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of what has occurred through this initiative has been conducted.

Literature Review

Fien and Guevara (2013) explain that the concept of the green economy replaces the previous concept of 'sustainable development' and that it has four interconnected and mutually dependent goals. These are, increasing economic growth; reducing unemployment; increasing social inclusion and equity; and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Aligning to these goals are three dimensions which they describe as, (1) 'widespread respect for, and costing of, ecosystem services so that air, water, soils, forests, crops, minerals and energy resources that we consume reflect a policy shift of living off the interest on natural capital rather than widespread borrowing of our share from future generations, thereby mortgaging the future of human society' (p. 256); (2) the dematerialisation of agriculture and industrial processes, reducing rates of depletion, waste and pollution and making use of energy more efficient. Resources that have been considered free or as externalities will be factored in and needing to be more appropriately costed. This is expected to have substantial effect on existing markets; and (3) an insistence on social equity and inclusion through clean and decent jobs, (p. 257).

The initial joint research report published by the Australian Conservation Foundation & Australian Council of Trade Unions (1994) raised the difficulty that occurs when attempting to define green jobs. This is made clearer through the following questions, is, 'a recycling plant that emits air pollution a green jobs? Is an aluminium smelter that dramatically reduces waste sent to landfill, yet contributes large emissions of greenhouse gases, a producer of green jobs; and are all jobs in ecotourism green jobs? (These questions are cited in Thomas, Sandri & Hegarty 2010). Such considerations inevitably lead to an awareness of there being 'shades of green' possible (UNEP 2008). Ehmcke, Philipson and Kold-Christensen (2009) have taken up the challenge of the shades of green argument and proposed a means for explaining jobs that are on a spectrum of green jobs through a simple set of categories that depicts work role and degrees of environmental sustainability.

Fien & Guevara (2013) suggests that it may be more helpful to think in terms of green skills for jobs; and that these might be classified as, (1) existing jobs will all require additional skill sets related to ethics and sustainability, others talk about the need to include environmental awareness. (2) New jobs being created within existing industries, such as might be found in building and construction. (3) New and expanded industries using existing technical skills along with ethical understanding and new technical skills, the renewable energy industry being an example. (4) New and expanded industries using new occupations, though these are still being developed (Fien & Guevara 2013: 259).

In a recent report by the Green Jobs Initiative, *Working towards sustainable development: opportunities for decent work and social inclusion in a green economy*, (ILO 2012), the case is made that current development models based on fossil fuels are unsustainable. They estimate that if this model continues then productivity will begin to decline and by 2030 will be 2.4% lower than today and by 2050 this will be 7.2% lower than at present (ILO 2012:vii). In contrast they report that worldwide growth in the renewable energy sector is some 21% per annum and currently employs around 5 million workers worldwide - this is double what is was just a few years ago.

The transition to a low carbon economy across Europe is being driven in part by the potential for jobs growth in much needed recovering national economies and the policy agenda of the European Union. The latter has instigated a 20-20 strategy. This policy setting involves aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels; increase the share of renewable energy sources in the final energy consumption by 20% and reduce energy use relative to projected 2020 levels by 20% (CEDEFOP 2013). These targets need to be backed up with new technologies, new work practices, and the appropriate range of knowledge and skills. Such strategies clearly implicate and provide an impetus for appropriately aligned learning across all the sectors of education with the vocational and adult fields of learning at the forefront. Accordingly, groups like CEDEFOP, the European Union, the ILO and the OECD often include the argument for ongoing lifelong learning.

Many reports from such sources as the International Labour Organisation (ILO 2012; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2009; Kauffmann & Less 2010), The European Union and Commission (European Commission 2011), CEDEFOP (2010), and national governments such as Germany (Jaeger et al 2011), France (Mathou 2010), the USA (Mass, Moss, Hopkins & Ross 2010), Brazil (Cruz Caruso 2010) and the United Kingdom (BIS 2010; Charalambous, Lawrie & Beadle 2010; Pye & Evans 2012), are all arguing that increasing investment in the green economy including the development of the necessary sustainability related knowledge and skills have the potential to increase employment, provide decent jobs and maintain the environment and increase social capital.

Rafferty and Yu (2010) in the Australian component to the 21 country study '*Skills for green jobs*' explain that 'existing shifts in employment within the Australian economy, namely the decline in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, are likely to be exacerbated by the transition to a carbon-constrained economy' (p.12). Over the last twenty-five years while professional health care workers have driven employment in the service sector up from 45% to 55%, manufacturing has decreased from 17% to 10%, and agriculture has declined from 6% to 3%. Such declines in existing job markets has led the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), to continue their research partnership in this field (1996) and identify six green industries which they believe are well positioned to flourish (2008, p.19). These are renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable water systems, biomaterials, green buildings, and waste and recycling. These reports estimate that the work in these emerging jobs will easily outnumber those that are disappearing.

Likewise, the Climate Institute (2011, p.1) estimates that some 34,000 new jobs could be created in Australia by 2030. Such estimates stand alongside the modelling provided by Hatfield-Dodds, Turner, Schandl and Doss, (2008), who optimistically explain the potential for jobs growth in these emerging green collar jobs. These researchers emphasise that it is possible to develop well designed policies to combine economic growth with a reduction of the environmental footprint; and that, transition to sustainability would have little to no impact on national employment. Their best case modelling shows the possibility of increasing jobs by 2.5 – 3 million jobs in the next two decades. Even those industries that are expecting to experience a high environmental impact could increase employment by some 10% in the next decade. They model that as many as 230,000 – 340,000 new jobs could be created across the transport, construction, agriculture, manufacturing and mining industries, (Hatfield-Dodds, Turner, Schandl and Doss, 2008).

In 2010 the federal government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) published their survey of 1932 employers from across eight different industries and found that just under half (48%) said they had been affected in some ways by environmental or sustainability issues in the past 12 months, with almost the same amount (47%) saying that they had not been affected at all. When asked about the next 3 to 5 years, 38% of employers thought that there would be a skills impact in the next three to five years. The skills most commonly identified by these employers were knowledge and understanding of compliance issues; general environmental awareness skills; specialist environmental skills; and knowledge about green products and processes. Many were concerned about the rising costs associated with compliance and in terms of appropriately aligned training explained their preference for in-house or private providers and short non-award programs.

Meanwhile, ClimateWorks Australia an independent, research-based, non-profit organisation, has conducted research across five industries, identifying a pathway and strategies to operationalise the transition to a low carbon economy (ClimateWorks Australia 2010). This study describes 54 opportunities where immediate action could be taken. Importantly, they explain that 22% of emissions reduction opportunities would be immediately profitable to implement. Yet despite this, when ClimateWorks Australia (2013) released its subsequent Progress report it showed that, 'while the Australian economy has grown strongly over the last decade, emissions have remained stable' (pg.3). This research suggests that if recent levels of emission reduction activities are sustained it would reduce by half the expected growth in emissions to 2019 – 2020. Consequently, this would provide only 40% of the 5% minimum 2020 emissions reduction target. This seems very slow progress and even a reluctance to implement the necessary changes even when these changes are shown to be profitable. The progress report denotes that even the very modest targets that have been set by the federal government may only just be reached by 2020.

Methodology

The study collected data through individual interviews with twenty key informants, namely industry and community representatives, considered to be stakeholders and participants in the green economy. All the interviews were semi-structured and were digitally recorded and fully transcribed. The data from the interviews were thematically analysed. All participation was voluntary and occurred following active and informed consent as per the Ethics approval.

The main limitation of this study is that it is small scale and therefore the findings have limited reliability, as they are indicative but certainly not definitive of the current situation. The purpose of this qualitative research was to provide insight into the nature of the current situation rather than provide extensive empirical proof.

The participants

The twenty interviewees are representatives of the following industry and community organisations as set out in the Table below.

Stakeholder representative	**Position in organisation**
Transport & Logistics company	Senior Training Manager
Medium and small sized businesses	2 x CEO/Owners
Community Education Centre	Senior Education Officer
Energy Generation Company	Senior Manager
Local Council	Sustainability Officer
Renewable Energy Retail Supplier/ Installers	3 x CEOs
Sustainability Victoria	Senior Manager
Master Plumbers Association	Senior Manager; Senior Trainer
TAFE Green Skills Centre	Program Co-ordinator, Senior Educator
Regional Development Centre	Regional Manager; Senior Consultant, Retired Bank Manager, President of APEX
Service Industry Association	Employer Representative
Industry Skills Council	Senior Manager

The perspectives of these representatives are presented below as vignettes.

The vignettes

Transport and logistics: this large transport and logistics company employs 20,000 people with an annual turnover of $3billion. In 2006 this company set out to reduce their carbon emissions. Audits showed that the company had an 80/20 energy usage, 80% being diesel fuel and 20% being electricity. The managers in the company set a target for reducing their emissions by 15% in 2010 and 50% in 2015. As of the end of the last financial year they had achieved a 36% reduction.

Three enterprise specific training programs have been developed and implemented by this company. The first is ‘Eco-drive’ which is aimed at reducing the 80% of the total energy usage related to diesel fuel. In this training program drivers work one on one with one of the company’s thirty training staff to develop more efficient driving practices. The drivers learn how to reduce fuel consumption, reduce Co2 emissions, minimise driver stress, increase road safety, reduce vehicle operating costs, reduce vehicle wear and tear, and minimise breakdowns. The resources for this program are interactive and online, and in a portable CD format. These learning resources have been translated into six languages and over 1000 employees have successfully completed the program.

The second program is for shopfloor employees. It is called ‘site-habits’ and is aimed at the other energy component that expends 20% of the total energy usage on electricity. This training program is more informal and site and role specific. The learning occurs through lunch box meetings where the employees are asked to consider how they might change an aspect of their electricity usage.

The third program came about after the manager for sustainability returned from completing a Sustainability course at Cambridge University in the UK. As a result the company designed a program that involves learning the basic science behind global warming and climate change. This program is aimed at middle management and has been designed and developed in-house. The program is called a Certificate in Environment and Climate Change. This program has ten modules and is conducted over two days of intense training.

The company explicitly recognises the risks and damages associated with global warming and climate change. It chooses to emphasise and explain the science. The average education level of their employees is Year 10 level. With this in mind, the company employed an artist to produce a wall chart/poster to explain the seriousness of the science behind climate change. These are displayed throughout the workplaces.

The size of the company with its 20,000 employees benefits from 'economies of scale' that allow the training resources to be professionally prepared using video production and online multimedia resources. Energy use costs the company $100m/per annum therefore a reduction of this running cost translates into a very large cost saving for the company. In exceeding their targets by the third year, the training and emphasis on sustainability is not costing but instead is adding to the company's profitability.

Timbertown Community Resource Centre: Timbertown has a population of 1400 and two large sawmills are the main employers. The town is situated on the outskirts of the Latrobe Valley. The Community Resource Centre conducted a survey to identify issues through which they could build programs and engage the community in community-orientated adult learning. As a result of these consultations, The Timbertown Community Resource Centre ran three sustainability orientated programs.

The first of these was 'the changeover program'. This involved changing over almost 5645 incandescent light globes and some 300 water wise showerheads. The second sustainability program run by the centre was a program to become Green Loans Home Assessors. One of the educators at the Timbertown Community Resource Centre trained as a trainer and assessor for this program. She brought these skills back and ran the program through the centre. They trained up 312 local people as Green Loans Home Assessors in the next four months. Unfortunately the government initiative was discontinued so the 312 graduates did not find employment, though many found they could turn their skills to the benefit of the community.

The third program involved 'flying the flag for sustainability'. This program consisted of three stages. In the first stage, each householder/participant had to choose to implement six strategies from a list of 30 possibilities. The options were meant to be cheap or even free to implement and involved strategies around water, waste, energy, disability access, and safety. The six implemented options had to be verified by a home assessor but once confirmed the householder was provided with their white flag. The flag was attached to the roofline of the house indicating the achievement. According to the Centre's co-ordinator most householders went beyond what was required and implemented up to twenty of these options – because they saved money and resources, and were cheap to implement.

Stage two had a further range of slightly more complex options considered to be promoting a higher commitment to environmental sustainable. Householders had to implement six strategies from the range of options at the middle level. Once assessed by a home assessor, a blue flag was attached to their roofline. Similarly, stage three involved implementing four options from amongst those at the highest level. Once they passed the assessment, a green flag was attached to the roofline and a 'declaration of sustainability' was provided by a qualified home assessor for possible use in the future should the occupant decide to sell the house.

The centre targeted businesses and households in the main street in order to give the program visibility. The co-ordinator estimates that 90% of the sign ups to the program occurred as a result of face to face contact outside the grounds of the centre. The workers at the centre were very active for the first four weeks and achieved 200 registrations. At last count, they had 380 householders or businesses register and achieve their white flag; 250 achieved the blue and 210 achieved the Green flag. Comments on the flag programs are very positive and believed to have contributed to a sense of community pride.

Renewable Energy Retail Suppliers and Installers: three people were interviewed within this category of stakeholders; two were owner managers of similar medium sized enterprises that did retail, design and installation, and both have over 30 years in the industry. The other person interviewed had 25 years of experience and worked for the related Industry Association. In 2012 over 13 per cent of electricity in Australia was provided by renewable sources and as of 2013, there were 24,300 working in renewable energy industry across Australia (CEC 2012). These participants described jobs in this industry as involving, marketing, sales, systems design, engineers, architects consultancies, panel and system installers, electricians and plumbers. One interviewee employed 30 staff and the other 18. They explained that the industry was currently in turmoil due to the administration of government subsidies. Subsidies make solar installations attractive to consumers, but successive governments announce subsidies and they then take them away. This leads to instability and insecurity. These managers explained that their longevity in the industry was due to them not relying on the subsidies and spoke of how this was an industry that was there for the making. Uncertainty about the economics though meant that they needed to be independent and viable for the times when the subsidies are rescinded. They argue that realistic 'feed in' tariffs are what are really needed along with a level playing field with the coal and gas producers.

Electricians need to do the wiring and installation of the electrical systems. Other installers can do the panel installations but by law only a licenced plumber can do penetrations through the roof. Careful and strategic divisions of labour are managed to control the costs. There are currently 4,500 registered electricians accredited to do installation work and approximately 322,000 installations were completed nationwide in 2012. Lessons have been learnt from the installation of pink bats with government rebates tied to installers being accredited. And accreditation is in turn tied to training and successful completion of three designated units of competence. Completion of these units though gives only provisional accreditation for three months. This must be followed up with a documented case study of an actual installation before full accreditation is approved.

A training program that received mention by all three of these participants was the Certificate IV in Renewable Energy. The Program co-ordinator and teacher in this course at one of the metropolitan TAFE Institutes was very well known to them all for his work throughout the industry. The program at that TAFE institute was considered cutting edge. A visit to three public TAFE providers confirmed the substantial investment being made in setting up actual systems for students to work on and learn through engagement with authentic industry quality installations and equipment.

The TAFE Green Skills Centre: the design of this TAFE Green Skills Centre epitomises what it is teaching. The centre has a 5 star energy efficiency rating and by using contemporary thinking in passive design and strategic selection of materials, adhesives, paints and finishes, 'practices what it preaches'. The design minimises energy use and maximises efficiency. The building has large arrays of solar photovoltaic cells on the roof and positioned in frames alongside the structure. It also uses the sun's rays to produce solar hot water. Likewise, rainwater is harvested from the roof and utilised in non-potable uses such as within the toilets. Rainwater tanks around the building catch and store over 110,000 litres of rainwater. Many of the services in the building are on show, to illustrate and be utilised in teaching sustainable systems. The building has a computer operated building management system. This does such tasks as monitoring carbon dioxide levels for air changes and control temperatures and air conditioning systems. The building has a geothermal ground source heat pump. This is used to draw in and transfer heat from the earth in winter and to use the earth as a heat sink in summer.

Many of the trade areas such as plumbing and electrical use the life size simulated buildings that have been erected inside the workshops for designing and installing alternative energy and sustainability systems. Conservation and land management, agriculture and animal sciences also utilise facilities in the building. The flagship programs though are the Certificate II and IV in Renewable Energy.

As the teacher explains,

> *The two courses are taught concurrently over 1 year for full time students and cover areas of technology, PV, electrical, solar thermal systems for both building and hot water, accreditations for the Clean Energy Council, grid design, standalone power systems, install and design and wind accreditations. We do wind energy conversion systems as well, the course covers basic electrical/electronic theory and workshop practices, at trade level.*

These programs are taught by teachers with 20 years of experience working with solar energy. Both of the teachers interviewed were very proud of their teaching facilities and the direct input they have had into its design and building. Both are very committed, one has held leadership positions within the industry and professional associations. This teacher explains his commitment to the industry and his long term involvement in the Wilderness Society as part of his motivation. He explains that this support and commitment is reciprocated by the TAFE as they funded him to visit Germany for a professional development program and to do industry visits.

One teacher explains that he sees green skills being a part of everyone's job but he also sees specialist job roles in sustainability and green skills as well. He describes how he sees the financial differences in building in sustainability and attempting to retrofit. Building it in is seen as being the much cheaper option. These teachers have made it their business to know many of the employers across the industry. They have established high credibility for their course and most of their graduates find jobs in the field. As one of the teachers explains,

> *'The students we get in for the courses, they are on top of it because they are coming into the industry because they love it, they want more of it and they're hungry for the knowledge'.*

The students in these courses were also eager to discuss their training with the researcher and aspects of these interactions have been reported elsewhere (Brown & Sack 2012).

Master Plumbers Association, the Plumbers Employee Union and the Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre (PICAC): two people were interviewed within this category, one worked for the Master Plumbers and the other provided training at the Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre (PICAC). PICAC is an industry partnership supported by the Plumbing Trades Employees Union, Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia, National Fire Industry Association, Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors Association, United Association and Plumbing Joint Training Fund (PICAC 2013). The Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre (PICAC) is an industry led training facility in a 5 Green Star-rated building in Melbourne. The Centre is providing and showcasing innovative and authentic training to the plumbing industry in OH&S, Fire protection systems, Mechanical services and Green plumbing. While some plumbers are happy doing what they are doing, others are being pushed to learn about new technology, new products and new ways of plumbing. These tradespeople are on the front line when a customer's water service blows and they turn to the plumber to ask what is available to replace this system.

Green skills have been added into apprenticeship and even pre-apprenticeship training as both core and electives. PICAC provides courses for apprentices, the more experienced post-apprentice plumbers and even plumbing trade teachers who work in TAFE Institutes and teach their own apprenticeship classes. Plumbers who are union members like apprentices can access this training at no cost to themselves. For self-employed plumbers a six day course is likely to cost around $1200. The centre runs a range of programs. In terms of green skills, the programs include, energy efficient plumbing, alternative renewable energy systems, water conservation, urban alternative water, solar hot water, urban pumps, natural waste management, rainwater harvesting, and geothermal technologies.

The staff members who run these programs argue that they are very much in front of the pack, with their courses based on contemporary research and new technologies. It appears that the training staff at the centre has been recruited from amongst the plumbing teachers previously employed in TAFE Institutes. All training packages now have some sustainability units in them, but these interviewees considered these to be very generic and not closely enough related to plumbing. The two interviewees reported that from their experience, the motivation for plumbers to develop these skills is considered to be multifaceted. These capacities and knowledge are considered good for business, cost effective, future-orientated, and supportive of choosing to live a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

Riverside Regional Development Centre: four community and industry stakeholders were interviewed from the Riverside Regional Development Centre. One explained his work as involving liaison with large scale solar energy developers to ensure that the workforce and required skill sets would be available if or when companies invest in this region. The second part of his job he describes as working with the industries of the region to review their energy and resources use. The other industry stakeholder explained that he is involved in mapping skills for roof top installation of PV systems. He also explained how he was involved in the bulk purchase of rooftop solar panels and installations.

The other two community representative stakeholders interviewed were members of the local Rotary Club and explained the community initiative that they ran for changing over incandescent light globes. This club teamed up with the local SES and they ran the change-over as a small fund raising exercise. The Clubs contracted to change up to 2000 globes but in the end it became so popular that they did 6000 globes, across 500 houses and 25 businesses.

These participants explained that new sustainability related jobs were being created around solar panel installation and at the professional level a number of jobs in some local companies where spreadsheets and systems were being designed and implemented. These are then being handed over to accountants to keep the systems up to date and running. They likened the process to that of the roll out of safety in the workplace some 20 – 30 years ago, and how each large company now has a dedicated Safety Officer but the requirement to work safely is divested as the responsibility of each and all employees. Likewise they thought that in the future most large companies would have one main Sustainability Officer in the workplace but that it would become part of everyone's work practices to be more sustainable.

They also believed that new jobs would emerge that cannot yet be imagined. Much is dependent on the decisions of government and the levels of subsidies and financial support. One of these managers speaking about large solar projects noted that there needs to be 'feed in' tariffs and the goal is for grid parity. This regional community has experienced numerous media splashes about large innovative solar projects being launched in this region only to see the hype fade before their realisation. Failing to deliver has led to some frustration and scepticism across the community yet many still think that if solar is going to make it anywhere it should be able to happen in this region.

Conclusion

The 'Living sustainably' Action Plan argues that EfS aims to tackle the underlying causes of unsustainable trends (pg 8). The form of education advocated is to initially raise awareness but which also develops capacities that enable the learner to take action and implement real and thoughtful change – informed, thoughtful and strategic action. The vignettes of the work-related learning programs detailed above epitomise these intentions.

From the evidence gained from this study it is apparent that new and adjusted work practices are being implemented across workplaces around new technologies and new products. These new ways of doing aspects of work are utilising renewable energy or are being designed to reduce use of finite resources and energy from fossil fuels. This is leading to some new specialist jobs in areas such as sustainability and renewable energy but the most change that is occurring to the majority of existing jobs is through the incorporation of changing work practices due to increasing environmental awareness, improving energy efficiency and the rising or ongoing costs of non-renewable resources and energy.

Most of the learning involves the development of new, and extensions to existing, skills and knowledge which are occurring across workplaces and within training courses. This skill formation is most often taking place through engagement with authentic installations, equipment, products and processes. Some of this skill development is happening on-the-job in the specific context of the work practices, some is going on in the community and some is also occurring through programs that are being run through new specialist and traditional institution-based occupational programs in TAFE, in enterprise-based training and industry-based training, and through community-based education programs.

The main drivers appear to be through a business case being made around increasing savings in the longer term, higher profits and avoidance of ongoing and rising clean-up costs. There is some concern being shown for the environment and the need to reduce pollution and start to address issues of climate change that are exacerbated through the continued use of finite resources and fossil fuels. Some have further extended this thinking to include the movement towards a more natural and long term sustainable existence. This was coupled with improving individual and community health and well-being. Some blockers seem to be the initial outlay of capital to purchase and upgrade new plant and the associated work practices; others cited inconsistency around the financial benefits from changing to renewable energy, while the contractors in these areas too, sought security through the implementation of a level playing field with others who provide and utilise finite resources and fossil fuels.

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Adult education and radical habitus in an environmental campaign: Learning in the coal seam gas protests in Australia.

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This paper examines the adult learning dimensions of protestors as they participate in a campaign to stop coal seam gas exploration in Gippsland in Central Victoria, Australia. On a global level, the imposition of coal seam gas exploration by governments and mining companies has been the trigger for movements of resistance from environmental groups. They are concerned about the impact of mining on their land, food and water supplies. In central Gippsland a group of 'circumstantial activists' comprised of farmers, tree changers and other local residents are campaigning against coal seam gas exploration. This unlikely coalition of environmental action groups has made effective use of a variety of community education strategies. This paper commences by outlining some of the key literature on learning and activism drawing on the education tradition of adult learning. We then draw on key concepts from Bourdieu's writing on 'habitus' and 'field' to analyse the data from this research. We outline some of the learning *practices of activists; through their involvement in this campaign, and the knowledge and skills they gain as they develop a feel for the game of protest. We argue circumstantial activists learn both formally and informally in the social environment of campaigning. Of particular interest is the role of more experienced activists from Friends of the Earth (FOE), a non-government organisation (NGO), as they pass on knowledge, experience, tactics and strategies to the novice and less experienced activists in this community campaign. We explore some of the contradictions of the protestors' identification as activists using Bourdieu's concepts of 'doxa' and 'Ilusio'. The paper concludes by arguing learning in activism is a rich tradition of adult education and practice. However, Bourdieu's writing on field and habitus makes an added contribution to interpreting the learning that occurs in the social space of a campaign or social movement.*

Keywords: *Adult learning, informal learning, activism, environmental movement, coal seam gas, Bourdieu, habitus.*

Context and methodology

Research into adult learning in the coal seam gas protests is limited, although an important site of research that needs further exploration. In previous research about learning and activism it has been argued social movements and campaigns are rich sites of adult learning (Ollis 2008, 2011, 2012). Whilst activists learning can cross a broad range of issues of concern and activism can span both progressive and non-progressive values and ideologies. Our interest in this space of research is concerned with progressive social change and the contribution that activism and movements for social change can make to furthering the project of social justice and to educating communities about social change. Tracey's previous research into the learning dimensions of lifelong activists and circumstantial activists examined the differences and similarities between 'lifelong' and 'circumstantial' activists. Circumstantial activists generally participate in activism due to a disruption, a life event or a series of circumstances that collide to motivate them to act on an issue of concern. One of the important outcomes of Tracey's previous research is the need for more attention to be given to the learning processes of 'circumstantial activists'. For example, if we can understand their motivations for participating in activism, there is a possibility of building larger and more cohesive movements for social change (Ollis 2012).

Twenty-three in-depth interviews were held with protestors involved in the coal seam gas protests in central Gippsland and its surrounding areas. The data collection phase of the research commenced in September 2013 and was completed in March 2014. This research for this project is qualitative using case study methodology and method (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Stake 2003, 2006). An application to the Deakin University's Faculty Ethics' committee was made and approval was given. Most of the interviews were held in the Gippsland, areas of Seaspray, Poo Wong and Koo-Wee-Rup. Access to the research site was facilitated by FOE an organisation involved in environmental activism in Victoria, Australia and internationally. A call for research participants was promoted through the networks of FOE and participation was entirely voluntary. The research team promoted the research at several coal seam gas events. Interviews were initially recorded and then transcribed. Research participants were given a copy of their transcript to review and noted any changes that needed to be made regarding factual inaccuracies or misconceptions about the data. This allowed the research participants to have some control of the data and the stories about their activism and adult learning (Stage & Manning 2003). All of the participants have been given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

As researchers we have both been involved in a broad range of campaigns and social movements. Michael was a draft resister for the Vietnam War, and has been involved in a myriad of community development based initiatives. Tracey is an activist educator and has held multiple roles as an organiser who has campaigned on issues such as youth housing, affordable housing, women's issues, the union movement and the rights of refugees. Whilst it can be argued we both have a position of insider/outsider status to the research, we had limited direct connection to the coal seam gas gas campaign. We knew none of the participants that were interviewed, apart from one interview that was conducted with the campaign co-ordinator of FOE.

Reviewing the literature, adult learning and activism.

Adult education has long represented a tradition of learning outside the confines of formal education and schooling. Places and spaces of learning such as neighborhood houses, museums, community gardens, adult and community education centers, libraries, art galleries, community campaigns, public protests and social movements are all sites of education, although not widely recognised as such. Progressive activism and the work of social movements generally reflects a collective commitment to social change education as Sandlin, Chulz and Burdick claim:

> .....they deal with bigger more pressing issues of cultivating a pedagogy of humanity, which ultimately has implications for schooling and non-schools settings. These are public pedagogies – spaces sites and languages of education and learning that sit outside the walls of the institutions of schools (Sandlin, Schultz & Burdick 2010:1).

The literature on learning in activism is eclectic and draws on several education traditions such as public pedagogy, critical pedagogy and adult learning. However, this paper focuses primarily on the education tradition of adult learning.

In recent years, It has been recognised that learning in community campaigns, activist groups and social movements are significant sites of adult learning (Branagan & Boughton 2003; Brookfield 2005; Crossley 2008; Foley 2001; Jasper & Goodwin 2004). In Australia, the work was led by Griff Foley in his important book *Learning in Social Action* (Foley 1999). This research explored the incidental, everyday learning that occurs informally in sites or spaces of rich activity such as neighborhood houses, environmental campaign groups, or a womens organization in Brazil. Learning in these sites is recognised as incidental, informal, tacit and implied and not always recognised as real adult learning (Foley 2001). Moreover adults learn both individually and collectively through their engagement in community development activities and by their participation in social movements (Jesson & Newman 2004). Walter (2012) has claimed, central to these concerns have been the role of social movements in facilitating collective and individual adult learning; and the significant role of activist educators in advancing the important work of social movements.

Much of the research on learning in social action has focused on cognitivism and the critical intelligence of activists as they work towards issues of social change (Foley 1999, 2001; Newman 1994, 2006). Or social learning in the situated site of popular education or social movements (Ollis 2012). Research on environmental activists' training has found learning is based on adult learning principles and is largely informal as formal education amongst environmental activists is uncommon (Whelan 2002:33). Learning in the social environment of protest is an emotionally charged practice, where emotions are often the drivers for taking action in the first place (Drew 2015; Flam & King 2005; Gould 2004). They are sites of education where adults engage in holistic, purposeful and embodied learning (Drew 2015; Ollis 2011, 2012). As Maddison and Scalmer (2006) argue progressive activists have a great deal to teach the world and refer to this knowledge as 'practical wisdom'. A powerful outcome of adult learning in social action is recognised in the conscientisation that occurs in individuals' lives as they grow and develop an awareness about both themselves and the world around them (Freire 1972). Others argue learning in the environmental movement is a calling and transformative, learning in this sense is deeply rooted in both the conscious and unconscious self. These activists generally have a deep spiritual commitment and connection to land, conservation, land care and the environment (Kovan & Dirkx 2003). This is apparent in the coal seam gas protests where a deep connection the land by activists, is an important motivation for participating in the campaign. These farmers, tree changers and environmental activists are highly protective of preserving their land and water supplies for future generations.

Pierre Bourdieu, activism and habitus

As stated the literature on activism and learning is eclectic and draws on several broad traditions of education and social theory. We argue an analysis of the practices that happen in the field of protest using Pierre Bourdieu's writing on habitus can contribute a new dimension to how we view activists' learning. Bourdieu wrote a series of books on practice, which focused on using his theory of habitus. (Bourdieu 1977, 1998, 2000). The work initially came from reflecting on his early days as an anthropologist, observing and interacting with peasant groups in Algeria. Bourdieu believed that the theory of structuralism could never explain the complex ways of organizing in this community. It could not account for certain work practices, their communal way of living, gender roles, marriage ceremonies and other community practices (Bourdieu 1999). He believed the key to analysing any practice within a field was to look at the ways in which people organized and interacted with one another, often unconsciously. Bourdieu believed that in any social field, certain habits, practices and dispositions are developed and reproduced; he described this process as habitus. Habitus and field work with one another. A field is a social space that generates activity. Habitus are the practices that are generated in the field (Bourdieu 1977, 2000). In this case the coal seam gas activists ways of practicing with one another - their dispositions, their ways of behaving, speaking, dressing, running a picket line, managing a campaign or interacting with others in the field, all form part of the habitus (Bourdieu 1977). Tracey's previous research on activists' learning practices identified that newcomer activists learn from one another in the social field of protest (Ollis 2012). It is here that novice campaigners learn the skills, knowledge and practices required to be effective in a protest, often from the more experienced members in the group.

Doxa & Illusio

Bourdieu's concepts of 'doxa' and 'illusio' also have relevance to understanding the coal seam gas protesters. Doxa is the concept that long held beliefs, thoughts, ideas and practices that seem to be orthodoxy, correct and natural, have more often than not been imposed by a struggle of competing visions. Doxa is a point of view of the dominant, which generally presents itself as a universal view (Bourdieu 1998). The doxa in this case is that green activists, farmers, and tree changers have competing interests or non-aligned views. This discourse will be explored further in this paper when we outline some of the narratives of the protesters. Pierre Bourdieu claims doxa is orthodoxy, a primordial political belief.

> ... It should not be forgotten that such a primordial political belief, this doxa, is orthodoxy, a right, correct, dominant vision which has more often than not been imposed through struggles against

> competing visions. This means that the 'natural attitude' … that is, the primary experience of the world of common sense, is a politically produced relation, as are the categories of perception that sustain it (Bourdieu 1998:56-57).

Illusio is from the Latin word 'ludas', meaning game, for example being in the game, or being caught up in the game, believing the game is worth playing or having a feel for the game (Bourdieu 1998). Developing a mastery of the practice of the game is relevant to the experiences of the coal seam gas protestors and why they are interested in the campaign. As Bourdieu claims,

> In fact the word interest initially mean precisely what I include under the notion of illusio, that is, the fact of attributing importance to the social game, the fact that what happens matters to those who are engaged in it, who are in the game. Interest is to 'be there' to participate, to admit the game is worth playing, and the stakes created in and through the fact of playing are worth pursuing; it is to recognise the game and recognise its stakes (Bourdieu 1998:76-77).

In this campaign the protesters see the importance of the campaign and they want it to be successful. Success means suspending the long held doxa of perceived negative discourses about radical environmental activists or greenies. These activists are learning how to play the game of protest.

Coal Seam Gas campaigning

Public interest in environmental issues has significantly increased in Australia in the past two decades (Flowers & Chodkiewicz 2009). Issues such as climate change and land conservation have long been concerns for environmental activists. One of the important roles of environmental movements and NGO's is to 'bring about behavioral and social change for sustainability' (Flowers & Chodkiewicz 2009:298). In recent years the mining of large multi nation companies by horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for gas, has emerged as a major environmental concern in Australia (Lloyd, Luke & Boyd 2013). As Willow claims:

> In recent years, the merger of horizontal drilling and hydraulic

> fracturing (often shorthanded as fracking) techniques has made the extraction of fossil fuels from deep shale rock layers feasible and lucrative (Willow 2014).

In the food belt of Victoria an unlikely coalition of people have joined together to prevent multinational mining companies from 'fracking' for coal seam gas. Here seasoned environmental activists involved with FOE, farmers, tree changers and concerned community members, have formed an improbable alliance to educate the community about the dangers of fracking for coal seam gas. In Australia and elsewhere internationally, as large multinational resource companies search for gas in a market with increasingly depleted gas resources, fracking for coal seam gas has become an attractive proposition. (Lloyd, Luke & Boyd 2013). In Australia, fracking for coal seam gas has become a prominent issue of concern for farming communities, where the imposition of hydraulic fracking has the potential to contaminate important water and land resources. Moreover, a coalition of rural community groups has formed across Australia under the broad banner of 'Lock the Gate Alliance' (Lloyd, Luke & Boyd 2013). There are three central concerns of the community organizers involved in the campaign. Firstly, the risk to the Australia's best food producing land and natural environment is important. Secondly, Australia is one of the driest continents on the planet with water resources becoming increasingly scarce; protesters believe the current mining boom will inevitably impact on water purity. A third and final concern is the impact of pollution through mining on the air as well as water quality. The Lock the Gate Coalition argues the impact on community life in rural communities is dramatic, drawing on international research about the impact of fracking for coal seam gas resources and armed with several case studies of farmers' experiences of mining companies using their land to mine (http://www.lockthegate.org.au/impacts). This coalition of activist groups and their successful campaign have managed to stop the production of coal seam gas in Victoria. Significantly, the coalition of Lock the Gate and FOE have been able to secure an indefinite broad based moratorium on mining.

The narratives in the dialogue listed below reveal the agency of these coal seam gas campaigners. Amy has had a long-term involvement in the environment movement, Gail is a local resident of Poowong and John is a retired small business owner who now owns a farm in Poowong in

Gippsland. Both John and Gail are newcomers to protest and have never been involved in a major campaign before participating in the Lock the Gate Alliance. As several activists have argued, the impact of coal seam gas on their land and community was the driver for their participation in the protest.

Amy says:

> Well initially it disturbed me greatly to think that our food bowl in Gippsland would be destroyed and the water would be contaminated. It's a great risk I feel, [in] Gippsland, and because I'm retired, and because I've always been I suppose caring of the environment or always like to think I've lived as sustainably as possible I thought 'yes this is something that needs help and I'm prepared, [to do something] I'm quite passionate about it'… .

Gail says:

> … this is an issue that touches all parts of our lives. So I mentioned social and I mentioned environmental as well. So there's the education on 'what is the environmental impact' which is something you have to research and you make a conclusion. You draw your conclusions and say 'is this acceptable', 'is this the only alternative we have', 'are there better alternatives' … .

John says:

> Yeah my word, once you contaminate the ground that's it - finished. They've proven that, in America they've proven it and Queensland and New South Wales are now learning the problem, we can't afford to have it.

What do the CSG protesters learn?

Most of the participants in the research are circumstantial activists; as previously stated circumstantial activists are those activists who come to protest due to a life issue, a crisis, an event an issue that effects them politically or personally. The event is often disruptive in some way, for many of these activists they must protest in response to this disruption or conflict. The disruption gives them important agency and drive, which builds a desire for knowledge so that they can resolve the conflict or disruption. Most of the CSG protesters, unlike lifelong activists, have not participated in protest and campaigns in their youth. They have not been involved in student politics or socialist, labor or political movements normally associated with 'left' politics. Moreover, the geographical location in central Gippsland is traditionally a conservative electorate. Most of the protesters have not been involved in broad based political social movements. Furthermore, some of the coal seam gas protesters are quite antithetical to radical environmentalists or greenies. It should be noted however, that in many rural farming communities people are often involved in local community issues. Furthermore, there is a long history of farmers pushing back against bank foreclosures, due to drought and loss of income. It has been argued the 'rural' community is a complex social space of education where important community practice within that social space is often misunderstood (Reid et al. 2010).

Furthermore some of the protestors are still establishing their identity about whether they are an activist, or whether they belong to a social movement (Jasper & Goodwin 2004). When the protesters were asked if they identified as an activist they responded with the following. Gail says her participation in the campaign is because she has a duty of care to the environment:

> 'No I don't really see myself as an activist. I was in New Zealand and they had a placard and it read 'I am not protesting against, It is my duty to care for', it was something in that wording and I thought 'yeah it's not actually about anything but it is a duty of care'.

John says he doesn't identify as an activist at all, but just another person who's concerned about coal seam gas. When he was asked if he identified as an activist he stated, 'no, I don't - I'm just another anti-coal seam gas bloke'. Tim a retired engineer and tree changer is adamant that he is not an activist and claims, 'I'm not an activist - I'm a concerned resident!' On the other hand Tina's involvement in the campaign has changed her identity and perception of herself, she states she now views herself as an activist when she never did before:

> Yes I do now I never did before, definitely so then you define

> activist, I'm not a direct action one, no that does not interest me at all, I will go to protests, but mind you when we did the Gippsland one (rally) I was certainly in your face down there and got on to a you-tube video. - Tina

Most of the protesters in the campaign learn a great deal through self-directed learning. They learn about global systems of inequality such as neo-liberalism and the imperatives of growth, profits and business interests. The majority of this education occurs through searching the Internet about the impact of fracking on the environment, and through socialising with other members of the campaign group. As Gail claims:

> I've spent literally hundreds and hundreds of hours trying to educate myself, you can feel strongly about something, but unless you know what you're talking about, you would be very unwise to go and speak to other people.

Bourdieu (1984) argues the knowledge of the autodidact is not given prominence in the hierarchy of knowledge because it is not legitimized and sanctioned by an educational institution through set curriculum and assessment and recognised or credentialed through formal qualifications or by what he refers to as the scholastic mode of production. Adult education literature and research has shown that most adults learn for most of their lives, in formal and non-formal settings (Beckett & Hager 2002; Billet 2004). However, we now know that a majority of this learning also takes place informally through socialisation. Education is an all encompassing process which often preserves dominant cultures and practices, but also provides an opportunity for reflection as well critique (Sandlin, Schultz & Burdick 2010). Activists' practice is learned through socialization and communication with other activists. In regards to the CSG protesters they develop incremental knowledge from more experienced activists and by observing both the effective and poor practice of other campaigners, they learn more experiential and communicative practices, conducted through embodied protest actions. Education is located not in the activities of the teacher, nor in the activities of the learner, learning occurs in the social interaction that occurs between both teacher and learner. Learning is embedded through social interaction in the everyday activities of being engaged with a group of campaigners. An important theme arising from the research is the protesters frequently referred to learning from the more experienced campaigners from FOE.

Tina says:

> At that stage FOE was coming to every community meeting by industry and Quit Coal, so it was a huge effort on their behalf and very well appreciated because they had the experience, although there was so much they didn't know about the local community.

Gail says:

> FOE is quite extraordinary, I'll be quite honest and everybody is willing to give you help, you're never given the brush off no matter how ignorant you are. I think definitely the training, you do the training, but you also get a lot of literature as well that you can read at your own leisure.

FOE has also been instrumental in providing some formal training on using the media and direct action practice. Through socialization in the field of the campaign with other activists, the data has shown the protesters learn community development skills such as, letter writing, how to lobby a politician, an understanding of policy, group work skills such as communication, facilitation skills and the everyday functions of running a meeting. Moreover, they learn event management skills such as how to run a rally, with large amounts of people, how to negotiate safety of people in a large event, how to liaise with police and use the media. They learn to think strategically about systems and structures that advance or impede the progress of their campaign. Tim's comment below shows his critically cognitive practice:

> … You can see companies wrecking the place, destroying the habitat I suppose, peoples livelihoods with no consideration at all for the future and our politicians are letting that happen and I can see the criminal aspect of that, it mightn't be law type criminal but it is criminal to society and human behaviour, if you like and respect for everybody rather than just the hip pocket!

John says he has learned about the social, economic and political realities of coal seam gas mining and the potential impact on the land by reading, thinking and listening to other people in the alliance and through observing the practice of others. As he claims 'I just read and look and listen and observe'. A common theme of those interviewed for the research is the role that most have played in educating the community about the risks of coal seam gas. This has included holding public forums and meetings, speaking at community forums and holding a stall at local events. In addition community education has taken place by selling hundreds of lock the gate protest signs, which are now fixed to the gates of farms all over central Gippsland. Education is always an important part of any campaign as Jose Dineras- Peiras writes:

> Activist educators are educators, whether school teachers or not, who are engaged in the collective social struggles for the liberatory transformation of the status quo. Their main purpose is to help to construct a more just and humane society in which everybody's rights are respected and in which one cultivates the principle that nothing is impossible to change. In this sense activist educators are 'dreamers' because they really believe that it is possible to construct a different society, they actively participate in trying to realize this dream by laying the foundations of deep structural changes in their current societies (2013:p1).

The activist dreamers in the coal seam gas protests are educating the public about the risks associated with fracking and the subsequent costs to the environment now and for generations to come.

Developing a 'feel' for the game of activism

A significant early theme arising from the research has been the role that FOE has played in resourcing the group of protesters. FOE is a radical global environmental NGO, recognised for it's green politics. Indeed, in Victoria the organization still operates as a collective amidst an environment of NGO's that have become corporatised. Here FOE organizers have played a role as conduit between the NGO and Lock the Gate campaigners within the field of the campaign and broader social movement. Bourdieu (1977) has argued that in every social space (field) certain practices and dispositions are played out to create a habitus, it is here the CSG protesters learn the dispositions to practice effectively. In the case of the Lock the Gate campaign, here several fields join together. The fields consist of, the non government organization FOE, the national Lock the Gate Alliance and the field of the central Gippsland campaigners to form what Crossley argues is a 'radical habitus'(Crossley 2002). As Crossley has written Bourdieu's theory of habitus is able to provide an epistemology that allows us to understand how societies and certain social practices are played out and or are reproduced:

> His notion of the habitus as both structured and structuring, a product and producer of social worlds, for example, captures both the embodied-performative aspect of social structures, and the mechanism whereby they are transmitted across generations and through historic time (Crossley 2003:43).

The partnership is important. FOE has resourced the group with information, provided spaces for informal learning to occur, but have also provided formal media training and information about direct action practices. As Bourdieu claims:

> Because the habitus is an infinite capacity for generating products - thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions - whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production … (Bourdieu 1977:79)

One of the consistent themes from the data has revealed the enormous admiration the protesters have for the skills, practices and abilities of FOE organisers; this was observed over and over again. The 'symbolic capital' that is brought to the field by the FOE organizers has been necessary and attractive. It is interesting to note Bourdieu's concepts of 'doxa' and 'illusio' are relevant to this field. As previously stated, doxa denotes ideas and discourses that are taken for granted in any social world. Bourdieu's concept of illusio outlines a belief in the game of protest that the campaigners have collectively agreed to play (Bourdieu 1977, 1998). The newcomer coal seam gas protesters entrenched 'doxa' is the taken for granted view that the interest of environmental activists could not ever possibly be aligned with the interests of farmers. Here Bourdieu's concept of 'illusio' for the game is being played out in relation to the identificatory dispositions of the protestors outlined above, and the rejection of the dispositions of being a greenie. Moreover, the illusio of the protesters towards the FOE organizers has allowed them to suspend their understanding of what they perceive to be the realities of the 'game' of protest. That is, that the very FOE organizers the campaigners admire so much have the dispositions and practices they would associate with being a 'greenie'. We argue the community development processes and practices undertaken by FOE of resourcing the alliance, building community, providing an informal space for knowledge development, informal learning and formal training, has undermined the doxa of antipathy towards the 'green movement'. Illusio has allowed the protesters to buy in to the game of protest because they have made an investment in the game and a successful one at that. These protesters believe they can undermine, delay or even win the campaign against coal seam gas exploration in Victoria.

An emerging conclusion

In this paper we have outlined some of the early findings from our research project into adult learning in the coal seam gas protests, in central Gippsland. Here a disparate group of campaigners have been effective in establishing a broad based moratorium on coal seam gas exploration in Victoria. The educational dimensions of these campaigners have shown they develop a broad range of community development skills by participating in informal and formal learning in the situated site of protest. They learn from observing the practices of the more experienced activists from the NGO FOE. We have argued there are several overlapping 'fields' in this campaign that allow a radical habitus of activism to form. Using Bourdieu's concepts of doxa and illusio we uncover the contradictions and long held beliefs about green activists and how these beliefs are suspended in order for the campaign to be successful. Finally, we argue the situated site of protest is a rich space for adult learning to occur. These activist educators are teaching the world about the impact of coal seam gas fracking on the environment.

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Assessing the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign: A developmental evaluation

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In this article we explicate our way of assessing the South African Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign, and in particular its impact in the Eastern Cape. We provide an account primarily of focus group sessions conducted in 2013 and again in 2014 with volunteer educators and past learners in the campaign. We concentrate on the way in which relationships with these participants and with coordinators in the province were established towards the creation of findings. We outline how our evaluative purpose could be seen as incorporating a social justice agenda (as in developmental evaluation) in that it was aimed at strengthening literacy initiatives as a human right. We conclude with some considerations around catalytic validity as a criterion for judging research practices. We reflect upon how this notion of validity can justify our research as being directed towards potentially activating further options for literacy initiatives to contribute to personal and community development.

Keywords: *developmental evaluation, literacy initiatives, catalytic validity*

Introduction

This article discusses our assessment of the South African Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign in the Eastern Cape and our way of promoting the use of 'findings'.[1] Our assessment is theoretically grounded in what Patton (1994) has named Developmental Evaluation (DE). To date DE has been used largely as a consulting tool, with few accounts of how it can be classed as, and fulfil the functions of, 'research' (Rey, Tremblay, & Brouselle, 2014). In this article we extend the research component of DE.

Our article is structured as follows. To begin with, we indicate that DE can be interpreted as containing an injunction to work collaboratively with participants towards improving broadly-defined social justice outcomes. This implies supporting (more-or-less) marginalised participants in the social fabric. We proceed to show how we tried to practice such an approach when assessing the impact of the Kha Ri Gude Campaign. We point to our way of interacting with the various participants. We discuss our manner of research reporting so that the report could become utilised for purposes of advancing literacy initiatives. We conclude with some considerations around the notion of catalytic validity as a way to substantiate the research.

Developmental evaluation: A participatory process

When outlining his view of Development Evaluation, Patton argues that the collaboration between the evaluator and the stakeholders who are 'most deeply involved with the evaluation, should be based on participatory and dialogue-driven process' (Patton, 2011:13).[2] The ultimate social aim is to support 'social innovators and social entrepreneurs, especially those working on issues of human rights and equity, [who] are typically trying to bring about fundamental changes in systems to change the world' (Patton, 2012:105-106).

As Reynolds also summarises, the focus in developmental evaluation is on how to change systems by developing the capacities of agents (Reynolds, 2014:79). Reynolds furthermore reminds us that questions of power relations and the way of justifying knowledge claims (epistemological questions) as well as questions regarding political and ethical issues always become invoked when doing evaluations

(Reynolds, 2014:75). (See also Bawden, 2007; Gregory, Romm, & Walsh, 1994; Gregory & Romm, 2004; Midgley, 2007; Wadsworth, 2010.)

Mertens has expressed a similar idea when noting that a social justice theory of ethics—which she believes should underpin both research and evaluation—'leads to an awareness of the need to redress inequalities by giving precedence, or at least equal weight, to the voice of the least advantaged groups in society' (Mertens, 2007:87).[3] Howard et al. (2008:488) likewise refer to the importance of taking into account that in research concerned with social inclusion, one needs to be particularly alert to the possibility of developing 'trust, respect, integrity, dignity and rapport' with participants who may be more or less socially excluded (disadvantaged). In subsequent sections of this article we indicate how we tried to incorporate these ethical principles, while being conversant with the human rights associated with literacy education. (See also Merriam & Kee, 2014:141, regarding rights to literacy and to lifelong learning.) Our manner of proceeding can be said to be in keeping with Bristol's point (Bristol, 2012:16) that postcolonial educational research (underpinned by postcolonial theory) reviews 'what counts as research' in contexts with a history of colonisation (as, for example, in the South African context) as discussed below.

Background to the Kha Ri Gude Campaign

With the inception of a democratic government in 1994, the post-1994 policies that were promulgated were aimed at redress across the country's institutions, including educational ones. Backlogs in adult education were particularly problematic, because during the apartheid era, Black people were excluded from free and compulsory education. Zeelen, Rampedi and Van der Linden explain the apartheid legacy pertaining to education as follows:

> The legacy for the newly chosen government consisted of racially embedded poverty and inequality, reflected in the educational system with its strong separation between education for Whites and education for Blacks. Blacks were allowed access [which in any case was not compulsory] only to underfunded and ill-equipped so-called *bantu education*. (2014:22)

The Kha Ri Gude South African Mass Literacy Campaign was launched by the government in 2008 with the intention to address the backlogs of illiteracy, with the understanding that literacy can enable adults to play an important role in social development by expanding their life choices, particularly for those who have had no or little basic schooling (McKay, 2010, 2012). In 2008, the government estimated that:

> Illiteracy rates in South Africa are high and stand at about 24 percent of the population over 15 years of age: 4.7 million adults never went to school, and further 4.9 million are functionally illiterate. Provinces with the largest number of illiterate people are KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, followed by Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West. The lowest numbers occur in the Free State, the Northern Cape and the Western Cape. The language groups most affected are isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sesotho sa Leboa. (South African Government, 2009) [4]

The campaign is organised using a cascade model, where educators (called volunteer educators albeit that they receive a stipend) are supervised, trained and supported by supervisors and coordinators. The cascade model entails a ratio of 18 learners per educator. Groups of 10 educators are supported by a supervisor who is overseen by a coordinator. By 2012, 2.8 million illiterate learners had become literate, with teaching delivered by 40,000 educators, who were managed by approximately 4000 supervisors and 400 coordinators (Department of Basic Education, South Africa, 2012). Learner retention for the learners was very high - about 92% country-wide - with nearly all learners graduating (http://www.education.gov.za/Home/KhaRiGudeWorkshop/tabid/857/Default.aspx). As far as the content of the curriculum is concerned, McKay (2012) indicates that the materials that were established for the campaign, were intentionally attuned to optimise the social, economic and developmental opportunities of literacy as connected with the Milleniuim Development Goals (MDGs). The campaign core materials were organised using certain themes in order to contextualise the learning around developmental outcomes, namely: learning to learn, my family, my home, the world of work, living a healthy life, the environment, our communities, South Africa and the world around us (McKay, 2010).

Volunteer educators are meanwhile advised (through their training) to try to instil a sense of positive interdependence (community co-operation) within their classes, and to encourage adult learners to find ways of co-operating further outside of the classes (such as, for example, by setting up co-operatives). The encouragement of a spirit of co-operative enterprise can be (theoretically) connected with what Lavia and Mahlomaholo (2012:6) call the development of a 'postcolonial imagination' in the sense of 'projecting alternative ways of knowing, doing and being'—that is, as alternatives to the capitalist project embedded in colonialism. The training also draws on Freire's notion of education as enabling people to participate in the construction of their futures. (Freire considers that people can re-envision and reshape their ways of living and thus participate in society's historical process—1994:256). Space in this article does not allow for a full discussion hereof, but Quan-Baffour and Romm (2015) recount, and reflect in detail upon, some exemplars of how literacy education in the South African context can function to generate an alternative to capitalist-geared (dehumanised) social and economic relationships.[5]

The evaluation (impact assessment) of the campaign: Research design and process

The research to which we refer in this article was conducted as part of a larger impact assessment of the Kha Ri Gude Campaign that is being undertaken by the University of South Africa (Unisa). The Director General of the National Department of Basic Education granted formal permission for this in 2013. The research is currently being undertaken in three provinces: Kwa-Zulu Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape.

The research design as a whole involves various methods, viz: focus group sessions with past learners and volunteer educators (VEs); interviews with Kha Ri Gude supervisors and coordinators; visits to projects undertaken by Kha Ri Gude graduates (with VEs and/or coordinators who are also involved); analysis of sections of learners' assessment portfolios; and analysis of some government-collected data pertaining to, for example, geographical regions, and learners' ages, gender and employment status.

In this article we report on two visits of three days each in the Eastern Cape, primarily to organise focus groups but also to see what projects Kha Ri Gude graduates had been able to set up further to their involvement in the campaign. In the first visit, which took place in August 2013 (led by Dichaba of this article, who was accompanied by two colleagues[6]) the research involved facilitating three focus group sessions (with past learners and a few VEs), as well as speaking at length to coordinators in Umtata and Port St Johns (and to the super-coordinator of the province). As planned, we visited some project sites—in particular, a bakery that was being run by Kha Ri Gude graduates with a coordinator, and also some poultry enterprises.

In the second visit, which occurred in August 2014 (led by Romm of this article, with Dichaba and another colleague[7]) we organised some 'member checking' and discussed and elaborated upon our draft findings (with participants and coordinators). We also conducted some further focus groups (this time with the coordinators facilitating); and we visited the bakery again, as well as another project—a pre-school that had been built by members of the community. As part of this community project, a Kha Ri Gude graduate was volunteering her services to help pre-school children, using materials that she had from the Kha Ri Gude classes. Community members had also started an associated vegetable garden to feed the children.

Sampling: Our way of accessing the participants (and their self-selection in visit 2)

We drew on some chosen coordinators within the province to arrange samples of learners and volunteer educators for all the focus groups. In the first visit the focus group sessions (two groups in Umtata and one group in Port St Johns) were limited to the numbers advised within the focus group literature, namely about 8 members each (cf. Liamputtong, 2011; Ndimande, 2012). These members agreed to take part in the group sessions when approached by the coordinators, after the coordinators explained to them what the research was about, namely to assess the possible personal and community impact of the Kha Ri Gude Campaign. (Participants ranged between the ages of 30 and 75, with the majority being in their 50s and 60s.) Whether if another sampling method was used we would have arrived at different insights, is impossible to say; but it is noteworthy that across all the focus groups that were conducted in this and in other provinces, the 'findings' were very similar, with similar positive impacts as well as challenges being reported (as we indicate below).

What we need to mention here, is that on the second visit to the province far more than the recommended 8 participants (as recommended by the literature) joined the sessions. The main reason for this, as explained to us by the coordinators, was that in between the first and second visits, the campaign arrangements had become drastically reduced—with communications between the coordinators/super-coordinator and the CEO in charge of the campaign (not the same person in charge as the person prior to 2012) having become tense and frustrating. The 'extra' people attending the various 'focus group' sessions at all the sites, including many would-be learners for 2014 and additional supervisors, coordinators and monitors, and even headmen of the village and chiefs (including a female chief) were all present to show us (the Unisa team) that they were disappointed with the reduction/stoppage of the campaign, as classes had not yet begun this year (2014).

Clearly, *we had little control in this case over the sampling,* as people chose to enter the sessions with agendas that were important to them. We do not regard this as problematic, but indeed as an expression of agency on the part of self-chosen participants and as an expression of their trying to set agendas and express voice, much as is advised by authors such as Mertens (2007) and Chilisa (2012), to equalise the researcher/participant relationship.

Focus Group Field Guide

The guiding questions were prepared by a team (led by Romm) that was tasked with preparing some questions, which were later discussed with all the research project members. The final guide was finalised by Romm (see Appendix 1), with comments for facilitators to bear in mind. The boxed material to follow contains Romm's comments to all the facilitators, which are relevant to our ethical position.

Focus group facilitators: Please remember to say that ‘today we are all together re-looking at any impact that your involvement in the Kha Ri Gude program may have had on you or whether you feel it did not have an impact’.

In the beginning while everyone is introducing themselves you can ask them to tell you roughly their age and when they joined the campaign (what year). And you can record on your note pad how many women and men there are. So we will have these 3 pieces of info about the participants in each group. Then you can start with the questions (as your guide). Remember to do some ‘checking’ along the way that you are hearing well what they are saying; and give them the opportunity to tell you if they want to add or modify your interpretation of what they are saying. You can also make summary statements along the way and check these with participants. This shows that you are listening carefully to them and they will appreciate this, while also feeling that you are giving them a chance to give commentary on your interpretation of the gist of the discussion.

Member checking and reporting/discussing interpretations

Further to our first visit, the Eastern Cape team of colleagues prepared a power point presentation. This was presented orally by Dichaba (with the help of a coordinator/translator) to the participants from 2013 who attended the focus group sessions in August 2014. As can be seen from the boxed section above, Romm had recommended to all staff facilitators already during the first visit to arrange a kind of ‘member checking’ while the focus group sessions were being run, by ‘checking’ from time to time the meaning of what participants were saying and by summarising and asking if the summary was sound. But in August 2014 we did some further member checking as Dichaba presented the various points that were on the slides. We stopped intermittently to ask if people wished to add or modify points that were being made. At most points, people were nodding in affirmative when Dichaba asked if this resonated with what had been said on the previous visit.

However, at one point a modification was requested. This was when Dichaba spoke about projects that had been successfully set up thanks to the learning that members had achieved via Kha Ri Gude and also thanks to their meeting people with whom they could form groups (co-operatives). Some graduates indicated that they were experiencing challenges on various scores. For instance, the poultry enterprises that they had set up, had failed as the chickens caught diseases. They said that they would need to learn about medication for chickens and also would need to get some support in organising this. Also, some other projects too had failed as the graduates did not have sufficient business acumen and so they had not kept any money aside to re-invest in the project (and also they indicated that they probably were not pricing their goods such that the business would be sustainable). They therefore requested that Kha Ri Gude should be extended in a variety of ways, to train them further.

When Romm asked the participants to comment as a whole on their response to the presentation, one person (speaking on behalf of the group) stated that:

> *This is what we said [on the previous occasion]. We are happy to see that everything has been written down. It is not like we are speaking and everything is forgotten. We are hoping that next time something will come out of the things that we had said.*

Romm then asked ‘how did you experience the whole of today?’ And one of the participants responded:

> *Even today we are happy that people have come and want to know how we are feeling about everything about Kha Ri Gude. You want to know our needs and this gives us hope as well.*

Space here does not permit a discussion of the additional focus group sessions that we held on the second visit or the additional project site visits. But the above offers a glimpse of how we set up a relationship with people where they were happy to see us and hoped that through our - as well as their - involvement, the campaign could be strengthened.

The next day we were invited to a meeting which had been arranged by the super-coordinator in order to discuss the dire state of the campaign.

(Political) Meeting at Tombo Hall, Port St Johns

This meeting (attended by about 500 people) had been arranged for monitors, coordinators, supervisors and VEs from various districts across the Eastern Cape to attend. The super-coordinator of the campaign in the province opened the discussion by indicating that 'we all know why we are here' (namely, to speak about the 'vanishing' of Kha Ri Gude in the province). She said that she did not know why it had 'vanished' as she was unable to get an answer from the government on this. She said that she would like 'our visitors' (us three from the university) to be aware of this meeting and of their concerns. The person chairing the meeting then indicated that a person representing the monitors would have a chance to speak and also a person representing the coordinators and one representing the supervisors. During their presentations, all expressed a failure in the lines of communication with the relevant government personnel.

The person chairing the meeting stated that some government communications had suggested that certain districts were now exhausted for Kha Ri Gude and did not require further classes while others needed it. But as it happened, he argued, many areas that they were told still needed classes were also cut off. So the reasoning that was supplied to them for the drastic cuts does not make sense.

During the meeting, he asked us (from the university) what kind of response we could give to their grievances. Our colleague then took the floor and said that we appreciated that they had chosen to set up this meeting when we came to evaluate the Kha Ri Gude Campaign in this province and that through the reporting process we would do the best we could to report back within the university and hopefully, due to the relationship between Unisa and the government, the message would also reach the government through the person responsible for community engagement in our college at the university.

Our reporting and its possible usefulness for participants

After the second visit we sent our draft report (via email) to the coordinators who had coordinated our visits. This is how we phrased our request for comment hereon: 'The document is in draft form so please feel free to make any suggestions—additions, deletions modifications'.

Further to this, one of them stated via email that: ‘Your report is well written as it included all the details of our visits. All aspects necessary are included’. Another offered suggestions, especially in regard to our one point (in the draft report point referring to women’s participation in community meetings): see our summary findings below in our account of the gist of our report. Also, this coordinator wanted it highlighted in our discussion of challenges that, as she put it, many of the projects that Kha Ri Gude graduates had set up ‘lack sustainability skills’ (see our last bullet point in our account under the heading of challenges).

In addition, Romm discussed the draft report with the super-coordinator orally (as they had an opportunity to meet soon thereafter): the focus of the discussion was the potential usefulness of the report. We discussed that possibly it could be used as one of the bases for her writing a letter to the Minister of Basic Education, expressing a plea to revive the campaign. (She indicated to Romm that she had arranged an additional meeting with co-ordinators already to further discuss strategy and that at that meeting she could obtain signatures to append to the letter.) She also at the same time handed over to Romm a video that had been made of the earlier meeting—for us to give to the person in charge of community engagement projects in Unisa’s College of Education. This person subsequently arranged that a leader in the community who is well connected (including with various people in government) use it as a basis for writing to the Presidency. (A visit to the Presidency indeed also took place.) In a later email to Romm (November 2014), one of the co-ordinators offered us the update that ‘Kha Ri Gude is back in our region but out of 23 districts it’s 10 districts now, at least it’s better than nothing’.

The gist of our report

As indicated above, our report on the provincial visit (Romm, Dichaba, Anakoka, 2014), was written in a style that bore in mind its ‘accessibility’ for those wishing to use it for furthering literacy initiatives. Our report was combined with other provincial visits before being sent to the College of Education and the community engagement directorate of the university. In our report we highlighted what we perceived as having come out very strongly as benefits for learners in terms of their sense of personal and community wellbeing.

Participants' expressions of a sense of self-reliance included that:

- They are able to go to the bank (or use ATM machines) without relying on literate persons to help them.
- They are not cheated by others when they ask them to get airtime on their phones for them.
- They can send sms's and can read sms's and can type numbers in when wanting to communicate with people.
- They have learned a lot about various illnesses—e.g. HIV and AIDS and TB and also the value of cleanliness.
- They can read the hymns when these are sung at Church; and when they are told to open a section in the Bible to read it, they are able to do this.
- They also learned the value of starting their own gardens as ways of sustaining themselves and many do do this—although they still could do with more support e.g. in terms of getting seeds or in terms of options for water. (At present they are fetching water from distant rivers.)

Increased involvement in their communities included participant activities such as:

- They are chosen for leadership positions in the community. For example, many of them now serve on the School Governing Bodies [SGBs] and they also take leadership positions e.g. in the Church, where some of them are treasurers.
- They can help their own children with school work and also other children—in one centre a Kha Ri Gude graduate is volunteering her services for the pre-school that was created by the community.
- Their confidence and self-esteem has increased and therefore they are able to participate actively in community meetings; and now that their roles as modern women are clearly defined they can help, support, and counsel other women and their

own children when a need arises.

- Because they meet each other in the classes, opportunities become created for starting projects - e.g. the bakery project is run by Kha Ri Gude graduates who trust each other and the pre-school initiative (a voluntary one) also involved Kha Ri Gude graduates. Also some have set up beadwork groups and gardens in groups.
- The spirit of teamwork has affected many of them in terms of setting up small projects and also doing voluntary work in the community - for example, some mentioned fetching wood for the school or they give other children food and clothes.
- They have gained more respect in the community because of being graduates.

Further to their involvement in the campaign, most of the learners would like to continue their education: some mentioned they would like to go up to matric and even further. The VEs too would like to further their education (e.g. via Unisa).

Notably, all of these expressions of the participants are in line with the MDGs mentioned in our background discussion to the campaign above. These goals became ‘lived’ for the vast majority of the participants in that they felt more confidently engaged in economic, social and political life.

As part of our report, we also noted certain challenges:

- *Six months is not sufficient for them to learn*. Most learners felt that they needed more time to consolidate their knowledge and also some additional extra knowledge is needed, such as learning how to price goods if they start a business and how to save sufficient for re-investment in the project.
- *Many felt that further skills training and further study is essential.*
- Many of them feel that their businesses suffer because they do not have the *basic machinery* such as a sewing machine or a

machine for sewing shoes.

- Many do not know how to access *seeds for gardens (besides water being a challenge).*
- They are very eager and can set up their own projects, but the little profit they receive they use for their day-to-day needs instead of saving the money or using it for project needs. The project therefore can collapse (as happened to the poultry project that they were proud of in 2013). Often the projects lack sustainability skills.

Our recommendations to the government were that**:**

- *Kha Ri Gude should become extended beyond 6 months* so that learning (literacy and numeracy) can be consolidated. Also, this longer period would enable the curriculum to be to 'beefed up' to include business skills training and how to manage projects (and basic pricing and re-investment into the business). Graduates also *need other skills training*, e.g. advanced sewing (to make school uniforms), poultry management (including disease management), shoe-making and repairing, using recycling material to make products, etc.
- *Abet [Adult Basic Education and Training] level 2 should also be offered by Kha Ri Gude* (by using the same model of reaching learners) so that learners have access to the learning sites.
- *The government should take a more active role in linking up various organisations with Kha Ri Gude graduates* (e.g. through the coordinators) so that they can be supported in their further activities in setting up small businesses and maintaining these and scaling them up. These can be NGOs, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Social Development, etc., where links should be made with Kha Ri Gude learners to look for further options for development.
- The drastic reduction of the Kha Ri Gude program especially in 2014 *needs to be looked into and reconsidered,* as the

> campaign has the promise of making such a vast difference in the lives of all those involved in it (including others in the community who benefit from having knowledgeable, caring and confident people in their midst, thanks in large part to the Kha Ri Gude process).

Besides our hoping to influence the relevant government officials to consider re-working the campaign accordingly, we also pointed out in our report that the university community engagement directorate can consider ways in which it can play a role in supporting continuing initiatives to strengthen the impact of the Kha Ri Gude Campaign. At the time of writing this article, we have sent a proposal to this directorate which is awaiting approval.

Concluding remarks: Catalytic validity for justifying research embracing a transformative agenda

In postcolonial educational research, as Bristol notes, it is vital that research should incite what she calls the 'construction of a social imagination', to regenerate ways of being in society that have become sidelined through the history of colonisation (2012:22). Our report outlined, *inter alia*, the ways of living that could be revitalised by linking literacy initiatives to personal and community wellbeing; and we suggested options for various players to take into account accordingly. Hence, as stated earlier, Romm suggested to the super-coordinator of the province that she could use our report in correspondence that she enters into with, for e.g. the Minister of Education.

The problem of communication breakdown with Government and the role of our reporting

The government is one of the stakeholders in this program, as they are funding and organising it. In the stance that we took in the report, we noted the communication breakdown as specified by the people to whom we spoke, and as evident from the accounts that we heard at the meeting at Tombo. In this case, we considered that since literacy is a human right (cf. Merrian & Kee, 2014:141) and given the goals as initially specified by the government, our duty was to show care for those most in need. These were mainly the would-be learners (for 2014) and the VEs (who benefit from the stipend they get from organising the literacy classes, in that they can help to support their families and also enrol for further education). The payments to supervisors and coordinators for their work also injects money into these poverty-rife areas. Hence we did feel an allegiance to support these prime participants, especially after hearing the expressed account of the value of the campaign to those to whom we spoke, and their reasons for advocating a strengthening of the campaign. We ourselves did not shy from supporting the ideal of literacy tied to development as built into the intentions of the campaign.

Besides constructing our report, our reporting process involved orally discussing the results of our evaluation with people who have actioning power within the university, in terms of their connections with the government and also in terms of their connections with community leaders who can take on advocacy roles. And we also liaised with research participants, and especially the super-coordinator, in defining how the report might be used.

The notion of catalytic validity

Lather (1986) is well-known for using the term *catalytic validity* as one way of defining how research processes can attain validity other than through the search for so-called 'truth' as representation of some posited realities (as in positivist and post-positivist-oriented approaches to research validation). She argues that research can never be a 'pure' description/explanation, purified of researchers' concerns (Lather, 1986:64). Furthermore, it is never neutral in its social consequences. She points to the importance of recognising 'the reality-altering impact' of the research process (1986:67). Given that research is always reality-altering in some way or another, it is preferable to consciously channel it towards advancing an experience of 'self-determination' of participants (which can be linked to community development, as shown above).

Ozanne and Anderson offer an additional angle on this, which pertains specifically to Community Action Research (CAR), but can also be applied in DE as a community-supportive approach. They define catalytic validity in their CAR project as 'the extent to which people were energised to be involved in and continue the work' (Ozanne & Anderson, 2010:134-135). That is, by virtue of participating in the research process, participants found options for additional (transformative) action, which the research served to catalyse.

Chilisa takes this point yet further. She suggests that researchers/evaluators can indeed become involved in training people in 'specific forms of social and political action' if participants request this. In any case, she argues that within what she calls postcolonial research paradigms some 'prompting of action' on the part of participants (towards increased empowerment) is likely to take place via the research, so that the research then becomes valid in terms of the criterion of catalytic validity (Chilisa, 2012:172).

In similar vein, Bristol (2012:16) expresses that in postcolonial research, agents are ideally energised towards nurturing 'educational transformation' (linked to Indigenous understandings of valued ways of being) and the research is judged as worthy insofar as people become thus energised/empowered.

These accounts of catalytic validity indicate how it can serve to validate research in terms of a pragmatically-oriented epistemology. Within a constructivist approach to knowing with a transformative or pragmatic twist (cf. Chilisa, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Romm, 2006, 2014 a,b), the distinction between 'research' as an *enterprise of developing social reality-construction* and 'evaluation' as *an enterprise aimed at advancing empowerment/social justice*, admittedly becomes fuzzy - as in the case of our involvement in assessing the Kha Ri Gude Campaign. Our research endeavour entailed engaging with (specific) actors so that the research could become a vehicle to advance valued development.

Endnotes

[1] Kha Ri Gude is the Tshivenda word for 'let us learn'.

[2] Collaboration can of course be instantiated in different ways. Cousins, Whitmore, & Shulha propose that we can conceptualise types of collaboration along three dimensions: control of decisions as to how to proceed; control of stakeholder selection; and depth of participation of stakeholders (2013:9).

[3] This is also the approach adopted by Romm in her discussions on accountability in social research (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014a).

[4] McKay and Romm (2014:6) indicate that in keeping with the South

African Constitution's provision for equality of languages, the campaign developed its core literacy and numeracy manuals in all 11 official South African languages—Tshivenda, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sepedi, Setswana, Xitsonga, Sesotho, Afrikaans, siSwati, isiNdebele and English.

[5] This ties in with Darder and Uriarte's point that 'race' and 'class' analyses of exploitative social relations cannot be separated when considering possibilities for shifting human relationships and offering options for empowering marginalised participants to develop new ways of expressing themselves in communities (2012: 72).

[6] Esther Njiro and XoliswaTawana. The latter conducted the session in the mother tongue of the learners.

[7] Mufungulwa Anakoka.

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Appendix 1: Our focus group guiding questions

1. Since you have been in the KHA RI GUDE campaign, have you been able to start a community project, example, vegetable garden, soup kitchen, etc.?
2. Through engagement in the campaign, what type of community participation are you involved in, example, church activities, political involvement, volunteering work, etc.
3. Since you have been in the campaign have you been able to start your own or with others a business enterprise, income generating activity, or did you find work or promotion (or just work better with others at work) because you can now do your work better?
4. Regarding your involvement in the KHA RI GUDE campaign, has it contributed towards you having to assist in your child's or grand child's school work, participating in the SGB's [School Governing Bodies]?
5. Are you able to look after your health better now and the health of others after attending the KHA RI GUDE campaign?
6. Have you considered studying further to ABET level 2 and maybe until you obtain matric?
7. Please let us know if there is anything else that you can think of where the Kha Ri Gude has impacted on you and/or on the community?
8. What do you think could be done to extend the campaign in future and also what can be done to support you more in future to improve your lives (and the quality of life in the community)? What do you think is still needed?

Finally, we are very interested to know how you experienced the discussion today. Do you think you learned from one another? Please give examples if so. Do you think you learned from hearing our questions and creating answers? Did our questions help you to think about the way in which the campaign has an impact? We are interested in any comments that you have about the session today! Who wants to start?

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What are the key ingredients for an effective and successful tertiary enabling program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students? An evaluation of the evolution of one program

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Tertiary enabling programs have become an increasingly important part of the post-secondary schooling landscape. In recognition of the need for increased access for certain under-represented groups within the university population, enabling, bridging or foundational programs are offered by a large number of universities in Australia as alternative entry pathways. This paper explores the outcomes of an enabling program being offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who are arguably one of the most under-represented groups within the university system in Australia. It explores, in two parts, the combination of factors that are resulting in these positive outcomes. Part one explores the 'data story' of the course and the factors that support retention and completion. Part two explores the 'stories of transformation' as told by the students themselves, providing insider accounts of richness and depth about the things that truly enable success in a tertiary learning environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. While not ignoring the limitations of evaluating a course that is still in its infancy, the students undertaking *this course are completing and moving on into higher education courses at an impressive rate, empowered by the skills, strategies and confidence they have developed through the course.*

Keywords: *enabling, Indigenous, education, bridging, foundation, Aboriginal*

Introduction

Tertiary enabling programs have become an increasingly important part of the post-secondary schooling system. In recognition of the need for increased access for certain under-represented groups within the university population, enabling, bridging or foundational programs are offered by a large number of universities in Australia as alternative entry pathways. Very often these programs focus primarily on the academic skills required for success at the level of a first year higher education course. However, courses that focus solely on academic skills ignore, at their own peril, the important areas of personal development and awareness, and the meta-understandings about learning that are the more common determinants of student success.

This paper explores the outcomes of an enabling program being offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who are arguably one of the most under-represented groups within the university system in Australia. It explores, in two parts, the combination of factors that are resulting in these positive outcomes. The first part explores the 'data story' of the course and the factors that support retention and completion. The second part explores the 'stories of transformation' as told by the students themselves, providing insider accounts of richness and depth about the things that truly enable success in a tertiary learning environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The purpose of tertiary enabling programs – a review of literature

Tertiary enabling programs, sometimes called bridging programs (Whannell, Whannell & Allen, 2012; Whanell, Allen & Lynch, 2010; Anderson, 2007) or foundation skills programs (Habel, 2012), have become a ubiquitous but important part of the post-secondary schooling system. Their aim is to increase access for certain under-represented groups within the university population through an alternative pathway into higher education. There is evidence to suggest that many enabling courses are meeting this aim quite effectively (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011; Behrendt et al., 2012). On a pragmatic level these programs not only provide a greater diversity in the university student population but also lead the students themselves into better work-related skills, enhanced financial status and new employment opportunities (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011; Dawe, 2004; Habel, 2012). There is also increasing evidence to suggest that an effective enabling program can provide these students with a transformative experience that helps them to rewrite their own understandings about themselves as learners. Many authors talk about this in relation to increased self-confidence, self-efficacy, satisfaction, motivation, inner strength and self-knowledge (Dawe, 2004; Coombes & Danaher, 2006; Habel, 2012; Boyle & Wallace, 2011). Other benefits of participation in such courses include making new friends, increasing support networks, developing stronger intergenerational connections and improved relationships with other people (Dawe, 2004). In addition, there may be wider benefits to the community and society through the building of 'social capital' (Klinger & Murray, 2009; Coombes & Danaher, 2006) in individual people, thereby allowing them to contribute to the welfare of their communities (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011), provide leadership towards helping achieve the community goals (Dawe 2004), and promote and facilitate family and community knowledge and well-being (Boyle & Wallace, 2011). Thus the more far-reaching benefits often come in the opportunity for the individual to transform their own ideas about what they are capable of.

Who are tertiary enabling students?

Tertiary enabling program students are often described as non-traditional university students (Klinger & Murray, 2009; Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011; Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 2001; Coombes & Danaher, 2006; Habel, 2012). Other terms used are disadvantaged, under-represented, equity sub groups, lacking opportunity and access, alienated, marginalised and minority (Klinger & Murray, 2009; Dawe, 2004; Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 2001; Coombes & Danaher, 2006; Habel, 2012). These students often share one or more of the following characteristics: low socio-economic background; non-English speaking; living in a regional or remote area; older; low levels of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy; and early school leavers (Klinger & Murray, 2009; Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011; Dawe, 2004; Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 2001; Coombes & Danaher, 2006). Many enabling students have had a negative experience in past educational efforts causing them to perceive university as a pathway not open to them (Coombes & Danaher, 2006; Anderson, 2007; Behrendt et al., 2012).

One of the main concerns about students from non-traditional backgrounds is the high rate of attrition and low rates of retention and completion (Klinger and Murray, 2009; Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011; Anderson, 2007). Factors such as disability, being older, being male, being from a regional or remote location, studying via external/distance mode, financial considerations, poor health, family crisis and needing to be a full time carer all impact on students' ability to continue with their studies, and non-traditional students often experience a number of these factors simultaneously (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011). Anderson (2007:458), states that 'bridging students have the greatest mass of drop out predictors working against them'. Some estimate the overall dropout rates for first year university students to be 30-40% (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011). Klinger and Murray (2009:2) point out the 'substantial human and financial investment' enabling students are required to make, requiring navigation of complex work, family, financial, health and legal factors (Klinger & Murray, 2009; Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011; Dawe, 2004; Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 2001). However, a low socio-economic background is not automatically a barrier to success in higher education (Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 2001; Anderson, 2007).

Nevertheless, in addition to overcoming a range of external challenges, students will often have to do battle with a range of personal experiences and feelings, including low self-esteem or self-confidence, immaturity, low motivation, negative past experiences at school (Dawe, 2004; Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 2001). A lack of experience in higher education can also lead students to be more inclined to take a surface approach to learning (Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 2001) and without the right kinds of institutional support (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011) they may never move beyond this. The challenge for institutions becomes one of how to maintain a 'high expectations' (Sarra 2014:7) approach to what students are capable of while also responding with support on an 'as needs' basis, and in particular, how the course itself can serve as a support for students to overcome some of these challenges.

Indigenous students and tertiary enabling programs

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011) suggests that Indigenous students still represent less than 1% of all higher education students, which is lower than the 2.5% of the broader Indigenous population. Due to the low number of Year 12 completion rates amongst Indigenous students most Indigenous students commencing higher education are doing so through an alternative route (Bandias, Fuller & Larkin, 2013:15). Attrition rates for Indigenous students are also significant with up to 35% not progressing beyond their first year (Bandias, Fuller & Larkin 2013:15). They estimate that in 2008 Indigenous people comprised less than 1.3% of the commencing domestic higher education student population and that in that same year around 70% of those students were gravitating towards health, education and society and culture courses (Bandias, Fuller & Larkin 2013:15-16). Lane (2009:6) takes a different philosophical view, highlighting the comparative success of Indigenous students from a 'mainstream' background as opposed to a 'welfare oriented background'. Lane (2009:6) also points to an increased diversification in the types of courses that Indigenous students are enrolling in. He does however acknowledge that 'summarising graduation data for 15 years does not convey the diversification that has been growing within disciplines' (Lane, 2009:7), and he argues that Standard Australian English literacy is the key factor preventing Indigenous students, particularly those from remote communities and 'urban ghettos', from achieving success in the university sector (Lane, 2009:8).

Oliver et al. (2013) agree with Lane and note that 'it is no longer appropriate to assume that health and education courses are the primary targets' (Oliver et al., 2013:53). However these authors suggest that there are emotional, motivational, health, familial, financial, study, literacy and transitional needs that require attention for Aboriginal students in order to improve both the under representation and the non-completion issues (Oliver et al., 2013:52). Oliver et al. (2013) note that tertiary enabling programs have largely been provided through dedicated 'Aboriginal Centres' but that such centres are suffering from both mounting demands and shrinking resources. Overall there are very few tertiary enabling programs dedicated to meeting the specific needs of pre-tertiary Indigenous students in Australia.

The Preparation for Tertiary Success (PTS) program – background and history

The PTS course was initially called 'Preparation for Tertiary Studies'. It was offered by Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education for four years from 2000 until 2004. The course was then re-accredited during 2004 and commenced a new phase at the beginning of 2005 running for 6 years in that form. In 2009 another review (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2009) was initiated due to a high number of initial enrolments and a correspondingly high dropout rate and a low level of course completion.

This 2009 review led to a completely new course being written which used as its foundation the 'Learning Power' theory developed by Ruth Deakin Crick (2007) and her associates (2004) and the related 'Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory' (ELLI) tool. This theory of learning sits within the broader educational conversation around providing students with meta-cognition and a meta-language about learning itself. Deakin Crick (2007) suggests that central to any notion of learning how to learn is the idea that the learners themselves need to want to learn, to become aware of themselves as learners and to be able to take responsibility for their own learning trajectories both in school and in life. Black et al. (2006) highlight the importance of 'learning to learn' skills for students so that they can develop 'autonomous learning' or 'intentional learning'. There has been an increased focus on how this type of explicit instruction or metacognition can help support learning for Indigenous students particularly in the area of English literacy (Rose, Lui-Chivizhe, McKnight & Smith, 2003; Rose, Gray and Cowey, 2000). While the theories around 'Learning Power' (Deakin Crick, 2007) were not developed specifically for Indigenous Learners, there are strong connections with Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing. For example Deakin Crick (2007) draws on the work of Rogoff & Wertsch (1984) and Lave & Wenger (1991) when talking about 'temporal connectivity' which refers to a 'way of being' in the world that orientates a person towards changing and learning over time and in different contexts, and lateral connectivity which refers to the ideas embedded in a sociocultural view of learning in which the learner is a ‘person in relation’ to other people and to cultural tools and artefacts, and in which learning is frequently mediated through the interactions of learning relationships. These understandings of learning sit comfortably with the ideas of Arbon (2008), Martin (2005) and Yunkaporta (2009) in relation to Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

This new course was renamed ‘Preparation for Tertiary Success’. At the heart of the new course, which began in 2011, was a focus on what students’ need, in addition to academic skills, in order to be effective and successful tertiary learners. Since 2012 the course has been offered by the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE), which is a partnership between Batchelor Institute and Charles Darwin University (CDU). PTS is delivered to Indigenous students from all over Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. The students range in age from school leavers through to mature age adult learners, and there is not a stark imbalance in terms of gender. The students come from urban, regional and remote locations and are a mixture of English first language, Aboriginal English and Indigenous Language speaking. The course is delivered in a block-release delivery mode (Asmar, Page & Radloff, 2011) which means that students attend face to face workshops for two four day blocks for each unit they are enrolled in. These blocks are often run ‘back to back’ meaning that students will be on campus for up to three weeks at a time and in that time will focus on three separate units. Between workshops students are expected to complete learning and assessment tasks.

By the end of 2013 it became obvious that this new course was producing dramatically better results for PTS students. This was evident in both the data story of enrolment, completion and transition to other higher education pathways, and in the personal stories of transformation that students were sharing with us.

Factors that support retention and completion

First the numbers are explored, which reveal how PTS has changed between the old version that ran from 2000 to 2009, and the new version, which commenced in 2011.

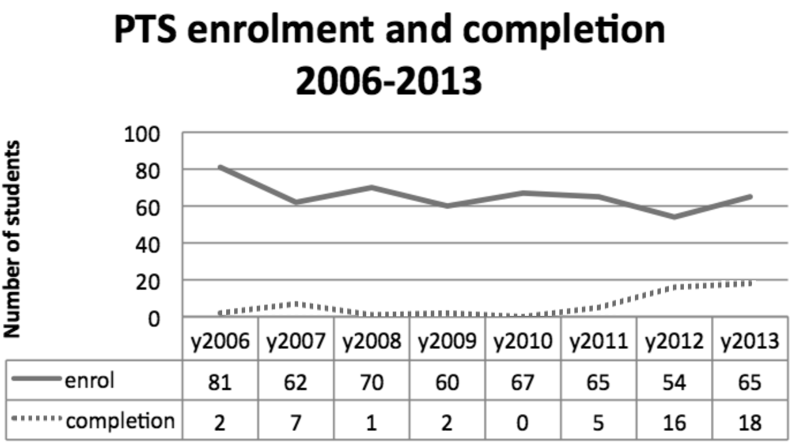
Methodology

The data for this section was gathered over a period of eight years from 2006 to 2013. This period covers five years where PTS was operating under the old model and three years of the newly accredited PTS course, which is sufficient to build a picture of the shift that has occurred since the implementation of the new model. Figures 1, 2 and 3 provide a direct comparison of enrolments and completions between the old and new PTS models. Figures 4, 5 and 6 build a picture of the completions and progressions/transitions for students undertaking the new PTS course.

Results

Enrolments and completions

Figure 1: *PTS enrolment and completion 2006-2013*

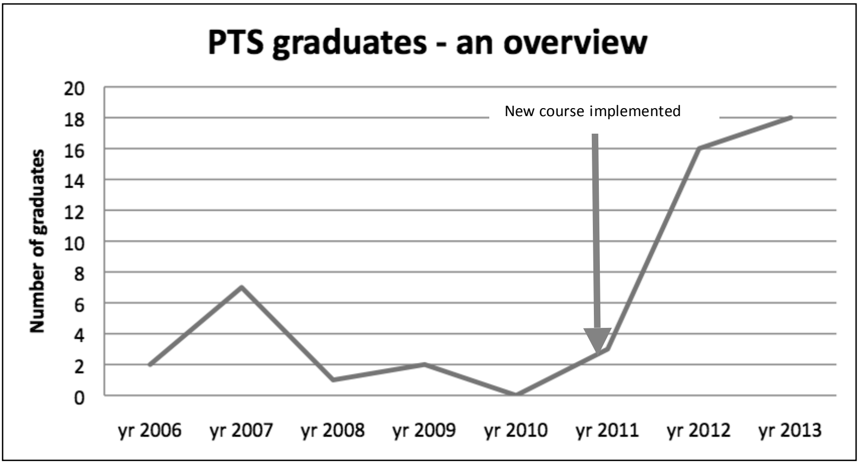


source: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2014

While enrolments in the 'old' PTS course (2006-2010) were relatively high, completions were very low. The majority of enrolments were rolled over year after year ensuring ongoing Equivalent Full Time Student Load (EFTSL) but considerable stagnation in the student population. In 2006 there were only 2 completions from 81 students representing a less than 1% success rate. During 2008, 2009 and 2010, only three students completed. The peak of completions happened in 2007, with seven students completing the course in that year which still only represents a 9% success rate.

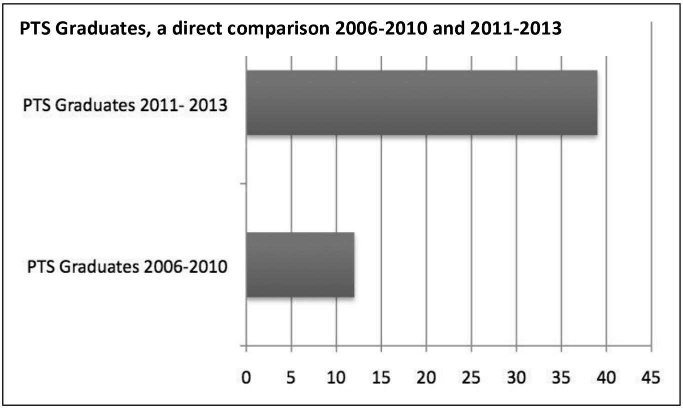
In 2011, after the course rewrite, enrolments held steady and five students successfully completed, which was comparable to the 2007 success rate. However, in the second year something started to change. 2012 saw a dip in enrolments but a significant increase in the number of completions. In this year a total of 16 students out of 54 enrolments completed PTS, representing a success rate of 30% - more than 20% improvement on the previous year and a significant improvement on any previous years. This success rate was maintained into 2013 with 18 students completing which represents 28% of the 65 students enrolled. There is still a large gap between the number of enrolments and the number of completions. Further investigation is being done into the details of this gap including looking at the number of students actively continuing their study from one semester to the next, the number of no show/drop out or inactive students, as well as the variations in these numbers across different campus deliveries. However, there is a clear upward trend in the number of students now completing the course.

Figure 2: *PTS Graduates – an overview*



source: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2014

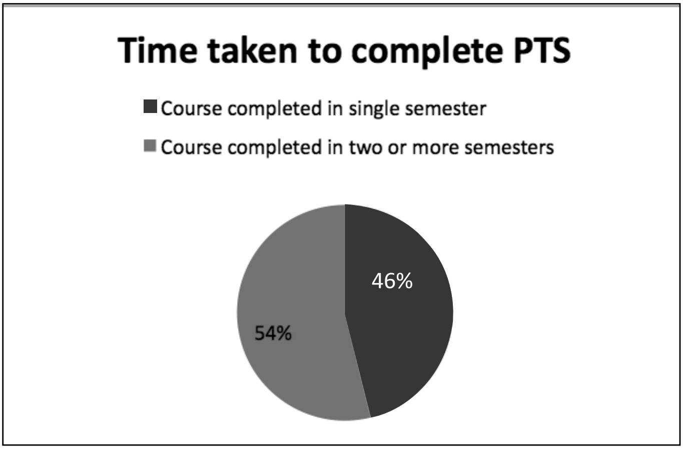
Figure 3: *PTS Graduates, a direct comparison 2006-2010 and 2011-2013*



source: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2014

In less than three years the new PTS course more than tripled the number of students graduating from the level the old PTS course achieved in a four-year period. Perhaps more importantly this figure also comes from a lower enrolment base, so as enrolments increase these graduate numbers should correspondingly go up.

Figure 4: *Time taken to complete PTS*

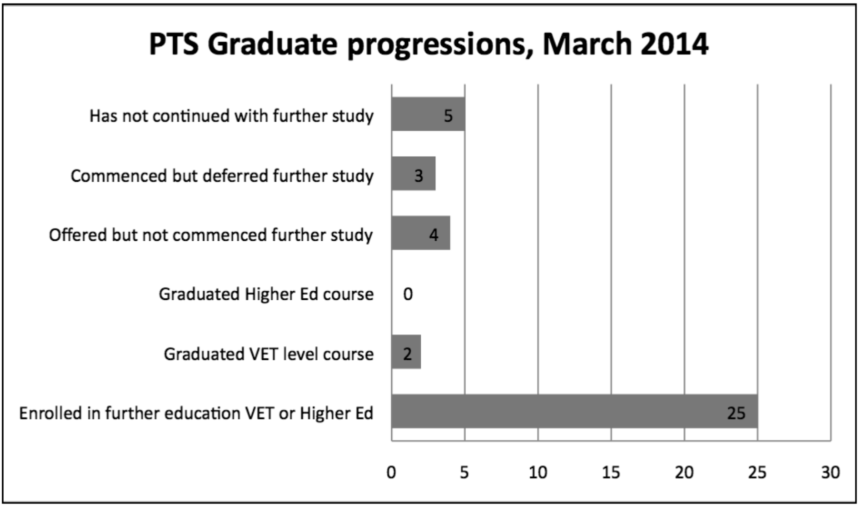


source: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2014

Another significant change in the 'new' PTS course is the number of PTS students who are now completing in a single semester (just under 50%). The students enter the course at an 'Advanced' level and must complete four units which can be done in one semester. The data suggests that not only is it possible for students to complete in one semester but that those who complete in this time frame are just as likely as any other graduates to go on and experience success transitioning into a higher education course.

Transition pathways beyond PTS

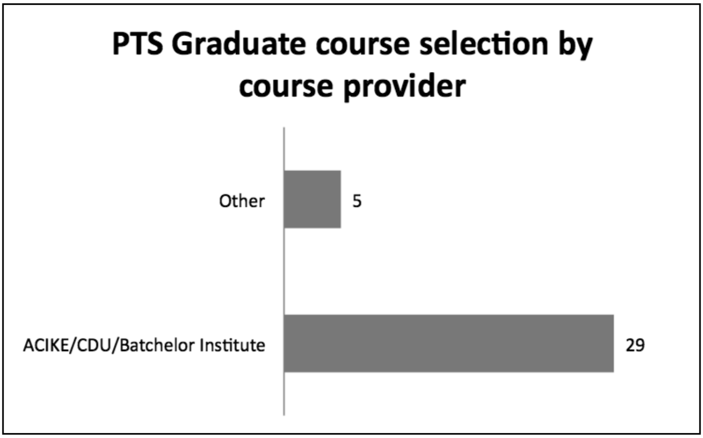
Figure 5: *PTS Graduate Progressions, March 2014*



source: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2014

Of the 39 people who graduated 2011-2013, 27 have progressed to either graduate or be enrolled in further education at either a VET or higher education level, the majority of whom (20) are pursuing degrees in higher education, a 69% progression rate. Of those not continuing the majority (7) have been made offers and have either not yet commenced or have deferred their study. Only 5 PTS graduates have not initiated any type of academic pathway beyond PTS at this point in time.

Figure 6: *PTS Graduate course selection by course provider*



source: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2014

Students are also demonstrating a type of 'brand loyalty' in their choices beyond PTS. Once students have graduated from PTS they are almost six times more likely to choose a future learning pathway through ACIKE, CDU or Batchelor Institute than any other course provider.

Part 1: Discussion

Since the change to the new PTS course students are now moving through PTS with greater success and using it as a pathway to move on to tertiary education. While it is still too early to predict the success of students who have now commenced a three or four year degree, the early signs are encouraging. Additionally, while there is a significant group of PTS graduates who have gone on to enroll in higher education courses, there is another group of PTS students who did not complete the entire course, but have used what they learned in the course to empower them to make new choices and changes in their life. These students, while counted as 'drop outs' or non-completers in the data, are still pursuing new pathways as a result of participating in PTS. What is encouraging is that the gap between the number of enrolments and the number of completions is steadily closing. While high course completion rates are exciting, they mean that the course can no longer rely on achieving its enrolment targets through continuing students.

Each semester requires significant marketing and recruitment to ensure continual growth in the number of people starting the course.

Part 2: Stories of transformation

The other part of the 'story' of the new PTS is revealed through the narratives of the students themselves. During their time in PTS our students have shared their stories with us and with their permission these stories have been published to a blog that is publically available (http://tertiarysuccess.wordpress.com/). These stories provide powerful narratives of the strong transformative experiences (Mezirow, 1991 & 2000) of the PTS students in terms of their learner identity. This is largely due to the combination of the theoretical approach of Learning Power and the ELLI Learning Dimensions (Deakin Crick et al., 2007) and the epistemological philosophy of Batchelor Institute, which is based on a 'Both Ways' approach to learning (Ober & Bat, 2007; Marika, 1999). Learning Power provides students with the meta-knowledge about learning that helps them develop new and transformative understandings about themselves as learners, while the 'Both Ways' approach values the Indigenous knowledge, experience and identity of the students and encourages critical reflection on the interface between knowledge systems (Nakata, 2007).

Part 2: Methodology - A thematic analysis of student narratives

A narrative methodology is used to explore how these students analysed and evaluated their PTS experience. This 'narrative turn' (Bochner, 2001) 'honours people's stories as data that can stand on their own as pure description of experience, worthy as narrative documentary of experience....or analysed for connections between the psychological, sociological, cultural, political and dramatic dimensions of human experience' (Patton, 2002:116). Narrative traditionally sits within the interpretative social science theoretical tradition. Importantly the central role of storytelling as a means of knowledge transmission is also at the heart of Indigenous knowledge systems (Wilson, 2009; Kovach, 2009; Chilisa, 2011; Kahakalau, 2004; Kawagley, 1995 & 1999; Barnhardt. C, 2001; Barnhardt. R, 2001; Basso, 1996; Hughes et al., 2004; Partington, 1998).

Stories and metaphors were the original teaching tool used by

Indigenous societies. Wilson (2009:17) points out that 'stories allow listeners to draw their own conclusions and to gain life lessons from a more personal perspective. By getting away from abstractions and rules, stories allow us to see others life experiences through our own eyes. This information may then be internalised in a way that is difficult for abstract discussions to achieve.'

The following discussion uses a 'thematic analysis' approach (Klinger & Murray, 2009:4). A thematic analysis of student narratives requires more than validity, reliability and generalisability as they also involve a tension centred on context. Context is essential for making sense of any person action or event, and therefore must be fully understood and factored into the analysis (Pepper & Wildy, 2009:3-5). It is also important that non-Indigenous researchers in particular question their underlying assumptions and ensure that they use the right questions for checking their understandings (Pepper & Wildy, 2009:2-4). In the case of these stories, each student has had the chance to read, edit and revise their story in order to add emphasis or remove unintended parts of the story. Only when the student was comfortable with the narrative was it considered 'finished'. From a thematic analysis of nine PTS student stories the following six themes emerged.

Theme 1. A holistic learner centered approach

In designing this new PTS course we chose to look at what learners need to know, be and do in order to be successful in a tertiary environment. Based on Deakin Crick's (2004) research, the PTS course explores what it takes to become effective lifelong learners. All teaching staff in PTS complete training in the use of the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI), which in turn is based on Deakin Crick's identified seven learning dimensions of successful lifelong learners, which she calls 'Learning Power'. This theory underpins all of the PTS units and provides a common language about learning that is then shared by the students and lecturers.

> *Once I found out what all the dispositions meant, like resilience and creativity and that, it helped me work out what sort of learner I am and I understood myself better* (Weatherall, 2013).

PTS students begin to explore what has been at the heart of often negative formal learning experiences and how by understanding their own learning identity they can improve their future learning experiences.

> *During PTS I have learnt the academic skills like how to write an essay and how to reference but I've also learnt social skills and that's made a really big difference in my life. Even back home now I am full of confidence in myself.* (James, 2012)

Theme 2. A high expectations environment

PTS is deliberately named as a 'high expectations' environment. We believe that our students can and will meet the high expectations we have of them, and we teach them to have high expectations of themselves and their teachers.

> *PTS has helped me to see that actually I'm good at a whole pile of things I hadn't realized before..... I wasn't that good at school, I was bored and often I didn't really want to be there. When I came into PTS I aimed high but I wasn't expecting to actually achieve it. Getting those high grades certainly built up my confidence.* (Cochrane, 2013)

> *I didn't really think of study, and especially university, as something that I could do. And now I'm trying to convince other people, 'If I can do it why can't you?!' My idea of my own self-worth and what I think I am capable of is much higher now than before I did PTS.* (Jordan, 2013)

Theme 3. Embedded, meaningful, explicit and culturally inclusive curriculum

Preparing students for the academic skills necessary for them to be successful in tertiary education remains core in PTS. Unlike many enabling courses, however, PTS students learn these academic skills in an embedded, meaningful way that is seamlessly integrated into their developing understanding of how people learn, and is respectful of both western academic and Indigenous knowledge traditions.

> *I think through schooling we're so used to our teaching being all*

> *one sided. Now, being Aboriginal I know there's always different ways of learning and doing things that is helpful to me* (Matuchet, 2013).

PTS has a curriculum that is challenging not remedial, and engaging not boring.

> *The thing I like about PTS is that you are not treated like an idiot. I did a different enabling course in Queensland about writing essays, Power Points, referencing and Maths. It was very dry and boring and nothing creative at all. I didn't go back after the 1st semester*. (James, 2012)

Students are placed into the PTS level that matches their existing skills and then they are challenged to move out of their comfort zone into new knowledge and understandings. There is strong scaffolding to ensure that the students feel supported. This support is gradually lessened until students show or tell us that they are ready to go it alone.

Theme 4. Learning relationships

Learning is social. Learning relationships have formed the backbone of what works in PTS. Often when students feel most like giving up, relationships with staff and other students keep them going. The peer relationship between students is about identity and connection.

> *We're all close and we are here for each other. We also motivate each other. It's really important to have people around you that motivate you* (Cochrane, 2012).

The teacher/student relationship helps to create an environment where the students feel comfortable and respected, and also a place where students can experience doubt but still feel like there is someone to keep pushing them and believing in them who won't abandon them.

> *Having lecturers that are so easy to talk to and are always there to help is another good thing about Batchelor and PTS. Also the fact that they have done so much learning, teaching and have had awesome life experiences was very encouraging*. (Matuchet, 2013).

Theme 5. Learning community – identity and culture at the centre

The notion of a learning community is also important. The PTS course provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the opportunity to learn in a culturally safe space. Many of our students have a lot in common with their fellow students, and studying together gives them encouragement that often makes the difference between finishing or not.

Our students also bring their diverse life experiences and personal and cultural identities, and together develop a sense of what their Indigenous identity means to them.

> *I love being surrounded by Indigenous students and staff and hearing about their different cultures. Through their experiences and understanding of the world I've learnt a lot about myself as an Indigenous person* (Motlap, 2012).

PTS has deliberately chosen to stay with the face-to-face workshop model, while still effectively engaging with the online space to add value to what we do. The workshops enable us to place a strong emphasis on the relationship building and often this is the first time our students have had an experience of a learning community where their knowledge is valued, welcomed and encouraged.

> *It's a safe environment for us Indigenous students. The other thing I love about coming to workshops is that I have made a lot of great friends who support me and believe in me too…* (James, 2012).

Theme 6. Learning community – using 21st Century Learning tools

The world of learning is rapidly changing and this presents us with many opportunities for supporting the ongoing community of learners established during the face-to-face workshops. Students have ongoing access to their unit materials through an online learning site, but we also engage with social media, predominantly Facebook, in new and exciting ways. We have found that we have been able to transform the ways we communicate about the course through extensive use of Facebook to contact and engage students.

Our students are already on Facebook, so by ensuring PTS is there as well, we have found a way to take the learning space to them rather than expecting them to come to us.

> *Our Facebook group is great 'cos we all keep in touch. (Two other students) and I were talking about it one day and then we realised that you write that stuff on our page to keep us thinking about PTS and our studies – to not go home and then forget about it.* (Simpson, 2013).

The final word – PTS stories of transformation

While as educators we always hope that what we are doing is making a positive difference for our students, it is often rare to get feedback immediately about the impact of any learning that has occurred. Perhaps because PTS itself has given the students the meta-language and understandings to explain their transformation, we receive many indications of the difference this enabling course makes in the lives of our students.

> *My whole mindset changed when someone at home had a go at me. Before PTS when someone said something bad I used to internalize it. But in this argument I stood up for myself and I think PTS helped me to do that because it's given me confidence. When I came back this year I was a completely different person. I decided that I would show people that I can achieve whatever I wanted to.* (James, 2012).

> *PTS has definitely made a big difference to me. It's like being part of a big community here. You learn so much ...It's changed my life and helped me find a new direction. I don't feel like I just graduated from high school and am wasting my time any more. PTS has certainly broadened my horizons* (Motlap, 2012).

Limitations

While these results are heartening and the students' level of self-awareness is impressive, PTS is by no means a one size fits all solution. A large number of students still apply but do not enroll, and a considerable number of students enroll but never attend workshops. However, this latter number is decreasing each semester. If students make it to the first workshop of the first unit, where Learning Power, ELLI Dimensions and the Both Ways philosophy are explored and embedded, they tend to succeed. As for the longer term impact of PTS on students going on to complete a university course, it is too early to say. Certainly the transition numbers are promising and a longitudinal approach will yield greater insight. It is also worth noting that while some students are attempting but not continuing with further studies there are examples of students going on to pursue other equally worthwhile pathways such as leadership courses and employment.

Conclusions

While the new PTS course is still in an establishment phase, the early results are very encouraging. Already the number of graduates far outstrips the number of students who graduated from the previous incarnation of the course. As course enrolments grow, those numbers should increase if resourcing of this growth is given priority. In addition to the completions the students are demonstrating high levels of autonomy and confidence when they complete the course. This study demonstrates that this is likely to be a result of a holistic and learner-centred curriculum and pedagogy, a high expectations environment, meaningful and culturally relevant content, strong learning relationships and engagement with a twenty first century learning environment. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the course is that it gives the students the meta-language and understandings to explain the transformation they feel they have undergone. The new PTS students are moving on, empowered by the skills, strategies and confidence they have developed through the course. There is no one ingredient that stands alone as the reason why the ACIKE Preparation for Tertiary Success course is proving successful. Perhaps it is the particular combination of factors aligning in the right way. We now need to strengthen and solidify the elements we have already brought together in PTS, and find new ways to improve into the future. A longitudinal study of these graduates over the next 3-5 years will give greater insight into the relative ‘success’ of PTS as an enabling pathway.

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Listening to hear: Critical allies in Indigenous Studies

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This paper reflects on a particular class in an undergraduate seminar in Australian Indigenous Studies where anecdote played a crucial role and where both the teacher and learners were challenged to consider their implication as racialised subjects in the teaching and learning process. The paper argues that student anecdote can be a vital bridge between theory and practice in adult learning. It suggests that all learners in Indigenous Studies, and also in studies of race and difference more generally, need to undertake effective listening and hearing practices in order to consider, imagine and engage with experiences and worldviews other than their own. Drawing from work dealing with critical alliances, discomfort in pedagogical contexts, and effective listening practices, this paper provides a conceptual analysis of the seminar in question extrapolating from this to engage critically with broader issues concerning Indigenous Studies and non-Indigenous critical allies.

Keywords: *Critical allies, Indigenous Studies, white discomfort, anti-racist pedagogy, listening practices.*

> …the space in which both teachers and students are the subjects of education, cannot abstract itself from the socio-cultural and economic conditions of its students, their families and their communities (Freire, 2001: 62)

> Many of us who teach … consciously accept the fact that the work of education is as difficult for us as it is for our students, that a great deal of what occurs in seminars and classrooms seems beyond conscious reach, that in the middle of unfolding pedagogy, more often than not, we become undone (Britzman, 2009: xi).

> At issue here is not a patronising notion of understanding the Other, but a sense of how the self is implicated in the construction of Otherness … (Giroux, 1992:141)

Introduction

The above citations provide stimulus for this article which is an attempt to understand and engage theoretically with the events of a teaching and learning experience in an upper level Australian Indigenous Studies undergraduate seminar. The paper recalls a particular class where I teach concepts relevant to anti-colonialism and decolonisation in various local and global contexts with a view to engaging students as critical allies 1 in Indigenous studies. The class consisted of two Aboriginal students, one male, one female, and fourteen non-Indigenous female students. On the occasion in question, the class discussion focused on the issues raised by an Indigenous student's narrative of racism at school. This paper reflects on the story told and on responses to it, by the student body, and by me. I consider the benefits of student accounts of their lived experience as valid knowledge, particularly as they arise in the context of teaching anti-colonialism within the institutional dominance of western knowledge and worldviews. Although the focus here is on one particular instance, the issues raised by this account are considerable. I have, however focused on three main concerns: the positive implications of classroom anecdote, white settler guilt and discomfort, and ideas surrounding effective listening and hearing practices in contexts where 'Others' are speaking. These issues are addressed with a view to finding more effective methods for identifying, and dealing with implicit and explicit expressions of racism, of coming to terms with un-ease, and engaging more truthfully and responsively to experiences and knowledge represented by "Others".

The paper addresses literature relating to "discomfort" arguing for its positive rather than negative possibilities for effecting alliances with Indigenous peoples' struggles. It builds on work concerned with the politics of listening. The paper differentiates between listening and hearing, arguing for what I call a practice of "listening to hear". I suggest that hearing what is said with a view to understanding Indigenous experience is not simply a matter of active listening. Rather, it must be accompanied by a conscious attentiveness to colonial relations of power and acquiescence to the possibilities generated by the "discomfort" arising from this awareness.

Class context and student anecdote

The context for the seminar in question was a discussion of Martin Nakata's biographical work, *Better* (2003), where Nakata recounts his own difficulties as a Torres Strait Islander student at school and university, and also, Paulo Freire's chapter, "Teaching is not just transferring knowledge" (2001) which explicates some of Freire's ideas about the need for dialogic pedagogy in colonial contexts. Class discussion focused on each theorist's ideas regarding the primacy of Western knowledge systems and the difficulties Indigenous students often face in finding a forum to speak at high school and university and importantly, to be heard in ways that attempt to understand, and engage with their lived experiences as Indigenous scholars.

During class discussion, a fair-skinned, fair-haired Aboriginal student related how the works of these theorists had helped him understand how dominant western knowledge systems had positioned him as a young Aboriginal high-school student prior to his university study. He told the class he was often advised at school by his non-Indigenous classmates to deny his Aboriginal heritage and to pass as white. His classmates had said things like: "you're not Aboriginal", "you can easily pass as white", "why do you identify as Aboriginal, you must have a European background as well"? In recalling and relating these experiences, the student became visibly upset as he reflected on his own experience in light of the set readings for that week. He explained how the work of Nakata and Freire had reminded him how it had felt to be coerced into denying his cultural heritage and identity. He said it was made clear to him that being non-Aboriginal, being white, was the better option, the more acceptable subject position. The student said he had found these interactions with his schoolmates embarrassing and humiliating and had felt worthless. He told the class he'd never discussed these high school experiences before but that he felt safe doing so in this class. I suspect this was due to his familiarity as a 300 level student with both many students in the class, and with me. However, I am aware that the notion of the classroom as a "safe space" is problematic, and especially so for Indigenous students. The student also stated that reading the work of Indigenous scholars who had written about similar experiences helped him make sense of his life as a young Aboriginal student and now, as a university student. The other Aboriginal student in the class, visibly moved by the anecdote, remained silent.

The non-Indigenous students appeared visibly distressed by this anecdote. I hasten to add that my interpretation of student reactions is partly subjective, based on considerable experience of reading students as bodies who convey emotions and responses non-verbally, but also, importantly, through listening carefully to the responses that ensued. When the Aboriginal male student paused, the student body reacted and interacted in what rapidly became a voluble discussion. One by one, a clamour of voices erupted with other narratives that recalled accounts of racism from their school days. Students took turns in voicing their observations of racism by relaying how they had also witnessed it at school, perpetrated on others, by others. The female Aboriginal student remained silent. The body of non-Indigenous female students vied for space to sympathise, and empathise, and possibly to ameliorate their discomfort — also perhaps, to assuage the discomfort of the Aboriginal students. There was a clear sense that the non-indigenous students distanced themselves from the racism that had been articulated: everyone, it seemed, had a story about racist practices in teaching and learning contexts, but each recollection of a racist incident was from somewhere else, enacted by someone else, in some other pedagogical context or social setting. Racism in the classroom was scripted as outside, not here, not present; it was the practice of others, not us. The irony of us all being in a space where anti-racism is a pedagogical focus was momentarily obscured. At the precise moment the Aboriginal student recalled being shut down by his non-Indigenous schoolmates (in what he himself had identified as a "safe space" to speak), he was again muzzled by his non-Indigenous university colleagues in an Indigenous Studies course where the very concept of speaking positions, colonial power, and the nexus between knowledge and power in colonial discourses are under scrutiny. The room became, for a few minutes, a vibrant dialogic space between anxious non-Indigenous students. They had unwittingly, and no doubt with good intention in their eagerness to return the class to equilibrium, overridden the lived experience, discomfort, and knowledge of the Indigenous student with their own narratives of other racist practices. The Aboriginal student's emotional account of his experience had produced such disquiet; it seemed the only possible response was noise. Before I provide a conceptual analysis of this event, it is necessary to consider the relationship between classroom anecdotes, white discomfort, and listening practices as these might impact on effective pedagogies in Indigenous Studies.

Literature Review: Anecdote, discomfort and alliance

The above anecdote exemplifies the power of personal narrative in teaching and learning, as bell hooks reminds us, "[A] powerful way we connect with a diverse world is by listening to the different stories we are told" (2010: 53). When I first began teaching, anecdote was considered a classroom practice to be avoided as much as possible, often a waste of class time, a potential for student "ramblings" that were at best, inconsequential, at worst, disruptive to course objectives. Pedagogical power relations dictated that the teacher was the primary source of knowledge and that it was her/his responsibility to regulate discussion if it became anecdotal or "off-track". Lee Ann Bell sees personal narratives as powerful pedagogical devices:

> the stories we tell about race and racism can become a learning tool to help us be more conscious of historical and current realities and through this consciousness, interrupt the stories that prevent movement toward democratic and inclusive community (2010: 3-4).

Bell sees the racism in narratives as a potential starting point for producing counter histories, and for starting a conversation about the motivations of racism with a view to producing opposing standpoints. She argues that "alternative stories will and do find a voice in the counter-narratives of subordinated people and their allies from the dominant group" (2010, 46). As the Indigenous student pointed out though, validation through the readings of Indigenous scholars was for him, an important factor in being able to make sense of the racism he experienced.

The non-Indigenous students' responses can be best understood by considering the dis-ease that the story generated. Reference to the asymmetry of colonial power relations frequently produces anxiety in students (McGloin, 2009: 40). Zembylas and Boler argue for a "pedagogy of discomfort" whereby possibilities for transformation are located in "learning to inhabit ambiguity, discomfort and indeterminism" (2002). Disquiet or anxiety is conceptualised as a basis for disrupting the kinds of nationalism or patriotism that are inscribed in dominant national narratives at the exclusion of opposing histories and narratives. Zymbylas and Boler recognise that embracing discomfort is not a simple process, "[To] embrace discomfort and ambiguity, of course, requires courage — courage to tolerate emotional uncertainty and courage to open up intellectually …" (2002). Elsewhere, Boler suggests a rethinking of the relationship between readers and public testimonies whereby readers accept responsibility for their part in producing certain narratives. "To turn away, to refuse to engage, to deny complicity" (164-166) she argues, is constitutive of "passive empathy". This is an important consideration in relation to the teaching context I am discussing and I will return to this point.

There is a modest body of material dealing with what is entailed in an effective critical alliance with Indigenous people in Australia (see for example, Aveling, 2004, Carnes, 2011, McGloin, 2009, 2014). Work on alliances is primarily work by non-Indigenous scholars; the suggestion is that we – non-Indigenous scholars – need to do our own hard work and think about what constitutes an ethical and fruitful alliance with Indigenous people. Research in the Australian context has yet to engage more comprehensively with ideas about anxiety or discomfort to the same degree as much contemporary research from Canada (for example, Regan, 2010, Davis, 2010), although Lynne Davis states the work is still sparse, but growing (2010: 4). Paulette Regan's work, *Unsettling the Settler Within* (2010), examines the effects of the Canadian residential schools and provides a critical analysis of the discomfort experienced by non-Indigenous people when confronted by colonial violence. Regan's work challenges dominant settler narratives. Regan notes that "as a non-Native woman who had worked both for and with Indigenous people for over twenty five years … my own deepest learning has always come when I was in unfamiliar territory culturally, intellectually and emotionally" (18). Although specific to the Canadian colonial context, Regan's work provides compelling advice about how alliances with Indigenous people can best be effected and maintained as part of a critical pedagogical practice. Regan sees a re-conceptualisation of history as an essential requirement for effecting ethical alliances with Indigenous people. She claims that we need to expand our view of history as an intellectual engagement with the past to adopt a "critical learning practice, an experiential strategy that invites us to learn to listen differently" (2010: 50). Importantly, Regan argues that non-Indigenous allies must ""restory" the dominant-culture version of history" (6). Building on Boler and Zembylas's concept of a "pedagogy of discomfort" (52) Regan contends that settlers, non-Indigenes, can be transformed to allies (16) and that being uncomfortable or "unsettled" with the truth discovered by revisiting colonial history (listening differently) is an important aspect of non-Indigenous/Indigenous relations (15, 17).

Lynne Davis's introduction to *Alliances* (2010: 2) asks, "[I]s it even possible to imagine relationships of mutual respect while looking squarely at the bald truth of Indigenous trauma and dispossession that flowed from colonization historically, and is perpetuated in ongoing colonial processes of violence in the present day?" Davis and Heather Yanique Shpuniarsky discuss some of the pitfalls that can occur between Indigenous/non-Indigenous alliances,

> [W]hen Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come together in alliances and coalitions, paternalism may be mobilized, subtly or overtly. There are often breeches of Indigenous social codes of which non-Indigenous people are simply not aware … [D]espite the good intentions of allies, colonial relations can be reproduced (337).

Davis and Shpuniarsky refer primarily to social relations within Indigenous communities. Their warning can be extrapolated to other contexts though. For example, in teaching and learning where protocol is embedded in the content of anti-colonialism as an acknowledgement of the validity of other knowledges and standpoints, a refusal to listen or politically engage with Indigenous standpoints can constitute a transgression of social codes.

Anne Bishop's influential work, *Becoming an Ally* (2002) considers some practical approaches to alliances. Although a general guide to alliance-building, Bishop's work can be extrapolated to specific situations. Bishop undermines neoliberal concepts of leadership and self-promotion often applauded as necessary attributes for students, arguing for an "unlearning" of privilege and an acknowledgement of our role in oppression. Bishop also emphasises listening as an essential practice for alliances.

The notion of learning to listen or to "hear" differently arises in work concerned with engaging politically with "others" as allies. Tanja Dreher's work, for example, (2009) focuses on "listening in" in the context of Muslim community media. She asks how certain modes of listening can be a "political process that is potentially difficult, conflictual and aimed at justice which sustains difference" (448). Dreher argues for a form of political listening where friendship and empathy are not always necessary or desirable (450) and where risk and challenge are the basis for political listening. She cites Jones' study of Māori and Pakeha students where the desire for Pakeha to understand Māori can be an "imperializing desire for absolution on the part of dominant groups – an unproductive need for reassurance" (451) which actually obscures the need for students to reflect critically on their own position of privilege or their complicity in on-going colonial relations of power. Dreher advocates a political listening practice that decentres knowing and mastery, and that risks conflict, discomfort and difficulty rather than safety and security (451). I take this to mean an active listening that consciously decentres the listening self in order to hear what an "Other" is saying, in other words to try to consider, contemplate, or *imagine* contexts outside of one's own referential or experiential framework. Risking conflict can produce discomfort, uncertainty about one's position, and a necessary re-evaluation of privilege that the risk-taker disturbed. Taking the notion of listening in another direction to consider silence in its gendered formations, Adrienne Rich's poetry sees silence as both a force of resistance and agency (Malhotra; Rowe: 11): silence can be resistant to the powers that impose it as an oppressive force, and agentive in its capacity to provide access to new knowledges.

Taking ideas of listening and silence into the classroom as a tool for critical pedagogy can be a tricky business though. Boeseker and Gordon speak of Native American practices where imposed silences incur a “wait time” after a question is asked so that speculative thought can replace any memorised response to questions (Malhotra, Rowe, 2013:10). While formalised pedagogical practices can work in some instances, my own practice resists imposed formulaic practices in favour of aiming for an understanding of why and how (and indeed, when) silence can be useful: in other words, it’s important to develop skills that help listeners know when it is appropriate to remain silent, or indeed, to speak.

Dreher and others working as ‘critical allies’ struggle with how best to effect transformative teaching and learning practices through an active, political engagement with other voices and narratives. Roslyn Carnes, for example, calls for us to “change listening frequency”. She speaks of the ‘narrow auditory range’ of non-Indigenous subjects and the need to “tune in” and “turn up the volume” (2011: 172). Carnes argues for “apprentice allied listeners” (181) offering a visual diagram for minimising ‘white noise’ where the point of centrality is to privilege Indigenous voices (182). Similarly, Nado Aveling articulates her struggle teaching students to understand anti-racism through critical whiteness studies, “on the one hand” she states, “I want my students to …know they can play their part in working against racism, [O]n the other hand … this means I tend to gloss over (quite unwittingly sometimes) and almost negate the pernicious effects of institutional racism” (2004). Following Foucault, institutions are embedded with discursive practices he describes as “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period” (1972:117). The university is thus already situated in a discourse where colonial power relations are skewed in favour of certain narratives, knowledges and pedagogical practices.

Discussion: Forging stronger alliances by listening to hear

My initial response to what happened in the class that day was to let the discussion go for a few minutes. On reflection though, my pause was probably not intentional. To be frank, the Indigenous student’s account of racism had affected me also; as a non-Indigenous teacher of anti-colonial studies, the narrative called into question two central concerns: our – non-Indigenous people's – acute anxiety when faced with the prospect of our own complicity in colonial practices, and secondly, our inability to hear what is being said. By the latter I mean not simply the act of listening but, drawing from Dreher and extending her ideas, to listen with the conscious knowledge of how colonial relations of power operate and how we, non-Indigenous subjects, can be active agents in re-positioning ourselves within that schema.

The Indigenous student's disclosure is a seminal example of the discomfort produced by narratives of racism on non-Indigenous listeners. However, Boler's notion of "passive empathy" (1999) as a denial of complicity describes the state produced by the narrative in question. It would be erroneous to suggest that students had not understood variously what they heard. While responses from the white female students were similar in their desire to re-place racism, this should not discount the diversity within that specific group; I am here dealing specifically with the discomfort noted in that response. The anxiety produced by the narrative was palpable as evidenced through the many examples of witnessed racism that competed for expression. Regan argues that attempts to decolonise (ourselves and our thinking) can often be paralysing (218). The response therefore, voluble, and perhaps inappropriate as it was, might also be read as an attempt to make sense of, or come to terms with the settler guilt that is itself an important aspect of learning about colonisation. It is also possible, though, to see the vilification of racism per se as a desire by the non-Indigenous students to position themselves as allies, to separate themselves from others perceived to be non-allies, or less enlightened. Undoubtedly, though, whether motivated by the discomfort of guilt, or by empathy, or a combination of these, one of the effects of the response to this narrative was to try to restore a conviction – a hopefulness perhaps – that somehow they/we operate "outside" of the domain of racism.

Regan tells us, "few people are enthusiastic about exploring difficult emotions that may leave them feeling hopeless …" (32). A productive pedagogical approach therefore is to build into courses a methodology that reminds students – and teachers – that dis-ease can be a valuable starting point for a more healthy alliance with Indigenous people. Recalling the framing quote by Britzman expressing how we, educators, become undone at various moments in the teaching and learning process, the event described here constitutes a pedagogical experience of ‘undone-ness’ where I / we, non-Indigenous learners and critical allies, were forced to address the complexity of emotional, political and cultural responses produced by the very discourses of colonialism under examination. That we were all faced with a dilemma is beyond doubt. The teaching and learning afforded by the Indigenous student’s anecdote provided us with varying contradictions, conflicts and distortions, troubling our desire for distance as it invited us to listen, to hear. Paolo Freire sees these moments of anxiety as integral to effective teaching and learning: “[E]ducation must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradictions, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and learners” (1993: 53).

Recalling Dreher’s call for a listening practice that risks conflict, I would argue further that listening – or hearing – what the “other” has to say, in fact, *must* be a risk-taking venture in order for a change in thought, perception and action to occur. If we are only to hear what is safe or familiar, there will be no conflict, no “poles of contradiction”, no impetus or motivation for transformation. It is precisely stories such as that presented by the Aboriginal student that generate an awareness of comfort and security and allow us – the hearers of such narratives – to wilfully suspend and interrogate our own privilege. In anti-colonial pedagogical contexts in particular, this risk taking form of hearing allows us to think beyond the narrative to confront our own complicity in its content. It demands time and space, room for the story to “sink in” before interrupting, or formulating responses. A more competent hearing practice for non-Indigenous teachers and learners, therefore, does not intervene for the sake of relief, indeed, does not demand respite at all, but risks the dangers of unlearning and re-learning.

Nakata et al., (2012:136) argue for an understanding of epistemological limitations of both Indigenous and Western knowledges:

> [A] rationale that focus on revealing the politics of knowledge production in Indigenous Studies – one that makes space for the exploration of ideas, that insists on critical reflection on the limits of all thinking on both sides, and that requires the development

> of better language for navigating such intricate and complex entanglements of meaning – provides good grounds for teaching both non-Indigenous and Indigenous students together (136).

The politics of knowledge production that shaped the Aboriginal student's recollections of being told to "pass" provided a groundbreaking opportunity for listening to hear, to engage with and understand the vicissitudes of life for many Aboriginal students.

Kevin Fitzmaurice, a non-Indigenous educator teaching Native Studies, grapples with whether we, aspiring non-Indigenous allies, are useful at all, or obsolete (2010). He asks if there can be any such thing as a white ally and claims that "the compassionate or 'refuser' white ally, who attempts to voluntarily give up power, remains caught within [this] ideological web of colonial privilege, where they are often a source of offense or amusement to Aboriginal people (358). Fitzmaurice echoes many misgivings by students and other non-Indigenous people working in this field whose discomfort tends to spill over into a form of hopelessness that tends to outweigh any political or ethical commitment to redressing colonial violence. Certainly, this is a common response in Indigenous Studies, particularly for students new to the discipline who, as Nakata et al note, often come to their study "ill-prepared for the knowledge and political contests they will encounter" (136).

Conclusion

Indigenous Studies teaches anti-colonialism but it is also a forum for Indigenous knowledge production. This may be imparted in the form of readings, through course material taught by Indigenous scholars or non-Indigenous allies, or through real, lived, and relevant experiences that are offered anecdotally as evidence of the enduringness of colonial violence. As Sefa Dei reminds us,

> [I]ndigenous knowledge speaks to the responsibility of knowledge to promote social change … [I]t calls for engaging discomfort and de-stabilizing knowing. It is about going where we have not been before and asking new questions (2008: 30).

I understand Sefa Dei's use of the word "responsibility" to mean that knowing demands action, that in knowing, we have an obligation to act and that it is action grounded in the discomfort of our privilege which is required for any form of transformation. If we are to “go[ing] where we have not been”, we have to learn to listen, and to hear, with acuity, and with mindfulness.

This paper attempts to offer some insight into the role and responsibilities of non-Indigenous educators and non-Indigenous students in the field of Indigenous Studies, not just as students and educators, but as critical allies in Indigenous struggles and active detractors of racism and oppression. Any analysis of such a complex event can only be partial and will not be unproblematic. There are questions of gender, class, identity, and nation, arising from the student narrative in question that have not been addressed here and that form the basis for further exploration. Making sense of some of the epistemic issues this raised for me by this, and indeed many other classroom narratives, will be an on-going process. This particular teaching and learning event was both challenging and useful. It provided a basis for a more comprehensive understanding of how, as non-Indigenous critical allies teaching Indigenous content or curriculum, we can intervene in the colonial power relations that structure institutional learning. The classroom event provoked thought about listening practices as conscious modes of hearing what an “Other’ has to say. It also inspired a critical reflection about how Indigenous learners can take on a teacherly role if they so choose, to make sense of their own lived realities, and to contribute to dialogic learning. I have argued that listening and hearing are not necessarily the same and that hearing with a sentient knowledge of our – non-Indigenous people’s – position within the colonial relations of power that structure all societal institutions, can be a starting point for productive non-Indigenous/Indigenous alliances.

Endnotes

[i] ‘Critical Allies’ refers to non-Indigenous listeners, participants, activists, supporters and advocators of Indigenous rights who see themselves as working with Indigenous people as allies, comrades, learners as well as teachers rather than spokespeople for Indigenous people and rights. As a somewhat nebulous term, the notion of critical alliance requires continual scrutiny in order not to be perceived as a folksy descriptor for supporters of Indigenous peoples and rights,

but rather, as a term that denotes an active role where participation/ activism takes the form of a genuine alliance alongside recognition of white privilege and the on-going effects of colonial power relations.

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Work-based researchers and Communities of Practice: Conceptual and gestational dilemmas

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Drawing on a presumption that a Community of Practice (COP) can add significant value to the situated learning development of adults in any context, this paper exposes and analyses the challenges faced in facilitating the development of a COP involving part-time work-based researchers. Using an empirical case example involving a collaborative research network of five industry organisations and a university, the specific purpose (and outcomes) of this paper are to (a) conceptualise a researcher COP involving part-time work-based PhD and Masters of Philosophy candidates (b) examine the pragmatic dilemmas these part-time researchers face in seeking to develop such a supportive social learning construct in respect to their research activities (c) tentatively indicate some challenges that higher education institutions and industry organisations confront in facilitating and nurturing such learning structures which span industry and academia contexts. Through its analysis, this paper draws attention towards the complex issues involved in developing a functioning rather than the often idealised COP in the part-time work-based researcher space.

Keywords: *Work-based researchers; Communities of Practice; Social learning.*

Introduction

This paper seeks to make a contribution to scholarly discussions concerning work-based research degree students and how their social learning may be facilitated through the development of a Community of practice (COP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). In delving into this topic this paper specifically intends to (a) conceptualise a Researcher COP involving part-time work-based PhD and Masters of Philosophy candidates (b) explore the pragmatic dilemmas these researchers face in seeking to develop such a supportive social learning construct in respect to their research activities and (c) indicate some challenges that higher education institutions and organisations face in assisting or facilitating such learning structures which span industry and academia contexts.

The construct of a COP can be defined as “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” (Wenger et al., 2002:4-5). It normally involves three interacting elements consisting of a domain of knowledge, a community of people and some sort of shared practice (Wenger et al., 2002). In its analysis, the paper utilises an innovative revelatory research network case. This case involved five local government authorities (councils) and a university in Australia participating in a research network wherein the councils’ full-time employees are the part-time Doctoral and Masters of Philosophy work-based research degree students. In this paper, the pseudonym for this network is ‘the syndicate’.

Work-based research degrees represent a third generation of research degree (Costley and Lester, 2012) wherein candidates seek to extend their professional development, their capabilities and critical thinking skills to be able to address complex work relevant issues (Costley and Lester, 2012; Doncaster and Lester, 2002; Lester, 2004; Wellington, 2012). The central distinguishing features of these research degrees include: a candidate informed, negotiated and driven program of research focused on a context based issue; outcomes that positively affect a candidate’s capabilities and professional career development and which stimulate action and change in the workplace – while making a significant original and valued knowledge contribution to practice (Costley and Lester, 2012).

Contrastingly, traditional doctoral research programs were primarily devised and driven by the academic knowledge and skills procreation needs of tertiary institutions (Costley, 2013; Fenge, 2010; Walsh, 2011) – which is more focused on the production of 'original' knowledge (Wellington, 2012) and is less concerned with outputs having relevance to specific workplace contexts or the skills development of industry practitioners.

Work-based research degrees are also distinct from profession-specific doctorates, which involve a significant coursework component and a thesis component based in the candidate's workplace (Maxwell, 2003) and which makes a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the context of a specific professional field. Notably, on the surface there are some strong parallels between work-based research degrees and profession-specific doctorates. These include research being undertaken in workplace settings and generating context relevant knowledge, and the research being a contributing element in the development of more effective practitioners (Lester, 2004) or 'scholar professionals' (Stewart and Chen, 2009). However, there are also key differences concerning the professional motivations and intentions and training of the candidates. These involve the quantum of formal coursework undertaken to inform and train the candidates (relatively high in profession-specific doctorates), a focus on improving a workplace and organisational career potential (in work-based research degrees) versus improving individual career potential in a discipline field, and the trajectory of the knowledge contributions expected in professional doctorates (Costly and Lester, 2012).

Whilst necessary in this paper to conceptually differentiate a work-based research degree compared to other research degrees, in practice the differences between them is often blurred (Costley, 2013) and consequently there remains some ambiguity in assuredly delineating boundaries between the types (Sense, 2015). Nonetheless, this paper has a focus on those research degree students who are in full-time employment and dispersed work situations and undertake their degrees in part-time mode en-route to improve their organisational career potential – and are usually busy adults in middle to senior levels in organisations. Comparatively, these candidates need to deal with their geographic isolation and challenges in balancing and meeting the expectations of their academic and industry stakeholders. Consequently too, their support needs are likely to be different to a normal full-time candidate.

Given these significant challenges, and from a learning capability development perspective, these candidates may benefit from the social learning that occurs in a COP. Therein, the development over time of a COP involving researchers from across a number of organisations, may aid their collective and individual learning and learning capability development through reflection on research processes and conceptualisation matters, guidance and sharing of ideas between them, and stimulating interactions which prompt or inform new learning. Indeed, higher education literature (see for example Ng and Pemberton (2013), Klenowski et al. (2011), Shacham and Od-Cohen (2009), Gardner (2007), Leshem (2007), Wisker et al. (2007), Weidman et al. (2001)) well recognises the benefits of COPs for empowering researcher learning and higher-order thinking and for researcher moral support. However, it has not been previously examined as to how part-time work-based researcher candidates might best pursue such a development between them and indeed, what may impede it, nor how the employer organisations and participating tertiary institutions may purposefully support such development.

Added to that situation is a difficulty in conceiving this group of researchers in COP terms. That is, given the differentials between full-time co-located and interacting researchers in a relatively supportive university research environment which would normally aid the potential development of a COP, how then does one conceptualise a COP for a grouping of people who are spatially and organisationally dispersed and interacting only on a part-time and infrequent basis (if at all) on an issue of research? Thus, this conceptualisation is important for these work-based researchers to be able to relate to their current social learning situation or opportunity and to then identify and take appropriate learning actions that reflect their contexts and more systematically support the development of a suitable form of COP.

It is important to also emphasise that establishing a COP in this study was an ‘active’ activity within the operation of the ‘syndicate’ – not merely a conceptual debate about its possible utility in the context.

Hence, any potential conjecture that perhaps the COP construct was limiting and not the 'best conceptual frame' to apply to this social learning situation actually misses the intention of the study. This was a real example case of a group and its attendant temporary organisation intentionally seeking to establish a 'COP vessel' to help stimulate and facilitate their social learning. Therein, the idea of a COP was considered to structurally support attempts to realise social learning and consequently, had 'traction' with the participants in this case i.e. the notion of building a 'community' focused on their research capabilities development was one which the participants could readily value and tentatively support. In that way, the COP construct served as a rallying node to focus participant energy on systematically (and not accidentally or not at all) developing their social learning activities – irrespective of whether the research 'data' collected ultimately resisted or supported its development. Thus the 'COP frame' was not superimposed over the case to analyse it, it instead was an integral part of the case. This paper reports on the issues/dilemmas associated with that actual activity undertaken in a rather difficult set of contextual circumstances. Consequently, it provides a rare insight into a temporary organisational form (the syndicate) trying to intentionally and systematically support and promote social learning through the formation of a COP – accepting (and not at all detracting from) any notion that the practice precedes the formation of a community (Gherardi, 2009; Wenger, 2000). To generate a 'practice' however, one first needs to provide / create structural opportunities / circumstances that may aid the achievement of that outcome. Ultimately, this paper sheds a light on both the conceptualisation and practical gap in knowledge concerning the developmental issues of a COP in these contexts.

This paper will now present a discussion on the conceptual framework of Situated Learning Theory (SLT), which underpins the focus of this paper. The following section will then outline the empirical case study and thereafter, a commentary will be provided on the methodological approach pursued. Following that, a discussion on the outcomes from this case analysis will be presented. Finally, some concluding remarks, limitations of this work and future research opportunities will be articulated.

Conceptual framework

In addition to the COP definition previously provided, a brief explanation of situated learning theory (SLT) and its construct of a COP are appropriate. Embedded in the constructivist paradigm, wherein learning is considered an integral part of generative social practice within a context (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Richter, 1998), and in contrast to cognitive perspectives on learning, the focus of situated learning theory is concerned with learning as social participation within communities of practice (Park, 1999; Senge and Scharmer, 2001; Wenger, 1998). Situated learning actually evolves (explicitly or implicitly) through the learning processes of observation, dialogue, storytelling and conversations between people as they participate and interact within a practice, and can be considered in more pragmatic terms as learning-on-the-job. Therein, participants develop their technical and social competencies and negotiate the construction of their identities and common meanings around situations and objects within their developing practices (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Cook and Yanow, 1993; Dixon, 1999; Gherardi, 1999; Gherardi and Nicolini 2000; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger et al., 2002).

A significant construct of SLT is a COP. A COP exhibits the interacting elements of a domain of knowledge and a community of people participating in a shared practice. They emerge and develop as people formally and informally interact over extended time periods on a mutual topic/s of interest and within those interactions, learning and the exchange and generation of knowledge occurs. In this frame, knowledge is thus conceived as an emergent, situated, embedded and negotiated activity (Gherardi, 2009). Moreover, it would be incorrect to simply assume that a COP only consists of people interacting harmoniously and collaboratively together - perhaps embracing the sentimentalized notion of ‘community’ too strongly. Rather, a COP can also be a hotbed of political activity and contested spaces – and these power relations (amongst other phenomena) are an aspect of the practice within COPs, which could benefit from more evaluation (Fox, 2000).

COPs can exist in any context and we may belong to any number of them for example at work, in hobbies or in clubs. COPs aid the exposure of spatially distributed tacit and explicit knowledge held by individuals and provides a canvas for the development of individual identities within the practice space. Despite these expressed features, COPs cannot be mandated into existence by an 'authority' and expectantly, there is no set of definitive guidelines to apply to this COP development issue – it remains a context responsive and emergent entity which cannot be fully determined at the outset. This emergence view also being entirely consistent with Gherardi's (2006) perspective that practice organises a community and thus a COP is the outcome of the discursive actions of participants as they interact in and with their environment i.e. the community does not exist before or in the absence of the practice (Gherardi, 2006). Consequently, to underline this formative hierarchy Gherardi (2006) places an emphasis on the 'texture of practices' (Gherardi, 2009) rather than give priority to the term 'community'. Wenger (2000) also offers a similar view that COPs emerge from the convergent interplay of competence and experience via mutual engagement. As a practice emerges, it becomes the 'social container' of the competencies that constitute a social learning system (Wenger, 2000).

Despite a COP's emergent character and lack of organisational legitimacy (Wenger and Snyder, 2000) it is necessary for its formation and persistence that appropriate stimuli and conditions and resources are established to support such development (Wenger, 1998, Wenger and Snyder, 2000) and thereby stimulate participant social learning while they are on-the-job and to create a supportive learning community (Klenowski et al., 2011). In the context of part-time work-based researchers, conceptualising and developing a COP involving these researchers presents particular challenges –which are discussed later in this paper.

SLT and its construct of COP have also provided a foundation for other studies concerned with the social construction of knowledge and the application of such learning within organisational settings. In the discipline of Practice-Based-Studies (PBS) for example, based on their case study of remote consultation in cardiology Bruni et al. (2007) introduce a concept of "systems of fragmented knowledge" – which represents the spatiality of knowledge. This concept places the focus onto the network of interdependent and interacting practice elements (e.g. equipment, people, forms, routines and techniques) in which knowledge is embedded and which is necessary for the performance of the practice. This conceptualisation tracks deeper into the practice interactions between people and practice technologies to mobilise knowing-in-practice. As such, it is still heavily aligned with and draws on the concept of SLT (and its attendant construct of COP) and the interacting social discourse between human elements but goes further to examine the part that non-human artifacts play in mobilising learning, the generation of knowledge and action within a practice. Similarly, Gherardi (2009; 2006) also recognises that knowledge within a practice is not only an activity situated in social practices between humans, but also actively distributed amongst non-human artifacts. She considers that in the historical development of PBS, a theoretical proposal that knowledge should be defined as an activity, led to it being considered as an activity situated in time and space and therefore as taking place in work practices (Gherardi, 2009). Therein, the work practices constitute the locus of learning, working and innovating. Such observations are aligned to remarks by earlier SLT researchers, namely Brown and Duguid (1991), who similarly indicate that learning, working and innovating were interrelated and complementary and were neither conflicting or problematic forces – thus knowledge is conjoined to practice and learning is the connection between work and innovation (Sense, 2007). These recent example contributions to PBS literature which further examine the dynamics within a practice, do not at all detract from the earlier conceptual work on SLT and COP, but demonstrably reinforce the significance of SLT and the notion of a collective practice as the vessel for learning and organising.

The empirical case study

The case study (the syndicate) involves a network of five local government authorities and a tertiary institution collaborating on developing the staff of the local government organisations through them becoming worked-based researchers. These local authorities are involved in a complex mix of local social, economic and political challenges and also deal with higher-level government policy development and impositions. These authorities formally verified their participation in the syndicate by signing a three year contract with the university which articulates the obligations on all parties and wherein, each year of the program each authority can nominate up to two of their staff to become research candidates. This syndicate is relevant to this paper's focus because it serves as a revelatory case (Yin, 1994) of ways to systematically support and develop work-based researchers through a network approach and provides insights into issues impeding or supporting the development of a supportive COP for the researchers in such a context.

The structure of the syndicate involves three principal elements, the first being the network of councils and the centrality of their staff being the researchers. Secondly, those candidates pursue research projects on important local or sector issues and conduct their investigations within their own and/or other syndicate organisations workplaces (a specified operational principal and contractually agreed to). Thirdly, the university is a facilitative hub for informing and guiding the research projects and students and for knowledge exchange between the participants and councils. The types of projects pursued in this syndicate are multidisciplinary (a final total consisting of 14 Masters of Philosophy and 3 Doctoral projects). The predominance of a Masters of Philosophy reflects the prior qualifications and contexts of the target population. The researchers are all senior to middle managers, with ages ranging from 24 to 56 and there is a predominance of female researchers (83%) in the group.

This syndicate required a critical mass of industry partners to fully fund its activities (via annual cash contributions) and to support their staff involvement (in-kind support such as time for research, access to people and information, participation in syndicate activities). In this case that critical mass was five organisations. As Sanderson et al. (2001) note, such network collaborations between local government authorities and tertiary institutions benefits the quality of research undertaken, its likely adoption in the sector and the learning of the organisations involved. Therein, local government authorities are introduced to new ideas, new practices and value sets, and improve their abilities to learn and adapt (Kilpatrick et al., 2006). Furthermore, the relatively close geographical location of each council in the network to the university (within a 120km radius of the university) made physical access for researchers to research training, seminars and supervisors achievable on a regular basis. As indicated by the researchers, this proximity has helped create a tangible sense of deep support for each candidate.

Another operational feature of the syndicate was how the candidates became involved with their research projects. After a call for expressions of interest from their employer council, each project is initially proposed and outlined by the candidate, and then reviewed and endorsed or otherwise by their council executive. Consequently, the councils have the freedom to nominate their staff and projects in the first instance without any constraint on the discipline areas or level of study involved. Once nominated, those candidates are then subject to meeting the university entry qualifications for research degrees and the identification of suitable academic supervision for their projects. The syndicate director at the university is particularly involved in these activities. Given these students are additional to the normal intake of full-time research students, an important operational consideration is that research supervision capabilities and capacities at the university involved are carefully assessed and managed.

Similar to Doncaster and Lester's (2002) investigation of a Doctor of Professional Studies program at Middlesex University UK, a feature of this syndicate is coursework on research methods and proposal development. It provides an essential theoretical grounding and pragmatic guidance for these industry-based researchers (who have not previously undertaken formal research) in the ways of formulating and conducting their projects. This coursework is partially customised to this syndicate audience and normally runs on a fortnightly weekend attendance schedule over four months. Research skills training like this has also been acknowledged by Sanderson et al. (2001) as key to building internal research capacities in local government. Additionally, students pursuing research degrees in Australia can complete their degrees without tutoring costs – in contrast to normal postgraduate coursework programs. This financial saving, coupled to a program that does not require these time poor professionals to attend 'regular class lectures', is a further attractant.

The syndicate also includes opportunities for networking, knowledge exchange and relationship building (centred on research) wherein participants cross boundaries between different organisations and fields of expertise (Tynjälä, 2008). Sanderson et al. (2001) and Tynjälä (2008) argue that a well-developed infrastructure that captures, manages and disseminates information from research is also important to bring about learning in a network. For example, the syndicate involves interactive forums where the research students' projects and their activities are presented to representatives of all the participating councils and university academics. Attendance at these formal and other less formal gatherings is often challenging from a time perspective for these researchers distributed across five organisations. The syndicate also takes a collaborative approach to decision-making about its activities with its partner organisations. This feature is intended to facilitate the development of a more expansive, ongoing relationship between the participating organisations – that which involves further research partnerships and ongoing industry-academia involvement in improving council operations. For a more detailed discussion of the case study context and operational structure, please refer to Sense (2012).

Methodology

This paper utilises a case study methodology. Therein, data collection methods of semi-structured primary stakeholder interviews, a focus group activity and limited observations of the work-based researchers were executed. Here, the primary stakeholders were the work-based researchers and their academic supervisors. Six months after the program commenced nine of the initial twelve researchers and their academic supervisors were interviewed. A research assistant who was not in any managerial position within the syndicate performed these interviews and university ethics protocols were followed with respect to how those discussions were actioned. At the time, given their availability and relatively high number and mix of interviewees compared to the total participants involved i.e. interviewing 75% of the current candidates and 90% of all academic supervisors involved, was considered to provide a sufficiently large volume of rich data to inform the study.

The candidate interviews sought responses to questions concerning their learning experiences in the syndicate thus far and on what they were doing about developing their learning connections and relationships and sharing knowledge between each other. The academic supervisor interviews sought their responses to questions on how the syndicate supported work-based researcher learning development, their role in those learning processes and what knowledge generation and development and sharing they observed between participants. The candidates' learning behaviours were also observed in research methods coursework sessions, less formal candidate get-togethers, and in seminar sessions. These observations served as secondary data sources and aided conclusions arrived at from interviews. The focus group activity involved nine candidates from two intakes and sought explicit reflections and suggestions on building a research COP between them. Data analysis involved an interrogation of the data streams from the interviews and focus group discussion to identify common themes. From that thematic analysis, key themes indicating the conceptual difficulties involved and gestational dilemmas experienced by these work-based researchers in respect to developing a COP and those able to assist such a development i.e. the supervisors, were derived. These themes are detailed in the following section.

Outcomes and discussion

Consistent with the declared purposes of this paper, the outcomes address the conceptualisation of a part-time work-based researcher COP (WBR-COP) and the pragmatic difficulties faced by participants and supporting organisations in supporting such a development.

(a) Conceptualising a WBR-COP

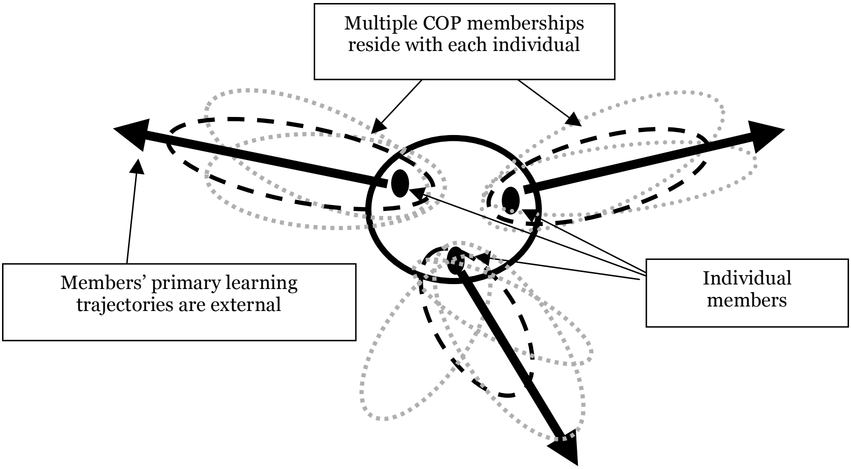
Why is it beneficial to conceptualise a COP in this particular context? As mentioned in the introduction, these spatially dispersed work-based participants pursuing their research in part-time mode represent a particularly difficult group to expect to successfully stimulate and promote their social learning activity. Yet, as earlier indicated, the concept of a COP has high relevance/value for any research degree students' learning and moral support while in the process of completing their studies. A COP framework endows a holistic and structural perspective towards addressing this social learning conundrum. Thus, a conceptualisation of a WBR-COP may help these students to better understand and systematically and more wholly explore their social learning challenge/opportunity in their context and help frame their coordinated actions to achieve it - that which otherwise may remain a fragmented activity or be left purely to chance or inaction.

In the case, the term COP was not explicitly highlighted in responses from interviewees. The participant interviews sought commentary about developing the connections, relationships and sharing knowledge between the parties so far, and any potential future actions to build their collective knowledge and learning practices. Their responses related to the general notions about the value of sharing information and establishing contacts in other councils that would benefit their learning and research – rather than a forthright focus on developing a functioning COP. Also, interviewees were not particularly conversant with a detailed appreciation of the elements of a COP although all were comfortably familiar with the term and its intentions concerning building a 'practice' and a 'community'. In these interviews, there was also a profound acknowledgement of the value of the coursework learning sessions in establishing initial relationships between the parties and for 'forcing' them to get involved in reading the literature and considering and knowledgably developing their research plans. As one candidate commented "Once the coursework is over….we are going to miss that opportunity to get together as a group to talk about things… because we are not going to have the same impetus" and another, "the coursework will end, it's like the safety security blanket being ripped away". This recognition was coupled to expressed desires to want to continue to meet up face-to-face and to exchange information via electronic media on an ongoing basis, e.g. as one candidate offered, "to keep on getting together and keep supporting each other". ….and another, "it takes a few times together to get that cohesion and we've got it now so it would be a shame to lose it". It appeared that the desire for future ongoing 'learning connections' and a 'knowledge domain' were evident at the time of interviews so as to build on the initial contacts made and to continue in some form to share knowledge and support each other to learn in their research process. These exhortations however, lacked supporting commitments to action by individuals.

Six months after the interviews were conducted, the focus group activity involving two student intakes, also revealed very little in way of committable ideas and a propensity to 'spend the time' on developing a COP. The candidates ran the session, and could take the conversation anywhere they liked provided it focused on a core question of "What can we do in the future in respect to building a 'research community of practice' between each of you and between your councils?". Given this focal point, this outcome is particularly interesting, given all candidates were observed to acknowledge and reinforce the perceived benefits of more systematically ‘getting together’ to support each other and to learn, but seemed reluctant to fully commit to actually doing things that required their face-to-face time, other than to ‘digitally’ support knowledge sharing. The digital medium was enthusiastically supported by all to assist the sharing of knowledge between them e.g. a webpage share file, digital stories on them posted on the webpage, in addition to email contacts being readily shared. These ultimately were actioned by the syndicate administration team but to limited usage by candidates and between candidates.

Overall in the case, the functioning of a COP between them appeared difficult for these participants to grasp and action – particularly given all their other time commitments and relative spatial distribution. How then can one conceptualise a WBR-COP and better inform participants’ actions in this regard? Fortuitously in 2007, a researcher articulated a conceptualisation of a project team from a situated learning perspective – that which involved conceiving project teams as an amalgam of many different communities of practice - which simulated an embryonic form of a new COP (See Sense, 2007). Figure 1 depicts this conceptualisation.

Figure 1. *A typical dedicated project team*


Multiple COP memberships reside with each individual
Members’ primary learning trajectories are external
Individual members

(Adapted from Sense (2007)

There are strong similarities between this conceptualisation of a project team and a WBR-COP condition. In comparative reference to Sense's work where he initially argued project teams cannot be considered a COP, the WBR-COP participants also: have a defined start and finish cycle and do not intend to continue on indefinitely nor do they have a collective past or future; have a specific focus i.e. progress their personal learning in respect to their specific research project – and are not concerned with a longer term practice development between members; have participant identities strongly forged externally to the group and these generally reflect other communities world views; have participants who do not share a common negotiated perspective on the world and get-togethers between them serve as knowledge exchange venues for multiple communities of practice. Therein, participants can access external sources of distributed knowledge in other communities of practice or, as Tynjälä (2008) articulates, participants cross boundaries between different organisations and fields of expertise. However, they do not develop a mutually negotiated and shared practice involving their own artefacts. In effect, like with project teams, a WBR-COP situation is not structurally able to be considered a COP – as generally defined.

However, Sense (2007) also argued that in project teams, they: provide a focal point on a topic that people have an interest in and thereby act as a causal prompt for COPs to emerge and grow; participants are involved in negotiating boundary objects and brokering to determine the imported artefacts relevant to the group's activities; provide the opportunities for individuals and the team to learn and develop their capabilities and their identities and their mobile practice. Similarly, and on the proviso they regularly 'gather together' in some way in a WBR-COP grouping: a focal point is necessarily evident (i.e. research knowledge and skills and mutual support); participants can negotiate the artefacts they choose to use to function when together; it may provide multiple potential opportunities for participants to learn from each other and develop their research capabilities and identities while also developing their research practices which may translate into their other work activities. Given these structural similarities to dedicated project team structures, it appears reasonable to suggest that one can conceive a WBR grouping also as an embryonic form of a new COP. The emphasis here being on the term 'embryonic' particularly when accounting for the added complications of their temporal part-time connections and spatial separation to each other further impeding the opportunities for social learning development. As exemplified in Figure 1, this conceptualisation signals the primary learning trajectory for individuals as external to the immediate WBR group and the core challenge is to amend that to an inbound learning trajectory wherein the various COPs of WBR participants would abut, since this is where major learning and knowledge generation is stimulated and where new practices can emerge. Consequently, this embryonic form of a new COP conceptualisation pointedly draws participant attention to the primacy of their commitment, their participation, and their efforts necessary to realise social learning amongst their group.

(b) Pragmatic dilemmas faced by participants in developing a WBR-COP

Developing and operating a WBR-COP also poses core pragmatic dilemmas for the participants. Some of these have previously been alluded to and based on the case examined, include:

(i) Time prioritisation – workplace context and work task hegemony over research task activities and activating a WBR-COP

In the first instance, this dilemma involves workplace context issues and changes attracting researcher attention over and above their research activities and cultivating a COP. For example, in the case examined these included concerns of council amalgamations leading to potential job losses particularly at middle management level, changing organisational structures meaning more role responsibilities being placed on some researchers compared to when they commenced their research, and the shifting priorities of their day to day responsibilities which directed their attention onto more shorter-term urgent work task matters. Concomitantly, candidates were time poor for research and research network activities given their many work tasks (and other personal commitments) taking centre stage. This dilemma/challenge is not unique to this case as there are other studies which also identify such time prioritisation and balance challenges e.g. Klenowski et al.'s (2011) study on building support for learning in a Doctor of Education programme. As one researcher noted in an interview, "...being a senior manager makes it really really hard……. This gets squeezed in around everything else I might do". These participants actually claimed en-masse that they had little time if any to participate or plan to regularly network with their colleagues. As another participant in the focus group activity noted (and was subsequently supported by all present) “People are really time poor in local government, it is usually thin numbers of practitioners doing everything” and another, “…we are all time poor, even it’s hard for us to meet now”. Consequently, any considerations regarding the actions required for developing a COP between the participants appeared lowest on the pecking order (if at all).

From an adult learning perspective as it relates to their research processes, this work task hegemony was very negative – and constantly so. One can certainly appreciate the significance of these candidates needing to attend to work matters given that is their paying job and figures prominently in their sense of identity and comfort in span of control and competence. Conversely, research and research processes challenge their sense of control and competence, and places them in situations where they need guidance and support. This impact cannot be overstated as seen in the case examined. To highlight this differential, when one candidate was asked what was it like becoming a researcher compared to her normal work, her response was simply “daunting!” The research coursework sessions and showcase forums undertaken in the case were some key activities designed to help build these researchers’ knowledge and competence in understanding and discussing their research. Both of these activities were considered by the candidates and supervisors to be seminal in helping provide the requisite research skills and in building researcher confidence about their projects.

In a cognisant response to this challenge, in the focus group session, the participants, in recognition of their ‘time poor’ condition (and lack of ready accessibility to each other) unanimously endorsed an idea of building a form of an electronic research information sharing network between them – wherein they could share details of their projects and their staged outcomes across the councils and beyond the immediate researcher group. Coupled to that, they also supported the notion of ‘digital stories’ from each of the researchers being posted on that site and the councils and their people could access those for a ‘taster’ of the projects. The intention here of course was to be able to access and share potentially useful information without any regular commitment to ‘get together’. Thus these actions served as a partial step in helping remain ‘connected’ in some way after the coursework finished, and as one participant previously noted in an interview that staying connected to each other “may help maintain a conduit for access to others councils”. The administration team for the syndicate did institute such a network through their university webpage and also recorded and posted digital stories from some candidates. After some initial interest, it appears that these resources have not been utilised as initially endorsed. That issue will be the subject of further enquiry.

Also, as indicated in the focus group session, a regular monthly meeting was considered helpful and was endorsed, but no participant could offer a firm commitment to regularly attend – further highlighting the priority work matters had over a WBR-COP development. It was also suggested by the group that each council could take a turn at hosting the researchers from the syndicate – either a formal presentation arrangement or simply other ‘get-togethers’ to catch up and compare progress. However, during their research process, none could commit to being able to present or attend such events – pending their work priorities. As one participant noted “Even if we take turns in hosting it, you need to take the time out, you just can’t expect the individual to. I think that is a really good idea, I guess whatever it is we do, there has got to be some structure around it so that there is some plan dates, some plan times.” In all, the following comment from one candidate in an interview sums up the candidates’ conundrum “Progress wise, the biggest part is just struggling on workload with the research, it’s like my job versus research”.

Based on the case and all the supportive infrastructure and resources provided to ‘structure’ some gatherings and the strong explicit commitments of the participating organisations and the candidates, it appears that this dilemma is a particularly difficult one to successfully address. This would be an even greater challenge for work-based candidates undertaking such studies on a private and organisationally unsupported basis. Thus, in this hegemonic condition developing a WBR-COP does not necessarily become emboldened as an essential condition of candidate learning and development and in being so positioned, those multiple social learning opportunities are left unexploited.

(ii) Spatial separation between participants

In the case examined this dilemma simply involved the physical distances between participants in different organisations in different locales making interactions and sharing knowledge (both formally and informally) more difficult to achieve or occur spontaneously. The focus of these possible interactions was to be between the candidates in the program rather than between the candidates and other researchers at the university. As one candidate noted “it isn’t easy for us to travel from council to get to these meetings and these sorts of things”. Moreover, as indicated earlier, these candidates very explicitly acknowledged the value they placed on the social interaction and informal learning taking place amongst the group while in their coursework sessions and as such lamented when the coursework was to finish. This tended to reflect a general concern that they as individuals would find it hard to organise and action regular get-togethers when removed from the ‘necessary’ coursework commitments. The physical distances between them coupled to their other work and personal commitments suggested they had little direct or immediate incentives to seek out regular gatherings with the group. To that end, some candidates suggested that if someone were to organise a regular event with an agenda where people could come along if they were able to, might be useful e.g. “maybe if we get it together monthly or bimonthly and we have an agenda of the things we are going to talk about…”, and, “I think the monthly thing would be helpful just to help keep me on track……”. However, the Showcase forums partially served as a venue to aid some ‘gatherings of the clan’ to occur but over time, attendance at those events has dwindled. The primary reasons expressed in relation to this declining attendance being their work pressures and travel time issues to meet-up. It appears that these general ‘intentions’ to want to continue to connect with and ‘share their research practices’ were stifled through their spatial separation and other pressures.

(iii) Pluralistic interests

This dilemma involves the candidates having separate and differently focused projects meaning their reasons for seeking to ‘come together’ are primarily on the processes and practices of research and for mutual support (apart from general interest) rather than a singular overriding mutual ‘output’ topic of interest. From a learning perspective, such differences might be considered beneficial to learning activities as people explore the different focal points, reflect on and compare to their own activities and share such expositions. But from a COP development perspective these multiple ‘output’ foci may not provide sufficient and more specific stimulus for people to actively seek out their colleagues to interact regularly and at multiple levels. As one candidate commented on this matter “After we’ve done this group of coursework, I’m struggling to see how much contact I’ll have with the rest ….especially because mine [project] is so far removed from everyone else’s”. That being said, the syndicate processes provided opportunities for interaction (both formal and informal) from time to time, and this did occasionally as one candidate commented “… encourage tapping into other consortium members’ fields of interest and their examples and learning from that…..” But, occasions such as these were relatively limited compared to the candidates furnishing such opportunities through more regular interactions.

Additionally as stated earlier, the motives of some candidates in doing any ‘connecting’ to other members was primarily concerning, as one candidate indicated “The biggest thing is about the information sharing, of getting contacts within other councils to be able to access good practical data”. While understandably a candidate may be concerned with ‘getting the research done effectively and efficiently’ in accordance with their usual workplace practices, only having that focus misses the ‘other opportunity’ for learning that occurs through a researcher networking and interacting on a more general level. This dilemma particularly points to an issue of candidate education about the value of social learning to individuals at a more general and discipline unbiased level and to emphasise the duality of their researcher roles i.e. as both learner and task achiever.

In sum, in the empirical case, there was a keenness of spirit about the notion of a WBR-COP but participants faced some significant dilemmas in pursuing it. Therein, they lacked time commitment to systematically undertake such an endeavour due to their workplace issues taking priority. Adding further complexity to this condition was the spatial separation of participants across different locals making ‘participating together’ in any form very difficult. The pluralistic research focus of individuals within the group was also not conductive to stimulating their actions to regularly meet and share knowledge beyond the mutual interest of research processes and the limited structured activities provided by the syndicate in that regard.

(c) Challenges for higher education institutions and organisations in sponsoring a WBR-COP development

Based on the experiences in the case examined, some tentative general arguments can be made concerning the challenges for organisations involved in generating and sponsoring a WBR-COP. For higher education institutions, the primary challenges include the provision of opportunities and resources to help generate conditions supporting a WBR-COP and thereby expose these candidates to distributed knowledge (conceptual, methodological and practical knowledge). These may include for example the provision of flexible and more mentor-oriented supervisors willing to be accommodative of the shifting workplace priorities of these candidates as they progress their projects, physical resources such as rooms and IT equipment to aid their 'gathering together' or the provision of an officer of the university to coordinate structured regular activities between these third generation research degree candidates throughout their candidatures – which may also incorporate exposure to other full time research degree candidates.

For organisations whose staff are the work-based researchers, they should demonstrate explicit support for their candidates' research and actions in pursuing their learning in their projects and, although often difficult, provide them the time and encouragement to attend gatherings and events involving other industry-based researchers. This, coupled with the candidates themselves being motivated to 'come together' implies a genuine recognition of the perceived value of such social learning activities – that which may not be readily acknowledged at the outset without some form of intervention to educate all the parties to that effect.

Conclusion

The functioning of a part-time work-based researcher and the challenges they face in pursuing their research and associated learning is relatively unexplored. Drawing on a case example this paper has examined the difficulties of conceptualising a part-time work-based researcher COP (involving a number of researchers in different organisations), and some core pragmatic dilemmas candidates, tertiary institutions and supporting organisations face in attempting to forge or facilitate these social learning practices. These researchers' social connections to each other are difficult to initiate and maintain and they necessarily juggle multiple commitments across different contexts whereby research and learning activities need to 'fit' within those complex and often competing conditions. This in turn has impacts on participants' abilities to want to or be able to seek out researcher colleagues to interact, converse, observe each other and share and create knowledge on research topics and processes on any regular formal and/or informal basis. Given these elements are essential for a COP to progressively develop it is not surprising that the conception and emergence of a WBR-COP appears to be a particularly difficult task – as indeed has been highlighted by the case presented.

Of course a COP of any kind cannot be mandated into existence, but they can be intellectually and practically supported and encouraged to emerge and prosper (Sense, 2007). Also as illustrated via the case, the practical implications for organisations and any academic institution involved in fostering such activities are reasonably significant and warrant further investigation and attention particularly if work-based people are to be considered an important source of candidates for research degrees. For researchers, the identification of issues affecting the social learning of candidates in this study pose new questions and present new avenues of enquiry into how best to support the learning activities of these third generation research degree candidates.

Thus, in recognition of the social learning potential inherent in a COP and the communal support network a COP affords its participants, work-based researcher candidates and their supporting organisations would do well to intentionally consider and systematically seek to address these conceptual and pragmatic dilemmas impacting such development. To do so and thereby actively facilitate the emergence of a WBR-COP possessing a focus on research and research processes, can only enrich the candidates' learning and the expansion of their learning capabilities throughout their candidatures. Ultimately, such activity only advantages the generation of new knowledge for participants, their organisations and for the broader community.

Limitations and future research: The limitations of this research involve the case data which was sourced from one collaborating group of five councils and their staff participants and one academic institution in Australia. Future research in this area may explore alternate ways to stimulate and assist researcher social learning practices in these demanding work-based contexts. Furthermore, a phenomenological investigation on work-based researchers 'becoming' competent researchers may also identify further valuable lines of enquiry into this issue.

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Motivating and enabling adult learners to develop research skills

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Adult learners undertaking a coursework masters are understandably nervous about undertaking research projects. However if done well, such projects represent a way to encourage the quantity and quality of practitioner research, which is important in all management disciplines, not only the emerging discipline of coaching. This paper offers an alternative to the individual master-apprentice model to which many research students are still exposed. Addressing the motivational needs identified in self-determination theory (autonomy, competence and relatedness) as well as self-efficacy and incorporating good practices in feedback, it outlines a way to make the process of learning how to do research more engaging than sitting listening to lectures. The paper reports the findings of a survey of the participants in the 2012 cohort who were asked if their competence and confidence in undertaking a research project had changed before and after undertaking the class, and if so, to list what they, their peers or staff had done to contribute to this change. The paper concludes that the approach offers a useful way to help adult learners develop research skills.

Keywords: *coaching, research skills, adult learning, self-*

determination theory

Introduction

All coursework masters students in Australia are required by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF, 2013) to have knowledge of research principles and methods and to conduct a research-based project. Such projects have the potential to encourage the quantity and quality of practitioner research, which is important in all management disciplines, but particularly important in a young discipline such as coaching, as much of the early research was conducted by commercial organisations keen to sell their services (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh and Parker, 2010). While there is literature on the development of research skills for doctoral students, there is little on the development of research skills with coursework masters programs. This study explored the effectiveness of incorporating self-determination theory (SDT) in the pedagogical approaches adopted in the research subject, in particular seeking to answer the question:

Does the application of self-determination theory help students develop competence and confidence in their ability to conduct research?

Background theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a needs-based theory of motivation, focusing on three basic human needs: to strive for competence, to enjoy autonomy, and to relate to others in a group (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000). These three elements, viz. competence, autonomy and relatedness, provide a focus and a basis for action in the classroom, which is more specific than general exhortations that classes should be engaging and motivating. Furthermore, self-determination theory has been developed over a period of four decades, and is described by Sheldon (2013:228) as ‘an integrated theory of optimal motivation, health and well-being’. Sheldon also categorises the research underpinning SDT as of the highest quality, with ‘findings published in the most rigorous scientific journals’. While research training often addresses technical skills and develops competence, the level of autonomy developed is variable. Furthermore, research training is often provided by individual supervisors and hence does not address the social aspects of motivation and learning. The three elements will be discussed next.

On completion of a research subject, a student should be competent in conducting research. The evidence that a doctoral student has become competent in research is typically provided in their thesis. However there is an increasing move toward helping doctoral students develop those skills through coursework (Perry, 2011) and to scaffolding their skills development (Holland and Garfield, 2012). It is important to note that competence in SDT is not only about being able to do something, it is about knowing that one can do something and having the confidence to do it unaided. To develop this level of confidence requires students to understand what is expected, self-assess against those expectations, and perform to the required level. Peer and lecturer feedback are valuable in as much as they help the student to calibrate their self-assessment (Boud, 2010).

The notion of competence in SDT is closely related to self-efficacy, a person's belief that he/she can successfully accomplish a set task (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 2012). If people think a goal cannot be achieved, they may not even attempt to achieve it (Gregory, Beck and Carr, 2011). Furthermore, self-efficacy leads to a range of positive outcomes including engagement, persistence, reduced anxiety, and greater cognitive flexibility (Moen and Skaalvik, 2009). Pasupathy (2010) noted the importance of self-efficacy for academic staff, reporting that those with higher levels of research self-efficacy produced higher levels of research outputs. Self-efficacy can be enhanced through building on previous successes (Tompkins, 2013), particularly if the task is not too easy and is accomplished independently and at an early stage with only limited failures. There is a risk of boredom and alienation if a task is too easy or of anxiety and disengagement if too difficult (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Schreiner, Hulme, Hetzel and Lopez (2009) state that the relationship between academic self-efficacy and educational outcomes has been well established. They stress the importance of timely, frequent and constructive feedback in achieving learning outcomes.

Autonomy and competence are essential for intrinsic motivation, which Deci and Ryan (2000:234) describe as "*people freely engaging in* *activities that they find interesting, that provide novelty and optimal challenge".* Niemiec and Ryan (2009) support this view, arguing that both autonomy and competence are necessary to maintain intrinsic motivation for learning, as competence by itself is not enough. They suggest that autonomy supportive tasks are conducive to students' internal motivation, deep learning and creativity. This is consistent with Knowles, Holton and Swanson's (2005) view that adult learners are internally motivated and self-directed.

Investigations into applications of SDT in educational contexts have found that autonomy has a key role to play in student motivation (Reeve, 2002). Reeve's study of teachers in the classroom found that students showed higher levels of autonomy and perceived competence when teachers listened to students, allowed more time for individual work, avoided directives, responded to student-generated questions, and resisted giving answers. Listening and being non-directive are classical features of coaching, e.g. Rostron (2009) and Scoular (2010) and are behaviours which the lecturers in the course in this study endeavour to apply, in order to model good coaching practice. Autonomy support for doctoral students developing research skills includes acknowledging the student's perspective and allowing students to make their own decisions (Overall, Deane and Peterson, 2011). Having to meet course requirements which are not seen as relevant or useful has a detrimental effect on autonomy (Hartnett, St George and Dron, 2011).

Gagne and Deci's (2005) meta-analysis of studies in organisations found that promoting autonomy led to intrinsic motivation, and a range of positive outcomes including job satisfaction, positive work attitudes, organisational commitment, individual psychological well-being and improved performance. Schreiner, Hulme, Hetzel and Lopez (2009) note that students who are genuinely motivated, are more likely to engage in learning, and that their engagement results not only in better performance in exams but also lead to personal growth and development. Support for autonomy in a work environment, according to Gagne and Deci (2005), includes choice and meaningful positive feedback as well as the interpersonal context such as managers' styles and organisational climate. The importance of feedback in achieving learning goals noted above is consistent with the education literature more broadly, e.g. Laryea (2013), Boyle and Mitchell (2011) and Hattie and Timperley (2007). As noted twenty-five years ago by Sadler (1989), feedback should help students understand more about the learning goal, their own performance in relation to that goal, and how to bridge any gap between their own performance and the learning goal. Students who self-assess and obtain feedback from peers and lecturers learn to identify their own benchmarks of good practice, to relate theory to practice, and to take responsibility for improving their own knowledge and skills. This autonomy promotes their capacity for lifelong learning (Boud, 2007).

The third element of self-determination theory, relatedness, is also important for intrinsic motivation, according to Deci and Ryan (2000), although less so than autonomy and competence. Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that human needs relate to innate tendencies toward achieving connectedness, effectiveness and coherence and hence environments which allow these needs to satisfied, contribute to people's vitality and mental health. Furthermore, according to Deci and Ryan (2002), social environments which fulfil these needs will result in motivated, engaged and successful individuals. Modern conceptions of feedback portray feedback as a relational process, rather than a product, involving at least two-way discussions of expectations and the extent to which those expectations are met (Carless, 2006; Rust, 2007; Pokorny and Pickford, 2010).

It is in this aspect of social relatedness that the approach outlined here differs most from the individual supervisor/student relationship which still characterises the experience of many research students. Mäata (2011) extols the benefits for doctoral students of seminars which provide enriching interactions, new ideas, and even new friendships. The notion of peer support in doctoral education has also been explored by Santicola (2013:256) noting that a cohort 'enables students to generate ideas collectively and collaborate with one another with the hopes of reducing the feeling of isolation'. Santicola found that doctoral students' need for autonomy can take precedence over working collaboratively with the cohort and that there needs to be a balance between working alone and coming together to discuss progress.

This paper next outlines the methodology adopted here and then how the principles of SDT were incorporated in a coursework masters' research class.

Methodology

The research approach adopted for this study was an action research approach, conceptualised in line with that articulated by Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart and Zuber-Skerritt (2002):

> 1. *"Action research is about people reflecting upon and improving their own practice;*
> 2. *By tightly interlinking their reflection and action; and*
> 3. *Making their experiences public to other people concerned by and interested in the respective practice."*

The approach adopted here meets the description of Carr and Kemmis (1986) of action research being concerned with the improvement of educational practices, understandings and situations, as well as relating practices, understandings and situations to each other, comparing theory and real life practice, for the purpose of improving practice. It also fits Holland and Garfield's (2012) description of action research as a form of self-evaluation aimed at improving performance, 'often used to investigate educational issues because it combines diagnosis with action and reflection'.

It should be noted however that the current study was not a classic participatory action research project as there was only one cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (although data from an earlier instance of the subject was the stimulus for the project) and participants (the students) were not involved in planning or sense-making. The approach may be characterized as 'technical action research' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986), testing the findings of research related to SDT in the classroom.

Data gathering was by means of an online survey. While online surveys may be less rich than interviews or focus groups, they have a strong advantage in that students may feel more comfortable in giving negative feedback. Furthermore, focus groups or interviews with students who have enjoyed an enriching and transformative learning experience may have a positive bias. For this study, the highly positive student surveys of the same subject in previous years suggested that this was a genuine possibility and hence an online survey was developed. The survey allowed for free text comments which, as will be discussed under the section Observe, provided real insights into students' learning about research. The online survey was conducted post completion of the subject, after results were declared and the time for appeals had passed, in order to comply with the requirements of the university's Human Research Ethics Committee, as this ensured that the responses given could not sway the lecturer's judgement in grading student performance. There were only ten students in the 2012 cohort and all ten participated in the survey.

Following a brief description of the context, the paper will next report on each of the steps of the action research approach adopted, viz. plan, act, observe and reflect.

Context

All forms of action research are situated in a specific context. It is important therefore to understand the context for this study, a Master of Business Coaching, where students learn about and apply their understanding of relevant coaching theory, develop their coaching skills, reflect on their learning and develop their own coaching models. The students on this program are typically experienced coaches and managers, working full-time and studying part-time, with an average age of 40 - 45. In addition to their work commitments and study requirements, these students often have carer responsibilities for either children or aged relatives. To cope with these competing demands, their motivation needs to be high. Their initial motivation for returning to study is related to their passion for coaching and is sustained by the quality of their learning experience and the support of their fellow students and faculty members.

One of their later subjects which initially can seem daunting and threaten student motivation is a business coaching research paper. Yet including a research requirement in all coaching programs was one of the recommendations of the Global Coaching Convention (Rostron, 2009) as well as a masters' program requirement of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF 2013). The challenge therefore is to find ways to ensure that the experience of learning to do research does not detract from the students' motivation to complete the program but rather enriches their coaching practice and equips them to conduct further research autonomously.

Plan

While there was only one cycle within the study reported here, the planning for the action was informed by three perspectives: the theoretical perspective derived from the literature relating to self-determination theory, the lecturer's experience teaching the class in previous years, and the student perspective derived from informal feedback, formal student surveys and the alumni survey conducted each year. The students' feedback consistently stressed that they valued being allowed to choose projects which were relevant to them, which is consistent with the theoretical perspective with autonomy identified as a necessary element of self-determination theory.

The lecturer's experience was that students often experienced high levels of stress while conducting their projects and hence was keen to find ways to help students achieve a sense of competence and confidence earlier in their projects, to maintain high levels of motivation, and furthermore to find ways for students to support each other, so that they were not solely reliant on the lecturer. A model of individual supervision was rejected as it would be inefficient in terms of lecturer time in developing common skills for all students and also in terms of underutilising the students' skill set and ability to help each other. Hence a blended learning model was developed, in which students would meet frequently (five full days) in the first month. Thereafter they would stay connected electronically as well as attend two further face to face days.

The theoretical framework of self-determination theory was identified as an approach proven to support the development of competence as well as enhancing student motivation, and this approach was therefore incorporated into the plan for the following year.

Act - Application of self-determination theory in the classroom

Competence

The purpose is to ensure that they have sufficient understanding of research methods to enable them to conduct small-scale research projects both ethically and effectively. During the first five days of face to face classes, students help each other to refine and finalize their overall research question. Defining a research question is often a difficult task but a critical one in order to complete a research project successfully in a short space of time. Students also help each other to refine their survey or interview questions and pilot their surveys and interviews. This ensures students get far more input and insight into how questions may be interpreted by their participants than if they only received feedback from their lecturer. Students come to appreciate that they already have skills in questioning which they have developed as coaches and can apply in research, in other words, they already have some competence and recognising this adds to their confidence and self-efficacy. Two months later, while conducting their research, there is a day for people to share their progress and get advice on any difficulties they are encountering. Having gathered and analysed data, students present draft findings to a panel of academics and peers, receiving formative feedback to improve their final report due one month later. Although each student conducts an individual project, their experience is a shared one, unlike the traditional solitary research journey.

As a core subject in the Master's program, there are assignments which are graded and contribute towards the students' weighted average marks for their whole degree program. Although necessary to provide a mark, these assignments are designed for learning, and not only to provide a mark. Rather than a single assessment of a final research report, the assignments are staged, with the Research Proposal (including an application for ethics approval) worth 30%, the presentation of draft findings 15%, and the Research Report (including an ethics completion report) 55%. In addition, there are non-assessed presentations, where students receive feedback but not grades. This staged assessment process helps build self-efficacy, in line with the 'ramped' approach to goal setting, which suggests that people who become competent in basic skills initially are better prepared to develop more complex skills later and to attempt more complex versions of the same task (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002).

Marking criteria and rubrics are provided at the start of the subject which ensures that academics articulate their expectations and that students are clear not only on the criteria, but also on the standard expected for each grade, e.g. what is the difference between a high distinction and a pass in relation to critical analysis? An example is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: *Extract from rubric for critical analysis*

High Distinction 85 – 100%	Pass 50 – 64%
- Demonstrates deep understanding of topic - Carefully and thoroughly evaluates previous research from all relevant perspectives, taking care not to let researcher's own assumptions or bias affect the review - Summarizes key themes - Identifies gaps in the literature - If direct quotes are used, they are used sparingly and to great effect - Insightful conclusion is clearly linked to concepts developed in the paper	- Demonstrates understanding of topic - Descriptive summary of previous research - Heavy reliance on direct quotes - Weak conclusion

Articulating requirements in this way makes it easy to give specific constructive feedback, as the feedback can be linked to each point. Summative feedback (marks) is given on the three graded assessment tasks. Formative feedback (also known as feedforward) is given not only on assessment tasks but also on non-assessed presentations and drafts which students are encouraged to send prior to formal submissions. Care is taken to phrase feedback constructively, identifying issues which students need to address, but doing so in a way which makes it clear that the intent is to help them improve. Students are advised what they need to do differently, and given specific feedback, such as a reminder to identify common themes in the literature, rather than summarize what one author said and then what another author said. Feedback is also given on drafts of applications for ethics approval so that all students receive their ethics approval in a timely fashion, enabling them to spend the maximum amount of time conducting their research project, rather than waiting for approval.

There are also additional benefits in terms of content knowledge as each student learns something of the theory and the findings of their fellow students as well as learning in depth about their own topic.

Autonomy

The primary element contributing to student autonomy is their ability to choose their research topic freely, the only constraint being that it should relate to business coaching, the focus of the masters' program. All the students' previous subjects relate to coaching and they therefore have a solid understanding of coaching theory and practice. They typically choose topics that relate either to their business or career, such as the application of coaching for maternity leave, or to personal interests such as moments of self-doubt in coaching. Furthermore students have to include a project plan with their initial research proposal and take responsibility for identifying participants and carrying out all their tasks on time. They also take responsibility for their own learning, with a reflection on what worked well and what they would do differently another time included with their presentation and report of their findings.

Relatedness

In the first five days, students learn about research and help each other refine their topics and their questions. An added advantage of the whole day format is that students spend their breaks together and informal learning and support continues outside the classroom. They also come to appreciate the expertise of their fellow students and experience the support and relatedness fostered by the program. As noted above, there is a progress sharing day while the students are conducting their projects, which enables them to support each other as well as receiving guidance. Two months later, while conducting their research, there is a day for people to share their progress, get advice on any difficulties they are encountering, and support each other.

Lecturers role model a coaching approach in the way they relate to students, listen attentively, ask questions, and give feedback both in class and on assignments. Rather than finding fault with in-class student presentations, we promote a collaborative approach, creating a thinking environment, in which the quality of listening helps others improve the quality of their thinking (Kline, 1999; Kline, 2009). The lecturer sits to the side so that students are presenting to each other, with the lecturer acting as facilitator. When students finish presenting, everyone takes a turn to comment on positive aspects before questions, challenges, suggestions for improvement or offers to help (e.g. identifying possible research participants) are invited. This positive support energizes the students, giving them confidence and support. The lecturer records the comments and suggestions which are emailed to each student later that day. This frees each student to engage fully in the conversation in class, knowing that important points relating to their topic will be captured. The email boosts their motivation as the comments clearly demonstrate that others are interested in their topic. It also boosts mutual respect as they recognize that their peers have useful suggestions to make. This creates a sense of community, where peer feedback is valued and reciprocated, and also gives the students additional practice in giving feedback, one of the core coaching skills. As the subject is taken in the students' second year, they have already had considerable practice in giving and receiving constructive and respectful feedback, making peer feedback a natural process to incorporate in the research subject.

In between face to face classes, students interact frequently with fellow students, with the academic staff and the library, with support available throughout their research projects both electronically and face to face.

There is no negative consequence for helping fellow students, unlike the example cited in Latham and Locke (2006) of MBA students whose distribution of marks was ranked, and hence helping others could mean doing worse oneself. Our grading is against the criteria, not against a given distribution. Of course no presentation is perfect, but rather than merely pointing out the failings, the students are advised where they need to improve, e.g. justify their choice of research methodology or support their arguments with references.

Observe – The data

The students were first asked to rate how confident they felt about completing a research project before they started the subject and how confident they felt afterwards. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *Perceptions of Confidence before and after starting the subject*

	Before	**After**
Not at all Confident	1 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Not Very Confident	4 (44.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Confident	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)
Quite Confident	2 (22.2%)	6 (66.6%)
Very Confident	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)

n = 10

As can be seen from Table 2, after completing the subject, all the students felt confident, quite confident or very confident about undertaking research.

Students were also asked to rate how competent they felt before they started the subject and afterwards. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Perceptions of Competence before and after starting the subject*

	Before	**After**
Not at all Competent	1 (11.1%)	0 (0%)
Not Very Competent	4 (44.4%)	0 (0%)
Competent	0 (0%)	3 (33.3%)
Quite Competent	3 (33.3%)	5 (55.5%)
Very Competent	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)

n = 10, 1 student skipped question

Again, after completing the research subject, all the students felt competent, quite competent or very competent at conducting research.

While statistical tests are meaningless with such a small sample size, there was a clear increase in both confidence and competence. Marks awarded for tasks showed that students' perceptions of their competence were justified, with average marks for each task and overall marks earning a distinction (75% +) as shown in Table 4.

***Table 4:** Mean and range of marks for each assessment task*

	Mean Marks	**Range of Marks**
Assignment 1 Research Proposal	77%	65% - 88%
Assignment 2 Presentation of Draft Findings	75%	65% - 88%
Assignment 3 Research Report	78%	65% - 86%
Overall Marks	78%	66% - 85%

It is clear that by the time they completed the first assignment, students had already developed a good degree of competence in conducting research. Building on students' existing strengths, both in their skills in listening and questioning, and on their knowledge of relevant literature, equipped students with the knowledge and skills they needed to succeed in carrying out a research project.

While the overall marks for each task changed very little, there were some strong increases in specific criteria, e.g. an increase in the mean mark for critical analysis from 70% in the research proposal to 85% in the final report and for linking findings with literature from 64% in the presentation of draft findings to 75% in the final report. Students incorporated the formative feedback in their later assignments. Unfortunately they sometimes omitted to address all parts of the criteria, so that their overall marks did not show the same improvement.

Students were asked to reflect on their key learnings. None referred to what they had learned about the topic they were researching, all referred to the research skills they had developed, e.g.

- *Keep the topic simple - the goal is not to "set the world on fire" but to learn the process of research*
- *Even though I thought my topic was precise, the results provide unexpected information that takes you in other directions - you have to let some things go or take them up as a separate research topic.*
- *Ethical issues in research such as perceived power in an*

> *employing organization and potential bias in questions were new learnings.*

Such comments indicate that students really had learned something about the process of doing research, and not only about the answer to their research question.

Reflection

Where there were differences between their before and after ratings of their confidence and competence, students were asked to comment on the reasons, choosing from a list of options or adding new reasons. The reasons were presented in the survey as three lists, actions by the students themselves, actions by their peers, actions by the lecturer.

In relation to developing competence, students cited the impact of their own actions in learning by doing the research project (5/10) and learning from feedback on each assignment (5/10).

An example of a free text comment was:

> *"I have the ability to undertake research. I have the desire to undertake further research. I have greater confidence through the process of adult learning and support from my lecturer and fellow cohorts. I would be willing to support future cohorts in their learning experience with my learned experiences both academically and professionally …."*

They also rated highly the support of the lecturer in refining their research question (6/10) and survey/interview questions (7/10); helping them obtaining ethics approval (6/10); providing clear marking criteria and grading guidelines (5/10); and giving constructive feedback on assignments (6/10).

Two of the ten students who graduated in 2012 commenced doctoral studies in 2013 while others have presented their findings to a variety of audiences, further evidence that they had developed competence, confidence and indeed a passion for research.

Autonomy in their choice of topic was very important, with most students selecting as one of the reasons for the increase in their confidence and/or competence as the ability to choose a topic which resonated with them personally (7/10) or choosing a topic which mattered to them professionally (6/10). Being able to choose their own topic, whether for personal or professional interest, is important for adult learners, addressing their need for autonomy and relevance. A research project requires high levels of effort from students, which is easier to maintain when the topic is one that they find meaningful and relevant.

An example of a free text response was:

> *"Selecting the research topic was an essential element that added value for myself and was a far greater motivator than workplace scenarios, group work and presentations that are provided as exemplars of industry practice. This was real."*

High levels of intrinsic (autonomous) motivation and support for autonomy have previously been found to lead to higher academic performance (Gagne and Deci, 2005).

The importance of relatedness was evident in the positive response of students to the support they received from fellow students and staff. Students noted the impact of the opportunity to refine their research question (5/10), to pilot their surveys and interviews with fellow students (6/10) and to motivate each other. The fact that others listened attentively and valued each other's contributions created a positive and motivating environment. They also learned from each other, thereby increasing their competence as well as their confidence. A free text response summarized the experience:

> *"This group has an extremely high degree of respect for each other, valuable industry experience and willingness to help each other. The facilitation of presentations and group work in developing and evaluating the research project greatly contributed to allowing everyone to provide their perspective and ideas."*

Relatedness also included a sense of being related to the teacher, with students valuing the lecturer's belief in the value of their topics (7/10); the lecturer's belief in their ability to succeed (7/10); and a positive response from the lecturer to their presentations (7/10). This is consistent with Niemiec and Ryan (2009) who say that in the classroom, relatedness is deeply related to a sense that the teacher 'genuinely likes, respects and values him or her'.

Students clearly perceived that their competence and confidence had increased while completing their research subject. The grades they received for the subject overall and for each graded task support their perceptions. As discussed here, the reasons they gave fit well with autonomy, competence and relatedness, the key elements of self-determination theory. The lecturer's reflection was that the students had indeed developed competence in conducting research. While a focus on developing competence is not unusual, the focus on autonomy and particularly the focus on encouraging a supportive environment that meets students' need for relatedness are rarely found in the literature about developing research skills. Yet clearly both contribute strongly to the students' perceptions of their competence and confidence.

Conclusions

Developing research skills is about more than technical skills, it is about creating a positive environment with support from staff and fellow students which enhances motivation for current *and* future research. The answer to the research question is that the application of self-determination theory does help students develop both competence and confidence in their ability to conduct research. All three elements, competence, autonomy and relatedness are important according to students' perceptions. Feedback is also related to all three elements, helping students develop autonomy in their ability to self-assess, to improve, and as a relational process rather than a product.

The contribution of this paper includes identifying practical ways to incorporate theories such as self-determination theory in the classroom, e.g. students and lecturer providing positive comments on each student's proposal before asking questions or making suggestions.

It is clear from the student responses that adult learners appreciate the support they receive from peers and staff and also recognise the importance of their own actions, in increasing both their competence and their confidence in conducting research.

Classes which help students become familiar with the research process and clearly articulate requirements ensure a shared understanding between lecturers and students. Research becomes less mysterious and intimidating. Staged assessments with prompt constructive feedback help students to learn and apply their learning in their later work. In articulating their key learnings, students commented not on what they had learned about their research topic but what they had learned about research, sharing insights which many researchers would identify with.

When adult learners see the relevance of research to their professional practice, they are more likely to continue accessing and conducting research as practitioners, becoming lifelong learners, partners with academic researchers, and members of a community of practice to enrich our learning and teaching. Since graduating, these students have followed up their new found passion for research and confidence in their own ability to conduct research.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

There are of course limitations to this survey, particularly in relation to the size of the cohort. Replication with larger groups is important, as well as with different degree programs and different teaching staff. It is also important to conduct pre and post surveys, rather than rely as this study did on students' retrospective perceptions of how they felt before they began the subject. The Human Research Ethics Committee's concern was to ensure that the students were clear that the lecturer could not influence their results, depending on their responses to the survey. An alternative that could be used in future is for a person other than the lecturer to conduct the research.

In addition to incorporating self-determination theory, self-efficacy and constructive feedback, the approach outlined here matches Seligman's (2011) construct of PERMA (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Positive Relations, Meaning, Accomplishment), which Seligman (2011) found to enhance people's well-being. A further study could test whether this approach results not only in helping adult learners develop research skills and the confidence to use them, but also in improvements in their well-being.

It will also be interesting to follow the progress of students who have completed this research subject and continue to research degrees, to understand whether their small scale experience with this research project helps them to succeed with a larger scale research degree. As the number of students applying for research degrees each year is increasing, it will be useful to develop approaches which work with clusters of students who can provide peer support, even when their topics are different.

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About the Author

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The meaning of learning on the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage

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The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of travellers on the Camino de Santiago in order to find out the pattern of their travel lived experience and the meaning of learning experience. For this purpose, eight Korean travellers were selected for the study; the study was performed using the hermeneutic phenomenological method. The findings are as follows: First, the pattern of lived experience -'the four Existentials, lived time, space, body and human relation'- on the Camino de Santiago was summarized into 'slow and composure', 'meditation and spirituality', 'companionship', and 'the dance of self-mortification through physical pain' in the four existential aspects of time, space, relationship, and body. Second, the lived experience of participants had profound meaning as a learning experience in terms of biographical learning, the theory of autopoiesis, and spiritual learning.

Keywords: *Learning experience, Lived experience, Four Existentials, The Camino de Santiago*

Introduction

This study explores the lived experience of travellers on the Camino de Santiago in order to find out the pattern of their travel lived experience and the meaning of learning experience. Travel has been an important learning tool for those in search of 'oneself' throughout the history of humankind. Travel is not just a simple voyage, but consists of learning experiences that involve transformative learning. Travel is chosen by oneself, and all activities in the journey are self-directed, thus making it a self-directed reflection. Today, travel allows the modern people to become 'time-machines' in the busy daily grind to take a step away from the complicated world of reality and to take some time to look back on life without any time restriction. John Locke says that the last step of education is travel and travel completes an individual as a gentleman (Goh, 2005). Also, Lindstrom (2011) has discovered that travellers 'eliminate individual prejudices, awaken the sentimentality, develop confidence and independence, and undergo the examination to discover their true selves, the trust in others, and the behavior-oriented approach for individual change' (p. 228), after the travel experience. Travel leads to the experience of nature, freedom, and philosophy of self-esteem. Hence, travel has various meanings in terms of education/learning.

The Camino de Santiago is a trail for travel on foot. While people are walking, they observe and investigate local architectures, language, culture, attitude of people, etc. It seems as if they are an amateur anthropologist. The Camino de Santiago is the way of the gospel walked by James the Apostle. The Camino de Santiago itself is a spiritual way and a way of self-mortification that engenders physical and spiritual pain while walking for more than a month. Nevertheless, many people have gone on this route of self-mortification in the past. It is because this way leads to the unknown world and is the way of experience of life that offers them the feelings of loneliness, longing, warmth, rumination of regrets, recovery, consolation, and self-discovery. For many participants, the Camino de Santiago leads to maturation. Furthermore, various people pursue communication and coexistence, reconciliation, and sharing for national and international peace on the journey.

The Camino de Santiago brings various learning experiences and discovery of oneself. For these reasons, there have been studies on the travel experiences on the Camino de Santiago (Gower, 2002; Hames, 2008; Katsilometes, 2010; Sawicki, 2009) However, these studies were primarily focused on the spiritual and psychological aspects and therefore could not explore the lived experience of travellers on the Camino de Santiago in terms of various learning experiences. This current study explored the travel experience of travellers on the Camino de Santiago in order to discuss the pattern of their travel experiences and the meaning of their learning experiences.

The Camino de Santiago

The Camino de Santiago is about 800 km long leading to Santiago de Compostela, the city with Saint James' tomb, to the northwest of Spain. Santiago is the Spanish name for Saint James. Compostela means the field of stars. According to local Christian beliefs, Santiago is one of the three sacred places of the world. There are other sacred places like Mecca, which are sacred for a different tradition. The Camino de Santiago was an important path of cultural exchange between the Iberian Peninsula and other European regions during the medieval times.

The Camino de Santiago is the Catholic route that has been walked since the 11th century for religious reasons. As it was walked by many religious travellers in the 10th and 11th centuries, it became the largest religious way along with Jerusalem and Rome in the 12th century (The Confraternity of Saint James, 2011). The way of Saint James reached its heights between the 11th and 14th centuries. The travel on the Camino de Santiago with over 1,000 years of history began to decrease after the Religious Reformation; it saw the least travellers in the 18th century. The travel on the Camino de Santiago resumed around the end of World War II. The way to Santiago in France was declared as the Way of European Culture by the European Union in 1987, and was also designated as World Cultural Heritage, including the Camino de Santiago in Spain in 1993. Travellers began to increase as the EU promoted the Camino de Santiago as the symbol of European integration. Although the number of travellers decreased compared to those of medieval times, this journey is still popular today.

The Camino de Santiago today is developing in a less religious way. Non-Christians and people in various age groups understand the meaning of this way based on various motivations and purposes and thus travel the way in order to experience the meaning. Their purposes include reflection of life, self-examination, freedom, meeting new people, comfort, religion, change, overcoming crisis, remedy, and new challenge.

Theoretical frameworks: Learning experience through the lived experience on the Camino de Santiago

The travel on the Camino de Santiago is not a simple voyage, but a learning experience that consists of transformative learning. It also brings passion to life and catalyzes spiritual awakening and development. In this study, the learning experience refers to the participants' cognitive, emotional, and physical experience in the interaction with themselves or others in the time and space on the Camino de Santiago. Four Existentials, lived time, space, body and human relation on the Camino de Santiago are the participants' process of learning. In particular, the travel on the Camino de Santiago is the process of learning experience through the body. The physical experience is learned through the experience of space, time, and environment with others. This study examines the participants' learning experience from the lived experience for the Camino de Santiago in terms of biographical learning, autopoiesis, and spirituality learning.

Biographical learning

Biographical study is a type of narrative study, where the researcher records the life experience of a person. Biographical study biographically records the personal experience that gave value to life. It discusses how the life process of an individual develops through the interaction with individual beings and social situations. It is also the process of examination of personal life and the process of contemplation of overall cultural meaning in the biography that gives historical and social meaning to life in the more inclusive context for the methodological exploration (Choi, 2006). Biographical learning occurs not only in the introversion, but also in the communication and interaction with others as well as in the social context. Biographical learning is the self-determinant and self-reproductive achievement of active beings that actively overcome/resolve problems in life and develop constantly (Alheit & Dausien, 2002).

This study interpreted and examined the participants' travel experience on the Camino de Santiago in terms of biographical learning. They intended to look back on themselves and find the 'meaning of life' through the journey. They walked with the essential questions on how they have lived, how they will live, and how they should live for a good life. The journey became a turning point that changed their lives.

Autopoiesis

The concept of autopoiesis, which is the combination of autos (self) and poiein (to produce, to create) in Greek, was first created by Maturana and Valera (1980, 1987), the cognitive biologists from Chile. The concept of autopoiesis of a biological organism expanded to the study of Luhmann, who studied autopoiesis as a social system in order to re-explore the meaning of autopoiesis in the learners' psychological system and the meaning of autopoiesis in the educational system (Moon, Han, & You, 2012). Living organisms and the environment stimulate one another and respond to the stimulation within the scope of autopoiesis (Maturana, 2002; Maturana & Varela, 1987). Autopoiesis is the mechanism of how a living organism produces itself through the dynamics of a system in which it currently exists, and learning occurs in the process of learning embodiment that constantly builds one's world based on the history of self-experience (Kim, 2007). In this study, the theory of autopoiesis refers to the process of building one's world as the travellers on the Camino de Santiago with different experiences by walking alone or together in order to influence the experience of one another. They decide the path of voyage and experience autopoiesis through ceaseless changes throughout the process of travel.

Spirituality learning

The pilgrimage is the spiritual training to broaden one's spiritual insight and the profound long-term voyage that has the ability to change the travellers through a continuation of challenge (Boers, 2007). The pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago are likely to experience a spiritual renewal and growth through the pilgrimage. Spiritual growth is the opening of oneself from the self-centred worldview to others and the universal worldview (You, 2012).

All humans have the possibility of spiritual experience; according to

Maslow, the peak experience is the experience of the most elevated satisfaction and joy that entails the deepest immersion and ecstasy in life. Spirituality occurs as the change of life and leads to spirituality learning as transformative learning. The spiritual lived experience on the Camino de Santiago is spirituality learning. The participating travellers on the Camino de Santiago discover the changed ego through self-mortification on the way. The new experience of awakening restructures the previous experience and makes them different. More specifically, 'awakening' reflects the transition of life.

Research design

This study explores the experience of travellers on the Camino de Santiago in order to find out the pattern of their travel lived experience and the meaning of learning experience. For this purpose, the hermeneutic phenomenological method of van Manen (1990) was applied. In other words, the participants' travel experience was captured as phenomena (descriptive phenomenological methodology), and the meaning and feeling of their subjective experience were analyzed through the description of philosophical, literary, and artistic interpretation (hermeneutic phenomenology), to explore the meaning of travel and the learning experience brought by the travel experience. This methodology is appropriate for several purposes: first, the travel experience on the Camino de Santiago is the walking voyage using the body for the experience through all five senses. It is made possible by the personal experience of the participants themselves through the four existential bodies, which are the lived experience of time, space, body and relation. Second, the various forms of mythical, religious, artistic, and linguistic experiences explore the method of reflecting the character of self-identity (van Manen, 1990). The Camino de Santiago has myths, religion, art, and language, and the people who walk on it experience diverse people, myths, culture, and language beyond the religious pilgrimage of the past. Third, hermeneutic phenomenology has the purpose to explore the meaning in language or conversation (Patton, 2002). It is also the tool that determines the essence of human experience, and includes travel records, literature, poetry, and art.

The participants of this study (see Table 1) are people who have lived as time-machines that only run forward. They are adult learners who took some time off from their busy lives for the transition of life through the travel lived experience on the Camino de Santiago. The sampling methods were criterion-based selection and purposive selection. The occupations of the participants included student, housewife, office worker, and retiree. The results were saturated when eight participants were interviewed, who had 1-3 travel experiences on the Camino de Santiago and whose ages were between mid-20s and mid-70s. The genders and ages of the participating travellers were broadly set for the appropriateness of data collection so as to find the common experience in their various travel experiences.

Table 1: *The participants*

Name	Sex/Age	Occupation	Trips/Date	Schedule
Enzo	Male, mid-20s	College student	1 time/Jul 2012	Compostela, 32 days
Blanca	Female, early 30s	Freelance instructor	1 time/Feb 2013	Compostela, 30 days
Jessica	Female, early 30s	Graduate student	1 time/Jul 2012	Finisterre, 37 days
Frida	Female, early 50s	Bookkeeping assistant & housewife	1 time/May 2012	Finisterre, 34 days
Camilo	Male, mid-50s	President	1 time/Jun 2011	Finisterre, 34 days
Mario	Male, early 60s	Retired	1 time/ Oct 2009	Finisterre, 31 days
Feria	Male, late 60s	Retired	1 time/May 2010	Finisterre, 25 days
Dante	Male, mid-70s	Retired	3 times/Apr 2008, May 2009, Jun 2011	Finisterre, 32, 34, 30 days

Note: The researchers gave each participant a Spanish nickname.

The researchers used the participants' observation logs, transcription, and official documents, and resources, such as poetry, novels, and photographs, were applied in the process of interpretation. I walked the path seven times for 11 days with the participants, walking approximately 300 km during four months for rapport and in-depth interviews. Each participant was interviewed one to three times. The observation involved non-structuralized questions.

The analysis and interpretation of resources applied the method of hermeneutic phenomenology of van Manen (1990). Our process of analysis first described the participants' phenomena of travel experience as itself through bracketing our pre-understandings (i.e., epoche). Second, we read the transcribed text several times, focusing on the words or sentences that denoted the basic meaning or significance of text and the repetitively used vocabularies, topics, and scenes. Third, 'open coding' was performed for 'categorization' in order to categorize the coded data. Fourth, in-depth coding was performed to classify them into the four existential bodies (time, space, relationship, and body). Finally, we observed the phenomena and used the language of participants to capture the liveliness and specifics of experience, profundity of meaning, and quality of thinking. Moreover, we used various phenomenological resources, such as metaphors, poetic terms, literature, and photography, in order to discover the essential meaning of travel experience of participants through several writing processes.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the pattern of travel lived experience of the participants on the Camino de Santiago based on the four forms of existentials, which are lived experience of time, space, body, and relation in order to find the meaning of lived experience. It was also to explore the meaning of learning experience through the travel lived experience. The results of this study are shown below in Table 2.

***Table 2:** Patterns and learning experience of travel lived experience on the Camino de Santiago*

Four Existentials	Pattern of Lived Experience	Learning Experience	Transformative Lived Experience of Life
Lived time (Temporality)	Time-machine: Busy life	• Learning • Empty • Meaning of physical pain: Dance of self-mortification toward awakening • Companionship • Return to the origin • Life: New beginning	• Away from seduction, broad mind • Recovery of self-esteem, breaking • Gratitude, empty, composure and slow • Simplicity, contemplation • Confidence, love • Missionary of hope, volunteer and sharing
	Time of conflicts		
	Time of immersion		
	Finite time and infinite time		
Lived space (Spatiality)	Open space: Desire toward the origin		
	Space of fear		
	Space of solitude and loneliness		
	Space of romance		
	Space of meditation and spirituality		
Lived body (Corporeality)	Physical pain		
	Importance of what is essential and basic		
	Embodied body		
	Tears		
Lived human relation (Relationality or Communality)	Relationships you want to stay away from		
	Unfamiliar relationships, Relationships of feeling and silence		
	Intimate relationships: Mutual dependence		
	Independence		
	Unfinished relationships: New network		

The participants took some time away from home, work, school, and a mundane life in order to have the opportunity of examination to look back on themselves through the travel lived. The pattern of travel lived experience based on the four existentials and the meaning of learning experience are as follows:

The pattern of four existentials of Travel Lived Experience

The meaning of time and space from the phenomenological view is explained as the time and space of internal lived experience or 'intentionality' in the subjective and cognitive realms. Our body does not just exist in time and space, but dwell in time and space. Time and space are lived. We are moving toward time and space. Our body is not merely in space, but toward space and adjust ourselves on the qualitative time and space so as to bring and embody our bodies into them in order to expand the scope of existence (life) (Jo, 2012, p. 197). The bodies of participants on the voyage exist as they dwell in time and space.

The "Lived time (Temporality)" is subjective time and refers to the lived experiential time of a certain situation that is given personally. Therefore, the participants on the Camino de Santiago experience the length or feeling of time differently according to their situations. The aspect of 'Time-machine' of the participants' lived experience of time is the time of routine life they lived before traveling to the Camino de Santiago.

> I have been a workaholic. I even forgot what it was to rest (Dante) I never slept with the light off on weekdays. I took naps or slept with my laptop in my arms, or went to work at 4 AM. (Jessica)

The participants walked fast with the joy of freedom away from mundane life, and physical pain came as time passed. In this process, they learned that 'physical pain dominates their thinking' and the 'composure of slowness'. In terms of the aspect of 'Time of conflict', they had to readjust the habit of time on the way. The physical pain and the failure to control time brings the conflict of 'why am I here; I want to go back'. However, the participants explore their introversion in the time of conflict.

> I was so excited that I was away from the tedious daily grind. My

> heart was pounding. I could not wait to walk. I wanted to start walking fast. I ignored the advice to apply Vaseline to my feet. A few days later, the entire feet were filled with blisters. I wanted to give up and had all kinds of thoughts. There was a person whose feet were ragged over the Pyrenees. The skin was not just peeled, but completely separated. (Frida)

The participants are physically and spiritually embodied over time and are able to control time for the 'time of flow'. They project themselves into the future. The form of existence becomes prospective.

> I had a big fight with my son after walking for about 15 days. We had different opinions and steps. We did not listen to each other. We walked separately. We took time to think and understood each other better. We were able to control time and be engrossed in walking. (Camilo)

However, they feel that they have not changed much at the final destination. They have already changed and the changed selves have already become themselves. The destination is not the end, but the time of another beginning. The participants can have the time to look into their introversion in the experience of stagnant time. They feel 'the finiteness and infiniteness of time' simultaneously.

The 'Lived space (Spatiality)' is the space in which we experience and feel, but it can be unfamiliar or familiar according to situations or can be different from person to person. Heidegger says that the space of current existence (Dasein) is existentially 'the elimination of distance-Ent-fernen' and 'the openness of direction-Ausrichtung' (Heidegger, 1927) 'Open space' is the space where the participants experience freedom in the open space of Santiago. Also, open space generally consists of one-on-one experience between oneself and the space. It is the space where one wants to contemplate as a free being separate from other.

> I don't like the flowers in pots. I feel sorry that they are confined. They are just like me. They have to be planted in the open land. The flowers and plants on the way...Freedom. It was so good. I didn't want to come back home. (Frida)

The aspect of 'Space of fear' is the space of fear due to unfamiliarity, but the space of serenity and meaning. In terms of the aspect of 'Space of solitude and loneliness', solitude and communication are the two aspects of the same phenomenon. The participants could get lost and discover the ego through introverted communication with themselves in the space of solitude and loneliness, where they walked the long trail of the desert all by themselves under the hot sun. The aspect of 'Space of romance' is the space of romance that is comfortable, enjoyable, and happy. The aspect of 'Space of meditation and spirituality' is the space of meditation and spiritual awakening as they focus on the way so they do not miss the arrows along the path.

> The compulsion that I might die. I was anxious until I found the arrow. The sense of crisis stimulated my nerves so I could not be idle... It eliminated all distracting thoughts. There was nothing else to do besides walking. (Mario)

In the 'Lived body (Corporeality)', the physical experience is the subjective lived experience that is the basic pattern of human experience. This is the overall phenomenon that conveys the mystery of the most basic and direct experience. The body is the symbolic indicator that evaluates the quality of the given time and space (Merleau-Ponty, 1968), and the participants embody themselves in order to expand the scope of existence (life). They experience the approach toward the "l'être-au-monde, in-der-welt-sein" by leading the interaction with others. The word "l'être-au-monde" means they are in the world and also are advancing the world at the same time.

'Physical pain' is the experience of conflicts and regrets. Walking 20-40 km a day in the unfamiliar space and time engenders physical pain as the body is not embodied yet. However, the participants do not give up, but rather overcome themselves because they have the existential will to change. In terms of the 'Importance of what is essential and basic', walking every day is the key as the body is tired. They communicate with themselves in silence by asking the basic questions, such as, "Would my feet be OK?" "Would I arrive at the lodging safely?", and "Are my feet OK; can I walk?" The 'Embodied body' brings the experience of oneness of body and mind. The body is not just in the space but moves toward space. The oneness of body and mind transcends the present and projects oneself into the future or nature. That is, Entwurf into the nature. Nature and people, body and spirit, and body and mind become one.

> I walked not knowing that my toe nails were fallen out. I realized when I took off my socks. The soles of my feet hurt so much in the beginning, so a certain degree of pain didn't hurt so much later. (Blanca)

The "Lived human relation (Relationality)" is the experiential relationship we maintain with others in the interpersonal space we share with others. The dasein does not live alone in the world, but lives with others as In-der-Welt-sein (So, 2001). In other words, we live together 'Mitsein' with others in the world. We are being-in-the-world. Human lives have their unique worlds, but the worlds are created by relationships with others. The participants make new relationships with others on the 'Mitwelt', Camino de Santiago, which is the world shared by others, in order to recover their places as subjective beings in the world. The 'Relationship you want to stay away from' is because the participants want to contemplate without any interference of others as the subjects of time and space. The 'Unfamiliar relationship' refers to the unnatural relationship with barrier between oneself and others.

> I walked a long way all by myself at first. I could not think when I walk with others (Frida) The pilgrims talk in English, Spanish, and German, but they cannot communicate smoothly. They communicate by 'feeling'. It was the most basic sense of kinship. They share what others might need without having to talk to them…. (Mario)

Difficulties in verbal communication stiffen the relationship even more. The communication occurs through feeling and silence. The 'Intimate relationship' is formed on the basis of mutual dependence due to physical pain. In the intimate relationship, they no longer see others with biased views and experience the sympathy to see and understand from one another's perspective. The silence, soundless smile, short communication, and basic questions between oneself and the other share the language of friendliness, warmth, and consolation. People can communicate through feeling and silence.

> We walk and chants of 'go! go!' together while cheering each other

> up (Jessica). I had no confidence in myself. At that moment, a foreign boy said, “Nuna, you can do it; let’s go, Nuna. Nuna, go, go.” ‘Nuna,’ meaning “older sister” in Korean. I was so… The word ‘Nuna’ gave me strength. I had taught him to call me ‘Nuna’. (Blanca)

As the body is embodied and the mind is stabilized over time, the pilgrims hope to be ‘alone’ and experience their own subjective time. They establish the identity of self-examination and self as the true selves as they can be ‘Independent’ away from the dependent relationships. The ‘Unfinished relationship’ means the sense of kinship and intimacy between the pilgrims after the same experience leads to continued relationship subsequent to the pilgrimage.

> The American who fought in the Korean War (78) and his son (18) have become blood-brothers with us and we still keep in touch (Camilo). When it comes to my age, I have no one to talk to. I only have formal conversations with my family. My kids and grandchildren only talk with each other. But it is different now. Everyone asks information about the Camino and pays for my lunch to thank me (ha ha ha). I am even interviewed for a study today. This is happiness. (Dante)

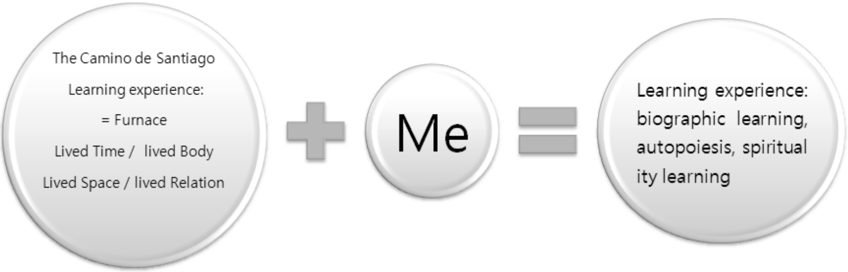
The meaning of learning experience of travel experience

The travel on the Camino de Santiago is not just a trip, but it is the experience of learning that consists of transformative learning. Four existentials, lived time, space, body and human relation on the Camino de Santiago, are the participants’ process of learning. [Figure 1] shows this process.

First, biographic learning as the learning experience of travel lived experience often entails the transformative experience of life through the lives of participants and the pain, conflict, and examination in the process of travel. The participants design their lives through the travel. The participants learn the resistance to seduction, tolerance, recovery of self-esteem, blessing of awakening, tears, appreciation, emptiness, encounter, pain of hastiness, composure and slowness, and meditation through the arrows on the way after the travel. Currently, they are living with positive minds and energy in order to spread hope as well as to engage in volunteer activities and sharing. The travel on the Camino de Santiago is the path of self-mortification that one can never walk by oneself, and the participants experience transformative experience while walking by themselves or with others. Biographic learning does not occur inside an individual, but is related to the communication, interaction, and social context between an individual and others (Illeris, 2009).

Second, the travel lived experience engendered the learning experience of autopoiesis. The participants, as shown in the image below, are the subjects of adjustment and change through relationship in the space of furnace on the way. This means that they spontaneously respond to the environment or allow the space of autopoiesis within a mutually dependent and dynamic system. The participants classified the relationships with the surroundings and others in the time and space of the way and spontaneously changed themselves within the environment. They affect one another along the voyage in order to configure their worlds self-directively. This can be compared to 'synchronized pecking'. More specifically, the hen should recognize the spontaneous pecking of the chick in order to break the shell and peck the shell from the outside so as to give birth to the chick. The hen only gives little help for the chick to come out and it is up to the chick to break the shell.

Figure 1. Learning experience of travel lived experience



> When we are 1 km apart due to the difference in steps, he just stands there and waits for me without a word. I follow him with courage. He goes ahead of me and waits for me over and over again. It's like he reads my mind. (Blanca)

The participants depend on each other in the mutual relationship, but demonstrate independence, responsibility, and creativity. The lived experience of the Camino de Santiago made the participants ‘changed and new selves’. This process means autopoiesis in nature. To borrow Maturana & Varela(1980)’s idea, each pilgrim, as an autopoietic organisation, is a system capable of reproducing and maintaining him/herself.

Third, the travel lived experience on the Camino de Santiago achieves learning through spiritual experience. Spirituality appears as the change of life and leads to transformative learning. The participants walk on the way of pilgrimage in order to experience deep flow and ecstasy and the peak experiences of satisfaction and joy. Their peak experiences changed their lives to live for love, generosity, consideration and cooperation, truthful sharing and service, endurance, simplicity, good deeds, and moderation. They focused their minds so they do not miss the arrows on the way, and learned the simplicity of life by having a potato left by someone for a meal. They were physically and spiritually matured by pain and prayed for others instead of themselves. Through the spiritual lived experience, the participants experienced transformative learning that made the problematic framework of Illeris (2009) more inclusive, identifiable, open, examinative, and emotionally changeable. The travel lived experience catalyzed their spiritual awakening and development and brought about the transition of life through ‘awakening’.

> The tears kept running down at the church. I learned to cry. I thought I was a very strong person…(Jessica) I was still healthy when I walked 40 days while eating only rye bread and drinking wine. Life is so simple… (Mario) My pain is nothing compared to the pain of Jesus when he went up the hills of Golgotha while carrying the cross…. (Camilo)

The participants have various religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, and no religion, and did not walk the Camino de Santiago for religious purposes; however, they still experienced religious spirituality. They say they were able to ‘experience the religious spirituality just by walking the way walked by Saint James to spread the words of God’. Currently, the participants are sharing their lived experience on the Camino de Santiago wherever they go, such as church, online communities, office and alternative school and so on. Their lived experience gives them the confidence and hope of a new challenge to future pilgrims. Those who have travelled the Camino de Santiago are living new lives at school, at work, and in everyday life.

Discussion

The meaning of travel lived experience of the participants appeared as emptying, learning from history, culture, and remains, meaning of physical pain: dance of self-mortification toward awakening, companionship, return to origin, and life: new beginning.

First, the travel on the Camino de Santiago was learning through "emptying." Tao Te Ching of Lao-tzu emphasizes the virtue of emptiness, using as emptiness. Freedom by emptying brings the filling toward fulfillment and happiness. The participants learn freedom and fulfillment without possession and the importance of rest and composure by emptying through the travel. You need to walk the Camino de Santiago only with the essentials. You cannot walk if you do not empty. You will not have any health problems even if you walk for almost 40 days with minimal food.

> I live a humble and simple life after the travel. I only need one or two condiments. I spend 2 dollars a day. It does not mean I have no money. It is a new way of thinking . (Mario)

The Camino de Santiago has many historical and cultural remains for learning. The participants learn the history and culture from the various medieval structures along the way, including churches and statues. These structures are educational fields.

> You can see the country culture along the way. You are tired, but the many cultural and historical remains make the trip not tedious at all. (Camilo)

Second, the meaning of physical pain in the travel lived experience is 'the dance of self-mortification toward awakening'. Suffering is non-receptivity. Lvinas (1998) believes that non-receptivity allows openness to others and pain is meaningful when 'suffering in myself' and 'suffering in others' are essentially separated and I am agonized by others' pain. The pilgrims tolerate others' suffering through the experience of oneness with the Universe or God; this is oneness of oneself and others so others' suffering becomes my suffering (Park, 2011). Physical suffering is the adversity for the maturity of soul and they spiritually grow through pain for the 'awakening' of soul.

Third, travel on the Camino de Santiago is companionship. 'Companionship' is the relationship of intimacy, where the barrier is broken through interaction. I (self) no longer see other with biased views and experience the sympathy in order to see and understand from one another's perspective. Self-mortification on the Camino de Santiago builds the relationship of mutual dependence and intimacy as the complete cooperators and the landscapes smear one another for the coexistence in the same world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945)

> What do you do back in Korea? Well, I don't have anything to do. I am jobless. I envy you! Why? For what? You have endless possibilities. That's what they said. I was a bit shocked (Blanca). He offered to carry my backpack when he had his own (Jessica). When I fell in the mud, he used his feet to push me out. He didn't care about his feet getting dirty. (Blanca)

Fourth, the travel on the Camino de Santiago is the return to origin and the invitation to the essential philosophy. Your understanding of yourself begins from the fact that 'people ask about themselves'. "What am I?" "What does it mean that I live?" People walk while asking about the meaning of existence, meaning of life, and identity. Camilo changed his plan while walking the way and travelled more places for 2-3 days. As he did in everyday life to use time more efficiently, he started early in the morning and walked faster. As a result, he became tired and unable to walk anymore. In that process, however, Camilo thought about why he lives and how he should live to learn such that his life needs slowness and composure. Jessica experienced 'brokenness' on the Camino de Santiago. She knew that she is not strong but weak. She often skipped meals, drank coffee instead of water, and worked when she had to sleep. On the Camino de Santiago, she learned that water, food, and sleep are the most basic essentials of human life. The participants looked back on their lives in order to return to the essential self.

Fifth, the travel is life and the new beginning with no end. The travel on the Camino de Santiago is the travel of lonely adversity and life in the search of the self. People encounter many adversities on the path of life. The process of travel is the continuation of physical pain and psychological conflicts. The participants successfully ended the pilgrimage. They now start again. The arrival at the destination is not the end, but another start. We return to the world of mundane life after the trip and prepare for another trip.

> *We must not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time. -T. S. Elliot*

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Book Review

Men Learning Through Life

Barry Golding, Rob Mark and Annette Foley (Eds.)
NIACE: Leicester, England 2014

Reviewed by Heather Wallace
Deakin University

Aging populations, together with increasing unemployment arising from the economic downturn experienced in many countries, has drawn attention to the increase in older adult men not engaged in full-time employment. Despite having more available time to pursue their interests, attitudes towards learning prevent some groups of men from accessing traditional learning contexts. *Men Learning Through Life* explores the reasons that large sectors of men are 'missing or excluded' from participating in life-long learning.

The editors Barry Golding, Rob Mark and Annette Foley outline the key health and wellbeing benefits that research into life-long learning has promoted and emphasise the social connections and life enrichment it can bring. The eight chapters in the first section outline their research and overall theories on male learning patterns. The second section includes contributions from current experts in the field, sharing their case studies. These case studies indicate a range of contextualized strategies that go some way to resolve the significant barriers to formal learning opportunities that inhibit participation of some groups of men in our society. The format is part research report, part textbook. A useful synopsis of each of the sixteen chapters is provided in the front section of the book. However the authors also insert an introduction preceding each chapter, signposting and forecasting the content which tends to became repetitive and irritating when reading the book, but perhaps useful if used purely as a reference text.

The editors explain that due to the current political and social emphasis on paid work, some men believe that learning is only worthwhile if it is job related. Another reason put forward is that some men, for a variety of reasons, may have developed an aversion to formal education, and this impacts their willingness to embark on training beyond school. Golding, Mark and Foley (2014), identify the need to provide '…places and spaces for men's learning' (xviii). The 'Men's shed' movement provides one such 'space'. Its origins are attributed to the backyard shed, a 'mainly private place for men to make and fix things'. The movement has built on this idea to transform informal shed like spaces 'to a collective, community space for men' (Golding, Mark & Foley, p 114). This movement is examined in greater depth and shows promise of creating a space conducive to the establishment of social connection and agency, and corresponding improvement in health and wellbeing.

The point is made that men's learning is not at the expense of women's advancement and learning. I found it interesting that the authors felt the need to justify their focus. There is a strong case for men to have dedicated programs catering to their special needs in providing lifelong learning in addition to the special women's programs and support groups. The needs of the groups are different. The ability to develop productive enriched relationships with families and friends, and contribute to communities was identified as a positive outcome from involvement in community-based learning. Providing for the men and catering for their needs, rather than at the expense of women's learning, may also benefit women and children. Golding, Mark and Foley also argue that the benefits are not restricted to one age group:

> 'Our fundamental argument is that learning and social engagement can be mutually reinforcing at any age, and that well being can be a positive outcome of both' (Golding, Mark & Foley, 2014 p.16)

The book reports on current research. It explores issues around men's learning and exclusion from formal education. It brings to our attention the needs of a group of people who are suffering from the economic turndown, changes in masculinity roles, lack of employment opportunities and identifies some of their unique needs. It will be of interest to providers of community education and health as well as researchers studying mental health, men's health and excluded groups. Policy makers and providers of education and community services will also find the text informative and thought provoking.

The second part of the book has case studies drawn from seven different nations contributed by additional authors. These chapters illustrate that the reasons for the marginalization of significant groups of men in societies across the developed world vary, however they also serve to illustrate that the issues are wide spread and tend to have common reoccurring themes. The case studies highlight a variety of contextually based responses including men's sheds, garden allotments, fishing clubs, boat building, historical reenactment and various clubs that have served to act as providers of informal community-based learning as well as increase social connection, counteracting isolation. The potential of informal community-based learning contexts to make a difference to the quality of men's lives is explored.

The main strength of the book is that it directs our attention to a largely ignored area, highlighting the complexity of the issues and factors impacting *'Men Learning Through Life'* and explores some of the benefits for both men and society that occur when men participate in learning beyond work.

About the reviewer

Heather Wallace is a passionate and experienced educator having worked across the primary, secondary, TAFE and tertiary settings. Her PhD investigated contextualised learning in a Kitchen Garden. Currently researching Pre-service teacher's understanding of place-based inquiry learning, she is a member of the Arts and Education Faculty at Deakin University and lectures in Humanities in the Bachelor and Master of Education courses.