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

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From the Editor’s desk

This editorial will be my final one for the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*. After almost 23 years in the role of editor, it is time to hang up the keyboard and pass the baton onto the next editor to take the journal forward into its second half century. It has flourished for almost 53 years of continuous publication, and is going from strength to strength. It has come a long way from its early days, in its:

(a) **local coverage** (as evidenced by the wide spread of topics from all States and Territories),
(b) **national status** (as evidenced in the ‘A’ rating achieved in the former ERA regime), and
(c) **international reputation** (as evidenced in the range of submissions arriving from all corners of the globe).

It is a great journal, with deep roots, a long history and a strong mission.

I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the issues and it has been a great privilege to serve the adult learning profession over this time. The flow of submissions has been satisfactory. The writers of articles, book reviews and research reports have been terrific people with whom to work. But most of all, because they do not (by definition as ‘blind’ peers) receive public attention and the recognition they deserve, I
most sincerely thank the army of reviewers for all their hard work over the years, as without them, the journal would not have a life as a refereed publication. And that, as you would all well appreciate, is increasingly important in this age when institutions are clamouring only for refereed output. The decision taken in 1999—rather a hard one at the time—to move to a refereed journal has turned out to be wise. As anticipated, both flow and quality have steadily risen. However, the tension in my mind has always been that this is also a practitioners’ journal, where articles should also be published that relate more to practice, and so we have maintained a section of the journal for non-refereed work. I must say that my most memorable moments as an editor have been when I have received emails, or personal comments at conferences, from those who have proudly proclaimed that their paper in this journal was the very start of their publishing career! To read, or witness firsthand, their excitement of that first publication has maintained my inspiration for so long.

This issue continues to embrace a range of adult learning situations, and the five main papers derive from five nations and refer to different research methodologies. We slide into the issue with a paper on the lived experience of the teacher-student relationship in New Zealand teacher education by David Giles, Elizabeth Smythe and Debra Spence. As they state, ‘relationships are at the heart of educational encounters’, and they explore various conceptualisations of this teacher-student relationship from a phenomenological standpoint. Their research, in the face of dominant educational discourses that have tended to take this relationship for granted, calls for the re-educating of educators towards essential understandings of relationship and what they call the relational sensibilities that are integral to being in relationship.

From teacher-student relationships, we broaden out to a national canvas where the contribution of popular education to national social transformation and the growth of democratic societies is explored.
Petros Gougoulakis and Michael Christie in their philosophical and historical paper analyse how individual transformative learning has contributed to a collective transformation of Swedish society and laid the foundation for a modern and coherent society with a high level of trust among the citizenry. They draw several parallels with Australia and New Zealand in their historical analysis, and also discuss the role played by study circles as an adult learning means of addressing a number of important social issues. Popular education and study circles have created public spaces for dialogue and critical reflection, and have enabled adult citizens to practise their civil liberties and contribute to a specific, Swedish political culture.

Then to Ghana, where Joseph Kwarteng and Samuel Boateng in their more quantitative paper examine the effectiveness of an agricultural extension program for meeting the needs of mid-career extension agents. In Ghana and other developing countries, agricultural extension is the key organisation dealing with human resource development with respect to technology transfer to farmers, farm families and workers. Based on self-reports from 30 participants, their study showed that the program had been effective in meeting the educational needs of the graduates. Their research suggests that universities and colleges involved in the training of human resources for the agricultural sector can improve their programs through curriculum revitalisation.

Ros Cameron and Jennifer Harrison tackle the long-standing issue of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Despite all the arguments over definitions and differences, they argue that there is nevertheless renewed interest in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning internationally and in Australia. They focus particularly on the New OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning and recent policy developments in Australia. Involving 172 labour market program participants from New South Wales and Queensland, they conclude that, for this population, life
(informal learning) and work experience (non-formal learning) are relatively more important for gaining self-reported skills than study (formal learning). Their paper argues for a holistic focus on the *dynamic interrelatedness* of these forms of learning rather than being constrained by a deterministic dichotomy between formality and informality.

The final refereed paper, by **Dian-Fu Chang, Ming-Lieh Wu** and **Sung-Po Lin**, is a quantitative study of adult engagement in lifelong learning in Taiwan. Their research, using data from a national survey of adults administered by the Ministry of Education in 2009, reveals a strong relationship between gender, socio-economic status (SES) and the learning experiences of adults. Women in low and middle SES groups were more likely to engage in lifelong learning, and such engagement depended on their family concerns. In contrast, men’s engagement in lifelong learning was more for career or work-related reasons, though many do not engage. The authors’ highlight the importance of rethinking how to eliminate, or at least minimise, barriers that affect adults’ engagement in lifelong learning.

The three Practice Papers examine the theme of learning and sustainable cities. These contributions tune in timely fashion with the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held recently in June in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The summit examined how to reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection on our ever more crowded planet. It highlighted seven areas in particular that need priority attention: decent jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans, and disaster readiness. More than 150,000 people attended this conference, bigger than its two predecessors of Stockholm in 1972 and the Rio Earth Summit of 1992.

It will be for history to decide whether it turns out to be a success. As might perhaps have been anticipated, there have been both negative and positive reactions. The conference was criticised by the head
of Oxfam in the UK as ‘the hoax summit ... They came, they talked, but they failed to act... Paralysed by inertia and in hock to vested interests, too many [governments] are unable to join up the dots and solve the connected crises of environment, equity and economy’. The UK Deputy Prime Minister acknowledged that he was ‘disappointed’ with the outcome, laying blame on the ‘neocolonial world’ where developing countries wanting to continue using fossil fuels to develop, like China and Brazil, have more power than the West and Europe. Other critics claimed that the final document, *The future we want*, though it calls on the world to shift to a ‘green economy’, contains no timetable for action and no details on how to achieve the sustainable development goals. On the other hand, the US Secretary of State viewed the conference as a success, as the inclusion of ‘green economy’ in the text has given the concept much more power and will encourage government and business to start cutting carbon and investing in renewables. The UN Secretary General acknowledged that the important thing was ‘to begin a new thread of discussion’. The *Guardian Weekly* (12 June, 2012) concluded that, if it does result in being just another empty document, the Summit’s

... main historical significance may be as a landmark in the shift in global power to emerging economies like China, India and Brazil and the shrinking role of state institutions compared with corporations and civil society.

Perhaps the Telegraph Media Group’s headline, ‘Biggest ever UN summit ends with faint glimmer of hope’, is a fitting summary (22 June, 2012).

It is in this light that the next three articles by Denise Reghenzani and Peter Kearns assume no small significance. They wrote to me: ‘... we expect [them to be] very useful to decision/policy makers, those in practice and students/researchers alike. What’s so important is the blend of philosophical/policy foundations that led to and drive the initiatives, embedded approaches to community
sustainability (and the resources government has devoted), and the exemplar they are to uphold when attempting a more significant commitment to lifelong learning in comparison here in Australia.’ (17 April, 2012). The first paper is a comprehensive account of two German programs, ‘Learning regions promotion of networks’ (funded from 2001 to 2008) and ‘Learning on place’ (funded from 2009). Their paper illustrates for us how the German Government responded to the European Commission’s 2001 call to implement ‘coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning’. The authors claim that this experience in building learning communities ‘holds considerable interest as a laboratory for testing approaches to lifelong learning in cities and regions’. There are policies and commitments that can be lessons for Australia. The second paper highlights the commonalities in Learning cities, Healthy cities and Green cities and how much could be achieved by addressing the big issues confronting towns and cities through a convergence of these concepts to support more holistic and integrated development. It draws on exchanges of information and experience from international developments in 12 cities in five continents, the work of the PASCAL International Observatory. The author draws out the implications for adult education in Australia, particularly within a framework of lifelong learning and community building, as a key player and partner in approaches to sustainability in towns and cities. The third paper is a discussion paper, asking us 10 key questions. It was written so that we might discuss potential responses in mixed groups that bring together people with experience across education/learning, health, environment, community building and cultural sectors.

The issue concludes with a research report by a group of Victorian researchers led by Elisha Riggs examining the need for flexible models for learning English for refugee mothers, and two reviews by Peter Willis and Lisa Davies commenting on books relating, respectively, to working as learning, men’s sheds and learning from illness.
The papers in this issue segue neatly into my reminder about the 53rd Annual ALA Conference in Byron Bay on 11–12 October 2012. Its theme is *Lifelong learning = resilient communities*. The publicity states that resilient communities withstand and respond creatively to adversity. Building community resilience means valuing respect and cooperation between all groups including Indigenous Australians, an economy that works for all, and living in harmony with the natural environment. The conference will explore ways that lifelong learning nurtures this resilience in the face of challenging times. We are all looking forward to it—and hope to see you there.

The next issue (volume 52, number 3) will be guest edited from the University of Technology, Sydney, and promises to be an exciting edition. Elaine Swan and Rick Flowers have enticed an interesting array of international writers to fill their issue. We look forward to it later in the year—around November.

Fare thee well, and keep up the excellent work in the field and in your research.

Roger Harris
Editor
Exploring relationships in education: 
A phenomenological inquiry

David Giles
Flinders University

Elizabeth Smythe & Debra Spence
Auckland University of Technology

Research that seeks to understand the lived experience of the teacher-student relationship is not prevalent. This article reports on a phenomenological inquiry which explored the nature of this relationship in the context of teacher education. Participant’s lived experiences were hermeneutically interpreted against the philosophical writings of Heidegger and Gadamer. In this way, the research focused on the teacher-student relationship as it is ‘experienced’ by lecturers and student teachers in pre-service teacher education programs, rather than how it might be ‘theorised’.

The research found that relationships are essential and matter to the educational experience whether this is recognised or not. Similarly, a teacher’s comportment was found to have a communicative aspect that is felt and sensed. Further, relationships are experienced as
a play that is lived beyond the rules of engagement. Consistent with critical approaches to education, this research calls for the re-educating of educators towards essential understandings of relationship and the relational sensibilities that are integral to being in relationship.

Introduction

Relationships are at the heart of educational encounters. When a teacher stands in front of students, they relate. When a student meets with a teacher, they relate. Remembering teacher-student experiences brings back memories of feeling inspired, bored or perhaps overlooked. Curricula, lesson plans and learning outcomes are long forgotten, but the impact of relationships lives on.

How the teacher-student relationship is conceptualised varies considerably. For some, the essential aspect of this relationship is what happens between the teacher and student, as if the relationship comprises an interpersonal space across which the teacher and student traverse (Hartrick Doane 2002; Metcalfe & Game 2006). What lies between those relating is variously described as a space, a gap, or an opening, which allows room for relational happenings. Inter-actions occur as trans-actions exchanged from one person to the other. Buber (1996, 2002) describes relationships that accentuate differences between those relating as “I-it” relationships. These relationships tend to objectify the participants, the relationship, and the transactional nature of the relationship. Palmer’s (1999) concern is that relationships that are reduced to such an objectified form of relating privilege technique and efficiency over relationship.

For others, relationship speaks about a connectedness that exists, a connectivity that is basic to our humanity (Bennett 1997). Relational connectedness emphasises holistic relationship rather than the space
between those relating. This view of relationship shifts the attention from the functionality of the space between people to an inherent connectedness that is integral to relationship (Hooks 2003; Gibbs 2006). Educational processes that value relational connectedness seek to nurture the wholeness of students through a genuine concern for the teacher-student relationship (Miller & Nakagawa 2002).

Re-framing relationships within the context of a community draws attention to the inter-connectedness of the many shared relationships that co-exist in everyday experiences (Palmer 1997). The many relationships within a particular context resemble a ‘web of communal relationships’ (Palmer 1998: 95).

While there is value in theorising from empirical data about relationship, it is equally important that educational research consider the ‘lived experiences’ of relationships in education as this draws us towards essential understandings of the relationship.

**Research foundations**

This research inquiry was underpinned by the philosophical writings of Heidegger and Gadamer (Giles 2008). Their works were vital to an ongoing understanding of the ontological nature of phenomenology and its quest for exploring the a priori nature of everyday experiences in the lifeworld (Caelli 2001; Koch 1996). The aim of phenomenological research is to establish a renewed contact with original experience, prior to theorising about it, and to bring to ‘light the meanings woven into the fabric’ (Raingruber 2003: 1155) of the experience. ‘The lifeworld, the world of lived experience, is both the source and object of phenomenological research ... [indeed] the starting point and end point’ (van Manen 1990: 36, 53).

There were two central understandings of this research. Firstly, it is *phenomenological*, in the sense that the inquiry explores a particular phenomenon, the teacher-student relationship; secondly,
the inquiry is *hermeneutic*, in the sense that the inquiry seeks to lay open prior and variable understandings of things, disclosing essential meanings of the phenomena in the process (Annells 1996). Hermeneutic phenomenological research is a thinking and writing activity. ‘Research and writing are aspects of one process’ (van Manen 1990: 7). Upon hearing the recount of lived experiences, the researcher writes and re-writes from the stories until they consider their interpretation captures the nature of the experience. The importance of phenomenological writing cannot be understated as phenomenological research is the ‘bringing to speech of something’ (van Manen 1990: 32). In most research approaches, researchers write up his/her understandings. In phenomenological research, the researcher writes to understand. In the experience of writing, the researcher contemplatively articulates essential understandings and meanings, letting meanings come that they have not seen before.

The process of *being-in* hermeneutic phenomenology is like a journey of thinking that weaves through the reading-writing-contemplation of the inquiry (Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson, & Spence 2008). The research is experienced as a ‘felt’ and uncertain journey where new possibilities arise, a kind of being-in-the-play of researching. The process of hermeneutical reflection involves a to and fro circling movement towards ‘ontologically positive significance’ (Gadamer 1994: 226), that is, the essential meanings of the phenomenon being researched.

**Research method**

Phenomenological research brings together philosophical foundations and methodological considerations in an ongoing dialogue. The paths or methods, suggests van Manen (1990: 29), ‘cannot be determined by fixed signposts. They need to be discovered or invented as a response to the question at hand’. In this way, the phenomenological method is not understood as a set of investigative procedures but rather as
methods that are contingent upon the phenomenon in question; informed by philosophical literature, the insights of previous phenomenological researchers, and lived through experiences as researcher (Ironside 2005). In summary, the phenomenological methodology is a turning towards a phenomenon rather than a preoccupation with research techniques (Gadamer 1994).

Participants
The participants in this study were student teachers and lecturers from five different pre-service teacher education providers within New Zealand who were engaged in pre-service teacher education as a student teacher or as a lecturer. Seventeen participants agreed to take part in this study. They represent a sample of lecturers and student teachers in teacher education programs in New Zealand. Nine of the participants were lecturers and eight were student teachers. Three participants identified themselves as Maori, one identified as Pasifika, one as Malaysian; all the remaining participants identified themselves as Pakeha. Pākehā is a Māori term for New Zealanders of predominantly European heritage. Fourteen of the seventeen participants were female. The participants were aged between 20 and 60 years.

Data collection
The first stories that were gathered in this research inquiry were David’s. The stories became a text for an exploration of his prejudices and pre-assumptions in relation to the phenomenon. We were aware that the problem of phenomenological inquiry ‘is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much’ (van Manen 1990: 46). An interview was recorded, transcribed and interpreted as a way of making more explicit how David was towards the phenomenon at the initial stages of this research. van Manen suggests that raising awareness of one’s own experience of a phenomenon can provide ‘clues for orienting
oneself to the phenomenon and thus to all the other stages of phenomenological research’ (1990: 57).

A phenomenological interview process gathered thick descriptions of the participant’s everyday experiences of the teacher-student relationship. Once each transcript was completed David followed a process similar to that described by Caelli (2001). He began by reading the typed transcript alongside handwritten notes and highlighted words. Using the participant’s words, he then reconstructed or crafted stories in a chronological and/or logical order. The words and meanings that described the experience were kept, while additional and superfluous words were deleted. Each participant was sent their set of stories for their verification, clarification, addition or, if preferred, deletion.

Having crafted one hundred and nineteen stories and completed a description and several interpretations for every story, we believed we had sufficient data. We were satisfied that new stories were largely re-telling an essential meaning that had been previously expressed in an interpretation. At this point, the gathering of stories was suspended so that David could move to a deeper interpretative appreciation of the stories in relation to the phenomenon under inquiry.

The stories and their interpretations became the basis of dialogue with others. During this time, the quality of the interpretive writing was discussed, interpretations were challenged, and prejudices became a matter of debate. Having reached this stage, David began engaging extensively with the philosophic literature, focusing particularly on the writings of Heidegger and Gadamer. David carried into his reading of this literature, the interpretive writing that had been completed on the stories. In this way, conducting a search for ontological understandings that could further illuminate the analysis was initiated. The purpose was to find phenomenological themes in a whole sense rather than themes relating to each participant; themes
that van Manen describes as having ‘phenomenological power’. van Manen (1990: 107) notes that the ‘essential quality of a theme ... [is that we] ... discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is’.

Trustworthiness

Research endeavours need to be trustworthy and have rigour; standards that have been set by the philosophers of this research approach. Smythe et al. (2008) suggest that the trustworthiness of a study is known first by researchers themselves, who test out their thinking by engaging in everyday conversations with those who are living the phenomenon. The trustworthiness of this research project can be seen in the transparent manner in which the interpretive writing was laid open for consideration on a regular basis with scholars, researchers, research seminars and conference presentations. On numerous occasions, the resonance of others during a dialogue provided a hallmark of trustworthiness.

Findings

The findings of this research are presented under three themes. The first describes how teachers and students are always in relationship, the second explores the nature of comportment and the third reveals the play of relating. While they are presented as separate themes, they are nevertheless all part of the dynamic, inter-related whole.

Always in relationship

When the relationship matters, teachers and students relational experiences are engaged, connected and respectful of the other. This aspect of the phenomenon reveals that, while variously experienced, the relationship matters. A teacher whose relationships with students matter recalls the following story. The story describes two very different experiences between the teacher and students across consecutive classes:
About three weeks ago on the second last day before the semester break, out of the blue one student said, ‘We really enjoy your classes’. It was funny that on that day I was teaching beyond the finish time of 4 pm but it didn’t feel like it.

The next day I had the same class on the last day of term. I had a lot to teach. I was feeling pressurised. They did not seem interested. I said, ‘Now look here, I’ve got things I’ve got to finish’. They were a bit uptight. After a while, I drew them into a discussion. I carried on and taught to 4 pm. In spite of this, they still said, have a good break. When I left the class, I looked around the campus and there was no one around. I should have just said I know there are times when I can trust you to go home and look through these readings. I should have just accepted that this was the last day, accommodate that, and say, I trust you. I was very troubled and went and shared this with a colleague. I went home and went out for dinner. Throughout the whole dinner I was thinking about this class. It spoiled my holiday.

In this story the relationship matters to everyone. The students show their care through their informal comments to the teacher about the course and in their farewells prior to vacation (Rayle 2006). This teacher mattered to the students before, during and beyond the classroom experiences.

The teacher reveals a different kind of mattering. The teacher recalls feeling pressurised by time and the tasks to complete in the lesson. Concerned by the movement and pace of the lesson, the teacher works to keep the students on-task. The teacher is so focused on ensuring the students receive the content they need, that she overlooks their more human needs, to get away for a holiday. What mattered initially then for this teacher was different to what mattered for the students. As the teacher reflects on the lesson, she is concerned that she prioritised the completion of the tasks when she should have recognised the implications of the vacation. On this occasion, the teacher senses a conflict about what matters most.
As the students departed, they remind the teacher of their relationship and how the teacher mattered in the relationship (Frymier & Houser 2000). Similarly, as the teacher notices the absence of other people on campus, the teacher is reminded again of ‘her mattering’ of the relationship. The teacher’s concern for the students continues to matter as the events of the lesson are shared with a colleague and then carried into an evening meal, a holiday, and beyond. Thus the relational experience of being-with these students is not over for the teacher. It affects the teacher’s professional and personal life. Lessons do not end with the clock times. They live on in the teacher’s and student’s historicity as endless and open to further understanding.

There are also occasions when the teacher-student relationship does not appear to matter. In these situations, there seems to be a lack of care and an attempt to subordinate the other. The teacher in the next story appears to be such a teacher:

My maths teacher was very abrupt and thought that his way was right—the only way. He came in and said, this is what you have got to be able to do. If you can’t do this, then you are going to fail. This is how you do it. Arrrrggghhh!

He got worse. He actually yelled at some people and I was thinking, am I back in school? He would totally humiliate people. A couple of people challenged him because he was so rude. He would never back down or apologise. He would just get really blown up about it. It was disgusting. It was like school. He was yelling at us. And I thought, hello, we’re adults. I still don’t know why he was yelling at us.

It was horrible. I was thinking, how can this guy be in this institution? Who’s let him in? He wasn’t there for us in any way. He didn’t care about us at all. Some classes we had were in the morning, what a bad way to start the day. Actually a couple of times, we showed up and he didn’t.
The student in this story experiences a teacher who appears to care little about their relationship. The student questions the teacher’s way of relating. Why must this teacher be this way? Why must the experience of relating with this teacher be so difficult? The absence of care is noticeable.

This teacher is *with* the student but not *for* the student; *present* in the teacher-student space but not *towards* the student. The teacher’s way of relating was less of a being-to-being relating and more of an objectified I-it relating (Buber 1996). This type of relationship can be seen in the way the teacher does not welcome any appearance of the student as a person, as an individual.

Hultgren suggests ‘the response-ability that we have as ... educators is to create such a space ... so that ... students realize the power of their own insights and the beauty of their own voices’ (1992: 237). These students seemed to have little or no ability to defend themselves and, in the absence of a meaningful and reciprocal relationship, this student loses hope in the relationship. The student is also concerned with the teacher’s right to be-with the students at all. After all, this was a program that should be staffed by experienced teachers whose way of being should be exemplary. This student felt distant from the teacher and somewhat ‘lost’ in an experience where the meaning and ‘way’ was difficult to fathom.

The student and teacher are always in relationship. While the student or teacher might appear to ‘break’ this relationship, this is in fact not possible. The ontological nature of the relationship means that the relationship is always-already an integral part of both the teacher’s and the student’s everyday worlds. When the relationship does not matter to the teacher, the character of this experience is of concern to the student. Relational experiences can also carry ‘dis-ease’ about the closeness of the relationship. In the story that follows, a teacher experiences this with a student:
Karen was a student who used to be so uptight. She felt the ‘system’ had wronged her because she already had experiences and skills and knew how to manage children. She was good at her practice and yet she had to go through this retraining course. In the process, we had to encourage her to go through some personal counselling.

The following year, Karen requested to be in my class again. She actually wrote this in a letter. She said I understand her, I am there for her; I understood her problems and her issues. During this period of time, Karen would take a lot of my time. She was like that. I needed to step back because I was getting too involved with her.

In this story a teacher recalls a student who was completing her academic study under duress. The need to retrain is interpreted as an injustice by the student, given the extent of the student’s prior knowledge and experience. A mutual deepening of the teacher-student relationship reaches a point where the teacher becomes uncomfortable. Not only has the student taken a lot of time, but the student wants to continue in a similar manner in the next semester. The request to take this student again enables the teacher to realise that she has been too giving, and her involvement has become too close. The relationship appears to have a compulsion and exclusivity that has the teacher feeling isolated and trapped by the student. How close should the teacher-student relationship be and/or become? This relationship matters differently to the teacher and the student. The student is keen to continue their relating, the teacher less so.

Teachers can feel as if certain students are abusing the trust within their relationship. Concerned by the lack of honesty, teachers wonder about how they relate with the students. Somehow the boundaries of comfort and safety are challenge, raising an alert in situations where students’ way-of-being can feel too familiar or even intrusive.

The stories in this theme suggest that we are always in relationship and that relationships matter. The primordial nature of being
human is one of being-with-others in a relational co-existence that
is essential to the world we share with others. Once a student has
enrolled in a particular course, the teacher and student are ‘always’ in
relationship; ontologically, they cannot exist in any other way. While
human beings have some influence as to the ‘nature’ of the relating,
\textit{we} is integral to being human.

\textbf{Comportment}

Teachers’ and students’ comportment is sensed by others and
show how they are. While this comportment has a temporality, the
comportment also has the familiarity of a particular stand that shows
what is most integral to the person. This familiarity is experienced
relationally in how the teacher and student comport.

In the following story, a student describes a very knowledgeable
teacher who does not appear to have a breadth of experience in the
subject she is teaching. The student senses a lack of experience in the
way the teacher comports towards their teaching.

There was one lecturer ... I don’t know that they had worked in a
school. I think they had their academic qualification but I don’t
know how much experience they actually had. Things can be OK in
theory but in practice, that’s not always how it happens. She really
knew her academic information, the theories, the right answers,
the academic side of things but I felt that somewhere there was
something missing in her practical knowledge. I don’t know how I
knew that but it was just something. She’s the sort of person that
you wished you had her head on your shoulder when you were
trying to write your assignments because she knew the right things
to say.

She did come and visit me when I was on a practicum in a school.
She was very positive and she was very specific with her praise,
but some of the comments she made, I felt, were made from a
perspective of someone not having been on the floor teaching
herself, not quite knowing how it is to be there. Lecturers need to
have the experience on the floor teaching, how can you teach when you haven’t done it yourself?

The teacher in this story responds appropriately in an academic sense but appears to lack personal experience of the topic she is teaching. The teacher’s comportment makes an impression upon the student’s being. The student feels that ‘somewhere there was something missing in her practical knowledge’ as if the teacher did not have an experiential knowledge from having worked with children. This student is unsure how she knows this ‘but it was just something’. Something in the way the teacher comports, speaks to the student of someone ‘not quite knowing how it is to be there’ with children. Had the teacher been experienced, her comments and interactions would have been different, and shown in the way she comports herself.

The teacher’s comportment influences the way this student stands in her relationship with the teacher moment by moment (Heidegger 2001). It is in the way that the teacher is with the student that the student feels a ‘knowing’ about who this teacher is. Who this teacher is comes across to the student on different occasions, such is the nature and influence of the teacher’s comportment (Dreyfus 1991). Who this teacher is and how she is with the student is integral to the teaching-learning experiences. Unless the student can trust that a teacher’s knowing comes from and is rooted in experience, then confidence in the teacher’s practical wisdom is undermined.

For some teachers how they are inspires the students they teach. The teacher, in the story that follows, comports in a way that shows a deep respect for the student.

One teacher asked us for ideas and listened to us. She was interested in us. She wasn’t interested in just telling us; she wanted to get our thoughts. She wasn’t teaching anything significantly different, but she just put it into a way that was useful. It made such a big difference. We had our class in the music room. We had no desks or any tables. There were heaps of us; too many for the
seats in the class. For a lot of the lecturers, we were treated like we were kids in a class. They said we’re all colleagues but a lot of them didn’t treat us like that. Whereas this teacher managed to teach us without actually making us feel like we were children. It made a big difference.

This student describes a teacher who expects reciprocity in relating with the students. The teacher comports an openness that calls for engagement as ‘she wanted to get [the student’s] thoughts’. The teacher communicates an attunement towards the students regardless of the limitations of the physical environment. It is the people within the space that the teacher is attuned to, rather than the problems of the space.

The teacher’s stand towards the student is regularly experienced as this is how this teacher was. Learning, for this teacher, requires engagement with another and sharing ideas in dialogue. The roles of teacher and learner are shared through actively listening to how the students are relationally. The expression of each person’s voice in the reciprocity of dialogue releases the potentiality of learning. These students feel as if they are an integral part of their teacher’s learning. In the process the teacher’s way-of-being releases this student to learning about the what and how of teaching and learning.

Other stories show how a teacher’s comportment can have students dread the thought of further encounters.

I had a lecturer in my first year who treated me like a kid. The way she spoke to me, the way she asked another student to stop talking; I mean it was probably even more derogatory than the way I asked my kids to stop talking. I wouldn’t even talk to the kids in my class like that, because they’re too old for that. She spoke right down to me. She was scary. I wasn’t the only one that was scared of her. She was scary. I never had a scary teacher when I was at school but I learnt what one was like. She noticed absolutely everything. I got a letter from the department saying how well I
had done an assignment in her course. I don’t remember her ever saying, oh, that was well done.

This student feels belittled by a teacher whose behaviour is ‘scary’. This teacher communicates messages about the nature of relating and the ‘place’ that this student has. By speaking to the student as an object, this teacher lets the students know that they are not equals. In fact, the student feels less than a child, spoken down to and without any affirmation. This student endures a passion-less and frustrating position.

Absent from the teacher’s comportment is an acceptance of this student as a ‘particular’ person with particular interests. The teacher does not want to listen to the student, indicative of comportment that is not open to being-with the student. Rather than finding voice, the student is silenced.

Comportment is our ‘mode of being’ and relates to how we are in the world. Every comportment is always already in a certain attunement. The accessibility of another’s comporting occurs within the ontological experience of relating.

In the play

The relationship between a teacher and a student is always in play. The play’s movement has the teacher and student continuously engaged in the immediate and concrete situation (Macintyre Latta & Hostetler 2003). Immersed in dynamic and unpredictable relating, the teacher and student move and become in each situation. Previously learned theoretical knowledge about relating gives way to a direction that is found in the phronesis of the situation (Dunne 1997). While the techne (the knowledge that informs the ‘know-how’ of relating) might be useful to the situation, it is the lived experience of relating that has the unpredictability. This theme shows how teachers and students experience being-in-the-play of relating and the phronesis (practice wisdom) of being-in the relational play. In the
following story, a teacher describes a student whose contribution to a classroom discussion is very different from the way the conversation had been unfolding.

I was teaching one morning around underachievement in schools. How can teachers meet the needs of some students with regard to assessment? In the course of the discussion, we were talking about going that little bit extra to form a relationship with students and give a little bit of extra time to those who weren’t doing OK. Was there something outside of the classroom or the structured lesson that you could do that would help them achieve more?

One particular student said, well, that sounds really nice and very idealistic but why am I going to give an extra hour or three hours a week to that student if I’m not getting paid for it? He instantly blew me away. Where are you coming from on this?

Before I had time to react, one of the other students openly challenged him and said, if you’ve got that attitude, if you’re just in it to fill in hours and take home wages, why do you want to be a teacher? Isn’t teaching about helping people, of going that extra distance, of making a difference? And he said, yeah, as long as I’m getting paid for it. He was absolutely serious. He was straight up. Where’s this guy coming from on that? He’s no longer a face among the students.

Amid a conversation exploring the support that might be offered to students who are struggling with their learning, this particular student expresses a concern for his salary in providing such support. Other students had been offering their thoughts but what caught this teacher’s attention was the student’s apparent self-interest at a time when the support for under-achieving students was being explored. This particular moment influences the movement of how this teacher and student relate. This teacher is concerned, attuning herself to the relational play that is unfolding between the teacher, the student, and the other students in the class.
The teacher finds herself feeling ‘blown away’, thrown by the student’s comments and struggles to understand where this student is coming from; who is this one who speaks? The thrownness is a reminder that, as Heidegger (1996) states, we are literally situated in the midst of a world of interplays beyond our control. For Heidegger, our thrownness is not a ‘finished fact’ (1996: 179); rather, being thrown into an already existing world, we project onto an always-already present world from within our thrownness. Hostetler, Macintyre Latta and Sarroub suggest that perhaps ‘a first step for teachers in pursuit of meaning is to acknowledge their thrownness’ (2007: 234).

The teacher is not ready and able to relate differently; she is searching for meaning in the play. This teacher might choose to remove herself from the experience but instead she finds herself caught, if not ‘trapped’, in the relational play. The teacher’s experience of relating with the student is one of wrestling for a ‘way-to-be’ amid the uncertainty of a very present and fluid reality.

This story reveals the seriousness and the frailty of the relationship between a teacher and a student. The seriousness is seen in the delicate opening and closing of relationship within a classroom dialogue. Brought together for an educational endeavour, the relationship moves and ‘becomes’ in the play. This becoming is experienced in moments that change the nature and movement of the relating between a teacher and student. Being in such experiences is an embodied moment, filled with anxiety and carrying the participants in the play, that is the relationship.

The following story shows various aspects of phronesis that are primordial to being in the play of relating. Within the story, the phronesis is shown in terms of its resoluteness, techne, tact, pedagogical thoughtfulness, moral knowing and attunement. This story focuses on an interaction between Tania, a student teacher with experience in early childhood contexts, and her lecturer.
Tania had been out there working in the field for six years and knew everything there was to know. I went out to assess her teaching practice and was concerned. I could hear a lot of her voice and not a lot of the children’s. I started talking to her about this and she said to me, well, what am I supposed to talk to them about? Well, what can you talk about with children? What did you do this morning? What did they do when they got up this morning? Wouldn’t that be a starting point? She said, I don’t know whether I can do that. So I just sat with the children and started talking to them about driving up to their town on that day and what I’d seen on the road driving up there that day. I saw this really really cute sheep. It was so little and so fluffy and I just wanted to get out and hold it. Then someone said, I’ve got a bear at home and he’s soft. She could see what I was doing. Then I said to her, now you go and sit with them, you share something with them. They were all over her. She couldn’t get a word in edge ways. She was almost in tears because she was staggered at how much they were telling her. She hadn’t realised. She’s a totally different person. It had such an effect on her.

In this story, a lecturer finds that talking with a student about her concerns is met with questions and uncertainty. Responding to the moment, the lecturer sits with the children and engages them in such a way that a reciprocity of relating begins. She did not come to this experience expecting to be engaging with the children first-hand.

This is not a show by the teacher. The sincerity of the teacher’s relating with the children opens a very different dialogue. These children were ‘playing' freely in dialogue with the teacher. This teacher leapt in, uncertain of what might transpire but with an improvisation that is in the student’s best interests. An exclusive focus on the techne of this moment (e.g. the lesson plan) might ‘squeeze out the self in teaching as the “who” is sidelined and silenced by the “what”’. The wisdom in the teacher’s actions change how this teacher and student experience the play of their relating.
This situation is not hopeless for the student as she can now see how the teacher was interacting differently. Accepting the opportunity to be with the children in a different way, this student is overwhelmed and moved. Field and Latta (2001) suggest that some experiences re-member us, causing us to be a different person in a different place.

In this story, the teacher’s phronesis opens the possibility of the student’s learning. The moment calls for the student to be in the uncertainty of the relational play with children. Both teacher and student teacher experience the unrehearsed to-and-fro movement of being in-the-play of relating.

This theme has focused on the play that is relating. The players take for granted the moments and movement of the play. The unpredictability and uncertainty of the play is opened in the moment in response to the play. Such practical wisdom, or indeed the absence of such, is not engendered as a cognitive act but rather a person’s sensitised attunement to the movement of the play. The creative process of being in the play draws upon the person’s practical knowledge for the immediate and particular situation.

**Conclusion**

Relationships are essential to the educational experience whether they are recognised or not. When the relationship between a teacher and a student is good we seldom attend to the relationship. While the relationship matters to the experience, the relationship lies out of sight and is largely taken for granted. Indeed, there does not appear to be any thinking or wondering about the relationship or the ability of the teacher and student to relate. On other occasions, the assumption that relationships matter is called into question. In these times, the teacher-student relationship concerns the student and is stressful for the teacher. In these moments, the concern over the relationship foregrounds the teaching-learning experience for those involved.
While relationships can be incorrectly assumed to matter, it is critically important that educators become more attentive to how their relationship is with their students individually and collectively. Educators need to have the ability to relate to their students, as well as remain attuned to recognise how these relationships are mattering. Student—teacher relationships are felt and interpreted by those involved, whether they are consciously aware of this or not. This research inquiry found that when the teacher-student relationship matters, this can be seen and felt in each person’s way-of-being.

An educator’s dispositions and sensibilities towards relationships are essential to the educational endeavour. Inspiring teachers, having such dispositions and sensibilities, leap into relational experiences and avail themselves of the relational moment and its movement. They become increasingly adept at reading the relationship and living phronesis in the moment. Foregrounding relationships in education has the potential for humanising educational praxis in the face of powerful and dominant educational discourses that have taken the teacher-student relationship for granted for the sake of the system that ought to serve it.

References


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Popular education in times of societal transformation—A Swedish perspective

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The aim of this philosophical and historical position paper is to discuss the ways in which Popular Education—folkbildning—has contributed to the social transformation of Sweden through self-directed and collaborative educational practices. One of our premises is that individual transformative learning, fostered by folkbildning, has contributed to a collective transformation of Swedish society since the late 1890s and laid the ground for a modern and coherent society with a high level of trust among its citizens.

Introduction

Scandinavia has been an inspiration for many countries when it comes to organised, well-funded and effective adult education. In Australia for example, Adult Learning Australia (ALA) looked to
Sweden in the mid-1990s, when it applied for government funding to create study circles to address a number of important social issues. This initiative has evolved into the Australian Study Circles Network Pty Ltd (ASCN) which, to quote its own website, ‘is a central resource for those who want to learn about study circles or organise a Dialogue to Change (D2C) program in Australia’. In Sweden, there has a long tradition of study circles and other forms of popular education (*folkbildning*) and although this tradition has also changed and evolved over time, popular education has played an important role in Sweden, especially in times of societal transformation. This article places popular education in context and makes the distinction, firstly between mass movements and popular movements, and secondly between mass education and popular education. It is important to point out that we use these terms in a particular way and in a particular context—namely, as ways of differentiating between two different types of societal change in the intellectual and spiritual life of Sweden. We use Habermas (1984–1986) to help make these distinctions and refer to major political, religious and social changes that we claim have been either initiated within the ‘system-world’ or from within the ‘life-world’. The historical context is the gradual emergence, since the time of the Swedish reformation, of a socially cohesive, well functioning democracy. The example of a mass movement that included mass education, which we use in this article, is the overthrow of Catholicism by the Swedish King, Gustav Vasa (1496–1560) and the establishment of the Swedish Lutheran Church. This change begins with a struggle within the the ‘system-world’ and over two centuries results in a shift of power and privilege from the Catholic to the Swedish Church. By the 1800s the Swedish state Church encompassed and impacted on the lives of most Swedes and was responsible for a system of mass literacy. It, in its turn, was resisted, but this time from within the ‘life-world’. Religious reformers, backed by ordinary people, created the Free Church
movement, which we characterise as a popular movement that used popular education to spread its ideas.

Habermas’ theory of Communicative Action (1984–1986) helps us understand, analyse and draw conclusions about the role of popular education, historically and today. For Habermas, there are different types of action that are motivated by different types of reason. He labels his first category strategic/instrumental action. This type of action can countenance unilateral, non-inclusive means when the end is considered important enough. Quite often power and money tends to steer the process. Communicative action seeks common understanding and agreement via a process of rational discourse in order to achieve a mutually acceptable end. In communicative action all parties are given a fair hearing. According to Habermas ‘the system-world’ that includes the market, government and non-government organisations, has been increasingly characterised by strategic/instrumental action. Habermas does not exclude the use of communicative action in the system world but is concerned that instrumental reason and action, which is most often found there, is seeping into and contaminating both public and private spheres of ‘the life-world’ (Eriksen & Weigård 2003: 101). It is ultimately the ‘life-world’, in democratic societies, that has to be responsible for keeping the ‘system-world’ honest.

The shift in power from government by privileged few to parliament elected by universal suffrage, and the time it took to achieve this, is an another example of societal change brought about by a struggle between ‘system’ and ‘life’ worlds. Both Sweden and Australasia have experienced this struggle. New Zealand led the way by introducing voting rights for men in 1879 and by extending the right to women in 1891, while in Australia propertied men could vote in many colonies in the 1850s and in 1901 federal Australia extended that right to all adults. It took Sweden until 1911 for men to win the right to vote and another decade before women were given that right in 1922.
The struggle for political and labour rights was begun by individuals who formed unions and was resisted by right wing governments voted in by property owners. Examples of resistance on the part of the ‘system-world’ were the crushing of the forest workers’ strike in Sundsvall, Sweden, in 1879 and the breaking of the Australian shearers’ strike of 1891 in central Queensland, Australia. In both cases the army was called in. These traumatic events were a catalyst for the creation of social democratic parties in both Australia and Sweden. The emergence of strong parliamentary democracies in Australia and Sweden are, we argue, examples of popular movements supported by popular education. Today there are other threats to democracy, including acts of individual and group terrorism. The tragic event that occurred in and near Oslo in the summer of 2011, when a right wing terrorist exploded a bomb outside the office building that housed the social democratic Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, and then drove to the party’s youth camp and shot 69 young social democrats, exemplifies the fear and hatred that a genuinely democratic institution can inspire in extremists. It also underscores how important it is for a democracy to be grounded in a common set of beliefs and values that are fostered and renewed by individual transformative learning maintained via popular education.

**Building ideologies and mentalities**

A person’s world-view consists of concepts, ideas, assumptions and theories that are expressed in meaningful acts of consciousness in the individual’s social and cultural milieu. An individual’s world-view may begin as a more or less articulated response to one’s environment, for example, as the adoption of parental values or the acceptance of viewpoints expressed by school or other authorities. In time this rudimentary world-view is built into a more or less functional and sustainable noetic system. We employ our world-view to construe meaning of our experiences and other meaning schemes
we encounter. But that same world-view can obstruct and narrow meaning (Cranton 1994, Mezirow 1997, Taylor 1998).

The ability to reflect and communicate with others forms, frames and conditions the way we learn and such learning, in turn, leaves impressions on and shapes meaning structures. Such individual structures arise within social structures, which in turn ‘survive’ in the human mind and body as memory traces (Giddens 1984, Haugaard 1997). Meaning structures are socially determined knowledge that include both individual as well as collective resources and which help contribute to the full use of the human potential. The nature of social knowledge, according to Giddens (1984), is represented in three different forms: practical consciousness, discursive consciousness and the unconscious. In this paper we concentrate on the first two forms. Practical consciousness is a knowledge of everyday practices that actors carry in their minds as tacit knowledge. It differs, however, from the form of knowledge called discursive consciousness, which is reflected and possible to express verbally, as, for example, when human agents discuss and reflect on their activities. It is, primarily, through discursive consciousness that actors become able to change their behaviour patterns, especially when they are inspired by role models, when the need for change arises or when they face uncomfortable or disorienting dilemmas (Giddens 1984, Haugaard 1997, Söderström 2006).

Ideas, analytically speaking, constitute the first level of a more comprehensive process of ‘idea building’. On this foundation of ideas rests the next level that is characterised by the way in which a number of ideas, as well as other signs and utterances, relate to each other. These specific patterns of relationships between key ideas constitute the growing ground for ideologies. Ideology is related to other systems, such as religion, industry, science and art, and together under certain conditions can form sub-cultures and cultures. The concept of culture is very broad but, in the anthropological sense,
denotes our entire way of life and includes not only our spiritual and intellectual life but also its material base (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952, Anderson et al. 1999). Culture is inseparable from our everyday lives since it is a ‘given’ and permeates everything we are and do (Jensen 1988). Broadly speaking, culture refers to the collective heritage of ideas, knowledge, beliefs and values, and the patterns we use to communicate these to each other (see for example, Hammer 1910, Dewey 1966, Ödman, 1995). Culture cannot be made intelligible unless we approach it from a developmental and an educational perspective, which includes understanding the specific views of individuals and groups who make up the culture. Communicative practices, that include formal and informal education, are prerequisites for meaning-making in society. This process of communication and meaning-making involves people in different contexts who interact for specified purposes. In other words, cultures are a social construction.

The third level of the ‘idea-building’ can be described by the term mentality/mentalities. Mentalities, or ‘habits of the mind’ (Mezirow 1997, Taylor 1998), are referential frames, patterns of attitudes, values, beliefs and feelings that are founded during a long-term socialisation and acculturation process in specific socio-cultural contexts. Mentalities give culture its original aesthetics and constitute its ‘mental universe’. They are social/collective manifestations of thinking, action, dispositions and frames of reference marked by specific existential conditions that together constitute meaning-making. Carriers of mentalities are rarely aware of the underlying processes that create conditions for the emergence of specific ideological and theoretical systems. In the course of time mentalities appear to be canonical, that is, contradiction-free and ‘given’, which obscures the fact that they once, long ago, emerged from conflict arenas where violent power struggles were fought. Mentalities are therefore cognitive and emotional structures, whose texture consists of the deposits that victorious (political) regimes give rise to,
reshaped continually into effective mental and material expressions. A dissection of mentalities is likely to reveal segments of ideas, habits and practices of previous generations (rituals), latent collective sentiments (feelings and intuitions) and cognitive schemes that fabricate intentions and orchestrate acts.

The efficiency of mentalities on both individual and collective levels is ‘crystallized’ in what Bourdieu describes as *habitus*: a system of structured, structuring (unconscious) dispositions, constituted in praxis and based on past experiences, which, while it integrates the individual’s previous experiences, at any given time can also serve as a matrix for an individual way to perceive, evaluate and act. Members of a group or class, being products of the same objective conditions, share a habitus. The practices of these members are better harmonised than the agents themselves know. According to Bourdieu, habitus is a precondition for coordination of practices, and mobilisation (Bourdieu 1992, Berner et al. 1977, s.53). The gradual establishment of a State run Swedish Church is a good example of habitus. The various study associations that make up much of popular education in Sweden today are arguably other examples.

Mentalities are therefore culturally shaped, while at the same time culture-forming. Ödman (1995) has coined the term *immanent pedagogy* to describe all forms of subtle influence that permeate our lives. Such a pedagogy is inherent in almost all life situations and its subtle impact can be mentality-forming:

> Pedagogy and mentality are in my view closely related to each other. It is through pedagogical activities that mentalities are shaped, and pedagogy is, in turn, shaped by the mentalities of the ‘educators’, in a dialectical interface. (Ödman, 1995, our translation)

Since mentalities are shaped and spread through long-term, socio-cultural processes, it is difficult to delimit mentalities such as mass and popular movements or the mass and popular forms of education
that have been linked with them. In the rest of this paper, we will analyse the development of three popular movements in Sweden and a common form of popular education (the study circle) that was developed by them. We argue that these movements, and the study circles that supported them, formed an effective reaction to what we, in the context of this inquiry, refer to as mass movements and the types of mass education that were connected to them.

**Three popular movements and their use of study circles**

The three popular movements we refer to in this section are the Free Church Movement, the Temperance Movement and the Labour or Trade Unions Movement. In all three we can detect a reaction to a dominant ideology or mentality and a determination on the part of individuals and groups of individuals to react against a system or habitus, built on and protective of power and privilege. Activists in the ‘life-world’ who initiated change were themselves subjected to the existing mentality that privileged the churchmen, capitalists and politicians. This mentality embodied the ideologies of a state-run church, a capitalist economy and a property-based constitutional monarchy. Despite their early conditioning, activists from the ‘life-world’, through a process of discursive and reflective consciousness, were able to build a new ideology or mentality that was embraced by ordinary people rather than being imposed upon them.

These three popular movements, and the popular education (*folkbildning*) system they inaugurated, began in the wake of the industrial revolution in Sweden. Although there are many historical parallels between Sweden and its English neighbour (for example, the development of a state church), both the agrarian and industrial revolutions occurred later in Sweden. Industrial machinery was being used in the logging industry in the early nineteenth century and by the middle of the century Sweden’s growing textile industry had shifted to steam driven carding, knitting and weaving machines, but
these developments had already occurred in England almost a century before.

The system of mass literacy that we mentioned in the introduction benefited activists from all three popular movements mentioned above. They understood that knowledge was a source of power and was an essential tool in any attempt at reform. The system of annual literacy checks was initiated by the Swedish Church in 1686 following the translation of the bible into the vernacular. Once a year parish priests visited farms and villages and tested their parishioners in their ability to read a passage from the bible and answer catechism questions. This system was continued for two centuries and, although it was a means to maintain Church control, it also inadvertently led to a general level of literacy that is unparalleled in other western countries. When the three movements mentioned above set up study circles to educate their members, many who participated in them were already able to read.

Leaders within the Free Church Movement objected to the way the Swedish Church controlled ordinary people’s place and form of worship and outlawed private prayer meetings. The law banning such meetings and the practice of any faith other than Swedish Lutheranism (enacted 1726) was abolished in 1858. Pietists, Evangelicals, Baptists and Methodists were able to create legal organisations that used popular educational methods to educate their members. Some of these members, in turn, helped start the Temperance Movement and the Union Movement. Both of these movements reacted to the large-scale poverty, oppression, marginalisation and ignorance associated with societal change that followed enclosure laws, rural unemployment and a shift to the cities, where housing was cramped and unhealthy. Conditions were so poor, the hours so long and the temperatures in winter so severe that the work day often began and ended with an issue of vodka (brännvin). Both these movements grew in strength and numbers
during the second half of the nineteenth century and there was an overlap of membership, especially among study circle leaders (Gougoulakis 2001, Christie 1996). A number of labour leaders, for example, gained knowledge, organisational skills and the motivation to reform society via membership in the temperance movement. At the end of the 1800s, these and like minded activists began to organise themselves into trade unions and political parties, and made use of the same means of spreading their message as the teetotallers. They used libraries, study circles and lectures as a means to achieve their political, social and cultural objectives. In 1912 the various worker groups organised their educational activities under a central organisation, the Workers’ Educational Association. Later, other adult education associations were established by different groups with particular ideological and political profiles.

Unlike many other European countries, which overthrew their monarchies or drastically reduced their power in the revolutionary year of 1848, Sweden followed a reformist path, using the right to mass education as one means of averting revolution. When Sweden lost its war against Russia in 1809, the King was deposed and his uncle installed, on condition that a new constitution gave increased power to the Riksdag, Sweden’s representative body for the four estates—nobles, clergy, merchants and farmers. In the same year Gustaf Abraham Silverstolpe called for basic education for all classes of society, arguing that it would help inculcate morality, love of country and an acceptance of one’s place in society. Education was seen as a means of averting revolution and instituting reform. Others, like the teacher Carl Broocmans and the botanist Carl Agardh (later the Bishop of Karlstad) rejected the notion, arguing that education should be the exclusive privilege of the clergy and the upper classes and instead, supported libraries and other forms of popular education. By 1833 this push for educational reform had another motif. Erik Gustaf Geijer insisted that poverty was founded in ignorance and that education could be used not only to inform people
of their duties and moral obligations but also to improve their social and economic situation. On 18 June 1842, the government bowed to demands for educational reform and introduced basic schooling (mass education) for all and provided some support for parish libraries (Steele 2007, Gougoulakis 2001, 2006 & Christie 2002).

Ultimately, the driving force behind any popular movement, and an indispensable condition for it to attract supporters, is the existence of a strong idea, a desirable and necessary goal. The temperance movement and the workers’ movement were two great popular movements that, at the turn to the twentieth century in Sweden, contributed decisively to the achievement of ‘social solidarity and social responsibility’. This was a period of social awakening that highlighted the demand for a new type of citizen, one able to embrace and realise a great social idea. For the temperance movement, it was public sobriety and abstinence from drink; for the workers’ movement, it was a vision of economic liberalisation in which a fair day’s work received a fair day’s pay. The ideal of the free churches was the freedom to practise their beliefs anytime and anywhere, which meant having to undermine the hegemony of the state-run Swedish Church. In their struggle for religious, social and political rights, the popular movement utilised education as an important tool. Gradually, this kind of educational practice took organisational manifestation in the form of educational associations. Study associations acquired and coordinated resources that could be used to realise the particular social movement’s organisational objectives (Svensson 1996, Amnå 1999). As Olsson points out:

Participation in organizational activities and the internalization and realization of an association’s idea through practical work, strengthened its members. By participating in social work and by deliberating and discussing general issues, a large strata of workers gained a real education, which in due course helped counterbalance the formal education that leading social classes were in possession of. In this way, a good foundation was also
laid, quite unconsciously, for a more thorough, theoretical and personal self-education when the association’s members took part in the training sessions and study circles. (Olsson 1922:48, our translation)

The Swedish word for popular education is *folkbildning*. If we consider its mass character, the activation and participation of diverse—mostly indigent—groups of adults in learning activities, as well as its perception of learning as an instrument for empowerment, social advancement and assertion of fundamental political rights, it is possible to see a connection with the German concept of *bildung*. For the individual, the idea of education as a lifelong and life-changing process rather than simply the acquisition of knowledge and skills, fits quite snugly into Wilhelm von Humbolt’s notion of education or *bildung*. In this sense too, popular education is separated from compulsory school (formal) education in regards to educational, organisational and curricular goals, because it has an autonomy that is based on principles of self-education and the cultural needs of the participants. (Gougoulakis & Bogotaj 2007, Christie 1998, 2002).

**Study circles**

Since the late nineteenth century, the study circle (a self-directed, democratic and collaborative learning method) acted as a balance to a mass school system that became more exclusionary the older its students became. The study circles became places for collective learning and communication and the loci of social networking. They were also used as a means of achieving political objectives when organised by associations with such aims. The study circle in its broadest sense was already being used in the mid-nineteenth century by popular movements, but as a more strict educational form and strategy it dates from 1902 and Oscar Olsson is regarded as its ‘instigator’ (Törnqvist 1996, Arvidson 1991; Andersson et al 1996, Vestlund 1996, Gougoulakis 2001, 2006).
The study circle, as a systematic and self-governing meeting place of learning, has become a national educational standard for popular education. It has also been a tool for both individual and collective emancipation and a means for social and community development (see for example, Coleman 1990, Gougoulakis & Bogataj 2007, Larsson 2001, Oliver 1987, and compare Candy 1991, Brockett & Hiemstra 1991). The pedagogy of study circles was, and still is, premised on a free and open dialogue between equals. Participants exchange ideas and experiences under self-directed and deliberative learning processes, beyond the sort of hierarchies associated with conventional schooling. Study circles provide a public place that seems to appeal to ‘creative people’ (compare Florida 2006).

After a century and half of struggle, the state today not only recognises Swedish popular adult education as a free and voluntary form of learning but actually ensures its independent existence via legislation. The state view on the character of non-formal, popular education is expressed as follows:

- Popular education is and should be free and voluntary. This free and voluntary popular educational work enables all to seek knowledge on the basis of their own experience, preferences and learning style, without limitation from demands for results, and without mechanisms of exclusion. The approach permits dialogue, involvement and questioning, without a preconceived framework. By reason of this, popular education fulfils a role not covered by any other educational institution, a role which also contributes to maintaining the vitality of democracy (Government Bill 1997/98:115:5).

**Popular movements’ educational agenda for societal transformation**

After a long struggle in the nineteenth century the history of Sweden’s popular movements, and the popular educational forms they embrace, is now an integral part of Sweden’s modern history. From the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards, the movements’
historical development can be divided into four phases using distinct signs that mark shifts and transformations in the values of civil society. Following a radical phase of formation, the new social movements became established as legitimate actors in the country’s political life. This was made possible through state recognition and public economic support. Civil society was gradually incorporated within the dominant political culture marked by a social-democratic, reformist orientation towards co-operation, pragmatism, compromise and equality. The new movements toned down their protest profiles and supported the new *folkhem* (people’s home) project, which is a metaphor for the Social Democratic Party’s political vision of a public welfare system (Gougoulakis & Bogotaj 2007).

The post-war spirit of consensus was followed in the 1960s and 1970s by a new phase of civil-social development. During this time of reappraisal, radical new social forces entered the political arena, impelled by the agenda of post-material values. The individual’s need for personal integrity and self-realisation infused cultural debate and challenged the predominant collectivistic thinking of the period. This phase of awakening and criticism targeted the social model of production. The popular education organisations became more independent vis-à-vis their ‘original’ founders and were rejuvenated with new members and new or evolved social movements.

A number of tendencies during the last three decades of the twentieth century forebode great changes in Sweden’s society, economy and cultural life. A new ‘social morphology’ of networks that use *information* as a basis for productivity and power were established (see Demertzis 1996). In the swell of globalisation, the role of the state in public life is decreasing and at the same time individualisation is spreading. The redrawing of the power map involved in globalisation is generating both new winners and losers and new areas of resistance. New movements are emerging, organised on a network basis and not dependent on national borders. In some ways, these
movements express civic commitment with global awareness and responsibility. They are composed of new identities constructed chiefly out of meaning and spirituality. The roles of established movements are being questioned as more and more people abandon them. Yet this cannot be seen as a waning interest in politics, but rather an expression of an individual-centred search outside of given collective structures. The purpose is largely the same as it always is, to reduce susceptibility to various risks; but the means seem to consist to a greater extent of individualised strategies for eliminating the effects of these risks (Demertzis 1996).

Popular education and its pedagogical theory are compelled to take a stance regarding these social changes. The individual is clearly becoming the actor in the new era, but the focus on the individual need not, perhaps should not, be allowed to deny the significance that a functioning collective has for the individual’s opportunities to develop and be well. As a field, civil society is not homogenous but rather an arena full of conflict where the various agents compete for preferential rights of interpretation, the creation of world images, and ideological hegemony. In addition, every agent is characterised by defined relations toward other agents within civil society and toward the state and the economy (see Granovetter 1985).

As mentioned at the outset a vital ‘life-world’ is a prerequisite for a healthy, functioning ‘system-world’ in which structures and strategic action supports, rather than undermines, a truly democratic society. Participation in civil associations empowers people with resources to help shape and form their collective destiny. Today, the individual is exposed to new threats and risks (Beck 1998, Castells 1996, Giddens 1994). This makes the ability to learn and develop, collaborate and deliberate, act and reflect, a necessity of life. Study circles and popular education can help build this ability. Popular education contributes to transformative learning within society by
fostering and strengthening democratic virtues that enable citizens to participate politically in a modern society (compare Larsson 2001).

*Popular education* and *study circles* created public spaces for dialogue and analytical, critical reflection in the past. Today, ten Study Associations arrange approximately 280,000 study circles each year, where nearly 1.8 million individuals across the country participate in the most varied of topics. These study circles enable adult citizens to practise their civil liberties and contribute to a specific Swedish political culture, which, in turn, has shaped the mentality of Swedish people. It is a mentality that has served Sweden well and will continue to do so if, via popular movements and the educational associations they build, it continues to embrace analytical, critical, transformative learning principles.

**References**


About the authors

Dr Petros Gougoulakis, born in Greece, awarded a PhD 2001 at Stockholm University, Sweden, for a thesis entitled ‘The study circle: Lifelong learning ... in Swedish! A non-formal meeting place for discussion and learning for all’ (Studiecirkeln: Livslångt lärande...på svenska! En icke-formell mötesplats för samtal och bildning för alla). Gougoulakis is working as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education, Stockholm University. His main research interests deal with learning processes in various contexts, and, in particular, the subject area of adult educators’ qualifications as well as the phenomenon of ‘folkbildning’ (adult popular education). Gougoulakis is member of The European Society for Research in Education of Adults (ESREA) and Hellenic Adult Education Association (HAEA).
Professor Michael Christie was awarded a PhD in 1978 at Monash University, Australia, for a thesis entitled ‘Aborigines and colonists in early Victoria, 1836–1886’. Christie has maintained an interest in cross-cultural research during his career but, in his recent research, has focused on university pedagogy, the supervision of doctoral students and the pedagogical use of information communication technology in university teaching and research. Michael Christie is Sweden’s first Professor of Higher Education and has been active in building a national network of researchers in this area. He has strong connections with adult and higher education researchers outside of Sweden, including Australia.

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Mid-career extension graduates’ perceptions of the impact of a demand-driven, extension curriculum in Ghana

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University of Cape Coast, Ghana

One of the major challenges facing Africa today is ensuring that extension practitioners are well trained to enable them function effectively as facilitators of change at the farmers’ level. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a mid-career B. Sc. Agricultural Extension Curriculum in meeting the educational needs of mid-career extension agents. The study was descriptive and used a validated questionnaire to collect data from 30 purposively selected graduates of the program. The study revealed that 66.7% were aged between 40–49 years, and 93.3% had at least 10 years of working experience before entering the program. The graduates considered their competencies at the start of the program to be below average in all but 6 of the 25 courses offered under the program. After going through the program, all the graduates had attained competencies that were rated from high to very high. Improvement in academic status, knowledge and skills in the human relations as well as technical areas in agriculture, and attitude to
work, were perceived as the major benefits of the program. The effectiveness of the program in meeting the needs of the graduates was attributed to the availability of appropriate facilities and the conducive environment for the teaching-learning process, availability of adequate and competent lecturers, committed and supportive administrative staff, balanced curriculum and a well-planned and supervised field component of the program known as the supervised enterprise projects (SEPs).

**Introduction**

The improvement of a country’s human resource capacity for productivity is a pre-requisite for social and economic development. In the agricultural sector, both formal and non-formal education efforts are essential for developing the competent workforce necessary for improving food security and rural employment and bringing about a reduction in poverty, especially rural poverty. In Ghana and other developing countries, agricultural extension has emerged as the main organisation dealing with human resource development with respect to technology transfer to farmers, farm families and workers. There is also general agreement that agricultural extension must be supported to continue playing this critical role in agricultural and rural development in sub-Saharan Africa (Carson 2000).

Numerous studies, however, have pointed out that the development of human resources, particularly the training of extension workers, remains a major problem (Crowder, Lindley, Bruening & Doron 1998; Kwarteng, Zinnah & Ntifo-Siaw 1998; Opio-Odongo 2000; Maguire 2000; Zinnah & Akeredolu 2005). Most of the extension staff engaged in ministries of agriculture and other public related agencies or extension staffs of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) neither have the requisite university level education nor the practical exposure needed to improve agricultural productivity. There is substantial literature to indicate that most of the agricultural
extension staff in sub-Saharan Africa lack appropriate training beyond secondary school (FAO 1990; 1993; 1996; Swanson 1990; Zinnah, Steele & Mattocks 1998). This deficiency, according to Carson (2000), hampers the efforts of governments, NGOs and other agencies to assist resource-poor farmers and to improve links between farmers, researchers and extension staff. These extension agents received substantial training in technical agriculture, with very little exposure to important areas such as rural sociology, communication, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and the capability to work as a team. These are critical areas in which knowledge and skills must be developed to produce competent and effective agricultural extensionists.

The problem of inadequately trained agricultural extension agents in sub-Saharan Africa is exacerbated by other critical factors including:

- lack of up-to-date human resource development needs assessment in many African countries which results in poor policies needed to direct relevant human resource development programs (Lindley 2000);
- dissemination of knowledge predominantly by lecture method which does not augur well for experiential learning (Burkey 1993);
- tendency to organise training programs away from real-life situations facing farmers making it difficult for trainees to relate what is being done to actual farm conditions (Burkey 1993); and
- absence of systemic revitalisation of the curriculum of most agricultural colleges and universities to make them responsive to emerging requirements and demand of the rapidly changing working environment of extension staff (Zinnah and Akeredolu 2005).

To address the problem of lack of responsive training programs for extension staff, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana developed, with the assistance of the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), and the
Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development, a two-year, post-diploma, mid-career BSc. Agricultural Extension program in October 1993. The program was financially supported under the Sasakawa African Fund for Extension Education (SAFE).

The philosophy of the UCC B.Sc. Agricultural Extension program is based on the experiential learning model which emphasises a combination of theory, experience, critical reflection and practice (Kolb 1984). This philosophy is geared towards building the confidence and the commitment of extension staff so that they can work with farmers in a participatory way, learning from them, helping them to take control of their activities and enabling them to learn on their own. In nurturing the philosophy of experiential learning, the B. Sc. Agricultural Extension program places tremendous emphasis on the off-campus, farmer-focused, action research component of the training program called the Supervised Enterprise/Experience Projects (SEPs). Under this component, students who have had a prescribed one-year period of training on the University campus undertake a 6–8 months, off-campus, field-based, experiential program.

As an action research methodology, the SEPs are designed to immerse students in valuable farmer-focused, experience-based learning activities that mirror the total milieu surrounding subsistence and semi-commercial farming systems (Ntifo-Siaw & Bosompem 2009; Selener 1997; Chambers, 1989). They are meant to reduce the discrepancy between the training provided and the various tasks the extension staff are to perform in their work environment after training. Development of critical thinking skills, systems thinking capabilities, problem-solving strategies and the development of life-long learning attitudes are emphasised.
Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to investigate mid-career extension graduates’ perceptions of the impact of the demand-driven extension curriculum on their competencies. The specific objectives were to:

- describe graduates’ perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the program;
- examine graduates’ perceived levels of competencies in selected courses before and after the program;
- describe graduates’ perceived strengths of the program;
- describe graduates’ perceived weaknesses of the program;
- describe the extent to which graduates’ perceived career aspirations had been met; and
- solicit suggestions from graduates for program improvement.

Methodology

The study utilised a descriptive survey design to accomplish its objectives. The data used in this study were collected through a validated questionnaire. To establish content-validity, the authors’ face-validated questionnaire was submitted for review to three university lecturers who had experiential learning expertise. These experts assessed and judged the questionnaire to be content-valid. A total of 30 questionnaires were administered to purposively selected respondents comprising the 2006 B. Sc. Agricultural Extension graduating class. The survey instrument comprised a five-point, Likert-type scale to measure perceptions of respondents of the variables of the study. Open-ended questions were included to collect demographic and other data concerning the graduates’ career aspirations, the strengths and weaknesses of the program, benefits from the program and suggestions for improvement. Using the statistical software SPSS version 10 to analyse the data, descriptive statistics, including percentages, means and standard deviations,
were computed to describe the data. The percentages described the
distribution of respondents on the characteristics of respondents
while the means and standard deviations described the mean
responses on respondents’ perceptions and the extent to which they
varied on their perceptions respectively. The open-ended part of the
questionnaire was analysed qualitatively by examining and recording
responses to establish the frequency of occurrence of the responses.
This enabled the most important (most occurring) responses to be
identified and discussed.

**Results and discussion**

**Characteristics of respondents**

Of the 30 respondents, 66.7 percent were in the age group of 40–49
years with only 20 percent and 13.3 percent being within the age
groups of 30–39 years and 50–59 years respectively; 93.3 percent
had been working for at least 10 years and only 6.7 percent had
between 5–9 years’ working experience. The results indicate that
the respondents were mostly middle-aged and had had substantial
amount of working experience as agricultural extension agents.

**Overall perception of the effectiveness of the program**

The means and standard deviations for the overall perception of the
effectiveness of the courses are presented in Table 1.
Table 1: Overall perception of the effectiveness of the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of course</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for participating in discussions in class</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall presentation of theory</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPs supervision</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of interaction with instructors</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities provided for socialisation, e.g. TV, common room, etc.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-SEPs preparation</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom organisation</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum balance: theory/practice/classroom/SEPs</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision for report writing</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trips</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall presentation of practicals</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library facilities</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to computers for academic use</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 1 = Very poor   2 = Poor   3 = Fair   4 = Good   5 = Very good

As shown in Table 1, 60% of the fifteen parameters examined under course effectiveness had mean ratings between 3.87 and 4.50, indicating that the respondents perceived them to be good aspects of the program. Facilities, field trips, overall presentation of practical learning activities, library facilities, equipment and access to computers had mean ratings between 2.97 and 3.38 indicating that respondents perceived these aspects of the program only to be fair.
Perceived competency before and after the program

Various courses taken as part of the extension program are aimed at providing instruction that would improve the competencies of students in specific technical areas of agriculture and farm management as well as ways of living and working as change agents among people in the community. Pre-program and post-program assessments of competencies of graduates with respect to the individual courses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Perceived competency before and after program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>After</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agn 205: Introduction to Computers</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agn 302: Non-Traditional Farming</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 301: Rural Sociology and Agricultural Extension</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 303: Social Change and Rural Development</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aec 301: Farm Management Economics</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 304: Adult and Non-Formal Education</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irc 301: Information Retrieval</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acr 301: Principles of Horticulture</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 322: Planning of Advanced SEPs</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aex 302: Communication and Extension Methods</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 305: Extension Research Methods</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 306: Systems Thinking for Changing Agriculture</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td></td>
<td>After</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 307: Participatory Research Methods in Extension</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aex 403: Report and Proposal Writing</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aec 401: Agricultural Marketing</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aex 402: Program Planning and Evaluation in Extension</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aex 405: Group Dynamics and Public Relation</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 406: Gender, Leadership and Youth Issues in Extension</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aex 410: Current Issues in Extension and Technology</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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<td>Acr 404: Pest Management</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>4.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aen 401: Irrigation and Drainage</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aex 409: Development of Extension Training Materials</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 421: Conservation Tillage</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aex 422: Evaluation of Advanced SEPs</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertaking Supervised Enterprise Projects</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 1 = None  2 = Little  3 = Some  4 = Much  5 = Very much

The results from Table 2 and Figure 1 indicate that, at the start of the program, graduates considered their competencies in all but six of the 25 courses to be below average (mean value less than 2.5). However, after the program, all the graduates had attained competencies that were rated from high to very high. It is interesting to note that standard deviation values for respondents’ perceived competencies both before and after the program were all below 1.0 indicating
that respondents could be considered statistically uniform in their perception of the components of the program both before going through the program and after they have been through it.

Figure 1: Competency levels before and after the program
Results presented in Table 3 show that graduates perceived their competencies (overall knowledge and skills) to have been significantly improved by their participation in the program. The overall mean value of respondents’ perceived competency before participating in the program was 2.15 which corresponded to ‘little’ on the five-point, Likert-type scale. However, after participating in the program respondents’ perceived competency was 4.13 which corresponded to ‘much’ on the scale. A dependent t-test showed that the perceived competency gain attributable to the program was statistically significant at the .01 level of significance. This is an indication of the overall program effectiveness in bringing improvement in the competencies of graduates. It is interesting to note that in both the instances of respondents’ perceived competency before and after the program, the standard deviation values are low (less than 1.0) giving an indication that respondents did not vary much from the stated mean competency values both before and after the programs. Thus respondents were generally agreed on the weak competencies before the program and also generally agreed that their competencies had been significantly improved after going through the program.
Table 3: Comparison of overall perceived competency before and after participation in the program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Difference in Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Prob.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall perceived competency before program</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>-22.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall perceived competency after program</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*sig. at .01  N=30

Perceived benefits of the program

An open-ended question sought to find out the perceived benefits of the program (defined to be the extent to which graduates believed the program would contribute to the overall improvement in their academic performance, status, knowledge, skills and ability to solve problems on the job and achieve positive results). Before the program, the graduates claimed that they were at the dead-end in their careers in terms of advancement on the promotion ladder. However, after going through the programs, the graduates reported that the program had offered them the opportunity to upgrade their academic status/credentials and therefore presented them with further opportunity to advance on the promotional ladder in managerial positions potentially up to the position of Director. They indicated that the program had contributed to overall improvement in their academic status, knowledge, skills and ability to solve problems on the job and achieve positive results. They also indicated that the program had prepared them and opened opportunities for them to pursue further studies at higher levels (i.e. Masters and PhD levels) if they so desired.

A few examples of the perceived benefits as expressed by graduates are quoted below:
The program has helped in raising my academic standards.

The program has exposed me to a lot of issues. I can now think systemically, look at issues from a broader perspective before taking action.

I have gained a lot of knowledge and I am in a better position to seek information and take up leadership roles.

Experiential learning through the SEPs has enhanced my knowledge and skills in participatory project conceptualisation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The program has enhanced my knowledge in diverse areas including communication, computing, systems thinking, critiquing, facilitation, proposal and report writing.

The program has improved my confidence level to assume a managerial position.

Perceived strengths of the program

In response to an open-ended question about how they perceived the strengths of the program, the graduates perceived the strength of the program to include: appropriate facilities and conducive atmosphere for the teaching-learning process; availability of adequate and competent lecturers to handle the various courses of the program; committed and supportive administrative staff; balanced curriculum in terms of theory and practical; the inclusion of emerging issues in extension and technology development; and the off-campus, participatory action research component which offered them substantial practical experience in the areas of conceptualisation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable agricultural and/or community development projects. A few examples of the perceived strengths as given by graduates are highlighted below:

The program is a useful one and the combination of practical work with the theory makes it very unique. Exposing students to issues concerning the latest policies of government as far as
agriculture is concerned makes students become abreast with what is going on in the ministry.

The curriculum is rich in content and relevant to the demands of the work environment.

Both academic and administrative staffs are very committed to program.

Lecturers are available, easily approachable and accessible to students.

Availability of library, computer room, accommodation, and lecture theatres make learning less burdensome.

**Perceived weaknesses of the program**

Pertaining to perceived weaknesses of the program, the respondents perceived the following as some of the weaknesses in the program that needed to be addressed: inadequate computers for practical hand-on computer training; inadequate seats for all students in the library at peak periods of demand; and inadequate financial support from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to support their SEPs. The graduates also indicated they would like to see courses on animal health and fisheries included in the syllabus and an increase in the number of field trips and excursions.

**Perceptions of the effectiveness of the program**

Respondents were asked questions pertaining to the perceived effectiveness of program in contributing to their levels of career aspiration and overall knowledge and skills intended for use at work. The results are presented in Table 4. It can be inferred from these results that the program had enhanced graduates’ attitude toward work, and met a large percentage of the career aspirations they had before entering the program. The graduates stated that they intended to use a substantial percentage of the overall knowledge and skills acquired in their workplaces.
Table 4: Graduates’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the program on levels of aspirations, overall knowledge and skills intended for use in the workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiration</th>
<th>% of aspiration met</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45–59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–79</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and above</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall knowledge intended for use in the workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of knowledge intended for use</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40–59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and above</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall skills intended for use in the workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% overall skill</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and above</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, 93.4% reported that at least 60% percent of the aspirations they had before entering the program had been met; 96.7% indicated that they intended to use at least 60% of the overall knowledge acquired in their workplace; while another 93.3%
mentioned that at least 60% of the overall skills acquired during training would be put to use in the workplace. The intention of a high percentage of the graduates to apply at least 60% percent of the overall knowledge and skills in their workplace indicates that the program had provided them with the requisite skills and knowledge relevant for the actual work environment. This further indicated that the program was responsive to the actual work environment within which the graduates would be operating.

Asked about the effect of the program on the graduates’ attitudes to work, all the respondents asserted that the program had had a positive effect on their attitude to work. On the basis of their experience in the program, 96.7% of the graduates reported that given the opportunity they would recommend the program to others.

Suggestions for improvement of the program

The following suggestions were offered by graduates for improving the program:

- UCC and other stakeholders (MoFA and SAA) should strategise to procure adequate numbers of computers and reference materials/textbooks for the computer room and library respectively;
- Efforts should be made to increase the seating capacity in the library
- Frequency of field trips and excursions should be increased to enhance graduates’ exposure to field activities and their practical knowledge;
- The curriculum should be reviewed to incorporate courses in animal production and health, fisheries and aquaculture and educational psychology—these courses may be offered as elective courses within the program;
- MoFA should be encouraged to increase its financial support to the students for the implementation of SEPs; and
• Access to the computer room and library should be improved and enable students to spend more time there.

Conclusions and recommendations

The results of this study have clearly shown that experiential learning works and that the curriculum of the B. Sc. Agricultural Extension program has been very effective in meeting the educational needs of the graduates. For example, respondents generally agreed that their competencies in various areas had been significantly improved after going through the program. The study has also shown that the implementation of a responsive curriculum improved attitude to work and contributed to building the confidence of the respondents. The relevance of such demand-driven curriculum can be inferred from the expressed intention of respondents to apply a substantial amount of the acquired knowledge and skills to work environment situations.

The findings also suggest that universities and colleges involved in the training of human resources for the agricultural sector can improve their programs through curriculum revitalisation as in the case of the University of Cape Coast to make them more responsive to the working environment of their graduates and society at large. It is recommended that in balancing theory and practice, innovative ways should be sought such as happened with the off-campus, supervised enterprise projects. Such an exercise should involve all stakeholders especially in the needs assessment, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the program. It is also important to address problems related to the educational support system such as the library and ICT facilities when revitalising and implementing such curricula.
References


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The interrelatedness of formal, non-formal and informal learning: Evidence from labour market program participants

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Central Queensland University

Jennifer L. Harrison
Southern Cross University

Definitions, differences and relationships between formal, non-formal and informal learning have long been contentious. There has been a significant change in language and reference from adult education to what amounts to forms of learning categorised by their modes of facilitation. Nonetheless, there is currently a renewed interest in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning internationally and in Australia. This has been evidenced through the New OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning and recent policy developments in Australia. These developments have implications for the recognition of skills derived from informal and non-formal learning, especially for those disadvantaged in the labour market. This paper reports on
data from a learning grid in a Learning Survey of labour market program participants (n = 172) from northern New South Wales and southern Queensland. We find that life (informal learning) and work experience (non-formal learning) are relatively more important for gaining self-reported skills than formal training/study. We conclude by arguing for a holistic focus on the dynamic interrelatedness of these forms of learning rather than being constrained by a deterministic dichotomy between formality and informality.

Introduction

This study looks at the relativity and interconnectedness between the three forms of learning—formal, non-formal and informal—for self-reported skill sets from labour market program (LMP) participants. LMP participants are considered to be disadvantaged in the labour market but they are a potential source of labour for a market under immense skill and demographic pressures. Despite the recent global financial crisis Australia is experiencing significant skill shortages and will soon feel the effects of the demographic tsunami of the ‘baby boomer’ generation leaving the workforce en masse. Government policy and funded initiatives to increase workforce participation and address human capital concerns has brought the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) to the forefront of several policy drivers aimed at groups excluded and traditionally disadvantaged in the labour market. Now more than ever, the recognition of informal and non-formal learning will need to be considered to assist these groups and help alleviate some of the labour market pressures being experienced.

There have been three sets of policy drivers behind bringing RNFIL back to the forefront of policy. These include the Social Inclusion agenda, the Council of Australian Governments’ (COAG) National Skills and Workforce Development Agreement, and the 2008
Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education (ACE). In 2009 COAG established the *Vocational Education and Training—National Skills and Workforce Development Agreement*. This agreement aims to improve the foundational skills of Australia’s working age population to enable effective educational, labour market and social participation and to ensure the Australian working age population has the skills and capabilities for the 21st century labour market and to increase human capital innovation, productivity and utilisation (COAG 2008). The establishment of the Ministry for Social Inclusion and related policy directions from the Australian Government adds another policy dimension to the potential role that RNFIL could play in addressing major issues that emerge from the social inclusion agenda. For example, many of the primary and secondary indicators of social inclusion have direct relevance to the practice of RNFIL and the five key forces (Pierson 2001) that drive the process of social inclusion (poverty and low income; lack of access to the job market; limited social supports and networks; the effect of the local neighbourhood; and exclusion from services).

The Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education announced a new Ministerial Declaration on ACE in 2008 (MCVTCE 2008) which acknowledges the original 2002 Declaration and the role played by the ACE sector in developing social capital, community capacity and social participation. The 2008 Declaration of ACE extends beyond these areas to the ACE sector’s ‘potential to respond to changed industrial, demographic and technological circumstances, and encourages a collaborative approach to ACE to allow the sector to make a greater contribution to...skills and workforce development’ (MCVTCE 2008). Bowman (2009: 1) reports that the 2008 Ministerial Declaration on ACE ‘focuses on optimising the national capacity of ACE providers to deliver vocationally focused programs which lead to further training and/or workforce participation with a particular focus in engaging the disadvantaged in such programs and economic life’. Ultimately, the Declaration provides ACE with a
significant role ‘at the interface between the two national agendas of Human Capital Reform and Social Inclusion’ (Bowman 2009: 2).

This paper will overview the key literature on informal, non-formal and formal learning, before reporting two studies that have attempted to measure adult learning at a national level (Canada and Australia). The paper will then describe international based initiatives and policy related to RNFIL before presenting the findings from the Learning Survey of labour market participants and the related discussions and conclusions.

**Key literature on formal, non-formal and informal learning**

A much quoted set of definitions for formal, non-formal and informal learning has been developed by the OECD (2005):

**Formal learning:** Refers to learning through a programme of instruction in an educational institution, adult training centre or in the workplace, which is generally recognised in a qualification or a certificate.

**Non-formal learning:** Refers to learning through a programme but it is not usually evaluated and does not lead to certification.

**Informal learning:** Refers to learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. In 1996, the OECD education ministers agreed to develop strategies for ‘lifelong learning for all’. The approach has been endorsed by ministers of labour, ministers of social affairs and the OECD Council at ministerial level.

Attempts to define formal, informal and non-formal learning are often referred to as problematic, blurred, competing, contested and contradictory (Colley, Hodkinson & Malcolm 2003; Golding, Brown & Foley 2009; Hager & Halliday 2006; Werquin 2007). A research report commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) of England to map the conceptual terrain around non-formal learning (Colley, Hodkinson & Malcom 2003) is one of the most recent and comprehensive conceptual analyses of informality and
formality in learning to date. The report not only synthesises the broad-based literature in this area but also contributes significantly to future development of and research into these aspects of adult learning. The report acknowledges the highly contested and even contradictory nature of these concepts. However, the authors categorise definitional criteria around two dimensions: a theoretical dimension and a political dimension, as follows:

- Differing theoretical approaches to learning (theoretical dimension);
- Contrasting claims about the effectiveness of learning (theoretical dimension);
- Differing claims about the relationship between learning and knowledge (theoretical dimension);
- Attempts to empower underprivileged learners (political dimension); and
- Attempts to harness learning for instrumental purposes, including social inclusion and economic competitiveness (political dimension) (Colley et al., 2003: 64).

These theoretical and political dimensions have influenced the operationalisation of these concepts in very different directions from the earlier writings of adult learning theorists Dewey and Knowles, and represent a significant and theoretically interesting transition.

The stance taken by Golding, Brown and Foley (2009) provides an example of how informal learning is viewed in terms of both a theoretical and a political dimension. The authors refer to the power differential that creates a systematic devaluing of informal learning. They go on to state that the ‘very nature of informal learning, particularly its unstructured and organic quality, works to dis-empower a range of adult stakeholders and diminish its value as a meaningful educational pursuit in a system that values highly structured, systematised, outcome-driven approaches to young
people’s learning’ (Golding et al. 2009: 53). Coffield (2000: 8) also takes a theoretical stance in terms of the relationship between learning and knowledge by arguing for the relative re-valuing of informal learning:

Informal learning should no longer be regarded as an inferior form of learning whose main purpose is to act as the precursor of formal learning; it needs to be seen as fundamental, necessary and valuable in its own right, at times directly relevant to employment and at other times not relevant at all.

In terms of informal learning, McGivney (2002) states there is no unanimously accepted definition. She claims that trying to explain informal learning is like ‘trying to grasp jelly’, and that it is easier to describe what informal learning is not than to try to describe what it is (McGivney 2002: 102). Nonetheless, the author falls back on the definition which states informal learning is a process by which individuals acquire values, skills and knowledge from daily experience. Livingstone (2000a: 2) defines informal learning as ‘undertaken on one’s own, either individually or collectively, without either externally imposed criteria or the presence of an institutionally authorized instructor’.

Some authors and commentators have noted problems with the emphasis on differences between forms of learning. Davies (2001:113) has expressed concerns about the division between different types of learning:

I do have some concerns that the notion of formal, non-formal and informal may become fixed as if these are three rooms with high walls around them so that the integrated holistic way in which real people learn and make sense of their world is lost. It may be that while breaking down boundaries between sectors, new boundaries are being constructed around different forms of learning.
Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm (2004: 3) make a strong connection between informal and formal learning through the notion of attributes:

> It is more sensible to see attributes of informality and formality as present in all learning situations. Attributes of in/formality are interrelated differently in different situations. Those attributes and their interrelationships influence the nature and effectiveness of learning. Changing the balance between formal and informal attributes changes the nature of the learning.

Marsick (2009), in a guest editorial focused upon a unifying framework to support informal learning theory, research and practice, concludes that, although informal learning is always defined in contrast to formal learning, they interact in important ways.

A discussion on formal, informal and non-formal learning cannot be adequately covered without mentioning the work of Eraut (2000) in relation to non-formal learning, implicit knowledge and tacit knowledge within the workplace. Eraut’s research found that a degree of explicitness is needed for improving work-based performance:

> ...thick tacit versions of personal knowledge coexist with thin explicit versions: the thick version is used in practice, the thin version for describing and justifying that practice...If people’s tacit personal knowledge and implicit learning are devalued, their confidence will diminish and their use of, and interest in, more formal knowledge will also suffer (Eraut 2000: 29).

Eraut (2000) developed a typology to explore the full range of learning processes or modes that fall within this domain of ‘non-formal learning’.

Similarly, Schugurensky (2000) developed a taxonomy of informal learning by using two main criteria for distinguishing learning: intentionality and consciousness (awareness). These two criteria are then mapped against three forms (types) of informal learning: self-directed learning, incidental learning and socialisation. This
results in self-directed learning at one end of a spectrum of informal learning, the other end occupied by socialisation and incidental learning occurring somewhere in between (Schugurensky 2000: 5). Werquin (2007: 5) proffers a similar mapping exercise with two components used to define the mode of learning: intentional learning, and whether the activity has learning objectives. This mapping exercise produces a set of four types of learning:

- Formal Learning (Type I Learning);
- Non-Formal Learning (Type II Learning);
- Semi-Formal learning (Type III Learning);
- Informal Learning (Type IV Learning).

Semi-Formal Learning (Type III Learning) is defined as learning in which individuals, ‘may learn during activities with learning objectives but they learn beyond the learning objectives; this is semi-formal learning...Individuals have the intention of learning about something and, without knowing it, learn also about something else’ (Werquin 2007: 5).

Recently, Illeris (2009) explored the barriers between different learning spaces so as to bridge the gap between learning that occurs inside schools and outside schools. He identified five main learning spaces in contemporary society:

1. Everyday learning
2. School and educational learning
3. Workplace learning
4. Interest-based learning

The inclusion of the last learning space has also been noted by Halliday-Wynes and Beddie (2009: 7–8), although they do not define it as such. They refer to the use of technology or information communication technologies (e.g. websites, blogs, social networking
sites) and how the mass consumption of these new technologies is expanding the hidden iceberg of informal learning. These technologies are facilitating informal learning and connecting the physical spaces of learning to virtual learning spaces through mobile phones and wireless web access.

The definition of learning spaces is not without its controversies and is also a problematic area. Billett (2002: 56) argues that ‘describing workplace learning environments and experiences as “informal” … constrains understanding about how learning occurs through work’. He argues that this description of learning environments as either formal or informal leads to ‘situational determinism’ instead of viewing learning as ‘inter-dependent between the individual and the social practice’ (Billett 2002: 56). As can be seen from the discussion of the literature, the defining of forms of learning and learning spaces remains an area of conceptual and theoretical dialogue and debate. We argue for a focus on the relativity and interconnectedness of these forms of learning and learning spaces.

**International interest in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning**

Internationally, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been researching and promoting the importance of lifelong learning, career development and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Several studies have been commissioned by the OECD and other international and European bodies in these areas (Commission of European Communities 2000; European Commission 2001; OECD 2003; The World Bank 2003). The Directorate of Education within the OECD views the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a crucial part of the lifelong learning agenda:

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is an important means for making the ‘lifelong learning for all’ agenda
a reality and, subsequently, for reshaping learning to better match the needs of the 21st century knowledge economies and open societies (OECD 2007: 1).

There have been several projects of a cross-country and international nature conducted by international bodies which acknowledge the value of recognising non-formal and informal learning. These include: *Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe* (Bjornavold 2000); *Transfine TRANSsfer between formal, informal and non-formal education* (Davies 2003); *Making learning visible* (OECD 2007); and the *New OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning* (Werquin 2010).

**Measuring the extent of non-formal and informal learning**

The work of Livingstone (2000a, 2000b, 2001), through the first country-wide survey of informal learning practices of adults in Canada, has expanded the notions of learning and work. The National Research Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) survey was first conducted in 1998, and has found that adults’ explicit informal learning is very extensive. Livingstone acknowledges the earlier work of Tough (1978) and the use of the metaphor of the iceberg, where the submerged part of the iceberg represents adults’ informal learning activities. The NALL survey found that respondents’ formal/informal learning represented a 20/80 percent split. Twenty percent of all major learning efforts were formal, or in other words institutionally organised (e.g. driving lessons, piano lessons). This was usually one-on-one, but involved a professional, formal situation. The other 80 percent were informal. Seventy three percent were planned by the learners themselves, where the learners decided the what and the how of the learning. Three percent were undertaken with a friend, neighbour or co-worker teaching the learner something, and four percent were within a peer group without any kind of professional help. Another finding from the NALL survey was that informal learning is a very social phenomenon and that ‘...there may
actually be more social interaction in informal learning than there is in classroom learning’ (Tough 2002: 3).

A significant finding from the research was the level of surprise NALL survey respondents expressed at the volume of learning they had completed and the variety of methods they had utilised in this learning.

...this is part of the iceberg phenomenon—not only are we as a society (or as educators) oblivious to informal learning, we don’t even notice our own. That’s right, people don’t even notice their own informal learning. So what do we do about this? I think it’s really empowering and helpful and supportive to encourage people to look at their own learning (Tough 2002: 7).

In 2007 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted a survey of Adult Learning in Australia (ABS 2007) and found that:

One in eight (12% or 1.3 million) Australians aged 25 to 64 years participated in some form of formal learning in the 12 months prior to interview in 2006–07. Almost one-third (30% or 3.3 million persons) participated in non-formal learning and approximately three-quarters (74% or 8.1 million persons) participated in some form of informal learning...Those employed full-time were more likely to have participated in some form of learning than persons not in the labour force (84% compared to 62%). Unemployed persons had lower participation in non-formal (25% compared to 38%) and informal learning compared to persons employed full-time (71% compared to 79%) (ABS 2007: 3).

The ABS survey also found that the most common form of non-formal learning was work-related courses (78% or 2.6 million persons) followed by arts, crafts or recreational learning (12%). The main fields of non-formal learning were in management and commerce (25%) and health (22%) (ABS 2007: 4–5). For informal learning, the survey found 8.1 million Australians participated in the previous 12 months with relatively even numbers across gender (76% of males and 73% of females). The most common form of informal learning was reading
manuals, reference books, journals or other written materials (75%), followed by using computers or the Internet (71%). Those who indicated they did not participate in any form of learning represented one-fifth of Australians and were more likely to not be in the labour force than those employed full-time or unemployed (38% compared to 16% and 24%). Labouring was the most common occupational group for non-participators (18%) and the most common industry for those who did not participate was the manufacturing industry (14%) followed by the retail trade industry (11%) (ABS 2007: 5).

In consideration of these issues, the present study sought to investigate the combining and relative importance of formal, non-formal and informal learning. In particular, two research questions related to combining forms of learning were addressed:

RQ1: Are skills gained by a single form of learning or by combinations of forms?

RQ2: Are there differences in combining of forms of learning based on demographic factors?

A further three research questions related to the relativity of forms of learning were addressed:

RQ3: Are there differences between the percentages of skills gained from different forms of learning?

RQ4: Are there interactions between the percentage of skills gained from different forms of learning and demographic factors?

RQ5: Is there an interaction between the percentage of skills gained from different forms of learning and category of skill?

Method and sample description

The approach taken in this study was exploratory and utilised data drawn from a broader Learning Survey administered to 247 labour market program participants in various programs run in south east Queensland and northern New South Wales in Australia. The survey
addressed issues across several themes: current training/study; computer access and digital literacy; previous education and training; awareness of recognition of prior learning (RPL); experience with RPL; future intentions for learning; and motivations and influences on learning. The survey was administered by the researcher or by trainers/facilitators of labour market programs to groups of labour market program participants. An aim of the research was to access a sample of people considered to be disadvantaged in the labour market. A major criticism of two large Australian research reports on RPL (Bowman et al. 2003; Wheelahan et al. 2003) was that the research utilised large secondary data sets of existing populations of students within formal learning settings; that is, people already engaged in some form of formal learning with an educational institution. A major aim of this research was to access a sample not engaged in some form of formal learning within the existing educational sectors, along with being disadvantaged within the labour market. It was decided that accessing participants on labour market programs would be an efficient means by which to capture such a demographic. Participants on labour market programs are usually registered as unemployed or seeking employment with Centrelink and/or receiving some form of government benefit or allowance. Labour market programs are usually targeted to certain groups of disadvantaged job seekers in receipt of benefits/allowances. Limitations common to surveys were addressed in the broader study.

The sampling frame for the broader study was those individuals who were currently unemployed and participating in a labour market program. The sampling techniques used were purposeful and snowball sampling where labour market programs were identified through government funding body websites and then by requesting referrals to other similar programs by those organisations funded to conduct the labour market programs. Sample bias occurred when a group attending a course not considered to be a labour market
program was included. This group was engaged in a training course that was full time, fee-paying and at a Certificate III AQF level and was included as they represented those individuals considered hidden unemployed—registered with Centrelink but not receiving unemployment benefits due to the employment status of their spouse. Due to the nature of the sample, the findings are limited to unemployed adults. Valid skills data for the purpose of the present study were provided by 172 of the participants. Sample demographics are provided in Table 1. The sample largely consists of unemployed adults and the highest educational achievement of the sample broadly matches the distribution for unemployed in the Survey of Education and Training (ABS 2005).

Table 1: Sample demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender (n = 169):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (n = 170):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–29</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–49</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–54</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–59</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status (n = 170)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Learning Survey included a learning grid for listing and proportioning self-reported skills across forms of learning. More specifically, survey respondents were asked to list up to three of their skills and, for each skill, allocate their learning of that skill across three forms of learning: life experience, work experience and formal training/study. As mentioned earlier in this paper, definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning are problematic and contested. We do not assume all life experience is informal learning, all work experience is informal or all formal training is formal learning. However, for the purposes of this data collection exercise these three categories were utilised.

Allocations for each of the three categories (life experience, work experience and formal training/study) were percentages, so that for each skill the total across the three forms of learning equals 100%. A total of 460 skills were reported by respondents along with proportions across the three forms of learning. A total of 129 respondents provided data for three self-reported skills,
30 respondents provided data for two skills and 13 respondents provided data for only one skill.

The self-reported skills were coded using the *Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)* (ABS 2001). The 6-digit codes from the ASCED were used in initial coding. Aggregation to 4- and 2-digit codes was later performed using SPSS’s recode feature. Coding was undertaken using the following process. First, the authors and a research assistant discussed the coding scheme and as a group coded ten surveys. The research assistant then coded the remaining surveys. However, on instruction, any skills that the research assistant had any doubts over were asterisked and listed on a separate sheet, indexed back to the original survey. When the research assistant completed working through the surveys, the ‘asterisked list’ was forwarded to the authors, who each considered the skills on the list and coded them. Discrepancies in codes were discussed and agreement reached. It is noted, however, that agreement was evident in the initial coding for the majority of these asterisked skills suggesting a high level of inter-coder reliability.

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of self-reported skills falling into each of the 2-digit level classifications in descending frequency order. The table also includes examples of the skills represented in each category. Management and commerce skills represent the highest percentage (41%) of self-reported skills and all other 2-digit classifications represented 10% or less of all reported skills. Very few respondents reported skills related to natural and physical sciences (2 mentions), information technology\(^1\) (6 mentions), health (8 mentions) and education (11 mentions). Examination of the examples in Table 2 indicates that most are low level skills, as would

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\(^1\) ‘Computer skills’ was commonly mentioned, however this was classified under management and commerce, which includes a code (080905) for ‘Practical Computing Skills’. This was considered more relevant for general computer skills than the computer science orientation captured by the Information Technology 2-digit classification.
be generally expected from this sample. For example, 33% of the skills reported in the engineering and related technologies category, which made up 10% of all skills reported, related to cleaning.

Table 2: Self-reported skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2-digit classification</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>Sales; secretarial and clerical; practical computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Related Technologies</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>Cleaning; automotive; mechanical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Fields</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Social and interpersonal; work practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Arts and crafts; music; writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, Hospitality &amp; Personal Services</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Cooking; bar service; waiting; driving; massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society &amp; Culture</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Sport and recreation; child and aged care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture &amp; Building</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Building; painting; laboring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Environmental &amp; Related</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Gardening; mowing; animal husbandry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Teaching; training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Nursing; first aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>IT; programming; technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural &amp; Physical Sciences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>Maths; chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>460</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the prevalence of management and commerce skills reported by the sample, these are broken down further in Table 3. Practical computing skills made up the largest number of skills in this category at 37%. The next most common type of management and commerce
skill reported was sales. All other categories represented less than 10% of mentioned management and commerce skills.

\textit{Table 3: Management and commerce skills}

\begin{center}

\begin{tabular}{lrrl}
\hline
 & n & \% & \textbf{Examples of respondents’ wording} \\
Practical computing skills & 69 & 36.7 & Computer, word processing, Microsoft Office \\
Sales & 42 & 22.3 & Customer service, cashiering, sales, retail \\
Secretarial and clerical & 15 & 8.0 & Reception, secretarial, clerical \\
Office & 12 & 6.4 & Office admin, record keeping, \\
Accounting & 10 & 5.3 & Accounting, bookkeeping, budgeting \\
Business and management & 10 & 5.3 & Supervisory, manager, change management \\
Purchasing, warehousing and distribution & 10 & 5.3 & Packer, courier, truck driving, forklift, stores \\
Keyboard skills & 7 & 3.7 & Typing \\
Marketing & 5 & 2.7 & Marketing, promoting \\
Human resource management & 3 & 1.6 & Human resources, recruitment \\
Public relations & 2 & 1.1 & Public relations \\
Public and health care admin. & 1 & 0.5 & Clinical coding \\
Real estate & 1 & 0.5 & Real estate sales \\
Tourism & 1 & 0.5 & Tourist industry \\
\textbf{Total} & \textbf{188} & \textbf{100.0} & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The statistical analysis methods employed to address the research questions are outlined in the next section as the relevant findings are presented.
Findings

Combining forms of learning

We first examined whether respondents reported that skills were gained by a single form of learning or by combinations of forms in order to address Research Question 1. For this examination, we used the data for all 460 validly reported skills. Figure 1 presents the results. Only small proportions of all self-reported skills were learnt by drawing upon one form of learning (that is, life experience only, work experience only or formal training/study only). In total, only 16% of the self-reported skills were learnt using a single form of learning, leaving the vast majority (84%) of skills being learnt using some combination of forms of learning. Therefore, the majority of skills reported by respondents were learnt using a combination of learning forms.

\[\text{Figure 1 was also generated using only the first-listed skill in the matrix by each respondent. The percentages for the different forms and combinations of learning were essentially the same and so are not reported here. We also controlled for skill by including only those skills in the largest category (management and commerce) and again the pattern was very similar.}\]
Two forms of learning were used for 42% of the self-reported skills. The most common combination of two forms was life and work experience, relevant to 26% of skills. This finding indicates that non-formal and informal learning, represented by life and work experience respectively, in combination represent a significant basis for learning the lower level skills so prevalent amongst those disadvantaged in the labour market.

Despite this, by far the most common combination, at 42%, was some mix of all three forms of learning. This result indicates that formal learning is relevant to lower level skills and people disadvantaged in the labour market but not in isolation, as indicated by the low percentage of skills gained entirely through formal learning (4%). Hence a combination of formal learning with other forms of learning seems prevalent and demonstrates the interrelatedness of the three forms of learning in skill development.

We addressed Research Question 2 by examining whether there were differences in combining forms of learning based on demographic
factors. The findings reported here are based on analyses of only the first mentioned skill by each respondent. It is noted, however, that these findings were essentially the same as those using all skills. It was considered more appropriate, however, to report findings using only the first-mentioned skill because demographic factors at the skill level are not necessarily independent.

A Mann-Whitney U-test indicated no difference between males and females in the mean ranking of the number of forms of learning used \((U = 3343; Z = -0.628; p = 0.530)\). However, testing indicated differences based on the demographic factors of age and education. A Kruskal-Wallis Rank test indicated that the mean ranking of the number of forms of learning used differed across age groups \((\chi^2 = 6.825; df = 2; p = 0.033)\). To determine which of the three age groups (15–29 years; 30–44 years; 45+ years) differed, multiple comparison tests using Mann-Whitney U were carried out with Bonferroni adjustment in interpreting probability values. This indicated that the 30–44 years group had a significantly higher mean ranking of the number of forms of learning used than the 45+ age group \((U = 1492; Z = -2.515; p = 0.12)\).

Similarly, a Kruskal-Wallis Rank test indicated that the mean ranking of the number of forms of learning used differed across groups defined by highest level of education \((\chi^2 = 10.915; df = 2; p = 0.004)\). The three education groups were (1) up to school certificate, (2) higher school certificate (HSC), and (3) TAFE/college certificate or above. Multiple comparison tests indicated that those with a highest education level up to school certificate had significantly lower mean ranking of the number of forms of learning used than both the HSC \((U = 924.5; Z = -2.719; p = 0.007)\) and further education \((U = 1538; Z = -2.707; p = 0.007)\) groups. Figure 2 presents a more detailed picture of these differences. The distribution across single and combined forms of learning for those with up to school certificate education is shown in the upper panel, while the middle panel shows
the distribution for those with a HSC and the lower panel for those with a TAFE/college certificate or above. The figure shows that a lower percentage of up to school certificate respondents combine all three forms of learning.

Figure 2: Forms of learning as a percentage of first-mentioned skills, by education

Relativity of forms of learning

Next, to address Research Question 3, we performed an overall test of difference in labour market program participants’ percentage of skills learning through the three forms of learning: life experience, work experience and formal training/study. The mean percentage of skills learning from each form of learning was calculated for each respondent, giving an overall measure (across skills) of the relative importance of each form of learning for each respondent. This data was then analysed using a single group repeated measures ANOVA.³

³ In all analyses the reported F statistic and degrees of freedom are based on multivariate tests with Pillai’s criterion.
There was a significant effect of form of skills learning \( (F_{(2,172)} = 20.071, p < 0.001) \). Pairwise comparisons undertaken with Bonferroni adjustment indicated significant differences between life experience and formal training/study \( (p < 0.001) \) and between work experience and formal training/study \( (p < 0.001) \). There was no significant difference between life experience and work experience \( (p = 1) \). The means for life experience (37.8%) and work experience (39.1%) are significantly higher than the mean for formal training/study (23.2%), indicating that the latter form of learning is relatively less important for gaining skills.

We then explored any between-subject interaction effects associated with age, gender and highest level of educational attainment in order to address Research Question 4. Due to small cell sizes for a full multivariate model, each demographic variable was considered separately. Therefore, the results here should be considered only tentative because interactions between demographic factors were not taken into account, only interactions with form of learning.

Gender did not have a significant interaction with form of skills learning \( (F_{(2,168)} = 0.397, p = 0.673) \). Hence gender does not influence the relative importance of the forms of learning. Surprisingly, age also had no significant interaction with form of learning \( (F_{(4,338)} = 1.728, p = 0.143) \). Therefore, age does not influence the relative importance of the forms of learning. In contrast, highest education level had a significant interaction with form of learning \( (F_{(6,328)} = 1.984, p = 0.067) \) at the 0.10 level. Note that for greater clarification in this analysis we used four, rather than three, education groups by splitting the ‘TAFE/college certificate or above’ group into two: (1) TAFE/college certificate and (2) Diploma or higher. However, the analysis using three groups also had a similarly significant interaction \( (F_{(4,330)} = 2.296, p = 0.059) \). Profiles of the four education levels across the forms of learning are shown in Figure 3. The figure shows that the relative importance of formal training/study increases at
higher education levels. In particular, the relative importance of formal training and study to those with a diploma level or higher qualification (mean = 33.6%) is greater compared with those with up to school certificate (mean = 17.7%). Consequently, and not surprisingly, those with up to school certificate rely more heavily on life and work experience for their skill development.

Figure 3: Profiles of percentage of skill gained from forms of learning for education levels

The final analysis involved exploring whether the percentage of skills gained from each form of learning differed by type of skill in order to address Research Question 5. Skills were classified according to two-digit ASCED codes. Due to low numbers of skills falling in the natural and physical sciences, information technology, health and education categories, these were excluded from the analysis. A repeated measures analysis with form of learning as the repeated measure and skill category as the between-subjects factor was undertaken. The multivariate tests for form of learning and the interaction of form of learning and skill category were significant (respectively,
The interrelatedness of formal, non-formal and informal learning

$F_{(2.424)} = 51.441, p < 0.0005$ and $F_{(14.850)} = 4.056, p < 0.001$). The 
forms of learning differed in the same way as the previously reported 
analysis (that is, the means for life experience and work experience, 
overall, were greater than the mean for formal training/study).

The interaction effect between form of learning and skill category 
indicated that the relative weighting given to form of learning 
depends on skill category. Figure 4 shows the profiles of the skill 
categories across the forms of learning. It shows that formal training 
and study is relatively less important for developing architecture and 
building, and agriculture and environmental skills. Architecture and 
building skills appear to draw more upon work experience than other 
skills. Architecture and building, management and commerce and 
engineering and related skills seem to rely less on life experience than 
other skills categories.

Figure 4: Profiles of percentage of skill gained from form(s) of learning for skill categories
Conclusion

The reported findings address each of the identified five research questions. Conclusions about each of the questions are presented before overall conclusions are drawn.

The first two research questions are concerned with combining forms of learning and the factors that may impact on this. Research Question 1 asked, *Are skills gained by a single form of learning or by combinations of forms?*. The findings of the study indicate that for people in labour market programs most skills are gained by combinations of forms of learning; in particular, combinations of:

- life experience and work experience, representing non-formal and informal learning; and
- life experience, work experience and formal training/study, representing non-formal, informal and formal learning.

Research Question 2, which asked, *Are there differences in combining of forms of learning based on demographic factors?*, subsequently builds on Research Question 1 by investigating whether demographic factors are relevant to understanding the combining of forms of learning. The study found no differences based on gender but there were some differences based on age and highest level of education; in particular:

- those between 30 and 44 years age tend to combine more forms of learning than their older peers; and
- those with up to school certificate level education are less likely to combine all three forms of learning than those with a higher level of education.

On the whole, however, it can be concluded that demographics do not neatly distinguish the way in which forms of learning are combined by people in labour market programs. These complexities need to be recognised when using demographics to target sub-groups in the development and implementation of labour market policies.
The final three research questions are concerned with the relative importance of the different forms of learning and the factors that may impact on this. Research Question 3 asked, *Are there differences between the percentages of skills gained from different forms of learning?* The findings of the study indicate that there are differences. In particular, the percentages of skills gained from life and work experience were higher than the percentage of skills gained from formal training/study. This supports the literature, indicating that recognition of informal and non-formal learning is important as a means of recognising non-credentialled skill sets, or what Tough (2002) referred to as the submerged part of the adult learning iceberg. Industries and the business community are experiencing major HRM challenges and the recognition of these significant forms of learning could be the first step in tapping into a potential pool of workforce applicants traditionally viewed as semi or unskilled.

Research Question 4, which asked *Are there interactions between the percentage of skills gained from different forms of learning and demographic factors?*, builds on Research Question 3 by investigating whether differences in the importance of forms of learning vary across demographic factors. Such interactions were not found for gender or age. Although age provides more opportunity to learn skills through life experience it also allows more time to learn through work experience and to undertake formal training and study. Hence, the *relativities* of forms of learning are not likely to be affected simply because one becomes older. Conversely, highest level of educational attainment was found to interact with the importance of forms of learning. Specifically, gaining skills through formal training and study is more important than life and work experience for those with a high level of education compared to those with only a basic level of education. This finding confirms the obvious, but addresses to the authors’ knowledge the previously untested assumption that informal and non-formal learning is relatively more important for people with less education and training. However, with respect to
Research Question 4 overall, it can be concluded that demographics do not have a large impact on the relative importance of forms of learning for people in labour market programs.

Research Question 5 asked, *Is there an interaction between the percentage of skills gained from different forms of learning and category of skill?* The study found evidence of such an interaction, indicating that different skill categories show different patterns of the relative importance of the three forms of learning. Formal training and study is relatively less important for learning the architecture, building, agriculture and environmental skills held by labour market program participants. Instead, work experience is more important than other forms of learning for architecture and building skills. These skills, along with those related to management, commerce and engineering, also rely less on life experience than other skill categories.

The results are particularly interesting in the context of the sample examined in this study; that is, those disadvantaged in the labour market who are mainly unemployed and reported mainly lower level skills. Overall, the results suggest that combining forms of learning is the norm and that non-formal and informal learning are particularly important. This suggests RNFIL has potential application to this sample and other similar people in labour market programs.

The study was exploratory and has highlighted the significance of informal and non-formal learning in the acquiring of skills which may be relevant in assisting in gaining employment. A study by Golding, Marginson and Pascoe (1996) used a somewhat similar method with a sample of students who had moved from higher education to TAFE to show that even people with tertiary (TAFE & university) backgrounds attributed most of their skills to combinations of home, family and work (and occasionally school). At a definitional level, we noted the change in language and reference from adult education to what amounts to forms of learning categorized by their modes of
facilitation and the current theoretical and political dimensions of these concepts.

The study could be extended to further investigate skill sets for those considered disadvantaged in the labour market. For instance, those groups targeted by welfare reforms aimed at increasing workforce participation tend to be considered semi or unskilled. Further research could investigate specific skill sets and gauge the levels of informal and non-formal learning that inform these skills sets for the purposes of skills recognition. Many industries are facing immense HR issues in terms of the ageing workforce, skill shortages and lowering rates of workforce participation. This study has implications for future practices in terms of the enactment of policies at the interface of human capital development and social inclusion.

Due to the nature of the sample, the findings are limited to unemployed adults. Despite this, the paper has highlighted the importance and extent of the interrelatedness of informal, non-formal and formal learning, especially for those considered disadvantaged in the labour market. The study has identified areas for further research in relation to the configurations attached to the relativity and interconnectedness between informal, non-formal and formal learning for specific self reported skill sets and has significant implications for the recognition of skills learned through non-formal and informal learning. We argue for a reframe from the focus on the differences between forms of learning to a focus on the connections, relationships and interrelatedness between these learning forms. We assert this will provide a much richer and fuller picture of the variables and contextual influences at play when individuals and groups engage in learning across a diverse range of learning spaces and across time. This reframe recognises the fluid and dynamic nature of the complex interplay that is learning.
References


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About the authors

Dr Roslyn Cameron is a senior lecturer in the School of Management and Marketing at Central Queensland University. She teaches in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the field of Human Resource Management and Development. Roslyn is a Fellow of the Australian Human Resources Institute (FAHRI) and has a particular interest in skill recognition systems from a human resource development perspective.

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This study examines the nature of adult engagement in lifelong learning in Taiwan. Previous studies have shown that gender and socioeconomic status (SES) are key variables related to equal access to education. Are these variables related to adults’ engagement in lifelong learning in a specific country? This study analysed data from a survey of adults that was administered by the Ministry of Education in 2009. The results show a strong relationship between gender, SES and the learning experiences of adults. Women in low and middle SES groups were more likely to engage in lifelong learning. This study reveals that women’s engagement in lifelong learning depended on their family concerns. Men’s engagement in lifelong learning, in contrast, was often for career or work-related reasons. By explaining the connections between the gender and SES of adult learners engaging in lifelong learning, the results of this study will enrich the context of lifelong learning.
Keywords: lifelong learning, adult education, educational policy, engagement theory

Introduction

The concept of lifelong learning was introduced in the 1960s. In the 1970s, international organisations such as UNESCO adopted the concept. However, there was little focus on lifelong learning from the 1970s to the 1990s. In the 1990s, the world witnessed the impact of globalisation, the effects of an aging society, and the influence of information technology. At that time, many countries started to focus on lifelong learning, and new regulations were introduced to ensure its implementation (Jarvis 2007; Kang 2007). Because lifelong learning became a widely-accepted concept in a knowledge-based economy, the Taiwanese government launched the legislative process for the Lifelong Learning Act, which was implemented in 2002. By implementing this Act, the government has placed great importance on the practice of lifelong learning.

The different backgrounds of lifelong learners may lead learners to engage in different learning activities. In a multi-cultural society, learners can develop different learning perspectives and behaviours (Chang 2004; Moen, Kelly & Magennis 2009). However, even though people understand the importance of lifelong learning, it is not easy to provide learners with equal access to limited educational resources. Research has shown that gender differences or low socio-economic status (SES) can affect the educational opportunities of individuals (Nesbit 2006). Generally, women have fewer opportunities for formal education due to their family responsibilities or social expectations (Gunawardena, Rasanayagam, Leitan, Bulumulle & Dort 2006; World Bank 2005, 2007). Desjardins, Rubenson and Milana (2006) found that generally gender differences are small for the developed countries considered, but this partly depends on the level of formal
education. Overall, in countries where women tend to have lower levels of formal education than men, women are less likely to participate in adult learning. Furthermore, employer support tends to be a less common source of financing for women than for men.

- Desjardins, Rubenson and Milana (2006) also showed the significance of education as a socio-economic marker, revealing that in many countries there is a strong connection between home background, educational attainment and further learning. This connection points to a cycle of intergenerational reproduction of inequalities that is strongly linked to lifelong learning processes. Those who have higher levels of formal education, and hence a greater likelihood of engaging in further learning, exhibit a tendency to pass the importance of formal education onto their children. Based on the results of previous research, we explore the following questions in a specific country to enrich the knowledge of this field: What are the experiences of adults engaged in lifelong learning in Taiwan?

- Do women of different SES face unequal situations when attempting to engage in lifelong learning?

- Do women and men have similar access to lifelong learning programs? Is this similar to other developed countries?

- What are the key reasons that adults might choose to not engage in lifelong learning in Taiwan?

**Literature review**

In 1972, UNESCO published *Learning to be* which was the first time that UNESCO promoted the concept of lifelong learning (Faure, Herrera, Kaddoura, Lopes, Petrovsky, Rahnema & Ward 1972). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also provided a significant contribution towards developing lifelong learning in a global setting. In 1973, its *Recurrent education: A strategy for lifelong learning* argued for recurrent education as an important strategy for lifelong learning (OECD 1998a). The most significant year for the development of the idea of lifelong learning
was 1996, when the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century announced the report, *Learning: The treasure within*, and indicated that lifelong learning would be key in the twenty-first century (Delors 1996). In the following year, UNESCO held the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA V, and proposed the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning which positioned lifelong learning as the key to helping society face challenges in the next century (UNESCO Institute for Education 1997).

The OECD’s *Education policy analysis 1998* selected lifelong learning as a special issue topic with its analysis of lifelong learning policies in different countries (OECD 1998b). In addition, the European Union (EU) proposed *A memorandum on lifelong learning* to discuss the strategies of lifelong learning implementation (European Commission 2000). In 2005, the EU proposed *Key competences for lifelong learning: A European reference framework* to reframe the eight key competencies for lifelong learning (Commission of the European Communities 2005; The European Association for University Lifelong Learning 2009).

Based on the promotion of lifelong learning in these various international organisations, many countries have been exposed to the importance of lifelong learning and become devoted to developing lifelong learning for all. Hasan (2001) analysed lifelong learning and examined the various definitions, policy and praxis in different countries, including Australia, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, Korea, the United States. However, many countries set their lifelong policy based on national adult education surveys. For instance, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada have surveyed their populations on the topic approximately once every two to three years (see Table 1).
### Table 1: The major national surveys of adult education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Survey institute</th>
<th>year</th>
<th>Age of adults</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Final/report</th>
<th>Survey frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Infratest Burke Sozialforschung</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>19–64</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>7,108</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>17 &amp; over</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>4,932</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1–3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>National Center for Educational Statistics</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>16 &amp; over</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>8,905</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3–5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>17 &amp; over</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>33,410</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initiating a national policy for lifelong learning development

The importance of implementing lifelong learning is to eliminate a gap in access to education within the community and to provide more equitable access to educational resources (Williamson 1998). Reframing policy to enhance lifelong learning is an effective approach in a democratic society (Nerland 2008). In many countries, the purpose of lifelong learning policies is to eliminate the unequal distribution of educational attainment, which might result in intellectual, social and economic disparities. Research has shown that adult education participation rates are positively correlated with a country’s level of economic development as measured by per capita gross domestic product. On average, the more prosperous the country, the higher the participation rate reported (UNESCO Sixth International Conference on Adult Education 2009). Furthermore, for each additional year of education in the adult population on average, there is a corresponding increase of 3.7% in long-term economic growth and a 6% increase in per capita income. Therefore, adult learning and education are not only financial expenditures but also investments in the future (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2009).

In 1998, the Taiwanese government published a white paper called Toward a learning society, and listed 14 action programs to establish lifelong learning in society. Subsequently, the Lifelong Learning Act was announced in 2002, illustrating that the promotion of lifelong learning and the establishment of education’s importance to society had become a clear concept and a national policy. In 2010, the Ministry of Education proposed ‘The Action Year for Lifelong Learning 331’, encouraging the public to spend at least thirty minutes for learning (3), thirty minutes for doing exercise (3) and to undertake one activity for the common good (1) per day (Ministry of Education, Taiwan 2010). To reduce the policy implementation gap, Taiwan has emphasised the social role of lifelong learning and encouraged
the general public’s acceptance of its importance. According to the purposes of the EU’s announcement of A memorandum on lifelong learning the intention is to promote active citizenship and employability. Lifelong learning has emphasised the responsibility of citizens to pursue personal self-fulfilment. In instances where the government has played a neutral role in policy implementation, lifelong learning may become a market-driven activity to satisfy the increased demands. Some programs based on lifelong learning policy have been implemented in Taiwan, but there is still a growing gap between the lifelong learning policy and its practice (Wang 2008). The gap causes concern about the engagement of disadvantaged groups, such as females and individuals of lower SES, in lifelong learning activities.

**Gender and socio-economic status explanations in lifelong learning**

Many structural inequalities have been found to limit the participation of different social groups in lifelong learning. In general, those who are female, older, less educated, less skilled, in low-skill jobs or unemployed, immigrants or from poor socio-economic backgrounds are the least likely to participate in adult education and training (Desjardins, Rubenson, & Milana 2006). Within a country, levels of participation vary according to socio-economic, demographic and regional factors, revealing structural deficiencies in access to adult education. Infrequent participation by certain groups illustrates structural inequalities in society, that there is unequal access to lifelong learning when general participation is low, or that infrequent participation in lifelong learning may create inequalities in society. Gender, geographical location, age and socio-economic status all play a part in lifelong learning engagement (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2009).

Gender is a key element in the discourse of lifelong learning (Rogers 2006). In many developing countries, women’s literacy rates
are lower than those of men. Comparing rates of different countries, there is a significant gender gap (Mulenga & Liang 2008). There are multiple constraints that may prevent women from participating in adult education, such as domestic duties, child care and submissive behaviour (Gouthro 2007; Lind 2006). Women generally have responsibilities and connections to the home. However, ongoing social changes have encouraged women to be more independent, and they have begun to expect to engage in more learning activities.

SES is a major determining factor in the attainment of different levels of education, and it is possibly another important factor in lifelong learning. In many countries, SES has been one of the strongest factors associated with educational differences in access as well as outcomes (OECD 2001). Generally, we may assume the higher an adult’s SES, the greater the likelihood of his/her engagement in education. At the same time, effective adult learning may play a critical role in providing opportunities for social mobility, which may decrease social inequality (Nesbit 2006). However, Desjardins, Rubenson and Milana (2006) indicated that the observed relationship is not necessarily direct.

**Engagement and lifelong learning**

Generally, ‘engagement’ is defined as what students do, feel and think during school. When learners are engaged in learning activities, they need to learn through interactions with others if they want to make the activity meaningful (Kuh 2009). The quality of effort and involvement in productive learning activities further defines engagement (Kuh 2009). Many articles on student engagement at the college level have been guided by the concepts of behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagements, while articles at the K-12 level have mainly focused on psychological and behavioural engagements (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris 2004). The literature defines cognitive engagement in terms of self-regulation, and students
use meta-cognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their cognition when accomplishing tasks (Fredricks et al. 2004).

Adults, in general, may have the ability to engage in self-directed learning, and adults can be seen as self-directed learners. When they engage in lifelong learning, they may evaluate the learning outcomes. Adult students engaging in learning activities in a social context are very different from students in a school context. The differences include, for example, their purpose, motivation, work limitations, family responsibilities, available time and financial abilities.

**Method**

To answer the research questions, the study analysed data from the Adult Survey in Taiwan in 2009. The following section will discuss the framework of analysis, data collection, sampling, data transformation and method of analysis.

**Framework of analysis**

To investigate adults engaging in lifelong learning activities, we propose the analytical framework shown in Figure 1. Using this framework, this study tested the following hypotheses:

H1: Women of different SES face unequal situations when they engage in lifelong learning.

H2: Women and men do not engage in similar lifelong learning programs.

H3: The reasons for adult learners’ disengagement from lifelong learning vary.
Data collection
To understand Taiwanese participation in lifelong learning, we implemented the survey supported by the Ministry of Education and the findings may serve as a basis for developing relevant policies.

To collect the views of the subjects in a short period, this study used the telephone questionnaire method Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) to randomize the digit dialling. The survey was implemented from Monday to Sunday during the evening from 6 to 10 o’clock from 1 June to 1 July, 2009. The total calls numbered 48,463, and the validated sample included 10,000. In this study, we specifically selected individuals 18–64 years old, and the validated sample in this group was 4,065. There were only 1,323 people who reported experiencing engagement in lifelong learning activities, which is 32.55% of the total sample. Based on the population distribution, this study employed post-stratification weighting to calculate the reasonable sampling distribution. In this study, the margin of sampling error was lower than 3%, at a confidence level of 95%.
According to the Annual report by the Ministry of the Interior of Taiwan, the total population in Taiwan aged 18 to 64 years was 15,970,678. Overall, 50.11% was male, and 49.89% was female. In this study, the data set consisted of 4,065 valid respondents, ranging in age from 18 to 64, with 40.91% male and 59.09% female. Chi-square test results revealed a statistically significant difference in gender distribution between the data set and the total population \((p < .001)\), as shown in Table 2. This finding means that the gender distribution in the sample is different from that in the population. Therefore, the samples needed to be weighted to facilitate statistical evaluation. This study employed post-stratification weighting to calculate the gender values and analysed the derived figures through statistical means. The equation is as follows:

\[
W_i = \frac{N_i}{n_i} \times \frac{n}{N}
\]

Note: \(W_i\): the weight value of group \(i\); \(N_i\): the total value of the \(i\)th group in the population; \(N\): the total value of the population; \(n_i\): the number of valid samples in group \(i\); \(n\): the total value of the samples.

### Table 2: Gender distribution in the samples and the population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Population*</th>
<th>(\chi^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>1,663</td>
<td>40.91</td>
<td>8,002,553</td>
<td>50.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2,402</td>
<td>59.09</td>
<td>7,968,125</td>
<td>49.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,065</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,970,678</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a. The population of Taiwan aged 18 to 64 was 15,970,678.

*** \(p < .001\).
Data transformation

Educational background and occupation in the database were on a nominal scale. For the data to fit the statistical model, this study adapted these two variables, educational attainment and occupation, into an education index and a career index. The adaptation process was based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) proposed by the OECD (1999). ISCED 1 (primary education) was designated as 1, which was presented in the questionnaire as ‘primary school graduate or below’. ISCED 2 (early secondary education) was designated as 2, which was presented in the questionnaire as ‘junior high school or junior vocational school’. ISCED 3A, 3B, 3C (upper secondary education or vocational education) was designated as 3, which was presented in the questionnaire as ‘senior high school (vocational school) (including the first three years of junior college)’. ISCED 4 (junior college) was designated as 4, which was presented in the questionnaire as ‘junior college’. ISCED 5A, 5B (higher education) was designated as 5, which was presented in the questionnaire as ‘university’. ISCED 6 (higher education) was designated as 6, which was presented in the questionnaire as ‘graduate school or above’.

The occupation data were adjusted according to Hwang’s (2003) proposal in ‘New occupational prestige and socioeconomic scores for Taiwan’. Occupations presented in the questionnaire as ‘agricultural, forestry and fishery workers’ and ‘non-technical workers and manual labor’ were designated as 1. ‘Sales and service personnel’, ‘technical workers and related workers’ and ‘machine operators and assembly-line workers’ were designated as 2. ‘Administrative staff’ was designated as 3, and ‘technical workers and assistant professional personnel’ were designated as 4. ‘Human resource, supervisors and managers’ and ‘professionals’ were designated as 5. The mean and standard deviation of the adapted education career indices are shown in Table 3.
### Table 3: The mean and standard deviation of education and career indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Indices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school graduate or below</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior high school or junior vocational school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Senior high school (vocational school)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attainment</td>
<td>Junior college</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate school or above</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean = 3.598, Standard Deviation = 1.275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human resource, supervisors and managers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical workers and assistant professional</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative staff</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales and service personnel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural, forestry and fishery workers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical workers and related workers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Machine-operators and assembly-line workers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-technical workers and manual labour</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean = 3.322, Standard Deviation = 1.416</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study applied a two-step classification to analyse the data. The education index, career index and personal income were included in the model. The results of the analyses were categorised into three different SES groups (high, middle and low-income groups), as shown in Table 4.
Table 4: Two-step cluster analysis of SES groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of combined</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>Education index</th>
<th>Career index</th>
<th>Personal incomea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>26.52</td>
<td>17.76</td>
<td>4.468</td>
<td>1.083</td>
<td>4.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>42.65</td>
<td>28.56</td>
<td>3.600</td>
<td>1.200</td>
<td>3.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>30.82</td>
<td>20.64</td>
<td>3.081</td>
<td>1.270</td>
<td>2.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response items</td>
<td>1,343</td>
<td>33.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,065</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Adults engaged in lifelong learning in Taiwan 323
This study used SPSS Version 15.0 for Windows to conduct a logistic regression analysis and \( \chi^2 \) test. The logistic regression model was used to analyse the experiences of lifelong learning among adults with different characteristics. In this study, we designated the engagement in lifelong learning as a dependent variable and the disengagement from lifelong learning as the reference variable. Gender (\( \chi_{gen} \)) and SES (\( \chi_{ses} \)) were designated as independent variables of the logistic regression model to verify hypothesis H1. The logistic regression model was as follows:

\[
\log \frac{p}{1 - p} = \alpha + \beta_{gen} \chi_{gen} \cdot \chi_{ses}
\]

Note. \( p \) as the probability of engaging in lifelong learning refers to disengaging.

To verify hypotheses H2 and H3, this study adopted the \( \chi^2 \) test to conduct a cross-analysis of the types of adults engaging in lifelong learning and the reasons why adults disengage from lifelong learning. The \textit{a posteriori} comparison of the \( \chi^2 \) tests was based on the comparison of adjusted residuals. The Z-score 1.96 was used for the 0.05 significance level, 2.58 was used for the .01 significance level, and 3.30 was used for the .001 significance level (Haberman 1978).

**Results**

In this section, we address the results according to the purposes of the study. The results show the adults’ lifelong learning experiences and the distribution of gender engagement in lifelong learning. The results also show the relationship of gender, socioeconomic status and engagement in lifelong learning. The adults’ program selection and their reasons for not engaging are then discussed at the end.

The results showed that 67.45% of adults did not engage in lifelong learning, and that only 32.55% of adults reported they had lifelong
learning experiences (see Table 5). The percentage of women (56.34%) engaged in lifelong learning was higher than that of men (41.87%). The percentage of low SES groups engaging in lifelong learning (41.59%) was higher than that of other SES groups.

**Table 5: Crosstab analysis by gender and SES for lifelong learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Socio-economic status (SES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>Women (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1,483 (54.08)</td>
<td>1,259 (45.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>554 (41.87)</td>
<td>769 (56.34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 53.219^{***} \quad 183.834^{***} \]

***\( p < 0.001. \)

Women engaged in lifelong learning

Using a logistic regression model, we analysed engagement in lifelong learning as the dependent variable, \( p \) is the probability of not participating in lifelong learning, \( \chi_{\text{gen}(1)} \) as women refers to men, \( \chi_{\text{ses}(1)} \) as low SES, \( \chi_{\text{ses}(2)} \) as middle SES refers to high SES. In this model, gender and SES were treated as independent variables. The result was as follows:

\[
\log \frac{p}{1-p} = -0.847 + 1.751\chi_{\text{ses}(1)}\chi_{\text{gen}(1)} + 0.656\chi_{\text{ses}(2)}\chi_{\text{gen}(1)}
\]

**Note:** a. \( p \) as the probability of participating in lifelong learning refers to not participating; b. \( \chi_{\text{gen}(1)} \) as women refers to men, \( \chi_{\text{ses}(1)} \) as low SES, \( \chi_{\text{ses}(2)} \) as middle SES refers to high SES.
There were statistically significant gender and SES differences in this model. The results indicated the model was fitted (see Table 6). Women in the low and middle SES groups engaged in lifelong learning 5.762 and 1.926, respectively, times more than did men. The fitted logistic regression model showed the data supported hypothesis H1.

**Table 6: Coefficients of the logistic regression model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Fit of modelb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Exp(β)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES(1)*</td>
<td>1.751</td>
<td>5.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES(2)*</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>1.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.847</td>
<td>0.428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a. SES(1) refers to low SES; SES(2) refers to middle SES; b. -2LL is -2 log likelihood, and HL is the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit statistic.

***p < .001.

**Engagement in different programs**

Among the adults who engaged in lifelong learning activities, 8.74% were in accredited programs, 17.73% were in certification courses, 53.52% were in professional development courses, and 20.02% were in leisure-related courses. This indicates that a larger number of adults preferred to engage in professional development courses than any other kind of lifelong learning activity. This study further analysed the engagement in different programs by gender and SES (see Table 7). According to the results of the $\chi^2$ test, there were no significant differences between men’s and women’s engagement in different programs by different SES. The result of the $\chi^2$ test did not provide sufficient evidence to support hypothesis H2.
Table 7: Crosstab analysis of engaging in different programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Low SES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Middle SES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>High SES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>Women (%)</td>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>Women (%)</td>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>Women (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited programs</td>
<td>26 (8.81)</td>
<td>24 (11.59)</td>
<td>10 (5.68)</td>
<td>25 (8.83)</td>
<td>6 (8.57)</td>
<td>12 (8.11)</td>
<td>103 (8.74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification courses</td>
<td>42 (14.24)</td>
<td>35 (16.91)</td>
<td>33 (18.75)</td>
<td>57 (20.14)</td>
<td>16 (22.86)</td>
<td>26 (17.57)</td>
<td>209 (17.73)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>185 (62.71)</td>
<td>118 (57.00)</td>
<td>85 (48.30)</td>
<td>142 (50.18)</td>
<td>31 (44.29)</td>
<td>70 (47.30)</td>
<td>631 (53.52)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure-related courses</td>
<td>42 (14.24)</td>
<td>30 (14.49)</td>
<td>48 (27.27)</td>
<td>59 (20.85)</td>
<td>17 (24.29)</td>
<td>40 (27.03)</td>
<td>236 (20.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>2.172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.520</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: there is no significant difference between categories in the crosstab analysis
Reasons for not engaging in programs

The reasons for not engaging in lifelong learning activities are listed in Table 8. The most popular reasons included lack of time (58.43%), no desire (12.65%) and work limitations (10.95%). According to the analysis, we found that lack of desire and work limitations were the main reasons why men did not engage in lifelong learning. The main reason for women’s lack of engagement was also lack of time, but women also commonly noted overwhelming family responsibilities. Hypothesis H3, stating that reasons would vary for adult learners’ disengagement from lifelong learning, was not fully supported by the data.
Table 8: Crosstabs analysis of reasons for not engaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men (%)</td>
<td>Women (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>754 (62.52)</td>
<td>452 (37.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No desire</td>
<td>189 (72.41)</td>
<td>72 (27.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work limitations</td>
<td>157 (69.47)</td>
<td>69 (30.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of required courses</td>
<td>72 (66.67)</td>
<td>36 (33.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overwhelming family responsibilities</td>
<td>28 (31.11)</td>
<td>62 (68.89)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 \) 62.32*** 29.49

***p < .001.
Discussion

Based on the above analysis, the study showed different experiences of lifelong learning among Taiwanese adults. The similarities and differences in experiences are now discussed.

Generally, women had less access to formal education due to factors such as family responsibilities and social expectations, which might affect their participation in lifelong learning (World Bank 2005, 2007). Recently, women have gradually surpassed men in lifelong learning participation (Bryans 2001; Moen, Kelly & Magennis 2009; Wu 2010). The results of this study showed that women, in comparison with men, had greater lifelong learning engagement, especially in the low SES group. In fact, the opportunities to access lifelong learning for both gender groups were not quite equal. Although many women are entering the job market in Taiwan, they are still expected to shoulder most of the responsibility for raising children and maintaining households. However, the social environment has changed gradually, and women are more aware of their self-development. This awareness will motivate many women to engage in lifelong learning in Taiwan.

Daines, Daines, & Graham (2006) indicated the reasons for adult engagement were categorised into vocational or professional development, aspirations for further learning or creativity, personal development goals, or a social need. Because more Taiwanese adults engage in professional development courses, there appears to be an emphasis on the vocational category. Governments have generally set budgets for lifelong learning programs. The key focus is usually on youth, professional training or special interest courses. Many adults have chosen to improve their professional skills, and there is greater benefit when learning programs are arranged at a time and a place suitable for them.
Previous studies have shown that a lack of time and finances are prime reasons why adults choose not to engage in lifelong learning (Desjardins, Rubenson & Milana 2006). Family responsibility was another reason given by adults for non-participation (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner 2007). This study also showed that lack of time was the main reason for not engaging in lifelong learning. From a situational point of view, reasons for non-participation due to lack of time can be problematic because it is a vague concept (Rubenson 1999). The value ascribed to learning will affect a person’s perception of whether they have time for it or not (Desjardins, Rubenson & Milana 2006). In a previous study, the response ‘no money’ was the second most common reason stated for not participating in a course (Desjardins, Rubenson & Milana 2006). However, this study did find a similar rationale because many programs were provided by the government or non-profit organisations in Taiwan.

In comparison with men, women were more likely to engage in lifelong learning. However, they reported a lack of time due to family responsibilities. This is a major barrier preventing women from engaging in lifelong learning. Men were often unable to engage in lifelong learning due to work-related factors and lack of desire. Typically, men involved in lifelong learning were deeply influenced by work-related factors, such as improving professional development and achieving their career goals. However, when the attraction of work decreases, the rate of male participation may also decrease (Porfeli & Vondracek 2009).

**Conclusion**

If we analyse lifelong learning experiences based on social status, we may obtain different results. For instance, adults from different cultures in the same society might view lifelong learning differently or might engage in learning activities in very different ways. The economic development stage of a country influences the resource
allocation for adults’ learning programs and differs depending on the stage of development. The experiences of adults in Taiwan may provide an explanation for lifelong learning engagement. In this study, gender and socio-economic status are significant variables that were found to be closely related to adults’ lifelong learning experiences. The results indicate that many men do not engage in lifelong learning. It is important to rethink how to eliminate or at least minimise the barriers that affect adults’ engagement in lifelong learning.

References


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Lifelong learning in German learning cities/regions

Denise Reghenzani-Kearns and Peter Kearns
Global Learning Services

This paper traces the policies and lessons learned from two consecutive German national programs aimed at developing learning cities/regions. Known as Learning Regions Promotion of Networks, this first program transitioned into the current program, Learning on Place. A case study chosen is from the Tölzer region where a network has self-sustained from its genesis in the initial program and conducts successful Learning Festivals.

The German Government funded the Learning Regions Promotion of Networks Program from 2001 to 2008, with support from the European Union (EU) Social Fund. Over 70 regions were supported with a substantial budget on a phasing-out funding basis. When this program ended in 2008, a new program titled Learning on Place began, funded by the German Government and the EU Social Fund, commencing in 2009. This program has a focus on public and private partnership in supporting good educational management in cities and rural communities. In this way, by involving private
foundations as partners, a framework for civic engagement has been introduced.

To understand the purposes of and outcomes from these initiatives, it is important to grasp the European context within which the German Government and its Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF [Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung]) responded in answering the call to implement ‘coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning’ (European Commission 2001: 4). In setting this challenge, the Commission communication quoted from a Chinese proverb that has philosophically underpinned the approach:

When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade, plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people. (Guanzi c. 645BC)

**Keywords**: Learning communities; civic engagement; place making; educational partnerships; capacity building; learning festivals

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**Introduction**

Based on concerns about moving into the ‘knowledge age’, the Lisbon (March 2000) and Feira (June 2000) European Councils of the European Commission foresaw a mandate—‘lifelong learning for all’ which led to the launch of a working paper, *A memorandum on lifelong learning* on 30 October, 2000. This embodied aims of active citizenship, social cohesion, and employability within ‘six key messages’ (2000: 10–19):

- guarantee universal and continuing access to learning for gaining and renewing the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge society;
visibly raise levels of investment in human resources in order to place priority on Europe’s most important asset—its people;

develop effective teaching and learning methods and contexts for the continuum of lifelong and lifewide learning;

significantly improve the ways in which learning participation and outcomes are understood and appreciated, particularly in non-formal and informal learning;

ensure that everyone can easily access good quality information and advice about learning opportunities throughout Europe and throughout their lives; and

provide lifelong learning opportunities as close to learners as possible, in their own communities and supported through ICT-based facilities where appropriate.

The 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning had also influenced this emergence of policy needed for the ‘new economies’ of the ‘knowledge age’. Broader visions of the nature of learning and learning environments were recognised as strengthening social, cultural and economic rationales for lifelong learning (Kearns 1999: 25). Paramount was an understanding of the value of learning.

Also having significant importance was the UNESCO International Commission on Education’s Delors Report (1996) with its ‘pillars’ of ‘learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be’, reflected in the further debate of their Task Force on Education for the Twenty-first Century.

Coupled with these initiatives was the OECD work on learning partnerships and learning cities/regions especially. Thus, there were parallel influences and guidelines that had a deep impact on enabling Germany to shape and mould its programs.

Ten policy principles for creating learning cities and regions were published by the OECD (2001: 120) and were seen to be applicable to any national or localised initiative in embracing a learning
community purview, based on inputs to and mechanisms of the learning process. Developed in Europe, these policy principles were geared to improving economic performance and regional development with ‘innovative-intensive activities’. While they might appear organisationally biased, the principles are transferable into other learning community environments.

Being implemented concurrently with the *Learning Regions Promotion of Networks Program*, but culminating in 2004, was the R3L (Regional LifeLong Learning) initiative across Europe funded by the European Commission. German Learning Regions Networks were directly involved, coordinating four of the seventeen European R3L networks for cross-border exchanges on issues of good practice to achieving cooperation in the lifelong learning field for a more durable and sustainable footing.

Much was coalescing to have an effect on the initiatives taken in Germany.

**Objectives in German Learning City/Region Networks**

The *Learning Regions Promotion of Networks Program* was funded as a contribution to the European Commission development objectives arising from the Lisbon Conference of 2000. It was accordingly aimed at the development of networks to support the transition into a knowledge society, with these structures envisaged as improving access to learning.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research published its framework to realise this future-oriented task in ‘Learning Regions—Providing Support for Networks’ to highlight the Program’s process and proposals, which reiterated their lifelong learning society goals (2004: 6):

- Strengthening the learners’ personal responsibility and self-management;
• Motivating disadvantaged groups that are currently less involved in education;
• Strengthening relations between all educational sectors;
• Cooperation of educational providers and users; and
• Improving the quality, quantity and structure of offers in order to
  promote user-orientation in particular.

In the first two years of operation, the Program sought public bids
for Network funding. A study of the socio-economic demographics in
potential learning regions provided a profile of settlement, population
development, employment and unemployment which informed the
most promising proposals from 2000/2001 for Federal government
and states’ selection.

In the early phase of development, the Networks chosen submitted
four-year plans to support their evolving development, innovative
measures to achieve the lifelong learning goals, and business models
to increase a sustainable co-contribution financially (up to at least
40% as a goal).

Two years’ continuation funds were contested for around 50 regions
to extend their work and for about 40 focused learning communities
in accord with the newly identified category on learning cities/
regions. This was due to a ‘consolidation’ phase in ensuring transfer
of successes and results through a revised agenda, namely, for
projects that provided:

• educational counselling to foster change management—
  organisational guidance and instruments for guidance through
  counselling institutions, youth authorities, employment offices
  (mandatory) and other agencies;
• the creation of learning centres—curricula, courses and
  certification;
• continuance between lifelong learning stages (from the cradle to
  the grave)—including transition from school to employment;
• small to medium enterprises as relevant partners and referents for training and qualifications; and
• communities as specific learning centres—learning cities/regions.

(Thinesse-Demel 2010: 114).

In this extension of the Program, human resources costs were met totally by the grants, but in-kind contributions for facilities and equipment from the participating bodies and institutions met about 20% of budgets. Strengthening environmental education and rural development were also introduced as foci and new regional learning communities gave emphasis to education as a means to local transformation. Increasing inter-regional cooperation/networking and greater mobility in lifelong learning were strong purposes for improving transparency and information flows between regions to achieve the EU theme of ‘lifelong learning for all’.

Over the years of available funding to 2007, phasing out in 2008, 118 million EUR were granted. Within this, approximately 51 million EUR came from the European (Union) Social Fund. Overall project management was outsourced to the service provider agency of the German Centre for Aerospace.

In April 2008, the Federal Government approved a Concept for Lifelong Learning under their ‘Qualification Initiative’, so this further integrated and complemented a focus on continuing education throughout life.

**Support for Networks**

As a regional strategy of cooperation and networking, stakeholders included all sectors of formal education, corporate and commercial related organisations/chambers/unions, cultural and socio-cultural institutions, bodies involved with youth activities, guidance and employment, as well as teachers and learners. An ‘exemplary’ organisational structure of a ‘Network for Lifelong Learning’ is set out
in Figure 1 (Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2004: 8). Networks operated as registered associations, non-profit limited liability companies, legal entities with memorandums, through agreements of cooperative intent, or foundations.

Because of the broad socio-economic objectives and relevant partners, Networks often had a significant number of members, 35% of the Networks having between 40–99 members, while eight per cent had over 100 members. This range of participation made communication, building social capital and coordination of effort key issues for the Networks. But, size achieved positive outcomes, such as comprehensive marketing and benefits from non-traditional partnerships.

**Figure 1: Exemplary organisational structure**

The Learning Regions Promotion of Networks Program illustrated an ambitious, bottom-up approach to socio-economic development with initiatives also influenced by American research prominent in the period by scholars such as Senge (1990) on learning
organisations. This approach meant that there was considerable diversity in the outcomes from individual Networks.

The significance of this Program’s approach largely existed in the role of Networks as an organising principle for community and regional development with an impact on such aspects as building a shared vision, enhancing supporting attitudes, integrating strands of development and, in the long term, contributing to the creation of social capital and a learning culture.

**Early innovations**

A key to understanding what was being nurtured was how reflective practice came to the fore in the study of initiatives. It is notable that a serious evaluation ran concurrently with developments (this is discussed later). Formative exemplars were provided as representative for other Regions, also demonstrating different themes or emphases, and showing a diversity of possibilities. This early overview documented innovations and changes; ongoing achievements were then recorded in the magazine *Inform* and on a website (portal), both supported by the Federal Ministry and the emergent Board of the Association of Learning Regions Germany.

The first scan of implemented projects within the Program resulted in a joint conference with the OECD in October 2003, *Policies to Strengthen Incentives and Mechanisms for Co-financing Lifelong Learning* and the 2004 Federal Ministry publication already acknowledged. A selection of the Learning Region projects provides a wealth of resources and experiences in summary:

- **Lake Constance**—Learn service points (L-points), open to all ages with information and guidance available on anything to do with learning, training and further education, including competency assessment. Ten L-points exist in schools, further education institutions, libraries, youth centres and other public locations.
• **Lower Rhine**—Marketing and motivational campaign reaching people through regular media reporting (radio and print) about learning region activities, such as school to work transitions, mobility with learning, or using famous and high profile citizens to comment on the importance of learning.

• **Emmendingen District**—Economic stimulation by overcoming education deficits and up-skilling potential employees for small to medium-sized enterprises as a target group in the domestic economy with further education achieved through The College for Personal Development.

• **Central-Mecklenburg-Coast**—Improving quality systems in education and lifelong learning within an ecological, heritage and tourism city development to meet employer and community needs.

• **City of Mainz/District of Mainz-Bingen**—Reaching those ‘distanced’ from education, especially older migrants, created ‘Step On’, a series of seminars in accessible town halls, neighbourhood centres and network cafes to access information ranging from health advice, to culturally sensitive nursing, to job searches via the internet.

• **Marzahn-Hellersdorf**—Education and architecture have developed a ‘learning location at home’ project by renovating pre-fabricated housing remaining from a building Expo to receive cable programs produced in high school multi-media studies (for example, video reports of neighbourhood living, ‘Braindays’, elearning).

• **Oldenburg District**—Consolidating a learning-for-life approach, 50 partners in the Network sought to strengthen a new learning culture through five sub-projects on learning counselling, demand and supply education models, ‘Strong for Children’ activities, media competence in rural/countryside adult education, and tourism education.

• **Wartburg Region**—In preparing disengaged youth for the job market, companies and vocational training worked together in a ‘Learning Landscape’ matching individual skill to regional economic futures conceived as ‘Knowledge creates Perspectives’,
and also informing parents how to assist with teenager job preparation.

- **Unna District**—Culture and the arts capitalised upon a ‘New Learning World’ for youth and adult learning, and in building a Centre for Information and Education on an industrial ruin. New competencies have been learnt through photography, public art, museum visits and so on to build new motivations, business and confidence.

- **Pontes/Euroregion Neisse**—A multi-historical city seeing itself as a ‘borderless bridge’ between the adjoining three countries: Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. The Network, in conjunction with the International Higher Education Institute, worked as a Euro-regional education and knowledge server, enabling greater mobility linguistically and culturally.

Greater transparency in education and reaching the disengaged or disadvantaged were common issues for the Network alliances. Learner-centred approaches to making learning accessible and fun drove many innovations. A strong connection was forged between acquiring new skills that matched demand in the world of work, from a ‘new’ world of learning. So, the link between education, labour, as well as social outcomes and further education was improved. It was observed that at times there was a solution-oriented, competitive approach to similar problems between regions, and that the subsequent ideas exchanges stimulated ‘new impulses’ to maximise learning outcomes.

**Impact on state and municipal education development**

The January 2010 issue of *Inform*, the magazine of the Learning Regions Germany Association, cites a number of examples where the *Program* has influenced initiatives taken by state and municipal authorities. These are examples of the ripple effects that often accompany successful innovations carried forward as evident in the new *Learning on Place Program*.
The existence of the *Learning Regions Network Program* influenced initiatives that drew on the concepts and activities of learning regions within state or city jurisdictions. Examples cited in the last issue of *Inform*, acknowledging the central reform of making lifelong learning a reality, included the following.

**State initiatives**

- **Hessen**—‘HESSENCAMPUS—Lifelong Learning’, a consortium initiative that involved cooperation between five Learning Regions within the state.
- **Lower Saxony** founded an Institute for Infants’ Education and Development based on the networking principles being implemented in the state.
- **Schleswig-Holstein** promoted a state-wide network of twelve further education alliances with federal, state and EU funding. The alliances functioned as regional networks to foster information and knowledge flows, and promote cooperation. They met in a federal-state working group set up by the Ministry of Economy in which the Learning Regions in the state also participated.

In these examples, applications of networking principles in related fields extended the benefits from the *Program* and attempted to ensure sustainability.

**Municipal/city initiatives**

- **Lippe**, in North-Rhine Westphalia, established five learning centres with links to the Learning Region, offering innovative approaches to lifelong learning for a range of target groups.
- **Nuremburg** collaborated in the provision for lifelong learning through the Learning Centre South (Südpunkt) ‘House’ and mobile ‘Learning Lounges’.
- **Offenbach** championed the cross-departmental municipal management program to further develop sound infrastructure for urban education through a comprehensive regional database and a Self-Learning Centre.
These examples reinforce the important point that the outcomes of the *Learning Regions Network Program* reside not only in the activities and sustainability of individual networks but also, and perhaps more importantly, in the stimulus to initiatives taken by the states and municipalities which apply networking and cooperation principles in extending provision for lifelong learning.

**Evaluation**

The *Learning Regions Promotion of Networks Program* was subject to a careful evaluation throughout its duration by a team from the Ludwig-Maximillian University (LMU), Munich. This study led to a substantial report published in 2009 that is available in German only, but access to an English *Summary* of the report (Gylling: undated) produced by the Learning Regions Germany Association documented useful information on this study.

**Outcomes and results**

It was evident from discussions with LMU that the *Program* had mixed results, as might have been expected from the bottom-up philosophy process with a diversity of approaches. In this context, the success factors identified in the evaluation report assume particular significance.

The evaluation report *Summary* provided the results of the *Program* in the following structure:

- Innovation in networks
- Interlocking the sectors of education and facilitating transitions
- Quality assurance
- Marketing education
- Educational counselling
- New learning worlds.
This Summary showed the Program encouraged a good deal of innovation in areas such as fostering improved transition between sectors of education (‘interlocking of the sectors of education’), marketing education, the use of e-learning and facilitating education in ‘new learning worlds’. In some cases, the Program served as a trigger for innovation in regional education development and promoting new products for the region as well as influencing state and municipal roles in education.

Benefits of networking

The Summary identified three direct benefits of horizontal and vertical networking:

- Change in the attitudes of participants towards networking.
- Knowledge transfer between institutions.
- Increase in competence of the individual institutions.

These benefits are central to achieving clear synergies from network development. The benefits may also be seen as learning processes so that the Networks function as learning organisations with benefits that enhance the performance and productivity of network members while also building a culture that supports further development of the community or region.

Achieving each of these benefits involved addressing various barriers, such as competition pressures, that impeded achievement of the benefits. It was seen Networks needed to establish social cohesion and identity in order to survive. Maximising communication between the partners and building on individual strengths were seen as motivating factors for success.

Success factors

Success factors identified in the evaluation Summary involved a spectrum of elements including effective communication, good management practice, and strategies that built social, cultural,
educational and economic capital. When well executed, the Network led to synergy and productivity outcomes that clearly brought benefits to all stakeholders. A point of interest in the Summary was the achievement recognised by the geographic closeness of a regional approach accelerating exchanges:

... a better revelation and mobilisation of the resources ... strengthens the problem solving potential of the Networks ... a correlation between societal, cultural and economic development becomes clear and meaningful on a regional level. (Gylling, undated: 6)

Identification of the Network partners with the Network and its goals was seen also as a key success factor. Fostering mutual trust and building social capital was obviously central to the Network concept. It is salutary to note also Reghenzani’s (2002: 14) Australian case study assessment, in that partnerships must attend comprehensively to all impacts and are heavily relational, dynamic and need to recognise the investment of all partners in establishing and maintaining learning communities of practice.

While there was progress in many Networks, the Summary also pointed to difficulties in balancing cooperation and competition and the varying commitments to Networks by members and sectors so that the intensity of cooperation varied between Networks and partners.

Not surprisingly, leadership, sound communications and effective management in areas such as undertaking an intensive regional demand or needs analysis at the beginning were seen as important.

A useful overview of success basics and benefits in sustaining Networks was provided by Gnahs of the German Institute for Adult Education, which was included in Inform (January 2010: 7). These factors were seen as:
• Learning Networks were generally created out of a concrete problem (e.g. high unemployment, problems in the further education market), and oriented towards enhancing the problem solving capability of the network and improving the situation.

• The implementation and success of Learning Region Networks is highly dependent on personal and institutional considerations. Personal and institutional hostilities and competition are often barriers.

• Learning Networks are especially successful when they are interlocked with other policy fields. Integrated in the larger connection (reducing unemployment, strengthening regional economic capacity) gives Networks legitimacy and promotes access to scarce resources.

• Learning Networks are most effective when they open up new opportunities for cooperation leading to synergy and productivity benefits.

• Learning Networks generally improve the conditions of the regional education market (e.g. through greater transparency), as supply and demand become more tailored to meet market needs, and more concrete and specific.

• Learning Networks often have a pioneering and innovation role in leading to guidelines for regional development that complement existing measures.

This précis reflects much of the experience documented in the Evaluation Report Summary which also synthesised key features of a Learning Network, noted as high performance against structure, function and proactive developments. Marketability of learning products was identified for those providing the ‘biggest chances’ for independence and sustainability.
Successful Learning Networks, such as the Bad Tölz Network, which is discussed as a case study, demonstrate what can be achieved in serving the learning needs of a community through a bottom-up approach to regional development driven by quality leadership, high regard for local conditions, cooperative partnerships and sound, systematic management.

Network typology

The evaluation team developed a Network typology with product/process and centralised/decentralised dimensions. Five positions were identified within the typology as ideal types (Gylling reproduced the LMU derived typology: 27). As the evaluation study was undertaken before the discontinuance of government funding, the subsequent relationship of sustainability of Networks in terms of typology positions would be a subject of considerable interest.

Figure 2: German Learning Regional Network Typology
Achieving sustainability

The Learning Region Promotion of Networks Program aimed from the beginning for Networks to achieve sustainability without government funding. Funding was provided on a decreasing basis to encourage exploration of alternative funding sources. While about half the Networks folded without continuing government financial support, Bad Tölz provides a fine example of a Network that has remained sustainable and independent.

Bad Tölz Learning Region case study

Bad Tölz Landkreis (District) in the state of Bavaria has a population of 121,373 (December 2010), with a distribution of 110 inhabitants per km². While there are 21 identified communities, or counties, three major towns are the focal points of the Learning Region: Bad Tölz (pop. 17,815), Wolfratshausen (pop. 17,992) and Gerestreid (pop. 23,306) (http://www.nationmaster.com/country/gm-germany/geo-geography).

Considered the heart of the district, Bad Tölz is an historic, medieval town with spas, Alp views, pilgrimage site, Europe’s first indoor waterpark, the Isar River flowing to Munich, and a neighbouring spread of service, commercial and rural industries. Unemployment is 2.4% (July 2011), significantly lower than the national average of 6.5% (August 2011). There has been described a tension between preserving the traditions of the old with modernisation.

Firsthand insights into the management and outputs of the Bad Tölz Learning Region (south of Munich) initiative were gained from the Chair of the managing Board of this Network, and his wife who is also active in the Network as an Advisor. As former journalists, the Chair having formerly served as managing editor of a business journal, they are seen as bringing expertise in communication combined with highly developed management skills, especially in marketing
practices for the development of the Learning Region. This expertise was recognised by the Ministry of Education and Research which gave them the leadership role in communication practice workshops for the whole Program nationally.

This role included the conduct of relevant conferences to pass on best practice in communication and marketing. The attention given to effective communications and business planning is evident in the success of the Learning Festival (LernFest) conducted by Bad Tölz every second year at a former monastery—Benediktbeurern. This Festival is promoted throughout southern Germany and has attracted 38,000 participants in a single day. On the intervening year, a Health LernFest is organised.

Structure

Bad Tölz Learning Region operates in a dual way with commercial projects (for instance, workshops and symposia) that bring in revenue, and community oriented, non-profit activities. This duality is reflected in organisational and financial arrangements. Training is conducted on a fee-for-service basis. The Learning Festival and Family Compass are examples of altruistic community-oriented projects. The Learning Region has a legal status with strong representation on its Board.

The important company role in the structure of this initiative is reflected in the ownership of the non-profit company that coordinates activities (LRTZ Gmbh in Bad Tölz), with shareholders including well-known companies in the region, as well as other project partners. Local companies support the Learning Festival in various ways, as well as sponsorship from major companies, for example, Audi, Roche, Sparkasse Bank, Sitec Aerospace, Radio Oberland and Tyczka Energy.

An office is maintained with full- and part-time staff in management, joint project control, event organisation, communication, advisors and office assistance, in addition to the voluntary committee.
The Family Compass project has a contact/coordination officer. A newsletter is published every two months, with an online request facility.

Function

Community resources in each of the three major towns of the Bad Tölz Landkreis are drawn upon in furthering the objectives of the Learning Region. Communication and marketing have been a priority from the beginning, giving the initiative a high visibility in the Region, especially with attractive mottos and catchphrases for projects. Transparency and communication are very important in providing the ‘glue to bind’ any Network. The transparency objective influenced an approach to outcomes, with precision in outcomes (data on outcomes and benefits) seen as important in promotion to partners and for success.

The lifelong learning messages in general programs and through LernFest furthered the interests of companies in attracting and retaining young people so that there was common interest in supporting the Learning Region initiative.

Proactive developments

Projects (products) other than the biennial LernFest undertaken by Bad Tölz have included:

- vocational guidance entrepreneurship activity for young people, a Job Compass aptitude test, programs for youth with special needs;
- conduct of a Health (and Wellbeing) Festival (Health LernFest);
- a transition management initiative involving all education sectors to solve issues in the movement from school to further training and professions;
- conduct of future-oriented Forums in the Benediktbeuern Monastery, for example, social and economic challenges for guidance and care organisations, management in turbulent times and so on;
• a Sustainability Declaration that was adopted by local organisations and alliances covering economical, environmental and energy sustainability resulting from the Benediktbeuern Forums;

• development of a career guidance manual covering school to work transition which is available as a free e-book ‘training offensive’ in conjunction with strengthening work-related skills; and

• conduct of a parent survey on information and service needs of families resulting in Family Compass (seminars, database guide for educational and counselling services towards family strengthening, interface between a school-family-circle within community education providers, care facilities, further education for parents with kindergarten age children, and active teen opportunities [such as Scouts])

The Bad Tölz Learning Festival (LernFest) provides a vehicle to focus community attention on emerging themes and issues; for example, bionics has been brought into the Festival as a major topic with a video that can be downloaded by the community in advance of the Festival. The Festival is supported by a 32-page program that directs community attention to highlights. In the LernFest, all ages and populations are catered for across themes designed to present the assets of the Tölzerland in the need for ‘active exchanges and ever new impulses’. The themes in 2010 were:

• **UNI Learning Fair** (discovering and experiencing science and technology)

• **Economy** (securing an entrepreneurial future through sustainable management)

• **Family** (working and shaping environments through family life)

• **Children and Youth** (developing incremental education and job opportunities)

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4 Family support initiatives have been a feature of the Bad Tölz Learning Region in collaboration with relevant foundations and organisations.
• **Bio Mall** (finding bio products and services for demanding, healthy lifestyles)
• **Liveability** (using life values and cultural traditions for the future)
• **Health Services** (harnessing strength and natural tranquillity).

Festival success is reflected in the increasing high participation, attracting people from Munich as well as the surrounding area/county. The 2008 Learning Festival was a winner in a Federal Government competition on ‘Germany—Land of Ideas’ in its approach to mobilising further learning by overcoming resistance or barriers to learning.

Just released programming for the 2012 *LernFest* in set around inspiring participants to know their abilities and build on potential. Approximately 300 ‘action stations’ have been arranged, with ideas workshops held in November 2011 and February 2012 for stakeholders on the themes:

• Youth need futures
• We all have great minds
• Strong family
• Sport as a cultural asset
• Values that survive historical turning points.

The role of this Learning Region in leading marketing for Networks has resulted in a series of conference documentations advising on, for example, the way to form a learning region, strategic collaborations, partner enthusiasm, target marketing, the way to a brand, and new approaches for site marketing. Professionals from economic development, regional tourism development, local government and education providers have been engaged in workshops, innovation forums and analyses to keep building knowledge and cooperation momentum for the future.
The Fourth Health (and Wellbeing) Festival was held in September 2011, adopting as its motto: *Feel Life—Conscious Health Experiences* with the ongoing entreaty to *Experience, Learn, Recall* among the 130 displays providing insights into health care and recreation. Many of the exhibitors arranged interactive and outdoor opportunities. A free, one-day congress preceding the Festival built on the historical Bad Tölz spa town economy with presentations personally and corporately on the latest scientific research and health policy/practice perspectives for this industry.

In initiatives such as these, the Bad Tölz Learning Region has demonstrated its relevance and value, and so achieved a basis for sustainability. A factor in securing the high visibility and continuity of commitment is in the acknowledgement received from national and state political and civic leaders engaged in opening, speaking or hosting roles within the *LernFest* activities.

The care given to good communication, sound management and regional identity are key factors in its sustainability, while the broad approach adopted that ranges across social, cultural, educational and economic development illustrates the value of holistic and integrated strategies of this nature. In these ways, the Learning Region initiative is assisting Bad Tölz in making the transition to a knowledge society and economy.

**Learning on Place Program**

With the ending of the *Learning Regions Promotion of Networks Program*, the German Government is now funding a new Program titled *Learning on Place* which commenced in November 2009. Forty projects have been funded in cities and counties with participation from all states over a three-year period with the option of two years’ extension. Overall project management once again is undertaken by the German Centre for Aerospace on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. For the initial three years, 60 million EUR
are available from the Federal Government and the European Social Fund.

The Program is directed at public and private partnerships to support good educational management on ‘site’, ‘spot’ or ‘location’, that is, ‘place’, in cities and counties/rural districts.

Engagement with Foundations

The important role of Foundations in bringing a private sector partnership role conveys somewhat of a ‘big’ or ‘civil society’ flavour to this initiative which is both less ambitious and more highly structured than the former Learning Regions Promotion of Networks. The foundations form a national advisory body providing advice on directions for this current Program. In collaboration, the National Foundation Network will develop key findings and conclusions from the Program.

Foundations are seen to exercise interdependence in being ‘catalysts for education innovation’, especially in understanding the educational landscape of their locality. They can also sponsor and provide a mentor relationship. Twenty-six foundations began in a National Foundation Network (now there are 46) to be engaged in the Program overall, while individual foundations are specific to the 40 projects.

Thus, there are levels of foundation involvement beyond the National Network. More than 140 foundations compose a commitment to initiatives. A local authority might have a number of foundations contributing through an umbrella foundation, sometimes including a nationally operating foundation; or a local foundation is organised. If there is a cluster or consortium of foundations, at least one is represented on the National Network. Where there is co-sponsorship of projects, a cooperation agreement exists.
Efficiency and coordination are important themes with a key objective being to shift responsibility to the municipalities. New issues such as demographic change with an ageing population, under-education of migrants, and skill shortages with women under-represented in science and engineering, have arisen that now need to be addressed systematically so that more coherent and coordinated arrangements for education are developed in the participating cities and counties.

The Program thus aims to foster cohesive, integrated systems for lifelong learning, supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Foundation Network. The Program is important in testing a public/private partnership approach to fostering lifelong learning in communities. The concept of ‘lifelong learning for all’ remains central with the motto, *Advancement through Education*. It is foreseen that well-educated, creative and imaginative people will maintain economic and social development as well as city and regional competitiveness, in adjusting to life course changes.

**Objectives of Learning on Place**

Objectives of this current Program include:

- increasing school participation;
- strengthening employability;
- meeting labour supply requirements;
- improving the transparency of education;
- improving transitions between different phases of education;
- improving educational access;
- strengthening democratic culture; and
- managing demographic change.

This mix of educational, social, labour market, economic and cultural objectives is oriented to the needs and conditions of particular cities and counties so that place management will be an important theme.
Each of the participating communities has identified particular goals in applications, for example, five Bavarian communities being funded include the following objectives as examples guiding their initiatives.

**Lindau**
- An educational counselling centre will be set up with a network of support throughout the county;
- An early detection system for the regional training market will be developed;
- A new department of education and regional development is envisaged;
- The project will be supported by the Peter Dornier Foundation, the Lake Constance Foundation and the Foundation Lindau Citizens to build on lessons from the Bodensee Learning Region.

**Kaufbeuren**
- There will be a special focus on transitions between sectors, building on the work of existing bodies such as the Integration Forum and the City Youth Council;
- Educational guidance will be strengthened;
- Family learning and responding to demographic change will be priorities;
- The project will be supported by the Community Foundation of Kaufbeuren, the Hans Seidel Foundation and the Bavarian Savings Bank Foundation.

**Landkreis Mühldorf am Inn**
- To increase participation of citizens in lifelong learning will be a priority, thereby increasing regional human capital;
- A holistic approach to education will be adopted with strong coordination between sectors;
- The Mühldorf Education Network will be extended;
• The Roland Berger Foundation and a composite of local foundations will support the initiative.

Munich
• The initiative will develop responses to current structural changes in the environment set by families, including the increasing variety of life forms, a deterioration of the socio-economic situation and the labour market, and the segmentation of population groups;
• Initiatives will be built into a city-wide strategy;
• Neighbourhood-based education will be strengthened;
• A Munich conference on education will be established;
• Holistic education management will be progressed;
• Social diversity will be addressed through a strengthening of integration/diversity management;
• The initiative will be supported by the Eberhard von Kuenheim Foundation of BMW AG.

Nuremberg
• A coherent overall approach to urban education in the city will be developed;
• The Education Conference and Board of Education will be brought together in Education for the City of Nuremberg;
• Current human rights development will be extended;
• Integration/diversity management will be enhanced with cultural mainstreaming;
• The initiative will be supported by the Sparkasse Nuremberg for the City of Nuremberg, and the Foundation Nuremberg—A City of Peace and Human Rights.

These were all identified as what were termed ‘Individual’ projects. An example of a ‘Collaborative’ project comes from the north, as undertaken by a city-state.
Bremen and Bremerhaven (Bremen’s harbour)
• A cross-departmental steering group bridging municipalities will oversee the design of a comprehensive education and lifelong learning system through the Senate for Education and Science;
• A parent education vision will be developed;
• Integration of neighbourhood oriented approaches will be part of an urban development strategy;
• Model projects will test improved tools for monitoring and quality control;
• The initiative will be supported by the German Children and Youth Foundation.

Similar objectives may be seen for other participating communities in the summaries available on the Program website: www.lernen-vor-ort.info.

The Learning on Place initiative will provide models for place management in building coherent arrangements to foster lifelong learning, while also addressing major challenges posed by social and economic change, such as the examples given above.

Related initiatives

German learning cities and regions have also been engaged in a range of international and nationally related initiatives, namely:

• PIE (Program of International Exchanges)—PASCAL (Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions) International Observatory, www.pie.pascalobservatory.org;
• EUROlocal, www.eurolocal.info;
• ELLI (European Lifelong Learning Indicators), www.elli.org; and
• Learning Regions Germany (LRD) Association, www.lrd-ev.net.
Comments on learnings from Germany

The German experience in building learning communities and regions is of interest in demonstrating the outcomes of a bottom-up networking approach, with top-down government support, to fostering lifelong learning and facilitating the transition of communities to a knowledge society and economy. While the results have been mixed, a good deal has been learned from success factors through the Learning Regions Promotion of Networks.

The approach adopted by the Bad Tölz region provides a critical exemplar of how leadership, communication and good management are exercised to achieve the benefits of synergy and enhanced productivity from networking to build social and human capital in cities and the surrounding countryside.

An important benefit resides in the influence of a lifelong learning strategy on state and municipal approaches which integrates cohesive planning and public/private partnerships for education and learning. The immediacy of addressing key policy and practice issues locally is seen in the current Learning on Place Program.

While the earlier German Network approach raised questions of sustainability when government money ceased, the understanding of educational, social, cultural and economic development was adopted as part of the fabric of a learned society. How to maintain and achieve this holistic approach is a key challenge for all communities moving forward.

Universities have not been leading players in the German programs, yet fostering social and human capital through service in building networks, raising student attributes and undertaking ‘real time’ research is essential for regional community engagement and development. The new Learning on Place Program encourages greater representation in collaborative efforts.
The role of private foundations both in advising general directions and in supporting individual projects brings a new wave of philanthropic responsibility and accountability that views lifelong and life-wide learning as purposeful and necessary.

In summary, the German experience has been a ‘lighthouse’ to learning community policy and implementation, with the key insights gained including the following:

- The value of a national role through funding frameworks such as the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and access to European Social Fund/European Commission grants;
- Sound strategies and structures in network building, interaction and in supporting relevant innovative projects;
- Fostering of creative, solution-oriented cross-fertilisation of processes and projects in the generation of cohesively, transparent responses;
- A balance between reflective continuous improvement and the importance of evaluative measures throughout;
- Holistic approach between various players and stakeholders in providing learning where it is needed, including the justification for learning initiatives and communications;
- Monitoring of progress and adopting relevant transnational methods and models to inform wider audiences;
- Conduct of ongoing workshops sharing knowledge and expertise so that best practice is systematically integrated and promoted in maximising the take-up of ‘big’ ideas and products;
- Considerations for sustainability across all facets of learning for development, themes to address, and inclusion of those engaged, such as foundations and municipalities; and
- Understanding of lifelong learning as central to social, educational, cultural and economic development, with learning cities/regions as the societal mechanism to realise this potential.
Overall, the German experience in building learning communities based on the *Learning Region Networks* and *Learning on Place Programs* holds considerable interest as a laboratory for testing approaches to lifelong learning in cities and regions. The fundamental tenants of *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* and the OECD learning city and regions principles have been progressed.

Networking the networks in order to address important policy/practice issues brings together the benefits from local, regional, state and national partnerships and the policy thrusts of government to respond to major challenges. Many of these approaches are transferable to other international contexts and there are fundamental policies and key commitments Australia can adopt.

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- Bielefeld and Bremen learning city personnel.

**References**


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Learning cities as healthy green cities: Building sustainable opportunity cities

Peter Kearns
PASCAL International Exchanges

This paper discusses a new generation of learning cities we have called EcCoWell cities (Economy, Community, Well-being). The paper was prepared for the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) and is based on international experiences with PIE and developments in some cities. The paper argues for more holistic and integrated development so that initiatives such as Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities are more connected with value-added outcomes. This is particularly important with the surge of international interest in environment and Green City development so that the need exists to redefine what lifelong learning and learning city strategies can contribute. The paper draws out the implications for adult education in the Australian context. We hope it will generate discussion.
Introduction

The UN Rio+20 Summit held in June 2012 reminds us of the critical importance of addressing the great environmental issues to ensure the future of Planet Earth. At the same time, escalating urbanisation around the world points to the challenge of building cities that are just and inclusive, and where opportunities are available for all throughout life, and where the well-being of all is an aspiration that is actively addressed in city development.

This challenge is widely recognised. The World Bank in its ECO2 Cities initiative has observed that ‘[u]rbanisation in developing countries is a defining feature of the 21st century’ (World Bank 2011). Cities almost everywhere face the triple challenges of urbanisation, sustainability and social justice.

The challenge of these big issues for city development clearly requires new paradigms to guide development, and innovative forms of partnership where all stakeholders are united for joint action for mutual benefit. However, the scene around the world continues to be characterised by segmented silo development, with few signs of integrated connected strategies that bring all stakeholders together in partnerships, including non-traditional partnerships, to achieve value added outcomes and benefits for all.

In this context, this paper comments on the roles of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities, and asserts that much could be achieved by addressing the big issues confronting towns and cities through a convergence of these concepts to support a more holistic and integrated development in what I have called Sustainable Opportunity Cities. While there is much discussion of town planning, environmental, and architectural features of cities of the future, there is far less discussion of social aspects. This imbalance needs to be redressed with a coherent social vision of future cities in which lifelong learning, and social justice and inclusion, are foundations.
This paper draws on international developments I have directed as Intellectual Director of the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE), a project of the PASCAL International Observatory involving online exchanges of information and experience between twelve cities located across five continents around the world. This initiative is discussed below.

In connecting the role of Learning Towns and Cities with key environmental and well-being issues in towns and cities, I am aware of the need to revitalise the notion of learning communities and cities in Australia by showing their relevance to priority issues that attract community and political attention. The reality that a Learning City is an overarching concept that can be applied in addressing such key issues as preserving the environment, fostering well-being for all, and ensuring public safety has not been sufficiently realised, and is reflected in the poor level of funding for these initiatives by governments in Australia.

In framing this perspective in the paper, I give some background on the landscape of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities pointing to some of the things they hold in common which could be used in building connections and synergies. I suggest that this process of building Sustainable Opportunity Cities should be seen as a creative process where new ideas and innovative strategies are required, but where the rewards can be substantial in addressing the big issues confronting cities I have mentioned, and building a just, humane society.

I should clarify up front what I mean by Sustainable Opportunity Cities. By Sustainability I mean the well known pillars of environmental, social and economic sustainability. By Opportunity I refer to the things that Learning City initiatives have traditionally been directed at: lifelong learning, building partnership, community and citizenship, and fostering enterprise. Expressed another way,
I am talking of building social, human and identity capital in cohesive, inclusive and sustainable cities.

I comment below on a few related features of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities, and then discuss some possible paths towards Sustainable Opportunity Cities in Australia. Some implications for the role of adult education are suggested.

**Learning cities**

The Learning City idea emerged from the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on lifelong learning in drawing attention to opportunities to progress all forms of learning in many contexts through partnership and building a shared vision.

This concept evolved through early manifestations as Educating Cities with a 1992 report by the OECD on *City strategies for lifelong learning*, prepared for the Second Congress of Educating Cities in Gothenburg, drawing attention to the potential of the city as a framework for fostering lifelong learning in many contexts (OECD 1992).

The role of the European Union in supporting lifelong learning as an organising principle for all forms of education has been important in driving the evolution of the idea of the city (or town/region/community) as a framework for lifelong learning for all. Various projects funded by the European Commission have contributed much in showing the range of strategies that can be applied in building innovative Learning Cities. Information and lessons derived from this experience may now be accessed through the EURO Local website: www.eurolocal.org.

A good statement of the aspirations and ideals that underpin the concept of a Learning City exists in a definition by Longworth (1999: 112):
A learning community is a city, town or region that goes beyond its statutory duty to provide education and training for those who require it and instead creates a vibrant participative, culturally aware, and economically buoyant human environment through the provision, justification and active promotion of learning opportunities to enhance the potential of all its citizens.

While this definition draws attention to much that is central to the Learning City idea, a further statement by Longworth (1999: 109) adds additional key dimensions to this concept:

A learning community is a city, town or region which mobilises all its resources in every sector to develop and enrich all its human potential for the fostering of personal growth, the maintenance of social cohesion, and the creation of prosperity.

Taken together, these statements point to the entwined individual and community development objectives of Learning Cities, the equity and social justice thrusts in the concern for “all its citizens”, and the aspirations to build communities that foster personal development, social cohesion and economic prosperity. The key role of a local government council in building a framework for partnership is widely recognised.

The Learning City concept has evolved in new contexts as challenges have been encountered as, for example, in the development of learning community initiatives in East Asian countries such as China, South Korea, and Chinese Taipei. Experience has shown that the core ideas in the

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5 A paper for the May 2010 International Forum on Lifelong Learning in Shanghai drew on a 2009 survey conducted by the Chinese Ministry of Education to estimate that there were, by the end of 2009, 114 national experimental or pilot learning communities organised in 30 provinces, autonomous regions or municipalities under the direct jurisdiction of the central government while the number of pilot learning communities organised by provincial authorities exceeded 4,000 (Hao Keming 2011: 64).
Learning City concept are sufficiently flexible to accommodate these applications in a wide range of international contexts while at the same time evolving international experience adds to the richness encapsulated in this concept.

To enable comparison of the Learning City concept with the principles I give below for Healthy Cities and Eco Cities, I sum up my concept of a Learning City as a city giving expression to the following principles.

**Principles for Sustainable Learning Cities:**

- Develop a shared vision
- Build partnership
- Address social justice and equity
- Involve the community actively
- Progress learning in many contexts and forms
- Make development strategic
- Address the big issues confronting cities.

**PASCAL International Exchanges**

In order to share ideas and experience across national boundaries, the PASCAL International Observatory in January 2011 inaugurated the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) to test online exchanges as a vehicle for international dialogue on good ideas. Twelve cities across five continents are currently participating in this project: Glasgow, Kaunas, Bielefeld, Bari, Cork, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, Kampala, Beijing, Hong Kong, Hume Global Learning Village (Melbourne) and Vancouver. Further cities expected to join shortly.

Information on PIE, including the methodology adopted and the experience of participating cities, may be obtained from the PIE web site: www.pie.pascalobservatory.org. After an initial stage of development based on stimulus papers posted by participating cities, PIE has now progressed to a second stage based on six major
themes: Cultural Policy; Responding to Social Change; Preserving the Environment; ICT and Media; Mobilising Civil Society; Healthy Cities.

The inclusion of Preserving the Environment and Healthy Cities as PIE major themes illustrates ways in which the Learning City concept can reach out to address major issues in the development of cities. At the same time, developments of these sectors stands to be enriched by exchanges of experience between cities on heritage and cultural aspects of development, learning strategies and community building, and strategies to address equity and social justice issues so as to build inclusive, cohesive cities. The Learning City concept offers a fundamentally humanistic vision of future life in cities that can also support strategies to address key issues in a range of sectors contributing to sustainability.

Examples may be found among the cities participating in PIE of approaches to fostering lifelong learning in a wide range of contexts. For example, the Hume Global Learning Village is an initiative of Hume City Council in a district of Melbourne with considerable disadvantage, great diversity with migrants from many parts of the world, but with a council committed to ideas of social justice and opportunities for all. The success of this initiative since 2004 shows the importance of values in driving partnership action, the key role of a local government council, and the pay off from careful strategic action guided by a shared vision of the future and strategies to involve and inform the community.

On the other hand, the Beijing Learning City initiative shows what can be achieved with leadership and careful planning in a city with a population of over 20 million. The Beijing initiative with an active Leadership Group reaches down into all 16 Administrative Districts so that the whole city is connected through a series of learning networks across the city. All downtown areas in the city have a community education network base led by community colleges and adult education centres.
The Beijing stimulus paper for PIE reported that 80 percent of sub-districts have established community education centres or learning centres. More than 1,000 full-time and part-time teachers have joined in this city-wide effort assisting communities in developing community education activities. This is an incredible effort that demonstrates what can be achieved with vision, leadership and concerted action.

Other stimulus papers on the PIE website illustrate important themes in city development. The Glasgow paper is interesting in illustrating how museums in Glasgow have adopted a social justice approach to their work, and so make important connections between cultural policy and social objectives in city development. The Bari paper shows how a city can adopt a broad partnership approach in combating crime and promoting public safety. The three African papers (Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Dakar) demonstrate massive problems arising from rapid urban growth with the Dakar paper showing the importance of harnessing traditional African ways of learning in fostering lifelong learning in Africa. Altogether, there is much to be gained from a careful reading of the PIE stimulus papers.

**Healthy cities**

It has become evident that Learning Cities and Healthy Cities share a good deal in common, and that community learning strategies can contribute much to Healthy City objectives. This convergence of interests has become more apparent with the strong interest of Healthy City initiatives in the social determinants of health following the work of the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. This provides a common platform of interest in addressing equity and social justice issues, with the experience of Learning City initiatives in these areas a resource that can be drawn on with benefits for health objectives.
The Healthy City movement emerged from the work of the WHO, and has been progressed by a number of regional networks that link cities committed to Healthy City principles. In the Asian region, for example, an Alliance of Healthy Cities now links a large number of cities in the Asian region, including some Australian cities.

WHO (2011) has defined a Healthy City in the following manner:

A Healthy City is one that is continuously creating or improving their physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing their maximum potential.

This could be a definition of a Learning City, with considerable commonality with the definition of a Learning City given by Longworth cited above. Both concepts draw on and develop a range of community resources, develop people to their maximum potential, and foster partnerships in these endeavours.

Key common interests that Learning Cities and Healthy Cities share were articulated in the Final Report of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (WHO 2008). The social determinants of health have been defined as the:

... socio-economic conditions that influence the health of individuals, communities and jurisdictions as a whole. These determinants also establish the extent to which a person possesses the physical, social, and personal resources to identify and achieve personal aspirations, satisfy needs and cope well with the environment. (Raphael 2004)

Follow up on the report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in countries such as the UK has identified areas where action is likely to be the most effective in reducing health inequalities. These have included areas such as early childhood development and education, social protection, and sustainable development which are typically the heartland of Learning City initiatives (Campbell 2010).
Healthy cities principles and values

A useful statement of Healthy City principles and values may be found in the 2009 Zagreb Declaration on Healthy Cities. These are shown below (WHO 2009):

- **Equity**: addressing inequality in health, and paying attention to the needs of those who are vulnerable and socially disadvantaged. Inequity is inequality in health that is unfair and unjust and avoidable causes of ill health. The right to health applies to all regardless of sex, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, age, disability or socioeconomic circumstance.

- **Participation and empowerment**: ensuring the individual and collective right of people to participate in decision making that affects their health, health care and well-being. Providing access to opportunities and skills development together with positive thinking to empower citizens to become self-sufficient.

- **Working in partnership**: building effective multi-sectoral strategic partnerships to implement integrated approaches and achieve sustainable improvement in health.

- **Solidarity and friendship**: working in the spirit of peace, friendship and solidarity through networking and respect and appreciation of the social and cultural diversity of the cities of the Healthy Cities movement.

- **Sustainable development**: the necessity of working to ensure that economic development, and all the supportive infrastructure needs, is environmentally and socially sustainable.

It is evident that much of this statement could apply equally to Learning Cities with the thrusts of these initiatives towards equity, participation, empowerment and partnership providing a framework to progress the objectives of healthy cities.

Health is one of the foundations for well-being. In thinking about the well-being of individuals and communities, we are inevitably drawn to thinking about learning, self-esteem, and the confidence that an
educated person able to continue learning and developing throughout life acquires. Learning to be is surely a pillar of well-being.

**Green cities and Eco cities**

Like Healthy Cities, there has been considerable promotion of the concepts of Green Cities and Eco Cities. With the Rio+20 Summit drawing attention to the need to find innovative ways to address the environmental challenges to the planet we inhabit, the potential of the city as an arena for progress is attracting growing interest—and, rightly so.

This interest is reflected in studies and initiatives such as the European Union’s Green Capitals awards, the Eco2 program of the World Bank, the Citystate concept developed by Sustainability, the Sustainable Cities Collective, and the EcCoWell concept I developed for PASCAL. If we look across these competing yet complementary visions, we will find a number of common themes that are relevant to the development of towns and cities in Australia.

The Eco2 program of the World Bank was launched as an integral part of the Bank’s Urban and Local Government Strategy. The core idea is stated in the following terms (World Bank 2011: 2):

> ... an Eco2 city builds on the synergy and interdependence of ecological and economic sustainability, and their fundamental ability to reinforce each other in the urban context.

This idea has been taken up by other agencies such as the OECD in its Green Growth Strategy that is discussed below.

The World Bank in its Eco2 program identified four principles for the development of Eco Cities. These are:

1. **A city based approach**—enables local governments to lead a development process that takes into account their specific circumstances, including their local ecology.
2. **An expanded platform for collaborative design and decision making**—accomplishes sustained synergy by coordinating and aligning the actions of key stakeholders.

3. **A one system approach**—enables cities to realise the benefits of integration by planning, designing, and managing the whole urban system.

4. **An investment framework that values sustainability and resiliency**—incorporates and accounts for lifestyle analysis, the value of all capital assets (manufactured, natural).

As I have noted with Healthy City principles, these principles could apply to good Learning City development, and could largely apply to Healthy Cities.

The European Green Capital award of the EU illustrates the growing significance given to the environmental challenges confronting cities in Europe, and the key role of local government authorities in improving and sustaining the environment. This award is intended to showcase good practice models so as to disseminate ideas about best practice.

Since the award commenced in 2010, the following cities have won the award: Stockholm (2010), Hamburg (2011), Vitoria-Gasteig (2012) and Nantes (2013). As with other green initiatives, the wards link respect for the environment, quality of life and economic growth.

The idea that Green growth is about more than the environment or ecology was also supported by the Green Growth Leaders (2011: 5) in a study of the socio-economic benefits of green development in Copenhagen:

> Green must, therefore, been seen in a broader perspective than strictly environmental. It is also about improving quality of life and creating jobs and business opportunities throughout the entire economy—not just in the clean-tech sector.
The OECD has added to these evolving perspectives on Green growth with its release of the *OECD Green growth strategy: A lens for examining growth* (OECD 2011a). This strategy was seen as providing a framework for Green growth, including addressing seeming conflicts of economic and environmental objectives (OECD 2011a: 10):

A green growth strategy is centred on mutually reinforcing aspects of economic and environmental policy. It takes into account the full value of natural capital as a factor of production and its role in growth. It focuses on cost-effective ways of attenuating environmental pressures to effect a transition towards new patterns of growth that will avoid crossing critical, local, regional and global environmental thresholds.

The OECD Green Growth Strategy attempts to bring together economic, environmental, social, technological and developmental aspects into a comprehensive framework, pointing the way to link Green growth to the other domains of socio-economic development.

Similarly, the Zero-draft of the Outcome Document for the UN Rio10+20 Conference recognises the need for the integration of economic development and environmental sustainability in balancing the three pillars of sustainable development seen as economic, social, and environmental sustainability (United Nations 2012). This recognition of the case for an integrated and holistic approach to developing sustainable cities is in accord with the thesis of this paper.

The key role of local government authorities in the development of a framework for sustainable development has emerged from the work of ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability, an international organisation with over 1200 members across towns and cities around the world. The work of ICLEI promotes key aspects of sustainability in ‘Urban resilience and adaptation’ and adds to good practice models that are emerging from leading Green Cities such as Copenhagen, Stockholm and Hamburg. (The in-depth profile of Copenhagen as a Green City prepared by the Green Growth Leaders (2011) provides
Learning cities as healthy green cities

a good example of the socio-economic benefits from well-managed green growth.)

The growing literature on Green Cities and Eco Cities points to the need for strategies to progress holistic approaches to urban development that link environmental, health, learning, community building and economic aspects of development, and which accord with the principles for Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Eco Cities I have mentioned. I turn now to the critical question of how we build pathways towards Sustainable Opportunity Cities that accord with these principles and which add value beyond these separate aspirations.

While I have drawn substantially in this paper on the EcCoWell paper I wrote for PASCAL on Sustainable Opportunity Cities, I have omitted parts of that paper which add to the full case for Sustainable Opportunity cities. The omitted parts relate to wellbeing, community and cultural aspects, economic aspects, place making, and balancing individual and community interests. These parts of the case may be read in the EcCoWell paper online: http://pie.pascalobservatory.org.

**The path towards Sustainable Opportunity Cities**

I have taken the position in this paper that cities around the world are confronted by a seeming convergence of forces that underpin key learning, health, environment and cultural objectives. This provides an opportunity to seize this ‘conjuncture of forces’ to develop in a coordinated comprehensive way through partnerships and a shared vision, cities that are sustainable, humane, and foster learning and well-being for all. I have termed such cities Sustainable Opportunity Cities (EcCoWell)—cities that combine the benefits of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green/Eco Cities.

While there is now a significant knowledge base on Learning Cities and Healthy Cities, and a growing base on Green Cities, the path
to Sustainable Opportunity Cities is likely to involve a reframing of our ideas about city development, involving new paradigms, and a ‘process of dynamic synergy’ (Hall 1998: 18): ‘The key is the ability to transfer ideas from one circuit into another—for which, there must be many such circuits’ (Hall 1998:19).

This process of linking networks in a ‘process of dynamic synergy’ will require frameworks to enable this to happen, a requirement that is becoming increasingly important with the growth of cities in size and diversity. The role of local government councils in this process will be central.

An effective Learning City initiative can provide a moral and ethical framework for stimulating learning throughout life, and building citizenship and a shared sense of identity and community that reaches out to others as well as addressing local concerns through city-based initiatives. This provides a necessary foundation for addressing issues such as preserving the environment, eradicating poverty, and enhancing health and well-being that are both local and global in their ramifications.

There are layers of connections in cities that can be built on in fostering this process of dynamic synergy, as Landry (2008: 22) notes:

> There are layers upon layers of urban interconnections—personal, political and economic—often based on historic migratory patterns such as the bamboo network of expatriate Chinese, who from Vancouver to Sydney are part of China-based trading system.

The experience of rapid growth African cities, such as Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Addis Ababa, points to the significance of understanding these layers of urban/rural interconnections as a foundation in the path towards sustainable EcCoWell cities.
With growing diversity in many cities through increased migration, both from rural areas and internationally, responding to diversity is a key challenge on the path to sustainability. This has been termed by Wood and Landry (2008: 23) as the central dilemma of the age: ‘Dealing with and valuing diversity and the desire for distinctiveness is the central dilemma of an age’.

While dealing with diversity will be a challenge for many cities, on the other hand planning for diversity advantage can be a source of cultural riches and creativity that adds to the ethos and spirit of a city (Wood & Landry 2008: 10–13).

Achieving diversity advantage in an intercultural city can often be a matter of the so called ‘Medici effect’, the convergence of ideas and concepts across related areas of city development which provides opportunities to establish a process of dynamic synergy that will lead to value added outcomes across these sectors, as happened in the burst of creativity in fifteenth century Florence under its Medici rulers (Johansson 2004: 2–3).

The concepts of Learning City, Healthy City and Green City have much in common so that connecting up these concepts, and their linked strategies, will provide opportunities to progress these objectives in humane, sustainable cities. The interaction of ideas at the intersections of these concepts will provide opportunities for breakthrough insights in harnessing the ‘Medici effect’.

There are surely opportunities in connecting up our learning, community, health, well-being and environmental aspirations to make this process creative. As the World Bank in its Eco2 City initiative reminds us, we should think strategically in terms of a one-system approach that connects individual initiatives.

The aspirations of Green Cities and Healthy Cities need the humanism that underpins the Learning City concept if they are to
flourish and to be sustained in the long term. The Learning City concept will be revitalised through the contemporary relevance of the Green City and Healthy City objectives. There is in this situation a convergence of interest, as well as a convergence of common concerns and objectives.

These aspirations will all benefit from the active promotion of a broad concept of lifelong learning for all. Over time, this will contribute to building a learning culture in cities that is receptive to new ideas (Kearns & Papadopoulos 2000). And, perhaps a Learning Society (Kearns: 2006).

While the concept of lifelong learning has sometimes been narrowed to a focus on skill and economic development objectives, there is much merit in the assertion by Duke that there is most benefit in widening the scope of lifelong learning ‘to address the social, civic and sustainable ecological needs of complex ageing societies’ (Duke 2011: 5). Active partnership in implementing such a concept of lifelong learning will benefit all the aspirations discussed in this paper. As Glaeser (2011: 269) has wisely observed: ‘We build civilization and culture together, constantly learning from one another and from the past’.

A successful Learning City initiative provides an overarching framework and stimulus to harness this process of on-going learning and partnership so as to further share aspirations and contribute to revitalising civilization and culture. This requires a certain boldness of vision, understanding of the past and present, and goodwill in reaching out to others (Ferguson 2011: 324–325).

Both the Healthy City and Green City aspirations need the work of successful Learning City initiatives in progressing equity and social justice, opening opportunities for learning and personal development throughout life, and building community and a civic sense of
common interest. Fostering these aspirations will build a platform for furthering health, well-being, environment and economic objectives.

While historically trade has been the vehicle to spread and deepen civilizations, modern technologies provide an opportunity to foster the interplay of ideas and cultures everywhere in the global marketplace of ideas.

**What are the implications for adult education in Australia?**

I turn now to the question of the implications of the ideas discussed in this paper for the role of adult education in Australia—and for the opportunities now emerging for those labouring in the vineyard in building learning communities with little support and recognition from governments.

In the EcCoWell working paper, four ways to progress a convergence of Learning City, Healthy City and Green City aspirations were identified. These were:

1. Learning Cities that broaden to progress Healthy City and Green City objectives.
2. Healthy City and Green City initiatives that apply Learning City objectives and strategies.
3. Networks that link Learning City, Healthy City and Green City initiatives in a particular region, or internationally.
4. New initiatives that adopt the EcCoWell approach from the beginning.

Each one of these approaches involves extending partnerships and building a shared vision of the future. It is surely time to assert the adult education role, in a framework of lifelong learning and community building, as a key player and partner in approaches to sustainability in towns and cities. The learning city idea is an
overarching concept that can reach out to support a range of pillars of sustainable humane cities.

The examples I have cited from the PASCAL International Exchanges illustrate different approaches. The Beijing Learning City, for example, demonstrates a comprehensive reaching down approach, reaching down to all Administrative Districts and sub-districts. Good practice is recognised and rewarded. The Hume Global Learning Village illustrates a more evolutionary approach which commenced as a Learning City initiative in a district with considerable disadvantage, but which is now considering how health and environment objectives can be linked to the on-going Learning City initiative. Both developments have an active Leadership Group, the strong support of the City government/council, and build on research in striving for continuous improvement.

The EcCoWell paper makes the suggestion that much would be gained from a mix of these approaches that fostered a rich milieu of innovative ideas and sharing of experience. Such an approach would be most productive if supported by relevant organisations and agencies such as PASCAL, UNESCO, WHO, UNEP and Green Growth Leaders.

There are various portents that the Learning City is an idea whose time has come in a context of growing concern with urbanisation, sustainability and poverty/exclusion issues. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg is currently undertaking planning for a Global Learning City Network to be launched in late 2013 with PASCAL contributing to this development. A special issue of the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* with a focus on Learning
Cities around the world is planned for July 2013. Both these developments are raising a raft of questions, including assessment of progress.

The context discussed in this paper calls for deepened partnerships that explore areas of common interest, mutual aspirations and strategies that progress all aspirations in value-added ways. This approach goes in the direction of ‘the deepening recognition of the value and necessity of partnership, pluralism, and the interplay of many perspectives’ (Tarnas 1991: 443).

The fundamental common interest that all stakeholders in Australian towns and cities have in promoting just, sustainable futures points to the need for a mutual commitment to action to ensure a sustainable future. This idea has been given shape by the German Government’s Advisory Council on Global Change as a Social Contract for Sustainability—a commitment by all sectors of society to joint action in the Great Transformation to a sustainable society (German Advisory Council on Global Change 2011). Is this an idea with implications for Australia?

While this paper has had a focus on Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green City initiatives, other relevant networks exist in cities that are relevant to the idea of a good city discussed in this paper. Networking the networks in cities, regionally and internationally is a key challenge and opportunity. There are opportunities in this situation to revitalise the concept of learning communities, and the role of adult education in Australian society.

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6 The *IJLE* issue will include a chapter on the interesting work done by the former Canadian Council on Learning in developing and implementing over five years a Composite Learning Index based on the four pillars identified by the UNESCO Delors Commission (Learning to Know, Do, Learning to Live with Others, Learning to Be). The Canadian CLI Index has been applied in Europe in a study sponsored by the Bertelsmann Foundation (ELLI 2010).
Living, learning and growing in Sustainable Opportunity Cities provides an opportunity to build a creative synthesis of the ideals and values that have motivated initiatives across education and learning, health, culture and environment sectors in urban contexts, and to reassert the historic role of cities as the cradles of civilization and culture.

The time for segmented responses is surely past and the path towards sustainable development in humane twenty-first century cities will be one of high interest with many opportunities for creative ideas and innovations.

References


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Living and learning in EcCoWell cities: Discussion paper

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These notes and questions have been prepared to promote discussion of the ideas set out in the Clarifying paper, ‘Living and learning in EcCoWell cities’ to be found on the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) website. This Discussion Paper sets ten questions for discussion. We are hoping to encourage discussions of these issues around the world.

These notes and questions have been prepared to promote discussion of the ideas set out in the Clarifying paper, ‘Living and learning in EcCoWell cities’. The Clarifying paper was prepared to provide a possible framework for further exchanges between cities participating in the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) that go in the direction of broader, more holistic and integrated strategies. (The Clarifying paper and information on PIE is available on the website <www.pie.pascalobservatory.org>).
It is hoped that arrangements will be made for cross-sectoral discussion of the ideas in the Clarifying paper so as to identify areas of common interest and ways in which these shared interests can be strengthened. Feedback from these discussions to PIE will have considerable value for all the cities participating in PIE, and will enable an expanded draft of the Clarifying paper to be prepared to include practical ways of working towards holistic strategies that advance learning, community, health and well-being, environmental and cultural objectives in participating cities in cost-effective ways that add value.

It would be particularly useful if the following questions could be discussed by mixed groups that bring together people with experience across education/learning, health, environment, community building and cultural sectors.

A. The convergence and common interest themes (pp. 4–12)

The central thesis of the Clarifying Paper is that Learning City, Healthy City and Green City initiatives share certain common interests, so that these aspirations will be progressed best in cities if holistic integrated strategies are adopted that recognise, and build on, areas of common interest.

For example, Learning City initiatives commonly aim to provide learning opportunities for all sections of the community, and so further equity, social justice and community objectives. An empowered and enlightened citizenry will have an enhanced understanding of environmental issues, while the equity strategies of Learning Cities will facilitate progress in addressing the social determinants of health.

**Question 1:** What links and connections may be identified between learning, community, health and well-being, and environmental objectives in your city? To what extent have these connections been forged in policies? What more could be done?
Question 2: What are the main barriers to more holistic and integrated strategies? How could these be addressed?

B. Advancing well-being in the city (pp. 10–11)

The paper asserts that learning, health, community building and cultural policies can each contribute to the well-being of citizens and their families. This impact can be enhanced if policies and strategies are co-ordinated. Central aspects include:

- learning encourages social interaction and increases self-esteem and feelings of competency;
- benefits from learning in one domain such as health and environment impact on functioning in domains such as family and community;
- as better measures of well-being are becoming available, the policy significance of well-being has increased; and
- there has been a growing concern in some countries at mental health problems and increased alienation of sections of the population, including many young people.

Question 3: To what extent are sectoral policies that enhance well-being co-ordinated in a strategic approach to promoting well-being in your city? What more could be done?

Question 4: In what ways are mental health problems and growing social alienation of some groups being addressed? What more could be done?

C. Enhancing place-making (pp. 12–13)

The Clarifying paper suggests that the concept of place-making can provide an important framework for bringing stakeholders into partnership arrangements to advance a shared vision. The active involvement of the community is central to this concept. The community role of civic spaces is a key aspect of creative place-making.
**Question 5:** In what ways could place-making in your city be enhanced as a democratic process contributing to empowering the community, strengthening citizenship and a sense of identity in the city, and contributing to the aspirations and ideals discussed in this paper?

D. Community and cultural policies (pp. 8–9)

Heritage and cultural policies can be important in building community, a sense of identity and belonging, and adding to social cohesion in cities—as well as enhancing the quality of life and well-being of residents. These dimensions of good cities are especially important in cities that have experienced rapid growth, large-scale migration, and considerable poverty and inequality.

**Question 6:** What role do community and cultural policies play in the development of your city? In what ways could their impact be enhanced?

E. Preserving the environment (pp. 7–8)

Many cities have adopted policies to preserve and enhance the environment, and a number of leading Green Cities have emerged. The success of Green City strategies depends on community understanding and support for the policies adopted so that there are important educational and learning dimensions. Innovative eco-community projects provide examples of community-led initiatives. Community understanding of complex issues, such as global warming, presents challenges where education and learning strategies can make a contribution.

**Question 7:** In what ways do Green City objectives connect with Learning City and Healthy City aspirations and strategies? How could these connections be strengthened?

F. Towards Sustainable Development in EcCoWell Cities (pp. 15–17)

The Clarifying paper asserts that ways need to be found to progress beyond silo development in cities so that holistic and integrated
across sectors leads to a shared vision, community support, and value-added outcomes in building humane sustainable cities.

This will require arrangements that transfer ideas from one circuit to another and which recognise the layers upon layers of urban interconnections. The growing diversity in many cities is a particular issue to be addressed.

**Question 8**: What steps could be taken in your city to strengthen sectoral understanding, co-operation and policy integration?

**Question 9**: In what ways could all sectors collaborate and contribute in addressing the question of growing diversity in many cities, and in progressing towards a shared identity with social inclusion in a sustainable city?

**Question 10**: Overall, what do you regard as the single most important initiative that needs to be taken in building humane, inclusive and sustainable cities?

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Flexible models for learning English are needed for refugee mothers

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The importance of English language acquisition for resettlement of refugees is well established, particularly as a pathway to education, employment, health and social connections. A qualitative study was conducted in 2011 in Melbourne, Australia utilising focus groups with 87 refugee background women from Karen, Iraqi, Assyrian Chaldean, Lebanese, South Sudanese and Bhutanese refugee
backgrounds. Focus groups and interviews were also conducted with 18 service providers and five bicultural and community workers. Several barriers were identified that prevented refugee mothers from learning English; however, some innovative and flexible models appear promising. The development, implementation and evaluation of innovative models and settings for refugee background women with young children to learn English in a culturally appropriate way are essential.

Importance of English for refugee settlement

Australia receives approximately 13,750 refugees each year (DIAC 2011). The process of refugee resettlement is complex, and it has been widely documented that gaining host-country language proficiency is critical for integration (Colic-Pesker & Walker 2003; Taylor 2004). Research shows that groups most at risk of exclusion, such as women, the elderly and those with limited previous education, are those least likely to learn English (Beiser 2009). Language skills are vital for participating in education and employment, and accessing services, which in turn, affect opportunities to develop social connections (Ager & Strang 2008).

As part of a suite of settlement services, new migrants to Australia with less than ‘functional’ English are eligible for 510 hours of free English language classes (DIAC 2011). Refugees are less likely than other migrants to have family and friends already in Australia, and so they rely on English classes and other settlement services as sources of information (AMES 2011). Failure to access English classes, therefore, heightens the risk of social isolation. An Australian study found low English proficiency was a significant predictor of post-partum depression for migrant mothers. Women in this category more commonly reported loneliness and isolation and a need for more support (Bandyopadhyay, Small, Watson & Brown 2010).
Flexible models for learning English are needed for refugee mothers

A Canadian longitudinal study found associations between limited English fluency and depression and unemployment among refugee women ten years after arrival (Beiser 2009). Conversely, English language proficiency has been found to promote wellbeing and self-esteem (Sun Hee Ok, Ehrich & Ficorilli 2012).

This study

The authors conducted a qualitative study exploring experiences of utilisation of the state-wide maternal and child health services by refugee background people in Melbourne, Australia. This report presents additional unsolicited findings concerning barriers for women’s participation in English language courses that emerged during the study.

Focus groups were conducted with 87 mothers from diverse backgrounds including: Karen, Iraqi, Assyrian Chaldean, Lebanese, South Sudanese and Bhutanese. Participants had lived in Australia for an average of 4.7 years. Service providers, including nurses, bicultural workers and other community workers, also participated. The full methods and results of this study are published elsewhere (Riggs et al. under review).

Results

Barriers for learning English

Participants reported wanting to learn English, but found attendance at classes impossible. For many this was due to child-rearing responsibilities and concerns that available childcare options were culturally inappropriate. Processes for accessing part-time study options are complex and women expressed concern that part-time, rather than full-time, study may affect their welfare payments.

Service providers reported that most refugee families prioritised attendance at English classes for the male, as head of the household,
to increase employment opportunities. Several also stated that some women were discouraged from attending mixed-gender classes by their husbands or other family members who considered them inappropriate. As one nurse commented:

It’s pretty sad; it just doesn’t seem to be considered important that the woman knows how to speak English too, and to me that’s a huge power imbalance there, so her husband learns to speak English and she doesn’t know how to say anything (Refugee Health Nurse).

Those mothers who accessed English classes found the allocated 510 hours insufficient, as this was the first experience for many of classroom-based learning. Some received home tutoring, but usually only one hour per week, which is not enough to learn a new language.

Impact of limited English

Our study confirmed previous findings that limited English proficiency leaves mothers at risk of isolation and marginalisation. As their children rapidly become proficient in English, communication issues and family dysfunction can arise. Most mothers felt their families would benefit if they learnt English, as they could be independent and not reliant on others to translate and interpret for them. English language acquisition would also increase mothers’ confidence in accessing mainstream services:

...some people they are afraid. They don’t know English and how they go on the [answering] machine. For me, it took me three days to make an appointment myself, I got the card, the number and I got the phone but I can’t...because it scares me (South Sudanese mother).

All mothers giving birth in Victoria are invited to attend a mothers’ group, which aims to provide peer support for new mothers living close to each other. For refugee mothers, lack of English limits this opportunity, as they reported being too scared to attend.
Despite giving up opportunities to learn English in favour of looking after their children, at times this decision compromised their parenting. As some women explained, they were unable to communicate with their children’s kindergarten and school teachers.

Dependence on public transport was particularly challenging for mothers who had to take children to kindergarten and school before going to English classes. Many refugees settle in new areas of housing development, where public transport is either inaccessible or too difficult to negotiate with several young children, particularly when services are infrequent.

The Bhutanese and South Sudanese mothers, in particular, identified computer and internet access and skills as problematic—as seeking employment, obtaining qualifications and driving licences all require computer skills and English language proficiency.

Innovative models for learning English
Some innovative ad hoc models were identified which offered opportunities for women to learn English by incorporating language learning into local programs, including cooking classes, culturally-specific and multicultural playgroups, and bilingual story-time. Several service providers reported that opportunities for conversational English in these programs allowed women to improve everyday language skills such as reading food packages and reading timetables for public transport. Many service providers and several women reported that gaining confidence in speaking English in these contexts was a key factor in assisting them to become self-sufficient. A program in Queensland was trialled in culturally appropriate settings and involved workshop-style learning based on real-life literacy needs and adopted a socio-cultural approach to English language learning (Hewagodage and O’Neill 2010).
Conclusion

Enhancing inclusion for refugee background women is a matter of human rights and is a significant community concern with lifelong and intergenerational impacts. Language proficiency is an important means of achieving inclusion. However, this study identified a range of barriers particular to mothers in accessing English language classes. It also confirmed the existing evidence that lack of English compromises study and work opportunities, impedes access to a range of health and social services, and increases social isolation. Flexible models that incorporate English learning into real-world contexts demonstrate promise. Rigorous evaluation of these models is critical for identifying successful strategies for supporting refugee settlement.

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BOOK REVIEW

Improving working as learning

Alan Felstead, Alison Fuller, Nick Jewson and Lorna Unwin
Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009
ISBN: 978–0-415–49646–9; $41.95; 225 pages (pbk.)

The authors of this soft cover, British-based, first book which examines the development and use of their theory of the Working As Learning Framework (WALF) are Alan Felstead, a Research Professor at the School of Social Sciences, University of Cardiff; Alison Fuller, a Professor of Education and Work in the School of Education, University of Southampton; Nick Jewson, an Honorary Research Fellow at Cardiff’s School of Social Sciences; and Lorna Unwin, a Professor of Vocational Education at the Institute of Education, University of London.

In the preface of this solidly referenced book, the series editor—Andrew Pollard—states that ‘the authors convincingly demonstrate that the [WALF] framework offers a sophisticated understanding of
how improving the work environment—both within the workplace and beyond—can enhance and sustain improvements in learning at work’.

It is clear from the outset that Felstead et al. are making several assumptions, one being that the work to which they refer is paid employment. Although not defined as such, it is apparent from the outset that they are not interrogating the other meanings that have been given to work in other societies and other eras. Casey’s (1995) brief history of work reveals the wide range of meanings given to work over time, from its lowly status in the ancient world—where only slaves, artisans and women worked—to being a social obligation today in the form of the work ethic. Moreover, Beder (2000) argued that the work ethic originated as the heart of capitalist culture from sixteenth century Calvinism—later to be taken up by Methodism in Britain—but was transformed into a generalised secular ethic (‘hard work leads to success’) in the nineteenth century and is still the dominant value in our society. This is important, as the authors make the economic relationship between (paid) workplace productivity and learning as central to their thesis. This ignores the more contemporary understanding of the term ‘work’, which allows us to examine the idea that work includes the unpaid work responsibilities involving—but not limited to—the skills needed for all forms of caring, volunteering, domestic responsibilities and family commitments. Furthermore, such unpaid work saves our communities considerable amounts of expenditure. The learning that occurs in such settings also has economic benefits for our modern society; if these tasks were undertaken by paid workers, who would pay for it? But aside from this sociological quibble, the book is interesting well-written and well-structured.

In Chapter 1, ‘Setting the scene’, the authors explain their choice of workplace contexts, each of which represents different types of industry. They include sectors which have differing histories,
production methods, markets and driving forces (although all seem to have the need, perhaps not surprisingly, to be driven by profit). They also note that, as they were completing the book, the first fallout from the Global Financial Crisis was being felt, and used this to assert that there was therefore an even greater need to increase the skills and productivity of workers to sustain the economy. Perhaps they would express this differently now in 2012, given that despite high skills and productivity, there has been a dramatic increase in unemployment and failed businesses and economies due to explosive economic failure in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. This has surely been greater than they could have imagined in 2009. Their now slightly problematic claim, however, does not diminish the usefulness of their framework, as is examined as follows.

In Chapter 2, ‘Mapping the working as learning framework’, the WALF is unpicked against a range of other aspects of workplace learning theories. In essence, they use aspects of the theory of productive systems, as these can allow an examination of the totality of a gamut of workers in organisations from individuals and small work groups to global, political and financial networks which may be involved in the production of commodities in our economic system. They also focus on the importance of power structures in any such analysis, and of the centrality of the concept of discretion—the amount of control that workers have over the aims and objectives of their work processes, how those objectives are obtained and who takes responsibility for their outcomes. Interlinked with these elements are those of habitual trust, in which the granting of discretion is validated by perhaps tradition and reliability. Symbolic trust about discretion is validated by symbols of moral or ethical values. Finally, there is communal trust, wherein people, groups and entities identify with one another and share some communal bonding which is often replete with emotional capital. In summary, the authors detail that the WALF is a new work and learning theory in which the interconnected theories of productive systems, work
organisations, learning environments and learning territories has been re-conceptualised. Given the potential of generating extremely complex data gathering and analysis if the WAFL were used in larger, multifaceted bodies, the authors have instead focused their research here on smaller, more specific workplace roles and contexts.

In the chapters which follow, the authors provide evidence to support the use of WAFL as a means of improving learning at work. For example, Chapter 3, ‘Processing calls’, is focused on a call centre (referred to here as a contact centre) in a local government authority, and the authors examine how its establishment altered the power relationships and authority of both individuals and departments across the whole local entity. In Chapter 6, the use of high discretionary relations and downward devolution of power was exemplified by a software development company in which decision making was left to project teams and employee rewards were tied to company performance. In Chapter 8, the foreign owners of a small parts firm required ‘proof’ that the workers were competent, clearly a context in which trust alone was not enough.

In the final chapter, Chapter 9, the WALF is positioned as a valuable, valid and reliable tool for research policy and practice.

The language in this text is that which is used by academic educationalists and hence could be challenging to a new researcher in the field who is not acquainted with the many and varied workplace learning theories that abound. While the book was strongly referenced throughout, I was slightly surprised that there was no reference to Poell’s Learning Network Theory, to which it appears to share some elements; however, this is a minor query. It is difficult to do justice to this well researched and thoughtful book in a short review, but in summary this text would be a valuable addition to the library of anyone who is researching in areas which are focused on workplace learning.
References


BOOK REVIEW

Makers, breakers and fixers

Mark Thomson
ISBN: 0732283434; price $27.99
232 pages with photographs and illustrations

Mark Thomson’s corrugated culture

The profile of this extraordinary and enriching book mentions in part that it examines

... the link between creativity and resourcefulness, a powerful Australian tradition forged out of isolation, drought, fire, war and the depression. From farm to factory to artist’s studio, the shed has come to be treasured as a palace of everyday creativity. It’s the place where problems are solved and communities built.

This is the third book in Thomson’s ‘Shed’ series, with Blokes and sheds and Rare trades. It could be of considerable interest to educators since it looks at the physical (and metaphoric) shed as a
place where the maintenance works of local living are addressed as learning projects pursued by individuals and groups.

This landscape-formatted book is like a compact ‘coffee table’ book. It is printed on thick art paper full of photographs of men working in and effectively ‘framed’ by their sheds, some in solitary splendor, others in amiable groups. The seven chapters are prefaced with a significant introduction about what Thomson calls the ‘national secret’, which is that ‘shed culture’ reveals resourcefulness around practical problem solving, adaptation and invention and that these practical qualities are worth dwelling on and encouraging lest they deteriorate in a throw-away culture of spectatorship and consumerism.

As Thomson points out in his introduction, buildings constructed by corporate entities like cathedrals, banks, courthouses and retail emporiums stand for significant corporate values in society. Where buildings of these corporate entities can dwarf the people who use them, the sheds that men inhabit are more of their own scale and stand for and enable personal and local practical engagement, usefulness and resourcefulness. Practical problem solving and resourcefulness translate happily to lots of areas of life, including big things like disaster relief on a grand scale and the alleviation of local forms of social distress caused by broken toys, tools and furniture. Such small-scale relief can generate a kind of local well-being drawn from being useful, belonging and fitting into a place in the physical and social world. The exchange of a cup of tea and a sandwich for a mended kitchen chair has a certain recognisable currency in social capital and belongs in the same local economy of resourceful sheds and bountiful kitchens.

The book begins with problem solvers and Thomson’s celebration of the tacit knowledge of practical people who often know more than they can tell. In a way, the celebration of tacit, resourceful knowledge underlies this rich and colourful book. The chapters that follow focus
on different kinds of shed—the farm shed, the car shed, the creative shed and the shed as palace, together with early stories of communal men’s sheds.

Thomson travelled in search of these makers and fixers and their sheds. Many of these encounters ended up as chapters in the book with a story of the author meeting the shed people. The story was then combined with helpful, nuanced photographs and interviews with the inhabitants of the shed, their interests and work. The work in the sheds ranged from heavy mechanical work in some of the farm sheds to maintenance work and carpentry in other more general sheds and finally to what could be called studio sheds. These are enclosures where ‘making’ artists ply their trades, making art installations, musical instruments, and sculptures.

One of the significant features of making and fixing in sheds is the unique form that many of these sheds took. The man and his shed seemed often a single highly individuated entity in which Thomson rejoiced and on which he celebrated. At the same time, isolation could be a downside to some men’s singular and idiosyncratic shed life. This could particularly be the case if the larger, domestic context with house, spouse and children of which the shed and its activity was a part had dissipated through loss and/or infirmity. Some sheds had already become places away from the house, where one or two friends could meet around shared making and fixing problems and share time and food and drink. Following reported benefits of such informal social engagements, a number of men either designated communal sheds for themselves or accepted invitation to use purpose-built sheds for a mixture of useful and social activities.

Such communal men’s sheds have now become an integral part of many local community services. Thomson is sensitive to well meaning innovations which have lead to sheds being built and then men being invited to use them without much consultation. He celebrates more democratic developments where sheds as communal focal points were
more bottom-up than top-down, as in the case of the Williamstown Shed which is discussed with the Nambucca Valley Men’s Shed in the chapter on Corrugated Brotherhood.

Thomson’s celebration of the beauty that can be found in some sheds is unleashed in the section on tools which seem almost like shed jewellery photographed in their gleaming arrays on many different walls and racks.

I read this book a while ago and then again for this review and discovered times when I felt an ache of recognition for a earlier time of diversity when more could be made of man’s endless inventiveness and where competitive pyramids and benchmarking did not fill the global landscape. I have realised though reading this book that, in comparing and ranking things and experiences according to competitive perfection, I might have overlooked good and beautiful things close to hand, some of which I could possibly do or make myself—not perhaps to world’s best standard but at least to a certain joyful local perfection.

Thomson’s focus on the shed as the simplest of buildings for acts of making and fixing can raise awareness of human convivial, collaborative and creative powers, capacities and obligations which each generation has to ensure have a place in the one that follows with its new contexts and new challenges.

This colourful and witty gem is highly recommended for educators of adults in community settings and general readers.

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A fascinating study of the way one authentic narrative—
in this case Havi Carel’s- can evoke the stories of
others... (Bruce Rumbold, Director, Palliative Care Unit,
La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia)

Perhaps it is because this book is the result of collaboration in a project
about a particular kind of reflective or ‘listening reading’ that it brings
to mind the image of a hall of mirrors. I don’t mean the fairground kind
of hall that distorts the images into caricatures. Rather, I see it as one
of those mirrored rooms used by fashion designers to explore the many
aspects of their creations from many different angles.

These stories by twelve different people are of their experiences of
living with serious illness. Most are writing about their own illnesses
and a few about the illness and death of a close partner or relative. They
have all used the personal account and phenomenological approach shared by philosopher Havi Carel in her book, *Illness: the cry of the flesh* (Stocksfield, UK: Acumen, 2008), as a lens through which to reflect on their own experience of illness and its potential for teaching life lessons. In doing so, they also touch on additional accounts of the experience of illness published by various other authors. The result is a richly overlapping wealth of reflections and experiences through which the reader can allow their own experience and, in turn, their understanding of illness and its impact on life’s journey to be reflected upon, challenged, extended and enriched.

These experiential chapters are preceded by a useful introduction containing a succinct outline of each. This is preceded by ‘some helpful ideas around being ill, learning and learning life, reading and listening reading, and stories for learning life...’ (p. 2). Thus primed, the reader listens to twelve responses to Carel’s exposition of the impact of serious illness as it is actually lived out and as it challenges and reshapes the dominant discourse.

These twelve essays validate the verisimilitude of Carel’s account even though they differ in several ways both from her and from each other. There is a common theme of the traumatic experience of having one’s mortality so bleakly foregrounded, and many comment on the lack of empathy from some medical experts who deliver this. The various reactions of either denial or anger or depression come as no surprise. But what is more surprising might be that common to all is the need to affirm the importance of what one has, little as it may be, rather than what one has lost, and to do this not once but daily by really living in the present moment.

Another common theme centres on relationships and conversations and how these are highlighted, challenged and often changed. Within this theme there are interesting differences pointed out. A number of the writers felt isolated by the lack of intimate conversation about their experience of their illness and could relate to Carel’s assertion that ‘I
can count on one hand the number of intimate conversations I have had about my illness with friends’ (p. 18). This puzzled the author of the first story as she also read that Carel had a wide circle of friends but on reflection wonders if this has to do with age and says: ‘I am twenty five years older than Havi, so it seems natural for my friends to share conversations about the ways our bodies are falling apart, and our hopes and fears for the end of life’ (p. 18).

A third common theme in the stories is that of the gift or ‘souvenir’ (p. 53) of illness. Despite the writers’ acknowledgment and vivid descriptions of the negative side of their illnesses, these authors name the positives as common experiences; a deeper awareness of the value of the ordinary, of the beauty particularly of nature, of the value of loving relationships. There is also mentioned the growth of gratitude for these and even, perhaps surprisingly, the presence of happiness and joy in life.

These common themes ground each individual story within the matrix of the wider human experience and challenge much in the dominant discourse about quality of life. They also ground the diversity found in the individual stories.

The editors have chosen the participants well so that we are invited into the illness experience of both men and women suffering a variety of different illness; those mainly physical such as cancers; neurological conditions such as MS and Parkinsons; dementia and the sufferings of grief in those close to them. There are contributors of different ages and stages of life; of different backgrounds, social, cultural and spiritual; and with different ways of expressing their truths and of finding strength.

Most of the authors have to some extent an academic background and express themselves through autobiographical narrative cross-referenced with the wider available literature. Many seem to have read the same authors as indeed I found I also have. However, a
few expressed themselves in poetry, the main vehicle for Diana Neutze living with advanced MS. John Knight, who has since died of cancer, also included poetic snippets. Neutze’s chapter in particular provides a breathing space or reflecting pool where one can return again and again to absorb gradually the many treasures of this book through her distilled versions of the themes. Every chapter of this book touched me in its own way, but particularly poignant was the courage of Kate Swaffer, an early onset dementia sufferer.

Havi Carel emphasises the benefit she found in her study of philosophy and her approach to illness, death and its attendant problems and fears are grounded and supported by a strongly rational and secular mindset. Gatt-Rutter points out that ‘Havi Carel’s phenomenology implicitly excludes transcendence’ (p. 62). This is also evident in a number of the authors of this book and Gatt-Rutter has found that ‘Life writing is not intrinsically atheistic or hostile to the transcendental or the spiritual but, ...tends to systematically elide this dimension...’(p. 62). However, although there is no author in this book as overtly religious as Nick Vujicic, author of Life without limits (New York: Doubleday, 2010), equal space is given to other authors like Battestini who is at home with Christian and eastern mysticism and Knight who wants to ‘confront the metaphysics of death’ (p. 48). This I believe should widen the book’s appeal and acceptance.

I don’t know if it is right to say that I enjoyed this book. I was fascinated and extremely touched by the many stories and admired the courage of the authors. It deserves a wide readership—a must for many, such as those in the helping professions. It is also a support and a voice for those who struggle in a competitive world with chronic illness. It is a book I think I will return to often each time reading more slowly so as to listen with respect and be inspired by those who have spoken up for the rest of us.

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NOTES FOR INTENDING CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

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

4 Authors are also to submit, separately from the paper:
   (a) the title of the article (repeated), name(s) of the author(s) and your institutional affiliation(s);
   (b) an abstract of between 100 and 150 words;
   (c) a five-line biographical note on present position and any information of special relevance such as research interests;
   (d) complete contact details, including postal and email addresses, and telephone and fax numbers; and
   (e) a clear indication of whether you want your paper to be refereed (that is, blind peer reviewed by at least two specialist reviewers from Australia and/or overseas)—if there is no indication, the paper will be considered as a non-refereed contribution.

5 Any complex tables, figures and diagrams are to be supplied in camera-ready copy, on separate sheets with an indication of the appropriate location in the text.

6 Authors are to follow the style used in this issue of the Journal. Footnotes should not be used. References should be indicated in text with the author(s), the year of publication and pagination, where necessary, in parentheses; for example, Jones (1998), or (Collins 1999:101). References are then listed in full, including pages, at the end of the paper in consistent form; for example,

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

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

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

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