AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

EDITOR'S DESK

Our regular editor, Roger Harris, has asked me to be the guest editor for this edition of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning. It is a great honour and pleasure to have this opportunity.

This edition of AJAL brings together individual, rural, regional, national and international experiences in adult learning, blending those localities and offering us insight into their interplay with each other and with equity issues. This edition offers readers a rich mix of perspective of marginalisation (rurality, class, class transition, culture, Indigeneity and disability) and of the intersection of these "categories" of identity with socio-political change and agency of change.

This edition features a number of interesting convergences of experience. The perspectives of rural learners and educators in a location such as Cameroon (Idowu on farmers working with agricultural extension agents in Mezam division) and in Australia (Alston *et al*. on fostering engagement and retention of PhD students

statistically likely to suffer attrition) are explored. So are learning-at-work issues in Australia (Timma on learning at three food production facilities in a region of Australia; and Berzin on educational change among Australian federal police officers). And to add to the wealth of insight, are articles that explore culture and learning (Hoy on the biography of a Chinese-Australian lifelong learner; and Munro on the potential impact of legislative changes on community-controlled Indigenous Australian education). To help us broaden our insight into equity and the experiences of learners is Buckingham's article on learners with intellectual disabilities. This edition's Book Review also visits ability and disability in Byrnes powerful review of the work of Arthur Frank; and our regular feature, the Journal Scan by Simons, helps us consider recently published research on vocation, workplace learning and critiques of evidence-based practice in the systematic review.

If we consider our own experience of being listener, reader, and makers of meaning of the text offered to us in this edition, we can ponder how each author offers us an opportunity to reflect on the intersections of equity with the experiences of learners and educators i.e. of the intersection of the personal and the socio-political.

The annual Adult Learning Australia conference approaches with the theme "Learners @ Work". The Conference will be held November 25th–26th 2005 in Canberra. To learn more about the 45th Conference, visit the website www.ala.asn.au where, for example, you will find that abstracts can be submitted up to July 29th 2005 for this annual feast of adult learning issues and experiences. This year those attending have the opportunity to explore both working at learning, and learning for work.

Ann Lawless
Guest Editor

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

Assessor judgements and everyday worker performance

Hilary Timma
Recently completed PhD studies
The University of Melbourne

The subjective nature of assessment focuses attention on the prior perceptions that workplace assessors can bring to formal assessment activities, regarding the competence of workers. This paper draws on a study into workplace learning and assessment practices and the construction of worker identities, which was conducted at three food production companies in North East Victoria. The paper proposes that, rather than concentrating principally on planned, formal assessment activities to determine the competence of workers, workplaces could develop an alternative approach and support assessors to utilize (and make publicly justifiable), the prior perceptions they have regarding workers' skills and abilities on-the-job and include these in the overall assessment.

An alternative approach to workplace assessment

When introduced, Training Package delivery focused on regulatory and compliance mechanisms to ensure implementation (ANTA 2004). Current policy proposes that Training Packages are now sufficiently embedded in vocational education and training (VET) provision to enable '... some flexibility in the application of standard rules ... to test different approaches ...' (ANTA 2004:6). In light of these changing attitudes, this paper draws on evidence from a study into workplace learning and assessment and proposes that prior perceptions about workers' daily work practices, which workplace assessors bring to the assessment experience, should be made part of the total assessment, rather than having assessors rely principally on formal assessment activities to determine worker competence. In many workplaces, assessors often know the workers they assess very well, as they engage in working relationships with one another and may also develop social friendships. Having said this, a vital, yet contentious component of workplace assessment relates to the judgement(s) made by the assessor of the worker's performance (Hager *et al.* 1994; Wolf 1995b; Jones 1999). As these judgements are critical in deciding if an assessee is competent, recognition needs to be given to the subjective nature of an assessor's judgements, which must, nonetheless, be publicly justifiable. Of pivotal importance is the need for a supportive structure to assist assessors to make informed judgements. This paper explores these issues and proposes a model in which the prior perceptions held by assessors, about the skills and abilities of workers, can form a basis for valid assessment.

The judgemental nature of assessment

On the whole, assessors do not decide the assessment criteria, but are responsible for interpreting criteria; and, assumptions are made that assessors have the ability to judge assessee performances consistently (McDonald *et al.* 1995). However, as different performances can

reflect the same standards, competence cannot be observed directly, but it can be inferred from performance (Hager *et al.* 1994; McDonald *et al.* 1995). Workplaces vary enormously and, for this reason, any assessment process is complex and judgemental, as:

> … one person's playing of a piano piece, one person's operations plan, is by definition not exactly the same as another's, and cannot be fitted mechanistically to either a written list of criteria, or to an example (Wolf 1994:35).

Wolf rightly claims that documents do not create the standards, but that they clarify and articulate them to assessors. Accordingly, it is the '… prior knowledge and implicit understanding of what competence in their own context means', that allows assessors to make professional judgements regarding the competence of an assessee (1994:34). Similarly, Mulcahy (1999:99) draws attention to the tacit knowledge that experienced practitioners bring to the assessment experience and that assessment of competencies is translated by assessors, in '… the presence of experience'. Results of two studies, which look at the reliability of assessments in vocational contexts, highlight the variable judgements made by assessors on when a learner is judged to be competent (Wolf 1995a). Some assessors demand perfect performance, whilst others are satisfied with barely adequate performance and doubt is then shed on the notion that clear written standards can ensure acceptable practice on their own. Wolf claims that the assessors' behaviour shows a tendency to '… ignore written instructions in favour of their own standards and judgements' (1995a:98). Therefore, it can be concluded that, whilst informed judgements can be made by individual assessors, it is not possible to ensure consistent judgements between assessors, unless practices such as assessment moderation are introduced (discussed later), to assist in developing consistency in assessor judgement.

Thus far, it has been established that assessment hinges on judgements being made and it is the assessor who is responsible for

deciding if an assessee has attained competency. As Wolf so astutely observes, '[t]he assessment does not take part in a vacuum, but within a social context' (1995b:133); and, this can create a particularly tenuous position for some workplace assessors, as they seek to balance working, social and (possible) personal relationships with the assessee, whilst endeavouring to maintain a professional and impartial approach to the assessment process. This discussion is illustrative of the way in which the 'cultural cohesion' of a workplace can count *against* fair judgements, as judgements can be too subjective. Having said this, an integrated, holistic and judgemental model of assessment accepts that judgement is central to assessment in a competency-based system; so '... the point is to take steps to ensure that such informed judgement is both valid and reliable' (Hager *et al.* 1994:9). Hager *et al.* acknowledge that an informed and experienced assessor weighs up the quantity and quality of evidence provided, in order to ascertain its consistency and, from this process, delivers a competent/not yet competent judgement for the assessee.

So far in this discussion, it is evident there are aspects of deciding competency that necessarily require assessors to apply a level of judgement (Raggatt & Hevey 1994; Beckett 1996; Jones 1999). As it is almost impossible to eradicate the subjectivity humans carry into the assessment process, Tovey (1997) proposes that the goal should be to reduce the degree of opinions and feelings felt by assessors. However, it is important to recognize that judgements are inevitably discretionary, are '... made in the flux of practice ...' and that assessors are required to discriminate between evidence for the competent performance of assessees (Beckett 1996:135). Assessors do bring their own experiences to the assessment process – they compensate, explain away, make allowances – and their own concepts and interpretations play a very active role (Wolf 1995b). The process of assessing is judgemental and necessarily has to be '... *because the actual performance which one observes – directly, or in the form of artefacts – is intrinsically variable...*' (original in italics)

(Wolf 1995b:70). Consequently, whilst judgements are unavoidably contextual, they will eventually become public knowledge and must be rigorously justified.

How skilled, then, are assessors at undertaking assessment of workers and how might they judge that an assessee is competent? In answer to this question, the training and assessment system assumes trainers/assessors have experience which is relevant and up-to-date and, subsequently, whose judgement and expertise is valued (Gibb 1993). Nonetheless, not all assessors have specific industry experience and training and this then casts doubt on their capacity to make informed decisions about the competency of a worker's performance. Judgements made by workplace assessors have a large component of tacit knowledge and this requires high levels of vocational expertise on the part of assessors, as well as '... expertise in making educational judgements' (Jones 1999:154). Assessment judgements are particularly vulnerable to the contextual significance of both personal relationships and also to the awareness of consequences for the assessor and the assessee (Docking 1990; Griffin 1997). These personal significances of the assessment process can influence the attitudes and responses of the assessor. It can be difficult for an assessor to separate assessment outcomes and demonstrated performance from what they know, or believe they know, about the backgrounds of those they are assessing and this can markedly affect outcomes for participants (Gillis *et al.* 1997; Cumming 1998). For this reason, it is important for organizations to assist in the development of assessors' judgement, which recognizes ' ... that " this is the right thing to do"...' (Beckett 1996:138). Again, this highlights the need to provide assessors with relevant training and supportive practice in assessment, to assist them in making informed judgements about assessees' competence, which can be, nonetheless, publicly justified.

Whilst studies show that interpersonal characteristics and physical features of the assessee influence assessor judgement

(Gillis *et al.* 1997), these features and characteristics do not lend themselves to public justification. Furthermore, workplace assessors also develop perceptions about the abilities (or inabilities) of workers to perform tasks because they often observe them at work, on-the-job, on a daily basis. Significantly, the effect of the language used by an assessor when giving feedback to the assessee about their product (or performance) can be problematic, if the assessor fails to make absolutely clear the distinction between the product (or performance) and in judging the assessee as a person (Boud 1995). The result of competent/not yet competent, may be interpreted by the assessee as a direct reflection of the assessor's personal feelings towards them, rather than as an indication of the assessee's competence at the task (Boud 1995).

It is evident that there are a great many complex judgements made by the assessor and that key judgements have '... far more to do with whether someone has actually performed up to the *assessor's* standards...' (italics in original), rather than with the individual performance criteria (Wolf 1995b:67). This observation highlights the contentious nature of the public justification of judgement, which supports a decision concerning the competence of an assessee. An alternative is to attempt to provide complete clarity in the competency standards, but this has been described as the '... never-ending spiral of specification' (Wolf 1995b:55), where the '... performance criteria become narrower and narrower and increasingly divorced from the real world of practice' (Hager *et al.* 1994:86). The issue of assessor judgement requires an understanding of the need to balance the specification of competent performance, with the recognition that informed judgement can be a valid and reliable component of assessing in the workplace. Likewise, the capability of assessors is of particular significance, as their skills in interpreting and implementing assessment guidelines must be balanced with meeting the requirements of the organization (including time and cost) and the needs of the assessees.

Capability of assessors

Variability of standards in assessment can occur across organizations and industries on a local or national basis (Brennan & Smith 2002) and the capability (or lack of ability) of assessors may be a contributing factor to this variability. Whilst the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (CAWT) (ANTA 1999) was designed to provide a minimum qualification for workplace trainers and assessors, it '… was frequently delivered with scant regard for quality' and failed to provide the skills needed to work with Training Packages (Brennan & Smith 2002:10). As a consequence, an exhaustive review of the CAWT has led to the endorsement of the new CAWT Training Package.

Individual workplaces may assume that staff with expertise in their chosen field, will also be able to assess with expertise when they have undergone assessor training. However, experience as an assessor takes time, support and practice (Docking 1997) and these fundamental aspects of developing competent assessors can be overlooked. Whilst workplace assessors need to have considerable expertise in their industrial field, they also require a sound knowledge of assessment techniques, so they are competent and confident to make informed assessment judgements (Jones 1999). Novice assessors, with little assessing experience, '… will typically know and be strict in applying the limited rules they have been trained in …', but will experience difficulties when they are required to adapt rules '… for more complicated situations requiring the use of experience, intuition and specialised technical knowledge of assessment' (Gillis *et al.* 1997:2.18). The best assessors are those with assessor qualifications, coupled with specific industry experience and/or training (Dickson & Bloch 1999). However, lack of ongoing assessor training causes workplaces to lose faith, when assessors cannot demonstrate industry-specific skills and knowledge (Dickson & Bloch 1999). Similarly, Bateman (1998) experienced problems

with those assessors who held the required qualifications, but who did not possess the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to assess effectively, or to collect information on which to make judgements.

Problems associated with workplace assessors can relate to their being increasingly busy with their own work and having less time to engage effectively with the assessee (Dhillon & Moreland 1996). Additionally, the level of assessor involvement can be influenced by the degree of willingness they have towards being involved, the type and amount of training they are given in assessment procedures and the fairness and reliability of the actual assessment tools they use (Maclaren & Marshall 1998). Consequently, recognition of initial suitability of candidates who undertake assessor training, underpins the importance of identifying staff development needs in assessment processes, techniques and standards (Mabry 1992) and in targetting those people who show a genuine interest in becoming assessors. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some organizations focus on particular individuals to become trainers/assessors, without considering the implications of the suitability of such choices. This can be a product of the 'cultural cohesion' that exists in specific workplaces, which emphasizes the importance of valuing 'mateship'. An innovative response to the issue of assessor capability recommends the introduction of validation/moderation processes, through forming networks of assessors (either intra- or inter-organizational), to share ideas and interpretations (Wolf 1993; Booth *et al.* 2002). This can assist assessors to develop common understandings about assessment that carry over into practice. By providing a network of peer support, it is possible to improve the capability of assessors, the quality of subsequent assessments and consistency in assessor judgement (Booth *et al.* 2002). Hence, the value of publicly justifiable validation/moderation practices, to assist the judgements of workplace assessors, becomes evident.

In summary, assessor judgements are central to competency-based assessment; yet, assessor training, on its own, does not ensure valid and reliable assessments. Judgements vary between assessors and in different contexts, as assessors exercise their understanding of what competence in their own context means. These informed judgements, whilst discretionary, must also be publicly justifiable. The capability of assessors is influenced by the technical knowledge of the assessor, coupled with the thoroughness of assessor training and the assessing experience of individuals. Establishing networks of assessors, to share ideas and interpretations, is seen as a way of developing common understandings among assessors that carry over into practice. Assessors require training and supportive practice in assessment in order to become skillful at making judgements; and, trained and technically skilled assessors, who are guided and supported to develop assessing experience, are most likely to make valid and reliable judgements.

A study into workplace learning and assessment practices

An ethnographic study into workplace learning and assessment practices was recently completed at three Food Processing companies in regional Victoria – a dairy company, an edible oilseed processor and the catering division of a healthcare firm (pseudonyms were used in the study). Nine production workers, four females and five males, were the principal respondents and each worker was undertaking formal training and assessment in either the Certificate in Food Processing, the Certificate in Dairy Processing, or the Certificate in Hospitality (Catering Operations), at Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels 1, 2 and/or 3. Each worker was interviewed on three separate occasions and was also observed at their work and assessors and colleagues of the workers were also interviewed. The fieldwork was conducted over a nine-month period.

Determining the competence of workers

Empirical evidence from the study reveals that these workers demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding most readily, through their actions, in the performance of their daily work (Timma 2004). Additionally, the study discloses that workers and assessors are aware of the prior perceptions assessors bring to the assessment experience, as workers are often observed daily on-the-job performing the tasks in which they will be formally assessed (Timma 2004). This paper proposes that these daily activities and practices should be overtly recognized and included as part of the overall assessment, to determine worker competence.

Louise, who maintains the quality and environmental systems at Emerald Food Co., is also an assessor and explains her relationship with the workers:

> I think it would be a lot easier to assess someone you didn't know! I find it is very hard to keep your mind on assessing at the time you are assessing. I suppose because I have that prior knowledge, I know people can do particular jobs before I am assessing them. It is harder to keep your focus sometimes. But, on the other hand, because you have seen them doing it outside the assessment time, I guess it makes it easier to re-word the questions and that with confidence, knowing that all you are really doing is getting the answer out of them that you know they have got (Interview [assessors] June 2001).

Louise raises pertinent issues regarding prior knowledge and assessment practices. Observing workers performing tasks competently on a daily basis means that she takes this knowledge to the assessment experience and this knowledge then influences the way in which she conducts the assessment. Patricia, a tester and packager of powdered milk products at Harvestime Produce, discusses how she is assessed:

> You tell the assessor (you are ready to be assessed) and you get it all organized. You do it after work. Make a time, usually it is only fifteen minutes or so (to complete the assessment). Well, they are always watching what you are doing and they've got a checklist and they have to check that, so they ask you questions to make sure that you know what you are doing at the same time and why you are doing it … Because you are working (together) sometimes they see you do it every day … (Interview 1 [production workers] April 2001).

Patricia reveals that, as the assessors are also co-workers, they regularly see her perform her daily work on-the-job and she is aware that this prior knowledge assists them to determine whether she is competent. Jim, a drier operator at Harvestime Produce, discusses how senior operators (who are often also assessors) observe him on-the-job:

> … a senior operator just checks to see if you are doing what you have been trained to do correctly and making sure you know what kind of job you are up to. What kind of stuff you have to do and whether or not you are doing it properly and whether or not you still need training in some areas. Usually, a senior operator checks you straight after a mistake and they pick up on it, then they come out just to check to see what you are doing and how you did it. Whether or not you have to be retrained to a certain task. (It happened to me) not too long back (Interview 2 [production workers] September 2001).

Jim emotively describes how the senior operator observes him working on-the-job and, from this informal assessment, can then determine any further training requirements. Gemma, one of Jim's co-workers at Harvestime Produce, is a processing organizer and also assesses workers on-the-job. In contrast to Jim's experiences, Gemma discusses the practical difficulties of formally assessing workers' ability to handle problems and irregularities during production and finds:

> … when we want to assess them on troublesome areas, on things that often go wrong, trying to *get* things to go wrong, so we can assess them on how they would handle the situation. Because they can tell you how to handle the situation but until you actually see how they react in the real situation it can be quite different … (Interview [assessor] June 2001).

Gemma's response indicates her need to visibly observe workers dealing with authentic problems during production, so that she can ascertain if they can work competently under pressure. Yet, there is a tendency at Harvestime Produce to perceive 'assessment' as a formal, planned activity; and, assessing workers dealing with 'real life' production irregularities is difficult to achieve in such a rigid assessment environment.

The data extracts from this study illustrate the interconnectedness of the judgements made by on-site assessors, concerning a worker's competence, coupled with the prior perceptions that these assessors hold, through their everyday interactions with and observations of, workers on-the-job. Tensions exist between assessors knowing workers as colleagues and observing them work daily on-the-job, whilst also attempting to assess within formal workplace boundaries. The assessment of skills in the current competency-based framework includes an element of worker attitude (a subjective notion), which means that the process of assessor judgement must be even more transparent to the assessee. To follow is a proposed model which recommends the utilization of prior perceptions that workplace assessors carry into the assessment experience and which are also publicly justifiable.

Utilizing prior perceptions in workplace assessment: a model

This assessment model builds on formal assessor training and practice and proposes:

- The development of assessment tools which include ongoing observations and discussions of workers' skills, abilities, attitudes and understanding, in the everyday performance of the job; and,
- Moderation practices to assist in developing consistency in the decisions made by assessors in determining worker competence. These practices must be publicly justifiable.

It must be stated that this model relates to in-house (and not visiting) assessors and could require workplaces to alter existing attitudes to assessment, particularly in relation to factors of time and cost (see, for example, Hager *et al.* 1994; Toop, Gibb & Worsnop 1994; Wolf 1995b; Dickson & Bloch 1999), due to the refinement of existing assessment tools. However, in the long-term, increased costs should be offset when assessment becomes embedded in the everyday activities and interactions of the workplace.

Enabling an alternative approach to assessment

- Central to this model is the modification of existing assessment tools, to incorporate the everyday, informal interactions, observations and discussions that occur between workers and in-house assessors. Input from work colleagues could also contribute to the overall assessment.
- Assessments should be conducted over time, on multiple occasions, that is, daily/weekly/monthly (or whatever is deemed suitable) to enable assessors to confidently determine the competence of workers, from everyday observations and discussions.
- Rather than a 'tick box' approach to competencies, assessors would provide written (or spoken) comments about the assessees' work and assessees would complete a self-assessment, to enable a more holistic picture of competency to unfold.
- Workplaces must provide sufficient time and resources, to enable modifications to and reformatting of, assessment tools

and recording mechanisms. Organizations need to factor this development time into their planning and the real work time of on-site assessment developers (often also the assessors). This can include specific time set aside when production is quiet or cleaning is taking place, when there is downtime, or when annual/seasonal maintenance is occurring.

- Workers must be informed that assessors will be informally assessing them on-the-job and building up a profile of their competency, over time. Additionally, workers should be encouraged to consult with in-house assessors regarding their assessment, when interacting daily as colleagues. This can assist in consolidating assessment as part of everyday work practices, rather than as a separate entity and can also minimize costs associated with formal, pre-arranged assessment activities.
- Trialling of this new approach is necessary to identify strengths and/or any problems that may arise, as well as allowing assessors and assessees to provide feedback and to become familiar with the new way of assessing.
- The recording of informal assessment activities must be expediently and accurately completed and may require changes to attitudes/practices, as workplace assessors must also meet their own daily work requirements.
- Training and ongoing support in the new assessment practices must be provided to assist assessors to make informed judgements. Whilst this incurs additional costs to the workplace, it is anticipated that improved assessor skills will make a real contribution, in the long-term, to increasing overall workplace productivity.
- Formal moderation practices between assessors should be introduced and nurtured, so that assessors share their ideas and interpretations with one another and can develop common understandings about assessment judgements, that carry over into practice (Wolf 1993; Booth *et al.* 2002).

Conclusion

This paper presents evidence from a study into workplace learning and assessment that reveals workplace assessors are often also colleagues of the workers they assess. The prior perceptions these assessors hold about the workers' skills and abilities, accompany them to formal assessment activities. A model has been developed, which advocates the inclusion of these everyday interactions as part of the total assessment and which must be publicly justifiable. Assessors require training and supportive practice to become skilled at making informed judgements and establishing assessor networks is a way of developing common understandings that carry over into assessment practice.

References

ANTA. (1999). *Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training*. Melbourne, Victoria: Australian Training Products Ltd.

ANTA. (2004). *"Moving on" – Report of the High Level Review of Training Packages*. http://www.anta.gov.au/highlevel.asp

Bateman, A. (1998). "Ballarat Assessment Centre: A case study of a consortium model assessment centre", *Transfer*, 3(2), October, 3–5.

Beckett, D. (1996). "Critical Judgment and Professional Practice", *Educational Theory*, 46(2), Spring, 135–149.

Booth, R. Clayton, B. House, R. and Roy, S. (2002). *Maximising confidence in assessment decision-making: A resource to assist assessors to maintain the quality of their assessment systems*. Leabrook, SA: NCVER. http://www.ncver.edu.au

Boud, D. (1995). "Assessment and Learning: Contradictory or Complementary?" In Knight, P. (ed.), *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*. London: Kogan Page, 35–47.

Brennan, R. and Smith, E. (2002). "Australian Quality Training Framework: Impact of provisions relating to teaching and teacher qualifications", *Australian Vocational Education Review*, 9(2), 8–23.

Cumming, Dr. J. Joy. (1998). *A Model of the Contextuality of Assessment Tasks and Processes*. West Melbourne, Victoria: Communication in Education and Training Pty. Ltd.

Dhillon, J. and Moreland, N. (1996). "Participants' Experience of a Competence-based Professional Development Programme: a case study", *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 48(4), 367–384.

Dickson, M. and Bloch, B. (1999). *Not Just Falling Over The Line? A snapshot of competency-based assessment*. Leabrook, SA: NCVER.

Docking, R. (1990). "Assessment in the Workplace: Facts and Fallacies", *Assessment and Standards in Vocational Education and Training,* Conference/Workshop report. Leabrook, SA: TAFE National Centre for Research and Development.

Docking, R. (1997). *Vocational education assessor training programs. Review of Research.* Leabrook, SA: NCVER.

Gibb, J. (1993). "Trainers/assessors and learners: The human face to the new CBVET system", *Testing Times: A national conference on assessment for competency-based training,* Conference papers. Adelaide: NCVER, 57–65.

Gillis, S. Griffin, P. Trembath, R. and Ling, P. (1997). *The Examination of the Theoretical Underpinning of Assessment,* (Research Grant Report). Melbourne: Assessment Research Centre: The University of Melbourne.

Griffin, P. (Prof). (1997). *Developing Assessment in Schools and Workplaces,* An Inaugural Professorial Lecture given by Professor Patrick Griffin, Foundation Chair of Education (Assessment), Faculty of Education, Dean's Lecture Series, September 18.

Hager, P. Athanasou, J. & Gonczi, A. (1994). *Assessment Technical Manual.* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Jones, A. (1999). "The Place of Judgement in Competency-based Assessment", *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 51(1), 145–160.

Mabry, L. (1992). "Performance Assessment". In Bragg, Debra D. (ed.), *Alternative Approaches to Outcomes Assessment for Postsecondary Vocational Education*. Berkeley, CA: NCRVE, December, 109–128.

Maclaren, P. and Marshall, S. (1998). "Who is the Learner ? An Examination of the Learner Perspectives in Work-based Learning", *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 50(3), 327–336.

McDonald, R. Boud, D. Francis, J. and Gonczi, A. (1995). *New Perspectives on Assessment*. Paris: Section for Technical and Vocational Education, UNESCO.

Mulcahy, D. (1999). "(actor-net) Working Bodies and Representations: Tales from a Training Field", *Science, Technology & Human Values*, Sage Publications, 24(1), Winter, 80–104.

Raggatt, P. and Hevey, D. (1994). "Do I Have Enough Evidence?", *Competence and Assessment No.27,* November, 10–12.

Timma, H. (2004). *Ontology, Assessment and the Worker: Constructing Worker Identities Through Assessment,* unpublished PhD thesis. Parkville: The University of Melbourne.

Toop, L. Gibb, J. and Worsnop, P. (1994). *Assessment System Design*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Tovey, M. D. (1997). *Training in Australia*. Sydney: Prentice Hall.

Wolf, A. (1993). *Assessment Issues and Problems in a Criterion-Based System*. London: Further Education Unit.

Wolf, A. (1994). "Measuring competence: the experience of the United Kingdom", *European Journal Vocational Training*, 1, 29–35.

Wolf, A. (1995a). "Authentic assessments in a competitive sector: institutional prerequisites and cautionary tales". In Torrance, Harry. (ed.). *Evaluating Authentic Assessment*. Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 88–104.

Wolf, A. (1995b). *Competence-Based Assessment*. Buckingham; Bristol, PA: Open University Press.

About the author

Hilary Timma *recently completed PhD studies at The University of Melbourne into the construction of worker identities through assessment, the work and the learning. Her research interests concern adult/lifelong learning and workplace learning and assessment practices. Her work in the VET sector includes teaching in regional institutes of TAFE, instructional design and training/ assessing workers in the hospitality and food processing industries.*

Contact details

2319 Beechworth-Wangaratta Road, Tarrawingee, Victoria 3678
Tel: (03) 5725 1761
Email address: timma@netc.net.au

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

'SERPS Up': support, engagement and retention of postgraduate students – a model of postgraduate support

Margaret Alston, Julaine Allan, Karen Bell, Andy Brown, Jane Dowling, Pat Hamilton, Jenny McKinnon, Noela McKinnon, Rol Mitchell, Kerri Whittenbury, Bruce Valentine, Alison Wicks, Rachael Williams
Charles Sturt University

The federal government's 1999 White Paper Knowledge and Innovation: a policy statement on research and research training, notes concerns about retention and completion rates in doctoral studies programs in Australia. This paper outlines a model of higher education support developed at the Centre for Rural Social Research at Charles Sturt University. The postgraduate student body in the Centre represent the most vulnerable to attrition – mostly female and mature-aged, a majority studying at a distance and part-time, and most with family and work responsibilities. The program developed in the Centre – the SERPS model (Support, Engagement and Retention of Postgraduate Students) – has seen a significant

rise in the number of students studying through the Centre and significantly high retention and completion rates. This paper outlines the model as well as the results of an evaluation of the model conducted with students in the Centre. This paper indicates that retention (and ultimately completion) is linked to the vibrancy of the learning and social support networks established for the students and the creation of a collegial culture.

The attrition and completion rates of students from post-graduate education programs in Australian universities have created concern within Australian government circles. The federal government white paper, *Knowledge and Innovation: a policy statement on research and research training* (Kemp 1999) notes the need to improve completion rates and reduce the amount of time taken to complete higher degrees. Yet the focus of the White Paper on PhD completion rates as a critical indicator of success for research programs risks prioritising a rapid throughput of students rather than the quality of the education experience. Such a model might well be described as research training rather than one that provides 'a complexity of nurturing knowledges and practices that underpin and enable innovation' (Zeegers and Barron 2000: 180 quoting Smith 2000). Attention to completion rates and minimal time for completion overshadows the links between the quality of the educational experience and retention of students, arguably a more critical indicator of success. Nonetheless a focus on completions alerts those of us engaged in teaching at postgraduate level to consider effective strategies that may influence students to stay with a doctoral program.

This paper outlines a model to address doctoral student retention developed by the first author, who is also the Director of the Centre for Rural Social Research at Charles Sturt University, a centre that

provides a 'home' for a cohort of over thirty PhD students studying within the social sciences areas. The model, named Support, Engagement and Retention of Postgraduate Students (SERPS) by the students, represents a departure from more traditional learning practices. The paper draws on a survey conducted with eleven of these students in the Centre whose names also appear as authors. A majority of the Centre's students are studying at a distance from campus and in a part-time mode, most are female, most have families and several have paid work, factors likely to promote attrition (Leonard 1997). In addition a majority are from rural areas. What the model and students' reactions reveal are the links between retention (and thus ultimately completion), innovative learning and social support networks and collegiality.

Higher education completions in Australia

From 1990 to 1999 there occurred a two and a half fold increase in the number of doctoral students studying through Australia's universities (DETYA 2001). Yet a study by DETYA (2001) found that fewer than 30% of doctoral students had completed their studies within five years. Concern over these completion figures led to the publication of the White Paper.

> There was general acceptance of the need to improve student completion rates and times to graduation …
>
> Institutions will be rewarded for performing research of an excellent quality, as well as being encouraged to increase their collaboration with industry. They will be rewarded for the quality of their research training environments and for ensuring that students complete their degrees. http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/whitepaper/6.htm

We know that students most likely to complete *undergraduate* courses are females, studying full-time, who are younger, urban and from a high socio-economic background (Martin, Maclachlan

and Karmel 2001). By contrast, *postgraduate* students most likely to complete their program are students studying sciences, who are younger, studying full-time and on scholarship (Martin, Maclachlan and Karmel 2001). McCormack and Pamphilon (2000) note that males are far more likely to complete a doctoral program (85% compared to 15%), although Martin *et al.* (2001) suggest that there are no significant gender differences in post graduate completion rates. Nonetheless the difference in the gender profile of successful undergraduate and postgraduate students may be explained by other factors impinging on students. Women, for example, are more likely to experience 'fractured' doctoral careers because of the pressures of combining work and family (Leonard 1997) thus making it more likely that female doctoral students will be mature-aged.

Also of significance to successful completion is a student's sense of isolation, a factor exacerbated by off-campus study (Macauley 2000). Students studying at a distance from campus are more vulnerable as are those from rural areas. If universities were to concentrate only on successful completions in minimal time frames, they might be tempted to favour those applicants that fit the 'success' factors outlined above. Thus universities may resist enrolling older females from rural areas, studying part-time by distance with work and family responsibilities because they do not fit the profile of the most successful postgraduates. Such a move would be questionable not only on equity grounds but also risks missing the rich contributions to academic collegiality that these mature-aged part-time students can provide. Such a move would also completely annihilate the Centre's student body.

The cohort of social science students studying through the Centre is significantly different to the stereotypical successful doctoral graduate and is significantly vulnerable to attrition. It therefore would appear to provide something of a challenge for a regional university specialising in distance education to produce significant PhD

completions. Yet our focus on the provision of successful learning and social support networks provides a challenge to the established wisdom on completions.

The students' support network

Clearly it is important to focus on the support networks, both social and scholarly, if students are to be retained in a doctoral program. This is particularly important if students are studying at a distance from campus. Critical to a successful learning environment is, of course, the supervision arrangement and Gordon (2000) suggests that one of the main factors in student withdrawal is dissatisfaction with their supervision arrangements. There is little doubt that the quality of the supervision provided for students is essential to their satisfaction (DETYA 2001; Colebatch 2002) and that flexibility in supervision arrangements is essential (Pearson 2000). However defining quality supervision is much more difficult. It has been described as an advanced form of teaching, a critical conversation (Knowles 1999), a mentorship (Taylor 1995), a master / apprenticeship relationship (Macauley 2000) and as having an implicit pastoral responsibility (Colebatch 2002). All students at Charles Sturt University are assigned a principal and associate supervisor whose task it is to provide one-to-one teaching relationships.

The model developed over the last six years at the Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University, a regional university, adds another layer to this relationship. It is important to note that the model is in addition to the formal courses and support networks operating through the University and the Centre for Research and Graduate Training more generally. The model is unique to the Centre, providing additional support to its students. Similar to the 'Collaborative Cohort Model' described by Burnett (1999), it brings the Centre's student body together four times a year in a supportive

learning environment where a strong sense of collegiality, trust and peer group support has developed. The seminar program provides a vehicle for an advanced form of learning, a critical conversation, mentorship not only between academics and students but also between students in the group, and also has an implicit pastoral element. In developing this model the focus of the Centre is on the provision of research education rather than research training. A significant attempt is made to develop a learning support network that is stimulating, nurturing and enabling of collegiality and student interaction.

There is no doubt that the attrition/completion debate encompasses a complex set of relationships and goals. However attending to the provision of a supportive learning network for students within the Centre is not about focusing on successful completions. It is more about investing in strategies that expand students' capacity to produce new knowledge and, in the process, allowing students to have an optimal support structure around them. That one of the spin-offs has been high retention rates and successful completions is a bonus. As with the Collaborative Cohort Model, the quality of dissertations and completion rates are enhanced (Burnett 1999).

The student cohort

The Centre for Rural Social Research was set up in 1989, in conjunction with the establishment of Charles Sturt University as a new regional university. The Centre provided an initial focus for the research of academics working in the new university and developed as a locus for postgraduate students in the early 1990s. The Centre's first PhD student, graduated in 1995 and the Centre's postgraduate student body has grown from four PhD students in 1994 to thirty-three in 2004. Approximately a third of the students are studying on campus full-time. Those studying at a distance are mature-aged and predominantly located in rural areas of NSW, Victoria, South

Australia and Western Australia. This significant growth in numbers has a number of explanations. The Centre has managed to secure its place as a focus for rural social research in a relatively short time. This, coupled with the strategic location of a number of leading rural sociologists, psychologists and social workers (a cohort that has changed over time but retains its leading edge focus on rural social issues research), has firmly established the Centre as one of national significance. Additionally students have been attracted to the Centre through the publicity generated by research and through various Australian Research Council (ARC) linkage projects with Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry) (APAI) scholarships attached. The rapid rise in numbers taxed the first author (as director of the Centre) to provide a satisfactory and engaging learning environment.

The model

Initial development

The Centre's higher education model developed from humble beginnings in the latter part of the 1990s. The first author became aware of the isolation of distance education students through the experience of supervising students at a distance. Initially a group of four mature-aged students, three of whom were studying part-time by distance, were invited to attend a seminar at the university where a wide range of issues relating to their own experiences and needs were discussed. The writer was principal supervisor for each of these students and had been conscious of their individual and collective struggles to stay engaged with their studies, the academic endeavour and with the university. Initially it was determined that a similar seminar of four hours in length would be held each semester. Very quickly two things became clear – one was that two seminars of less than a day in length was not enough, and, two, that there were other students studying through the Centre, not necessarily supervised by the first author, who were seeking access to the seminar program.

During the second year of operation the seminar program expanded to two half days, from midday the first day until midday on the second. This allowed the students to travel to the university on the morning of the first day and travel home on the afternoon of the second. It also allowed for students to make time to see their principal supervisor during their visit, spend time in the library, and to socialise over dinner. Further it allowed for more informal time for the students to discuss progress and issues with each other. The group soon negotiated for two seminars each semester – a total of four per year. It was clear that the seminar program had quickly taken on a significance far beyond its original conceptualisation.

Facilitating students' engagement

What was quickly evident was that the structured program provided the vehicle for students to engage at a number of levels. Previously students had been disengaged from the university itself, not necessarily seeing themselves as part of a larger student body and not feeling any strong sense of identity to the university because their rare visits had been solitary experiences for a one-on-one discussion with their supervisor. The seminar program quickly changed this perception, allowing students to gain strength from their collective identity as 'the Centre for Rural Social Research postgraduate students', and giving them the confidence to seek additional university infrastructure support such as their student funding entitlements, information on courses run through the graduate studies office, more detailed information on library facilities, and guidance on IT services and programs.

Campbell (2000) notes the importance of students' ability to participate in formal and informal student and faculty interactions. This has been evident in relation to the Centre's students. Because they were now regular visitors to the Faculty of Arts, staff came to recognise members of the group and students became more integrated into the life of the faculty and more attuned to academic

life and its structured patterns. One of the consequences was that several students were offered marking and tutoring opportunities.

However the engagement that has made the most significant impression on the students and has, more than anything, facilitated their retention in the program is the one the first author least expected. That is the engagement at a student to student level. Because students in the program encompass all stages of the PhD experience from the very first months to the final stages of drafting, students act as mentors to one another, advising, supporting, alerting others to good references, personal break throughs, research milestones, new computer programs, better ways of handling data, the best and cheapest voice recorders etc. It is at this level that the real strength of the group is revealed. From its earliest beginnings students asked for an email distribution list so they could keep in touch with one another between meetings to facilitate the ongoing discussion of their work. They now also have an on-line forum that acts as an ongoing tutorial discussion group. Their discussions can range from a comment on a book, to a tortured question on theory, to the best way to deal with managing work and study. The collegiality, support and trust evident in the group, despite its constantly changing membership over time, indicate that this group fills a need, particularly for students studying by distance.

Perhaps a real indication of the success of the group has been that the regular attendees have remained in the program despite significant life changes and each seminar is attended by about fifteen students. There are three other indicators that suggest to the writer the significance of the group. Firstly, is the joy with which the group celebrates the submission of a thesis, and /or the successful examination and graduation of a group member. Secondly, it is worth noting the efforts group members make to attend the regular seminars. An example is one member from rural Western Australia who, to get to the seminar, travelled a couple of hours by car, then

took a plane to Perth, flew to Sydney and then connected to Wagga Wagga. This is the most extreme example, but it indicates the lengths to which most will go to attend. Thirdly, the strength of the group is demonstrated in the difficulty graduates have in separating from the group. It is not unusual for those who have submitted, and even been successfully examined, to continue to come a couple more times. Their attendance is welcomed because of the new insights on the examination process they offer. Nonetheless it is difficult for group members to break away. It is clear then that the seminar format we have developed creates a strong sense of identity, collegiality and trust. Equally important is the content of the program.

The program

Initially the seminar program was held at Charles Sturt University's Wagga Wagga campus. A structured program included student presentations of their work and lectures from CSU academics and divisional support staff. Noting the developing enthusiasm of the group and the need for students to be exposed not only to new ideas and approaches, but also to the policy process dependent on research and to the employment possibilities that research opens, the first author determined that it might be useful to take the group out of Wagga Wagga. Group members were consulted and the idea was met with an enthusiastic response. A small amount of funding was obtained from the research office at the university which allowed for payment of speakers, the first author's travel and accommodation and that of Ian Gray, the Associate Director of the Centre, who has also attended many of the seminars. Because most students studied by distance, they travelled anyway to get to the seminar, so travel to a different site was not a problem. For some it was, in fact, easier to get to a capital city and cheaper. Accommodation has always been booked in university on-campus facilities in the capital city visited.

In the first year we experimented by going to Canberra for one of the seminars. Two leading Australian National University (ANU)

researchers were contracted to speak to the group on their work and theoretical position, as was a social researcher from the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS) who spoke on the employment prospects for researchers in the public service. The group also arranged a formal dinner and invited two politicians to attend. This exchange allowed the students to discuss their work, but also exposed the politicians to the scope of the research happening through the Centre.

During the second year of our expanded program the group decided to travel to Canberra for one of our seminars and to Sydney for another. On our first Sydney visit members stayed at Macquarie University and were privileged to hear from two leading academics and high profile policy people in state government. Our Canberra visit proved equally successful, this time being timed to coincide with the federal government budget week. The writer arranged for our group to be invited to the post-budget Labor Women's breakfast, a practice we have continued for several years.

We have continued our 'away' visits as they add a significant dimension to our learning. Over the years we have become known in Canberra as the rural PhD group, a group that politicians recognise has something significant to offer to the policy debate. We have been invited to lunch with the Minister for Family and Community Services, and have met on various occasions with several Members, Shadow Members and Senators. We have heard from leading policy people in the Department of Transport and Regional Services, Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries and the Office of the Status of Women. A direct result of our familiarity in Canberra circles led to our students being taken on as summer scholars in the Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries and in the BRS.

Our last two Sydney visits have taken place at the University of Sydney, joint ventures with students in the School of Social Work. This has allowed our students to be exposed to internationally prominent academics at the university. In this way students come

to meet and hear from leading theorists and researchers, many of whom they have read and studied. The ability to listen and question these writers adds a significant dimension to our distance education students' learning. We are indebted to academics at ANU, Macquarie and Sydney Universities who give freely of their time to speak to our students.

Essentially the 'shape' of the away seminars remains very much the same. A maximum of three speakers over our 24 hour period allows plenty of time for discussion on the issues raised by the speakers and also allows time for students to address with the first author, with the Associate Director and with one another any issues or concerns that may have arisen for them since the last seminar.

The two seminars held in Wagga Wagga are structured around the students presenting their work to one another and to invited staff for comment and critique. These seminars are more informal and allow students to engage with each other at a deeper intellectual level. Each at-home seminar has a theme – for example methodology, theory, data collection, analysis etc. Thus students present on the theme, bring any issues they may have on this theme to the group and generally engage with the development of their work in this particular area.

Again the dinners at night provide additional time for the in-depth student to student discussions so essential to providing insights, developing collegiality, providing peer mentorship, and generally allowing a relaxed atmosphere where students can get to know one another better.

The evaluation

In 2003 the writer decided to evaluate the program to determine how it might be improved. A written survey was developed and distributed to approximately fifteen students who had attended regularly over

the previous two years. Eleven surveys were returned. Of these eleven respondents, eight are female, nine are over thirty-five (three are over fifty-five), seven study at a distance, three are part-time, six have dependent children and seven have paid work (three full-time).

When asked to comment on what helps them work consistently, ten students noted the CRSR seminars, nine noted the collegiality within the group especially helped and ten noted the support they receive at home. Asked to comment on what had held up progress, six noted other personal commitments, six family commitments, five work commitments, six the isolating nature of the PhD process, five a lack of time, six noted their need for paid work and one health issues. Significantly all students under forty-five and all on-campus students noted that family commitments had held up their PhD suggesting that 'fractured' PhD study is not limited to female students.

Students were asked to comment on the seminar series. All noted the format is relevant, nine that the guest speakers are of significance to their research, all noted the spacing of seminars is about right, ten that the collegiality of the group is good, ten the usefulness of the away seminars, ten that the Wagga Wagga seminars are helpful and all noted the organisation of the seminars as excellent.

Asked to provide ideas for improving the seminars, one noted the need for more dialogue in between the seminars, another noted the need for more discussion time, two noted the need to have more time at Wagga Wagga and another suggested a buddy system within the group for new students. Asked to comment on the two best things about the seminar, seven noted sharing with others and the exchange of ideas, one noted seeing others progress provides motivation, another noted the need to present ensures critical reflection, one noted that the seminars provide an opportunity to recommit to research and to the PhD, another that learning from others was particularly special, one noted the guest speakers are inspiring, another that the range of stages of the group members demystifies the

process and breaks down isolation, and another noted the seminars allow students to learn about the process of a PhD.

When asked to comment on the two worst things about the seminars one noted the need for more rigorous debate, two that they have to leave the group when the PhD is finished, a part-time student noted it was frustrating to move more slowly than the full-timers, two noted there was not enough time, another noted the frustration of sometimes not being able to attend because of work and family commitments, and another noted the lack of dialogue between seminars.

The following additional comments were written on survey forms and indicate the support provided by the seminar program. Referring to the way they seminars break down isolation, one student noted:

> Always more motivated after attending a seminar, inspired by other students and relieved you are not alone.

Two students alluded to the learning and social support provided by the seminars.

> Seminars greatly assist – they provide a safe environment to float ideas for the first time – where you know you will get honest, thoughtful, considered responses.

> Huge learning from other students. This has been amazing for me. ... this aspect has certainly been most useful for me in terms of learning about specific topics, research process, personal management etc, but also in terms of support provided by other students. Would feel that I could probably call ten or more students right now for assistance and they would know who I was and what I was talking about and would be happy to help if they could. Have also made some friends which is a bonus!

One female student noted the way the seminars helped her overcome her lack of confidence in her ability to complete a PhD.

> I still feel nervous every time, but the supportive and collegial environment have helped me to better explain my topic and methodology, and have aided me in developing the confidence to make a presentation at a national conference.

The collegiality of the group inspired another student to note:

> Feel a sense of belonging to a group of people. Very important to me as it reduces isolation as a DE student.

The following comment also intimates that the collegiality and support provided by the group allows personal growth beyond the scholarly endeavour.

> The seminars keep me on track – motivation is high – support at time is positive … they give me the opportunity to grow – feedback is positive and useful in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

Noting the complexity of life for students studying part-time by distance, one student noted:

> There are two things that helped with consistent work – family support and seminars – and the main thing that got in the way of progress was the need to work.

Yet the seminars also provide a legitimate reason to step outside the external pressures of work and family to concentrate on their PhD and to become part of the academy.

> I enjoy the opportunity to get away from my job and, as a student, to enjoy the academic atmosphere.

Indicating something of the sense of inspiration the seminars provide, one student summed up as follows:

> Must admit that when they started, I thought they might be a bit of a waste of valuable time (I was wrong) and that four a year was too many, I thought two would have been plenty (I was wrong again). I've loved them!

Conclusion

Attention to PhD completion and attrition rates overshadows the sector's need to focus on a sustaining and supportive environment for our postgraduate students, and, therefore, quality research outputs. The provision of mechanisms to ensure students enjoy their learning, grow with the PhD experience, form attachment to the academic endeavour and emerge with well-developed research skills and enhanced critical capacities is essential to the retention of students regardless of their profile. At the Centre for Rural Social Research the profile of the PhD student cohort is anything but ideal when compared with the 'success' factors for PhD completions. Predominantly female, rurally located, studying part-time at a distance, with work and family responsibilities, the Centre's students are those most vulnerable to attrition. Yet the development of a model of post-graduate learning has enabled these students not only to remain in the program but also to develop excellent skills in a supportive and trusting environment and to make significant contributions to research.

If we are to focus on post-graduate completion rates, we must first ensure that the learning and social support networks we create are stimulating, nurturing and exciting, that they enable the exchange of knowledge, the challenge of big ideas, the support of colleagues and a place to share the excitement of a 'big breakthrough' that only other researchers might understand.

This paper outlines one successful model developed in the Centre for Rural Social Research, a research centre at Charles Sturt University. Since the survey that informs this paper was distributed, five of the co-authors have passed with significant results. The remainder are into the final stages of their PhD years and only one has taken leave from her studies for family reasons. These group members retain their place as the elders of the group. They have been joined by several new members, all of whom have taken to the group with

enthusiasm and a thirst for learning, and who draw on the skills and knowledge of the now senior members. The group members at various stages of the PhD process watch the graduates' careers with interest, taking pride in their achievements. Maintaining a consistency in our profile, our current members are scattered across four states and are mostly located in rural areas.

Distance and isolation have been overcome by this model and we look forward to developing its strengths even further. In 2005, for example, the first author is taking a sub-group to the National Women's Studies Association Conference in Florida, USA, where the group will have a whole session to present on their research on Australia's rural women. The introduction of an international focus is a natural next stage development.

While the concern of the government over attrition and completion rates is acknowledged, we would counsel a greater focus on the provision of successful learning and social support structures. As one of the co-authors noted on a survey form:

> I have developed a support network as a result of the seminars that I would not have had otherwise. This support has been crucial to my ongoing progress and my motivation to continue on the road towards completing my PhD.

References

Burnett, P. (1999). 'The Supervision of Doctoral Dissertations Using a Collaborative Cohort Model', *Counsellor Education and Supervision,* 39 (1), 46–51

Campbell, J. (2000). 'What are students in the UMPA survey saying about their pedagogical experiences?' In Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (eds) *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making Ends Meet*. Proceedings of the 2000 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference. The Advisory Centre for University Education, Adelaide: The University of Adelaide. 39–42

Colebatch, H.K. (2002). 'Through a Glass Darkly: policy development on higher degree completions in Australia', *Journal of Higher Education and Management,* 24(1), 27–36

Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) (2001). *Factors Associated with Completion of Research Higher Degrees*. Higher Education Series Report No. 37. DETYA. May. 1–8

Gordon, J. (presenting for M. Gallagher) (2000). 'The challenges facing higher education research training'. In Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (eds) *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making Ends Meet*. Proceedings of the 2000 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference. The Advisory Centre for University Education, Adelaide: The University of Adelaide. 9–14

Kemp, Hon Dr D.A. (1999). *Knowledge and Innovation: a policy statement on research and research training*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Knowles, S. (1999). 'Feedback on writing in postgraduate supervision: echoes in response-context, continuity and resonance'. In Holbrook, A. and S.Johnson (eds) *Suprevision of Postgraduate Research in Education No. 5*. Coldstream: Australian Association of Research in Education.

Leonard, D. (1997). 'Gender Issues in Doctoral Studies'. In Graves, N. and Varma, V. (eds) *Working for a Doctorate: a Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. London: Routledge.152–183

Macauley, P. (2000). 'Pedagogic continuity in doctoral supervision: Passing on, or passing by, of information skills'. In Kiley, Margaret and Gerry Mullins (eds) *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making Ends Meet*. Proceedings of the 2000 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference. The Advisory Centre for University Education, Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, Adelaide. 215–226

Martin, L. M., Maclachlan, M , & Karmel, T. (2001). *Undergraduate Completion Rates: An Update*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.

McCormack, C. and Pamphilon, B. (2000). 'Paths, phases, juggling and balancing acts: how women academics understand their personal experience of postgraduate study'. In Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (eds) *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making Ends Meet*. Proceedings of the 2000 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference. The Advisory Centre for University Education, Adelaide: The University of Adelaide. 193–202

Pearson, M. (2000). 'Flexible postgraduate research supervision in an open system'. In Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (eds) *Quality in Postgraduate*

Research: Making Ends Meet. Proceedings of the 2000 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference. The Advisory Centre for University Education, Adelaide: The University of Adelaide. 103–118

Smith, B. (2000). *Postgraduate Education: The Missing Link in the Innovation Equation*. Media Release, Melbourne: Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, Friday, February 11.

Taylor, P. (1995). 'Postgraduate Education and Open Learning: anticipating a new order'. *The Australian Universities Review,* Vol 38(2), 28–31

Zeegers, M. and Barron, D. (2000). 'More than an apprentice model: legitimate peripheral participation (LLP) and the research conference for postgraduate students'. In Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (eds) *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making Ends Meet*. Proceedings of the 2000 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference. The Advisory Centre for University Education, Adelaide: The University of Adelaide. 179–190

About the author

Margaret Alston *is Professor of Social Work and Human Services, and Director of the Centre for Rural Social Research at Charles Sturt University. The co-authors are students in the PhD program at the university and took part in the evaluation of the program.*

Contact details

Professor Margaret Alston, Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University, Locked Bag 678, Wagga Wagga 2678 Australia
Tel: 0418242856 *Fax: 0269332293*
Email: malston@csu.edu.au

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

Competent coppers: an analysis of the standards and practices of adult education within the Australian Federal Police

Michelle Berzins
Doctoral candidate
University of Canberra

The paper examines how the educational environment within the Australian Federal Police (AFP) has changed over their 25 year history. The case study was used as a methodological framework through which content analysis and interviews were conducted. It was found that due to the changing nature of their profession, the involvement of police personnel in ongoing personal and professional development is essential. Further, the educational environment fostered within the AFP was found to be one that keeps abreast of general advances in education, encourages further education of their personnel and delivers quality adult education through its accreditation as a Registered Training Organisation and a provider of nationally approved VET courses.

Introduction

In 1829, Australian police were recruited specifically from the working class because it was crucial for them to possess similar attributes and social backgrounds to those they policed in order to gain credibility, acceptance and support (Corns, 1988). Recent developments regarding the education and recruitment of police are of interest given that the 'educated' (who were once deemed so inappropriate and undesirable) are now keenly sought after to the point of being actively recruited. These developments provide the impetus to examine how educational standards and practices within the AFP have changed over time.

The article examines the ways in which the education and training of Australian Federal Police (AFP) have changed since the inception of the AFP in 1979. First, an overview is provided of the relevant literature regarding the education and training of law enforcement personnel. By exploring this literature, the context of the study is established and a foundation laid for the use of the case study as a methodological framework through which content analysis and interviews are conducted. The use of these two research methods facilitates the identification and analysis of the historical evolution of education and training within the AFP. The research demonstrates how the AFP has moved from providing internal, exam-based courses to being a provider of nationally accredited VET courses whilst also allowing suggestions for future research to be made.

Literature Review

Over time, the methods of policing have changed considerably, and one of the most significant areas affected by this is education (Palmer, 1995). Police operate in a dynamic and at times unpredictable environment, and all law enforcement agencies need to constantly update and expand the skills of their personnel in order to keep abreast of the emerging environment. In short, as the output of

policing has changed then so too has the input had to change. This means that the content and delivery of educational programs within police organisations has had to change to ensure that the curriculum covered by both new recruits and those engaging in ongoing professional development is relevant to the environment in which police operate.

As a result of changes within Australian workplaces and the increasing effects of globalisation, technological advancement and our nation's social and economic position, there is a changing role and place for adult education, and an increasing need for the skills and knowledge of employees to be efficiently updated on a regular basis (Tennant & Morris, 2001). These factors add to the dynamic environment that police are said to work in, and in order to effectively and adequately perform their duties, police officers must now possess education and skills in areas not previously considered (Edwards, 1999). Given this, it is fortunate that since the early 1960s, much has been done to raise the standard of police education and training (Reiner, 1992). Murray (2000) notes that over the past three decades, the education and training of police have improved immeasurably, and the public perception police strive to attain is now one based more on 'brain' than 'brawn'.

This shift in perception means that the emphasis is now on the *service* provided by police, including the intellectual component of their role which requires them to be professionals with a strong work ethic. Gone are the days where police officers were merely regarded as passive actors who carried out the orders given to them by their superiors. Instead, police have actively tried to replace this perception with one of being thinking professionals (Murray, 2000). Professional practice (and thus thinking professionals) are typically characterised by the use of judgment and informed action in unique, complex and/or uncertain situations (Schön, 1987). To be a thinking professional, the modern police officer must be multi-skilled, and

enrolment in higher education and/or participation in vocational education and training (VET) are two ways of attaining this status.

Further to multi-skilling and the acquirement of a professional practice, there is a need for both accountability and professionalism to be *"integral to the selection, recruitment, training, development, deployment, reward and promotion"* of police personnel (Australasian Police Ministers' Council, 2003).

To a certain extent, professionalism can be demonstrated through the attainment of formal tertiary qualifications (Edwards, 1999), and a failure to attain such educational standards may endanger the profession. This issue has already been explored by Bayley (1991, cited in Etter, 1993) who found that sub-professional educational levels were closely linked to the failure of police to be effective. This finding provides credence to the suggestion by Reiner (1992) that police standards regarding education have not kept pace with general advances in education thus causing the legitimacy of the profession to be undermined. Palmer (1995) takes a more optimistic approach by noting that whilst the methods of skill development within police organisations have always been relatively traditional, they have also begun emerging from the 'twilight zone'.

This emergence is evidenced by the many changes that have been incorporated into educational practices utilised by police services throughout the world. Some of these changes have been documented by Edwards (1999) who makes two points about education and training within Australian police services. First, towards the end of the 20th century, policing became more professionalised, and this trend will only continue to increase as we move further into the 21st century. Second, the requirement for professional qualifications has accompanied this professionalisation, and embedded within this has also been a need for police officers to increase their level of education.

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2004), the term 'lifelong learning' no longer merely refers to recurrent or adult education, but instead encompasses all learning endeavours undertaken by an individual throughout their life. Impacting on this has been the need for individuals to continually upgrade their work and/or life skills as a result of the increased pace of technological change, globalisation and the changing nature of work. To ensure that lifelong learning can flourish within police organisations, it is essential that there are adequate means by which ongoing education, training and career development can occur so that the level of service and professionalism that policing embodies can be maintained (Nixon & Reynolds, 1996). Further, it is essential that organisations ensure that the education being provided remains relevant to the workplace, whilst simultaneously responding to a variety of needs and fostering students' aptitude for lifelong learning (Tennant & Morris, 2001).

Methodology

The aim of this research is to compare and contrast the educational practices and standards used within the AFP upon its inception in 1979 with those used within the organisation today. The research question underpinning the paper is "In what ways has the education and training of Australian Federal Police changed since the inception of the AFP in 1979?".

It has been suggested that researchers who use only one research method severely limit their ability to understand the phenomenon of interest, and the use of multiple research methods is the best way to conduct an examination into a particular social phenomenon (Babbie, 1995). Given this, multiple methods are used in this study which enables a clear and accurate picture to emerge as to the reality of educational change within the AFP.

Triangulation is defined as the use of several different research methods in order to test the same finding (Babbie, 2004). More specifically, data triangulation is defined as the use of a variety of data sources (Janesick, 1994). In this paper, data triangulation is achieved through the use of the case study as a methodological framework in combination with the data-gathering techniques of content analysis and structured interviews – a research design specifically identified by Berg (2001) as being 'useful'.

The case study as a methodological framework

Intrinsic case studies are carried out when a researcher wants to gain a better understanding about a particular case (in this instance, the AFP). The intrinsic case study is not undertaken in order to represent other cases, but rather because its uniqueness makes the task interesting (Berg, 2001). Similarly, Stake (1994) notes that the case study *"...is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because...this case itself is of interest"* (p.237).

Content analysis

To identify and analyse the educational changes that have occurred within the AFP, extensive content analysis was conducted using training manuals, recruitment standards and gazettes. The first step in conducting content analysis was the identification of those texts which were relevant and which would facilitate the answering of the research question. This identification process generated a selection of documents including AFP Annual Reports, Agency Budget Statements, Police Gazettes and *Platypus* (the official journal of the AFP). Through reviewing these documents across the 25 year history of the AFP, common themes, trends and major transformations in education practices and standards became apparent.

Interviews

To supplement the content analysis process, interviews were conducted with current members of the AFP. The selection of participants was based on the criterion that they must have been employed with the AFP since its inception (or as near as possible). Explanation for this criterion lies in the anticipated depth of knowledge and experience that would come through interviewing personnel who had been with the AFP since inception, as well as the diversity of change that would have been experienced over the course of their employment. Understandably, natural attrition affected the number of individuals who met this criterion.

The identification of relevant personnel was done with the assistance of the AFP. In total, seven AFP members were identified as meeting the above criterion, however only six interviews were conducted due to the unavailability of one member. Each recorded interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted at either the AFP Training College or the AFP National Headquarters. Immediately following the completion of each interview, the information was transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. In total, respondents were asked six questions, of which one specifically addressed the concept of educational change within the organisation: "In your view and experience, how have education, training and recruitment practices changed within the AFP?"

Results

Content analysis

Annual reports from each of the 25 years of the AFP were scrutinised and the systematic examination of training manuals, recruitment standards, gazettes and internal documents was undertaken. It was found that the active recruitment of suitable personnel was closely linked to the quality of training and education provided to AFP

personnel throughout their employment. Upon inception, it was noted that *"manpower is the most essential and valued resource of the AFP"* (1981 Annual Report:12), and as the then-Commissioner Major General Ron Grey noted in the 1984–85 Annual Report, *"if the training system is not properly based, the force has no future"* (p.vii).

Historical analysis of education and training practices within the AFP

In the early 1980s, promotional examinations were held prior to an individual's advancement within the organisation. These examinations included modules such as law (theory, practical and research), supervision, administration and emergency management. During 1984–85, the AFP introduced qualifying courses for staff seeking promotions, and these courses replaced the examination system which had been used up until then by the AFP.

During 1988–89, new curricula for AFP training programs were implemented, and by 1991–92, core competency standards for positions and training were established. Also during this time, a significant amount of member training was outsourced and conducted in tertiary institutions throughout Australia. The use of core competency standards resulted in the eventual change to competency-based assessment of units – a move which was highlighted in 1993 during the launch by the AFP (in conjunction with the Canberra Institute of Technology) of the Associate Diploma in Applied Science (Fingerprint Investigation). When explaining the newly-adopted competency-based assessment process to AFP personnel, it was noted that *"students attending the course will be assessed on their competency in completing tasks which are taught rather than just being graded on their knowledge"* (AFP News, 1993:4).

In January 1997, the National Education, Training and Development team was created to oversee the development and delivery of all education, training and development within the AFP. As a result, new courses were designed to meet the standards set by the National

Police Education Standards Committee. Further to continuing the shift away from examination-based learning, these courses were also able to be counted towards post-graduate qualifications through the Australian Qualification Framework. In contrast to the tailored nature of these courses, the courses offered by the AFP in 1979–80 could not be used towards post-graduate qualifications, nor were they necessarily transferable between jurisdictions.

From 1 February 1998, the AFP acquired status as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), and thus became authorised to deliver the Diploma of Policing as well as numerous Certificate courses, an Associate Diploma in Investigations and an Advanced Certificate in Investigations. Around this time, the AFP also introduced the flexible delivery of their education programs in order to ensure that *"...participation in programs does not unduly impact on the workplace"* (1999–00 Annual Report:63). The methods of delivery then diversified to incorporate attendance within a formal classroom or workplace, on-line learning and distance education. Also during 1998, the AFP used what they described as a *"recent innovation"* on their Management of Serious Crime course by requiring participants to write a 2,000 word paper and demonstrate an ability to think critically, participate in simulations and orally present information to the class rather than sit formal exams.

Following on from the RTO accreditation and the changing modes of delivery, the Learning and Development section of the AFP underwent a significant overhaul in 1999–2000 so that a university-style system of education could be provided. By 2001–02 (and in line with its end-goal of providing a university-style system of education) the AFP had established three faculties (the Faculty of Professional Development, the Faculty of Policing and the Faculty of Security and Public Order) that were designed to meet the specific training needs of the organisation.

Tertiary qualifications

The content analysis process revealed that a major shift regarding the tertiary qualifications of new recruits occurred during the 1988–89 reporting period. At this time, 11% of applicants held tertiary qualifications, yet the Annual Report identifies the intention to *"...recruit more tertiary trained new members"* and that *"much recruiting effort will be directed towards encouraging applications from undergraduates and graduates"* (p.64). This intention became more tangible in 1989–90 when the objective was set to have *"...a 50 percent graduate workforce by the year 2001 rising to 70 percent by the year 2010"* (p.58).

In recent times, the number of AFP employees holding tertiary qualifications has increased. For example, demographic data relating to the first recruitment campaign of 2001 shows that more than 70% of new members held tertiary qualifications whilst 30% possessed the ability to speak a second language. It was also found that the tertiary qualifications of existing AFP personnel have changed over time, with more employees completing university degrees and undertaking post-graduate studies. By August 2001, over 50 AFP employees held Masters Degrees and 20 employees had attained (or were about to attain) their Doctor of Philosophy.

Interview results

Demographics

Interviews were conducted with current sworn members of the AFP (n=6). Respondents were not randomly selected, but were instead identified by the AFP based on their years of service. The years of service of those interviewed ranged from 20 years to 34 years, with an average of 25.25 years. This average is substantially higher than the average length of service for sworn AFP members of 11.11 years (as reported in the AFP's 2002–03 Annual Report:139), and this was due

to the prerequisite for interview participants to have been employed with the AFP for the majority of the period being studied.

Entry standards

Several respondents discussed the changes that have occurred over time regarding entry standards. Upon inception of the organisation, "the standards were not significant in any way – they were more physical as opposed to intellectual" and the people the AFP tended to look for were "6 foot tall, big [and] brawny with life experience". Now, the AFP tends to "focus on different people" including looking "primarily at employing graduates". The AFP now also "looks for someone who has a bit more life experience and who has good academic qualifications. They need analytical skills to manage a diversity of complex material, [and this] has changed quite fundamentally the type of people that we are bringing in". This change is also reflected in the role of unsworn employees within the organisation. "We used to traditionally 'grow' our technical teams from inside and we would give them a whole heap of vocational training. Now, we are recruiting people with specialist technical skills".

Tertiary qualifications

Several respondents discussed the changes associated with tertiary qualifications with one specifically noting that previously, the AFP "had a rather rigid tertiary requirement, but we have shifted from that now. We always had a policy of 70–30, which was a minimum of 70 percent graduates. All of a sudden that became nearly 100 percent, and it became nearly impossible from the late 80s to the mid 90s to get into this job if you didn't have tertiary qualifications. That was never the intention. The intention was that the other 30 [percent] would draw from life experience and workplace experience that would be equivalent to the tertiary qualifications that people had". As a result of this, "today, the average recruit profile is a person 29.5 years of age, with significant life experience. The vast majority

have tertiary qualifications – in excess of 75 percent come in with tertiary qualifications completed, and most of the rest have partially completed them. Of those 75 percent, 30 percent have post-graduate qualifications [and] 70 percent have a second language. The profile is very diverse".

Style of training

In the late 1980s, Peter Dawson of the AFP College "introduced the concept of people [within the organisation] going to a tertiary institution and gaining higher qualifications… I think that was the start of putting the AFP on to a more professional footing in terms of its training". Dawson was so influential within the AFP that one respondent noted that the changes relating to training were "all pretty much a direct result of his influence". One change attributed directly to Dawson was the removal of qualifying courses which was brought about by his declaration that "promotion should be based on merit, and as a result, he cancelled the whole notion of having qualifying courses". The move subsequently brought the AFP in line with government policies operational throughout the Australian Public Service.

Despite the enthusiasm and support from several respondents regarding changes associated with training, one respondent felt that "there is still some work that needs to be done in improving what we have on the courses". Other comments regarding education and training were that "we have got some work to do" and that "we could do a little bit better on the education side". Further to these comments was the suggestion that the AFP has "not yet designed our programs well enough to ensure that we have that fundamental capability of starting from the beginning and training to be able to give us the ability of moving people around from business area to business area".

Examinations and qualifying courses

Respondents also provided some insight into their own views and experiences with examinations and qualifying courses within the AFP. In the early days of the AFP, "examinations and qualifying courses took you through the ranks and you were not able to apply for positions unless you had those qualifications behind you". In essence, "you had to pass exams in order to move on". Since then, there has been "a fairly big move to competencies". This was recognised by one respondent who felt that "the internal police training regime has changed dramatically. It has gone from the days where there used to be a big stick and 'You will have an exam Monday morning', and has moved to this much more professional base where it is an adult learning environment. I think it is much more conducive to people actually learning skills". When discussing examinations, one respondent noted that "we have certainly moved away from those to a more adult education process".

Discussion

From interviews, it became apparent that the mid to late 1980s were the most notable and memorable times of change within the AFP for its education and training. This finding is consistent with Etter's (1995) assertion that organisational development of 'landmark proportions' occurred under the leadership of Commissioner McAuley during the late 1980s. Such change is evident when comparing the educational and training courses conducted upon inception with those conducted now. At inception, the courses were oriented towards practical activities, and they mainly focused on the attainment of key skills. These courses required specific levels of skill attainment and physical mastery, and differ significantly from the more cognitive-based courses (presented in a manner consistent with adult education principles) that are conducted within the AFP today.

Four respondents commented on the AFP's use of adult education principles during its education and training of personnel.

Four respondents spoke specifically about examination processes within the AFP, including the fact that upon inception, successful achievement on examinations was needed in order to complete courses. This requirement was noted by three respondents who recalled the 'three strikes and you are out' policy regarding a 'fail' mark on an examination. Such standards differ greatly to the competency-based assessments utilised throughout the AFP today.

It is possible that there is an implied 'tension' between university-style education and the provision of competency-based education and training. However, through conducting content analysis and interviews it is evident that the AFP has adopted a system which has 'the best of both worlds'. That is, a balance has been found where personnel can acquire skills and be assessed on their competency (such as the attainment of skills relating to weapon handling or urgent duty driving) whilst also extending themselves and furthering their careers through undertaking higher degrees and/or attaining formal qualifications. An example is found in the large number of AFP staff undertaking the Masters of Educational Leadership program at the University of Canberra, as well those undertaking other courses relating to topics such as risk management and innovation.

A key finding of this study relates to the tertiary qualifications gained by AFP personnel. The identification (and attainment) of a 50% graduate workforce is in stark contrast to the 5% of AFP employees who had studied beyond their leaving certificate when the 1980 annual report was compiled. The change in tertiary qualifications and post-graduate education of both new and existing staff is evident, and it is obvious that further education beyond the attainment of a university degree has become more pronounced within the organisation.

This case study provides insight into how organisations (in particular, law enforcement agencies) can foster an educational environment and encourage a workplace committed to the lifelong learning of its personnel. Edwards (1999) noted how the attainment of tertiary qualifications has accompanied the increased professionalisation of police, and the increasing number of AFP employees combining further studies with their work is just one example of the increased professionalisation being promoted by the AFP. At interview, three respondents referred to the increasingly professional image of the AFP and noted that this has been one example of positive change within the organisation.

The literature suggests that police standards regarding education and recruitment have not kept pace with general advances in education (see Reiner, 1992), however the findings presented here differ somewhat with the literature. For example, the development of new curricula, core competency standards and the introduction of the flexible delivery of programs in conjunction with registration as an RTO have all seen the AFP stay abreast of general advances in education. At interview, this was noted by three respondents, and it became evident that educational changes have been made at both a micro- and macro-level within the AFP through the incorporation of quality controls and assurances, the consideration of multiple intelligences and the use of evaluation processes, information technology and adult learning principles within AFP-delivered programs.

Conclusion

Once accepted into their profession of choice, it would be easy for individuals to stagnate and merely continue meeting the daily demands of their job without necessarily concerning themselves with ongoing personal or professional development. By analysing the changes that have occurred within the areas of education and training

since the inception of the AFP, it is possible to see how the standards of AFP officers have changed (and indeed improved) enormously since the inception of the organisation in 1979. This finding is in line with Reiner's (1992) assertion that the passing of time has enabled the education and training of police to undergo a drastic transformation.

By researching the question "In what ways has the education and training of Australian Federal Police changed since the inception of the AFP in 1979?" it has become evident that the practices of education and training within the AFP since its inception 25 years ago have changed significantly. In summary, it can be noted that: the mid to late 1980s were the most notable and memorable times of change; the AFP has stayed abreast of general advances in education; adult learning principles have been adopted and subsequently utilised within the organisation, and that the AFP has successfully moved from examination-based assessments to competency-based assessments, and become a nationally accredited provider of VET courses.

These educational changes have demonstrated that the AFP is a dynamic organisation. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated how the AFP have been able to refocus its own system of educational transformation by adopting modern and emerging best practices regarding adult learning promoted by other experts and professional bodies. Given the significant changes to education and training made during the life of the AFP, it is unlikely that its personnel will stagnate in terms of its educational environment. Opportunities therefore exist for future research to be conducted that compares the educational environment of the AFP with that of other law enforcement agencies, or alternatively, for further research to be conducted within the AFP that encompasses the experiences of more recent recruits.

References

Australian Federal Police 1981 Annual Report. Canberra: Australian Federal Police.

Australian Federal Police 1988–89 Annual Report. Canberra: Australian Federal Police.

Australian Federal Police 1999–00 Annual Report. Canberra: Australian Federal Police.

Australian Federal Police 2002–03 Annual Report. Canberra: Australian Federal Police.

Australasian Police Ministers' Council (2003). *Directions in Australasian Policing 2002–2005*.

Babbie, E. (1995). *The practice of social research* (7th ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth.

Babbie, E. (2004). *The practice of social research* (10th ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth.

Berg, B. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Corns, C. (1988). "Policing and social change". *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 24(1), 32–46.

Edwards, C. (1999). *Changing policing theories for 21st century societies*. Sydney: Federation Press.

Etter, B. (1993). "Future direction of policing in Australia". *Australian Police Journal*, 47(1), 43–54.

Etter, B. (1995). Mastering innovation and change in police agencies. In B. Etter & M. Palmer (Eds.), *Police leadership in Australasia*. Sydney: Federation Press, 278–309.

Janesick, V. (1994). The Dance of Qualitative Research Design: Metaphor, Methodolatry and Meaning. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 209–219.

Murray, T. (2000). "Police and the challenge of the 21st century: managing change in police organisations". *Platypus Magazine: The Journal of the Australian Federal Police*, 68, 8–13.

Nixon, C. & Reynolds, C. (1996). Producing change in police organisations: the story of the New South Wales Police Service. In D. Chappell & P. Wilson (Eds.), *Australian policing: contemporary issues*. Sydney: Butterworths, 278–309.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2004). *Policy brief: lifelong learning*. Retrieved 1 July 2005 from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development website http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/11/29478789.pdf.

Palmer, M. (1995). The likely environment in the year 2000 and beyond. In B. Etter & M. Palmer (Eds.), *Police leadership in Australasia*. Sydney: Federation Press, 1–39.

Reiner, R. (1992). "Policing a postmodern society". *Modern Law Review*, 55(6), 761–781.

Schön, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stake, R. (1994). Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 236–247.

Tennant, M. & Morris, R. (2001). "Adult education in Australia: shifting identities 1980–2000". *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(1/2), 44–54.

About the author

Michelle Berzins is a PhD candidate at the University of Canberra and recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award researching leniency policies, illegal cartel behaviour and competition law. Tutor and occasional lecturer in the Bachelor of Community Education course at the University of Canberra.

Contact details

Room 5C16, School of Education and Community Studies, University of Canberra, ACT 2601
Tel: (02) 6201 5269 *Fax: (02) 6201 2263*
Email: Michelle.Berzins@canberra.edu.au

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

Learning in a bicultural context: a biographical case study

Dorathy Hoy
Graduate
University of Technology, Sydney

This article reports on a study focussed on the identity formation of a second generation male Australian Chinese. Learning was a major part of his adult life: from poor beginnings he studied repeatedly to achieve his goals. It was posited that education was the potent force throughout the individual's development. The study, a life story, was underpinned by two theories: (i) Psychological impact of biculturalism: evidence and theory *by La Fromboise* et al. *(1993) and (ii)* The seasons of a man's life *by Levinson* et al. *(1978). The factors explored were family and attachment, gender, ethnicity and religion.*

The identity of adult education as a field of study is largely premised on the identity of the adult and also that adult development can only have meaning in a given social and historical context (Tennant and

Pogson, 1995, pp.5, 69). The application of research methods to the literary genre of biography has enlarged the human dimension and contextualised the qualitative data obtained from triangulated research methodology and from historical facts. Reflection upon an individual's identity in a bicultural situation is helpful to reveal the differentials of how they 'were positioned' (ascribed status) and the way they 'positioned themselves' (achieved status) in society and understanding how and why this was acquired. This research was generated by two theories that assisted in finding answers to the purpose of the study. So the theories *Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory* (La Fromboise *et al.*,1993) and *The seasons of a man's life* (Levinson *et al.*,1978) provided a supportive structure to consistently and simplistically integrate knowledge of the subject (Feist 1994, p. v).

The purpose of the study was, first, to investigate the experiences of an Australian Chinese male centred in the Australian and Australian-Chinese society, from 1926 until the end of the Twentieth century. Secondly, it was to determine what experiences were implicated in the various aspects of his bicultural context, including personal, social, cultural and historical aspects. In a bicultural setting, the sense of self creates cognitive dissonance when competing cultural and social values are different (Markus and Kitayama 1989, p.24). The individual in this biographical study lived within a closeknit household where four dialects or languages were spoken and there was a diversity of cultural practices and educational levels. He faced the dilemma of which Chinese cultural practices he should follow and the Western educational standard he should seek. His sense of personal identity evolved contextualised in its historico-socio-cultural settings.

The notion of identity was explicated in the work of psychologists (Gergen 1993, p.251) on personal identity, in concern of sociologists (Burkitt 1991, p.189) with the social identity and the minority groups, as well as the literary expressions of many cultural identities (Gilbert

et al. 2000, p.44) and viewpoints and was inclusive of evolving concepts of an Australian national identity (McCarthy 1999, p.94). Thus, there emerged a number of dimensions related to the formation of identity: personal, social, cultural and historical. The personal was inevitably set with social, cultural and historical domains and the dimensions of their interactions highly individualistic.

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction between the socio-cultural contexts in which a person functions, the perceived historical events that impact upon them, and their personal experiences. A slice cutting across these interactions could be themes such as as language or clothing or in this case the religious aspects that may be explored.

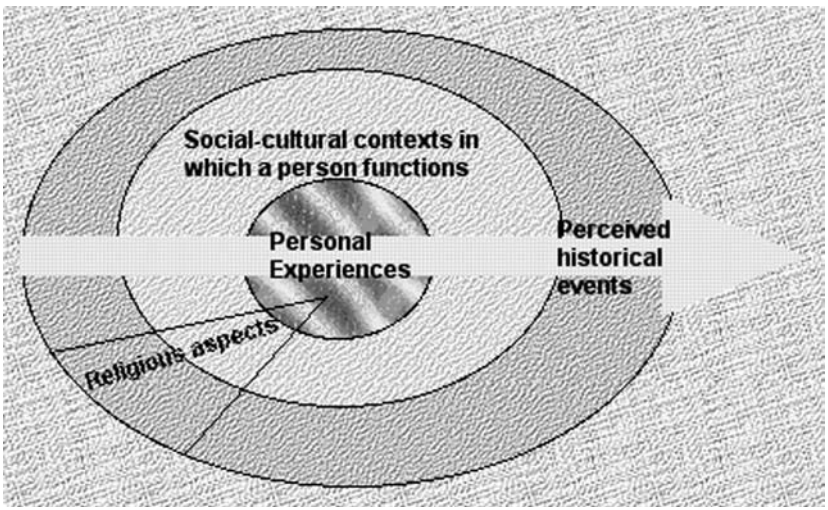

Figure 1: Psychological – Sociological – Historical – Interaction

Burkitt's (1991, p.205) study of the formation of personality emphasised the enmeshed link between production, communication and power. Thus cultural identity was positioned within the context of time and place, of history and culture, during the life course of a person's experiences. The questions, "would the individual's

personality be perceived differently by others, when in different work roles?" and "would the individual's personality or achievements be presented differently when coloured by the background of the commentator?" were drawn from his concern with work and social relations reconstructing our social selves. Burkitt drew attention to the fact that our learnt habits are accepted as a part of our disposition or our tastes, when they were unlikely to be common to the social class or religious or ethnic group in which they were reared (Burkitt 1991, p. 206). He concluded that, "the basis of human difference and individual identity is to be found within society, in the social relations that exist between individuals" (Burkitt 1991, p.189). Just as Jarvis (2004, p.83) stated that "the processes of learning appear in interaction between people, and between individuals and experiences."

The Study

Adult development is based on expertise gained from dealing with concrete problems and situations at work, in the home, and in community life (Tennant and Pogson 1995, p.33). The notion of identity is intertwined in the concept of an Australian-born Chinese that developed in the Australian post-World War II society. This concept distinguished Chinese families who had remained from the colonial period from those who came later as part of Government Plans, or as migrants or refugees. The term was worn as a crown by these early families to symbolise their acceptance by mainstream Australians and distinguish them from newer Asian arrivals whose accent was obvious. In the multicultural climate of the 1970s, these families were regarded as model assimilated Australians rather than the earlier enclaves that had formed Chinatowns. As a sub-cultural group they had ensured that almost very Australian country town had fresh vegetables and later that each such town had a Chinese restaurant. Walkey and Chung (1996), who examined Chinese stereotypes in America and New Zealand stated,

> "studies have shown that stereotypic attitudes toward the Chinese have undergone dramatic changes over the past century, from undesirable immigrant to model minority. The Chinese appeared to fit better into the family ideal of middle class Europeans than do many other minorities" (Walkey and Chung 1996, p. 283).

The interaction of the personal and social formations of identity in a bicultural context adds an interacting dimension to the problem. Within this context of an individuals personal identity, they might or might not choose to have labels applied to them. In terms of an individual's beliefs, from whichever culture, labels are vital factors in how people perceive their identity and what labels are acceptable or not. Some people have adopted derogatory labels as their own, such as pride in being black. While others rejected identifying with a label such as *banana* for Asians who felt white inside, a description of their assimilation. Consequently, individual identity in a bicultural situation was perceived and negotiated through the process of acculturation and fusion models. Early work by Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) dealt extensively with marginal people, who were born in one culture, raised in another and belonged to both. They both portrayed a marginal person as a negative stereotype and concluded that "living in two cultures is psychologically undesirable because managing the complexity of dual reference points generates ambiguity, identity, confusion, and normlessness" (La Fromboise *et al.*, 1993, p. 395).

This negative viewpoint was not shared by Goldberg (1941), who saw marginal people as having advantages "living at the border of two cultures". Analysis of the psychological influences of biculturalism crossed four disciplinary boundaries. Initially, it was the discipline of psychology, which dealt with the individual, emotional and behavioural characteristics. Then education encompassed the relationship with human social structures and sociology followed, examining groups and diverse socio-economic systems and lastly ethnology looked at cultural heritage.

Cultural competence was a multilevel continuum (La Fromboise *et al.*, 1993, p. 396). There were seven variables that our subject dealt with competently. These variables are listed below in italics and exemplified by excerpts from our subject's biography.

a) *Possessed a strong personal identity* and knew what he wanted to do and did it. He came from an impoverished background but with positive attitudes and did not feel disadvantaged.. He became part of the church and early assumed a leadership role and later a community role as a local alderman.
b) *Acquired knowledge and beliefs and values of the culture* of a lower socio-economic area in Sydney. He moved from schooling at a Secondary Technical School to a Technical Trade course becoming a Fitter and Machinist.
c) *Displayed sensitivity to the affective processes of the Australian culture* and readily adapted to this culture so different from his own. He realised that further formal learning was necessary, so he studied part-time to reach Matriculation standard. During this time, his interest in religion accelerated and caused his family great concern. They, through hard work, had acquired a substantial house in a lower middle class suburb. "Why would he want to live "off the plate" (i.e. church collection)?" said his father. Our individual left home. It was an unhappy parting for the No 1 son.
d) *Was able to communicate clearly in the English language*. He spoke and sang well with no trace of accent derived from the Chinese dialects he heard at home. He had attributes but still wished for further learning. The Central Church Mission provided food, lodging, and access to study, in exchange for certain work duties and solved his need.
e) Was accepted, *his behaviour* was such that he melded seamlessly into this new life
f) *Maintained active social relations with his* (Anglo-Australian) *cultural group*, tutored other students and believed that if you don't look for racism you don't see it.

g) *Negotiated the institutional structures of that culture* by passing the examinations required by the Church Board, and he was granted entry into the Theological College to acquire formal Theology qualifications.

Now an adult, he did not have a long-term plan but took opportunities as they arose and each learning phase was a step that prepared him for the next. His equable personality and social skills allowed him to function competently in two cultures. However, his absorption into the dominant culture was rapid. He had rarely been into an Anglo-Australian home and when he did it was indeed a developmental learning situation. He faced the dilemma of what cutlery to use and when, the processes of the meal and differing behaviour patterns – all in strong contrast to his Chinese home life. Jarvis (2004, p.83) reminds us that learning is in the first instance a process of receiving and processing any element of culture, received in any way. Our subject observed, listened and learnt.

Gordon (1964,1978) described this 'acculturation' period as where the subject enters the structures of the host society and he used a special term 'amalgamation' for intermarriage and marital assimilation. This 'amalgamation' came about when our individual was appointed as a Probationary Minister to a large Eastern Suburbs Mission. There were no Asians at all in this diverse congregation. Here he met and married an Anglo-Australian, much to the consternation of both sets of parents. This fitted Levinson's entering the 'adult world' period. Then, our individual was appointed to a rural mining town in New South Wales, the first Chinese minister, in that denomination to be sent to a solely Anglo-Australian parish. Gordon (1964, p 71) noted that the assumption of all assimilation models was that an individual lost their original cultural identity as they acquired a new identity in the second culture. They were 'aliens' until fully accepted in the second culture. If our subject was not accepted in any way, it was not apparent. He sounded Australian and though he may not have looked Australian, he was welcomed without reserve.

Summarising Chinese settlement and migration in Australia, Choi (1975, p.105) cited Robert E. Park's Race relations theory, as a cycle, "that is, a transition from 'contact' to 'competition' to 'conflict' to 'accommodation' and finally to 'assimilation'." He illustrated this by noting that though the Chinese earlier had clustered together, after World War II, they dispersed into the suburban areas. That was exactly what happened with our individual's family of origin and his extended family. They still kept their inner city Chinese networks and established others within their new Anglo-Australian communities.

Gamage and Mahon (1993, p.119) stated , " that ethnic identity has a static element defined by one's ancestral and genetic links, and a 'dynamic' element defined by the cultural group and territory within which one grows up, works and lives." Our subject clearly showed the 'dynamic' element to be the stronger as his time spent in the Anglo-Australian environment was dominant. Gamage and Mahon also noted, "that migrants of the second generation do feel affected by the tug-of-war between their primary socialisation influences and the secondary ones of their new home." Our subject did not feel any dislocation, so intent was he on his chosen pathway of learning. As with culture, language, understandably, is a crucial factor in the formation of identity and it was vital in this study to determine what language was most used in everyday transactions, and what language competency factors had influenced our subject's work, marriage or choice of other social activities over his lifetime of roles.

Levinson (1978, p.9) in his study 'a season in a man's life' supported Karl Marx's (1969) viewpoint that work was a major social site of identity. The four characteristics named by Levinson were social class origins, racial-ethnic-religious origins plus education and marital status.

Levinson's well known study dealt with three eras – the early 17 to 45 years; middle 40 years to 60 years; and late adulthood covering 60+ years. His overlapping eras he labelled 'times of life'. Each era

brought predictable tasks and the transition periods predictable challenges. This core development theory was criticised for its structured view of adult life. (Knowles 1998, p.173). However, our subject's lifetime events comfortably slotted into, in fact matched with Levinson's Life Task Developmental Model, as noted below:-

a) in the early adult period our subject moved from a trade course to church activities and formal study;
b) as he entered the adult world, he was committed to the church and married life;
c) on his ordination he assumed greater work responsibilities and challenges in this transition period;
d) at the age of 33 years he created his 2nd life structure and moved to the Far West of New South Wales. Then, he returned to the city and with three children was again within the 'family –fold'.
e) at the age of 40 years, in another transition period , he experienced a mid-life crisis. He left the church but with the help of church, family and friends secured a house and clerical work, while he studied at night. He created a new life structure, was elected a local alderman and completed his university studies;
f) during the next transition period he moved jobs , then settled into teaching with great satisfaction for the remainder of his working life; and
g) he prepared for retirement with further study but shortly afterwards ill health created a greater challenge.

The close relationship of the researcher to the subject provided a greater depth of information to his biography and a verification of facts.

Methodology

The content of this study was the deciding factor in the determination of the method (Flick 1998, p. 5) used in this qualitative research of the

life course of an individual. Biography was particularly suitable. It allowed for a reflection on a myriad of realities and aspects , and was inclusive of the subject, other participants and the researcher (Burns 2000, p.388).

The strategies for sampling the subject's friends, acquaintances and family were threefold. First, a survey was conducted of the subject against which, his own and other's perceptions could be compared. Second, a set of questions was sent for considered written responses that could easily be correlated. Third, a group of interviews was undertaken, that explored his character, personality and the times in his life in greater depth. The subject was aged 74 years, so participants were of a similar age and chosen for their knowledge and experience of him. They provided specific insights of the subject and were willing to give the time to an interview or questionnaire. Geographical distance and the mobility of the participants were also determinants in choosing whether a face-to-face interview or a questionnaire was the most appropriate format. The interviewees were asked their age, gender, cultural background and educational level in case those factors might prove to be notable variables. Both interviews and questionnaires were transcribed in total.

This three-pronged technique provided both quantitative and qualitative information and allowed the researcher to look for convergence, inconsistency and contradictory evidence. The triangulation was specifically achieved by an amalgam of

(a) cross-cultural Adaptability Self-Administered Inventory (Kelley and Meyers 1995) that psychologically surveyed the subject's adaptability tendencies;
(b) mailed self-administered written questionnaires to former colleagues and friends who were unable to be interviewed in person;

(c) audio-taped and transcribed oral face-to-face open-ended interviews (plus one by telephone) that involved the subject, members of his family of origin, colleagues and friends;
(d) factual documentation of primary and secondary sources, the Family History CD-Rom, original documents, newspaper articles and photographs as a cross-check; and
(e) analysis of the triangulated data was a stepped process that matched questioning with the underpinning theories. This triangulated methodology, using many sources, disposed bias and provided an empirical link to the theories.

Results and Conclusions

Was education the key factor in the continuous learning of this individual? The in-depth result was a surprise to all involved. It was religion. In mid-life he had moved from preaching to teaching and in retirement is still learning and involved in helping others, in the general community, with his latest interest, that of computers.

Levinson (1978) emphasised the importance of work in a man's life and our individual's working years were made known through the interpretation of the subject's own story and comments of his contemporaries and work colleagues. Each contribution exposed some facet of a chronological period in the subject's working life. Where possible, specific aspects were contrasted and counterpointed with the material from the subject's personal biography.
By immersion in the interview material, as Levinson had done, there developed an intuitive understanding of the man and his life (Tennant and Pogson 1995, p. 71) Religion dramatically changed his life but provided him with opportunities, as through church contacts he obtained an apprenticeship. Church activities and influence inspired his intense reading and a desire for more learning. He attempted the Matriculation certificate by private study and failed. Not deterred, he worked in the City Markets as a salesman in the mornings so that he

could go to a coaching college in the afternoon. His second attempt at Matriculation succeeded. He changed allegiances and moved to a Central Mission church, and some local friends followed him. He was intensely driven to learn more and when he told his parents that he was to train in the church institution, they were appalled. He had rejected his father's way of life at a time when his father had provided better living conditions for the family. His father had lost 'face' because of his eldest son's decision and our subject was no longer welcome in the family home.

However, caught up in his new life, his learning was both formal and experiential. He pursued his prescribed studies in theology, New Testament, New Testament Greek, homiletics and public speaking meanwhile absorbing this 'other world' of Anglo-Australians. He was strongly motivated; he set his goals and took responsibility for his own actions. He presented a positive image of an Asian-Australian identity assimilated to the point of fusion.

Most of our subject's study periods were pedagogical but his learning patterns moved from *dependency to independency*; he accumulated a *reservoir of experiences on which further learning was constructed*; he was in a *state of readiness* to develop socially and he moved *from subject to* performance *proficiency* (Knowles 1980, pp.43–45). In the study, there was an ample amount of data to counteract bias. Knowles (1998, p.152) made the point that "learning is a complex phenomenon that defies description by any one model". In conclusion, as Jarvis said, (2004, p. 83) "everybody's experience is unique and as individuals grow older so their uniqueness is even more apparent ".

References

Burkitt, I. (1991). *Social selves: Theories of the social formation of personality*. London: :Sage.

Burns, R.B. (2000). *Introduction to research methods*. (4th ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Australia.

Choi, C. Y. (1975). *Chinese migration and settlement in Australia*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Feist, J (1994). *Theories of personality*. (3rd ed.). Fort Worth,TX: Harcourt Brace College.

Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage

Gamage, S., & Mahon, J. (1993). National identity, ethnic identity and dual identity: what do you mean? In Gamage, S. (Ed.). (1993). *A question of survival: Studies on assimilation, pluralism and multiculturalism in Australia*. (pp.116–129). Armidale, NSW: UNE symposium group on assimilation, pluralism & multiculturalism.

Gergen, K. J. (Ed.). (1993). *Refiguring self and psychology*. Aldershot, Hants: Dartmouth Publishing.

Gilbert, H. Khoo,T & Lo, J.(Eds.).(2000). *Diaspora: Negotiating Asian-Australia*. St Lucia,Qld: University of Queensland Press

Goldberg, M.M. (1941). A qualification of the marginal man theory. *American Sociological Review*. *6*. 52–58.

Gordon, M. M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life. The role of race, religion and National origin*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gordon, M. M. (1978). *Human nature, class and ethnicity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jarvis, P. (2004). *Adult education and lifelong learning: Theory and practice*. (3rd ed.). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Kelley, C., & Meyers, J. (1995). *CCAI. (Cross-cultural adaptability survey) manual*. Minneapolis, MN: National Computer Systems.

Knowles, M. S., .Holton III, E. F. & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*. (5th ed.).Woburn, MA: Butterworth -Heinemann

Knowles, M..S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: from pedagogy to andragogy*. Englewood Cliffs: Cambridge

La Fromboise, T., Coleman, H.L.K., & Gerton, J.(1993).Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin*. *114*, 395–412.

Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Ballantine Books

Markus, H.R. and Kitayama, S. (1989). Cultural variation in self-concept. In Strauss, J and Goethals, G. R. (Eds.).(1991). *The Self: Interdisciplinary approaches*. New York: Springer-Verlag

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1969). (Unknown Trans.). *The Communist manifesto*. Baltimore: Penguin.

McCarthy, W. (1999). *A fair go.: Portraits of the Australian dream*. Edgecliff, NSW: Focus.

Park. R.E. (1928). Human migration and the marginal man. *American journal of sociology*. 5. 881–893.

Stonequist, E.V. (1935). The problem of marginal man. *American journal of sociology*. *7*. 1–12.

Tennant, M. & Pogson, P. (1995).*Learning and change in the adult years: A developmental perspective*. San Francisco.CA: Jossey-Bass.

Walkey, F. H., & Chung, R.C. (1996). An examination of stereotypes of Chinese and Europeans held by some New Zealand secondary school pupils. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*. *27*. 283–292.

About the author

Dorathy Hoy *is a lifelong learner and has taught in classrooms and school libraries, from preschool to tertiary levels, in positions of responsibility. Her particular interest is Chinese in Australia. She is a graduate in adult education (BEd Hons) from the University of Technology, Sydney.*

Contact details

(Mrs) D. Hoy, 10 Dock Road, Birchgrove, NSW 2041
Tel: (02) 9810 7446
Email: hoy@easy.com.au

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

Farmers' perception of agricultural extension agents' characteristics as factors for enhancing adult learning in Mezam division of Northwest Province of Cameroon

Oladele O. Idowu
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

The education of farmers would be result oriented if among other things the learning enhancement situations are created. Farmers' receptivity to training largely depends on the use of several educational methods by extension agents to reach farmers in Mezam division of Northwest province of Cameroon. Data were collected from May to August 2000 using Kerlinger's n ≥ 30 sampling technique in the division since no definite sampling frame could be obtained. The result indicates that majority are males (62.5%); less than 40 years of age (68.6%), had formal education (81.3%), and can speak and write English language (56.3%).

Farm visit is the most used teaching method (37.5%), while office calls (12.5%), group meetings (12.5%), and field days (6.3%) recorded low scores in the study area. The factor that was rated

as the most important in enhancing learning of the farmers was that extension agents should be knowledgeable in farming (87.5%). The agent being a farmer and educated (56.3% each) follows this, language came fourth on the importance list (50%).

Introduction

Agricultural education and extension systems have expanded tremendously, but often the development of new and more efficient training programmes and methodologies has lagged behind (Oladele, 1999). Agricultural education is becoming increasingly important in countries which depend heavily on agriculture for both the living of the majority of their population and their export earnings. Often the development potentials for the agricultural sector exist, while the agricultural education system, be it formal or non-formal, has not kept pace with the changing conditions of society (Bagchee, 1994). There are important similarities and differences between formal and non-formal education as they exist today. They have been organized to augment and improve upon the informal learning process – in other words, to promote and facilitate certain valued types of learning (such as reading and writing) that individuals cannot as readily or quickly acquire through ordinary exposure to their environment. These two modes of education are sometimes similar also in pedagogical form and methods (Adams 1982).

ICED (1975) reported that educationists have identified three sources of knowledge and education as being useful, and generally in accord with current realities. To distinguish between the three modes of information education, formal, and non-formal (recognizing that there is considerable overlap and interaction between them), they are defined as follows. Information education is the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills,

attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment. Formal education is the highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured "education system", spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university. Non-formal education is any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups of the population. Thus defined, non-formal education includes, for example, agricultural extension and farmer training programs.

Extension has a vital role in ensuring that researchers are aware of problems that farmers face. A partnership is therefore needed between the research system, which generates technology, the extension agency, which transfers technology, and the farmers who use the technology. Extension is most effective when relationships among the partners encourage dynamic, open communication, and feedback. Close and regular contact with farmers is obviously essential. Ideally, extension transmits problem-solving information to farmers and information on farmers' problems back to the research system.

The World Bank has invested almost $2 billion in extension in 79 countries since the mid-1960s, with investment rising from about $1 million per year in the 1960s to almost $200 million per year in the 1980s. Extension services can be organized in different ways, and various models have emerged. Much of the Bank's investment has been in the training and visit (T&V) system of extension, originally used in Asia and now in use in 30 African countries (Saito and Weidemann, 1990).

Any extension system must target particular categories of clients to meet their needs efficiently. One lesson to be learnt from the Asian experience of T&V is that training of extension workers should focus not only on the technical message to be transferred but also on learning more about "their farmers" and "their farming system",

especially about farmers' behaviour and the reasons they do things the way they do (Cernea and others, 1983). This is especially crucial in sub-Saharan African, where men and women within one household can have different resources, motivations, and constraints. Furthermore, face-to-face contact between agents and village level workers is particularly important when agricultural communities are heavily involved in subsistence agriculture and when large numbers of farmers are illiterate or unfamiliar with current technologies (Pickering, 1983).

Extension services in Cameroon can be traced to the MIDENO project which began in the early 1970s. In the early stages of the MIDENO project in the Cameroon, extension agents were encouraged to meet with farmers' groups but individuals could also request that extension agents (EAs) visit their farms. Also, farmers who purchased inputs were often visited. Analysis indicated that farmers who experienced farm visits and group meetings understood the recommendations better and were more likely to adopt them than those who only attended group meetings. Although assistance was supposed to be the same for men and women, men in the survey received eight times more individual farm visits than did women. Male farmers had little reluctance to ask for farm visits. Many women indicated that they did not think they could nor should ask or were "too far away" to rate a visit. Others thought visits were reserved for farmers who purchased inputs, something which fewer women did than men. For their part, the EAs concluded that women did not ask for visits because they were not interested. It was evident that the strategy of asking farmers to step forward to request visits was not as appropriate for women as for men (Koons 1988). The situation improved under later project initiatives for expanded extension delivery to women farmers (Walker 1989).

Rogers (1971) reported that the success of an extension agent is positively related to the extent of his effort, client orientation, the

degree of program compatibility with clients' needs and agents empathy with clients. Others indicators that affect the relationship are established include clients' higher social status, greater social participation among clients, higher education and literacy of clients and the cosmopoliteness of the clients. To enhance learning among the clients, the following characteristics were identified by Rogers (1983): agents homophily with clients; the extent to which agent works through opinion leaders; creditability of agents as perceived by the clients; and agents efforts in increasing the client's ability to evaluate innovations.

Farmers as the clients in the extension teaching-learning situation share similar characteristics with the audience in the communication process, which Schrammn (1973) reported could act as the mediator through the concepts of selective attention, selective perception, selective recall. The audience as the information processor exerts their preference for types of information and this is reflected in their characteristic ways of receiving information. The audience as a defender of its ego defines the audience as being reasonably deliberate in the use of information as well as the understanding of why and for what reasons some communication are attended to. The audience as a pleaser of others shows a personality variable exhibited by the motive to please others by compliance. The audience as a member of a group establishes the social ties among the audience, which influences the use of reference groups as guide for what to expect and how to react to the messages directed at them.

The educational needs for rural development referred to earlier are numerous and diverse, but they can be usefully grouped under four main headings. These are 1) General or basic education: literacy, numeracy, and elementary understanding of science and one's environment; what primary and general secondary schools seek to achieve: 2) Family improvement education, designed primarily to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes, useful in improving the quality

of family life, on such subjects as health and nutrition, homemaking and child care, home repairs and improvements, family planning, and so on: 3) Community improvement education, designed to strengthen local and national institutions and processes through instruction in such matters as local and national government, co-operatives, community projects, and the like: 4) Occupational education, designed to develop particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities and useful in making a living (Lele, 1975).

Need for the study

The assumption often made in meeting the educational needs for rural development is that rural target groups can make better use of the services and suggestions for improvement that are offered to them if the people working as consultants and negotiators have a better understanding of the natural environment and a basic knowledge of the society and economy. However education is needed and at the same time not enough education is available to rural target groups. Must target groups be educated or the projects have to adapt themselves to the existing level of target groups? The following questions emanate from their situation: What characteristics of extension agents enhance learning? What are the extension teaching methods used in reaching the farmers? Which of these methods are preferred? What are the personal characteristics of the farmers?

Purpose and objectives of the study

The general purpose of this study was to determine the factors that enhance learning among farmers in Mezam division of Cameroon. Specific objectives developed to accomplish the purpose are to:

1. Identify the personal characteristic of the farmers
2. Identify the extension teaching methods used among farmers
3. Ascertain those methods that are preferred by farmers

4. Determine the characteristics of extension agents enhancing learning among farmers

Methodology

The study was carried out in Mezam division, the provincial capital of the Northwest Province of Cameroon. Farming is the main occupation of the people in the area. Crops usually grown include maize, yam, cassava, cocoyam, melon and vegetables under mixed cropping practices. Livestock rearing was combined with crop production.

Sampling procedure and sampling size:

The target population of this study consisted of farmers. There was no definite sampling frame, however a large sample size technique of n>30 was used to select 32 farmers in the province (Kerlinger, 1973).

Instrument for data collection

Data for this study were collected from May to August 2000 through the use of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was subjected to face validity before administration. Information elicited from farmers included personal characteristics, farmers' perceptions of agent characteristics as factors for enhancing learning, extension methods used in reaching farmers, and the preferred extension methods by farmers.

Personal characteristics were operationalised in terms of age, gender, marital status, family size, and educational level. Farmers' perceptions were determined through a 3- point rating scale of the agents characteristics of very important, important and not important. Extension methods were ranked in preference and these methods were also indicated in terms of the frequency with which farmers experience them.

Data analysis

Data collected were coded and subjected to frequency counts, percentages, and chi-square analysis. The scores for the perceptions were dichotomized and the relationship between it and selected personal characteristics were examined. These were then subjected to frequency counts, percentages, and chi-square statistics.

Results and discussion

Table 1 shows that about 62 percent of the respondents are male and that a majority of the farmers are less than 40 years of age (68.6%). This shows that they are in the active years of labour. In the same vein, the majority are married (87.5%), reflecting an indication that the socio-cultural reasons behind marriage are being upheld. Family labour as a source of farm labour can also be responsible for a majority being married. With respect to the family size of the respondents, 56.2 percent had at least seven children. A large family size is an indication of rural areas with greater propensity for large farm sizes (World Bank 1989). Only 18.8% of the farmers had non-formal education while the remaining 81.3% had a formal education. It could then be concluded that the respondents could be proved to have a understanding of extension messages.

Table 1: Socio-personal characteristics and language ability of respondents, Mezam Division, northwest province, Cameroon, 2000, n = 32

Gender		
Male	20	62.5
Female	12	37.5
Age		
Less than 30	10	34.3
30–40	10	34.3
41–50	6	18.8
Greater than 50	6	18.8
Marital Status		
Married	28	87.5
Divorced	2	6.3
Separated	2	6.3
Family size		
1–3	4	12.5
4–6	10	34.3
7 and above	18	56.2
Education		
Formal	26	81.3
Non-formal	6	18.8

Table 2 presents the methods of extension teaching used the preference of farmers for the methods. While the farm visit was prominent among the methods used in reaching the farmers (37.5%), the demonstration was not used at all. As effective as the method

is, its implication for use is enormous in terms of cost, manpower, and number of farm families to be reached. Home visits were the next popular method used by extension agents to reach the farmers (25.0%), followed by group meetings (12.5%). The non-use of demonstration as a teaching method may be associated with the non-availability of teaching aids and specimens to illustrate the practice being pushed to the farmers.

Farmers' preferences for extension teaching methods as presented in Table 2 shows that farm visit is the most preferred method (50%). This may be connected with the use of farm visits by extension agent thus forming a perpetual habit. The situation of having the full attention of the extension agent and the likelihood that the agent can identify other problems on the farm might be responsible for this. Next on the preference list is the home visit extension teaching method. This may be associated with the fact that during home visits between farmers and extension agents, face-to-face communication is established and both parties give maximum attention to this. In this way, issues that are not only agricultural are also raised and discussed.

Demonstrations were ranked third by farmers after farm and home visits. This is may be due to the fact adult learners make maximum use of their senses in order to learn effectively. Demonstrations will enhance their use of these senses. The implications of the extension teaching methods used and farmers' preferences for one of three methods is that several factors that enhance learning have to be considered. The effectiveness of the method used will depend on the learning enhancement characteristics created in the teaching-learning situation.

Table 2: Extension teaching methods used and their preference among farmers, Mezam Division, northwest province, Cameroon, 2000, n = 32

	Method of Contact	**Method Preferred**
Home Contact	8 (25%)	6 (18.8%)
Farm Visit	12 (37.5%)	16 (50.0%)
Office calls	4 (12.5%)	-
Training	2 (6.3%)	2 (6.3%)
Group Meeting	4 (12.5%)	2 (6.3%)
Field days	2 (6.3%)	2 (6.3%)
Demonstration	-	4 (12.5%)

Table 3 shows farmers' perception of characteristics of extension agents that enhance learning on a 3-point scale of very important, important and not important. Being knowledgeable in farming was rated as the most important factor that would enhance their learning (87.5%), followed by the agent being a farmer and educated (56.3% each). The factor of language came fourth on the importance list (50%). The issue of language, respect, and gender as important factors could be related to the mutual trust and respect associated with extension work and the socio-cultural reasons circumscribing human relationships (Adams, 1980). Gender targeting as a device to enhance agents' acceptability was introduced in the Cameroon in 1990. Four factors were rated as being very important in the teaching-learning situation. These are being knowledgeable in farming practices (81.3 percent); respectful (87.5 %); language (50 %) and being a practicing farmer (56.3 %). Only gender was rated as important (87.5 %). Rated as not important were age (87 %), marital status (93.8%) residing in the village (93.8 %) and patience (56.3 %).

Table 3: Characteristics of extension agents perceived by farmers enhancing learning, Mezam Division, northwest province, Cameroon, 2000, n = 32

Factors	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Speaks the same language	16(50)	10(31.3)	6(18.8)
Be of the same sex	2(6.3)	28(87.5)	2(6.3)
Educated	18(56.3)	10(31.3)	4(12.6)
Married	-	2(6.3)	30(93.8)
Be a practice farmer	18(56.3)	8(25.0)	6(18.8)
Resides in Village	-	2(6.3)	30(93.8)
Advance in age	2(6.3)	2(6.3)	28(87.0)
Respectful	28(87.5)	-	4(12.6)
Knowledgeable in farming practices	26(81.3)	2(6.3)	4(12.6)
Patience	10(31.3)	4(12.5)	18(56.3)

Table 4 shows the Chi-square analysis of selected personal characteristics of farmers and their perception of the agents' characteristics as learning enhancement factors. From the five variables only marital status and family size were not significant ($X^2 = 3.84$, $p > 0.05$ and $X^2 = 4.91$, $p > 0.05$ respectively). On the other hand gender, age, and contact with extension were significantly related to their perception of agents' characteristics ($X^2 = 4.84$, $p < 0.05$; $X^2 = 10.82$, $p < 0.05$ and $X^2 = 18.07$, $p < 0.05$ respectively).

The significance of gender might be related to the socio- cultural setting that circumscribes the male-female relationship. A gender targeting approach was introduced in Cameroon to alleviate this restriction (Walker 1989). The older the age of the agents the more credible the clients consider them. Contact with extension

agents is also significantly related to the perception of the agents characteristics for enhancing learning. This is the premise upon which perception and attitude formation by the clients are based. During agents visits, verbal and non-verbal communications of the agents are observed and interpreted as noted by Rogers (1981) *that one cannot not communicate*.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis of selected farmers characteristics and their perception of agents characteristics as learning enhancement factors

Variables	X^2	df	P	Remarks
Gender	4.84	1	p<0.05	S
Age	10.82	3	p<0.05	S
Marital status	3.84	2	p>0.05	NS
Family size	4.91	2	p>0.05	NS
Contact with extension	18.07	5	p<0.05	S

Conclusion

The study has clearly shown the factors involved in adult teaching-learning process that need be considered carefully in order to make the teaching learning process more effective on the part of the extension agents and other development workers. This will in turn improve the efficiency of the non-formal education as well as help the development workers gain acceptability among the clientele in the field of work.

References

Adam, M. E (1982) *Agricultural Extension in developing countries*. Intermediate tropic Agriculture series. Longman Group Ltd Essex UK. pp 93–105

Bagchee, A. (1994) *Agricultural Extension in Africa*. World Bank Discussion paper No 231. Washington D.C

Burgoon, M & Ruffner, M. (1998) Human Communication, Holt Rinchart and Minston. U.S.A

Cernea, M. Coulter, J.K. & Russell, J. (eds) (1983) *Agricultural Extension by Training and Visit*. The World Bank, Washimgton, D.C

Egunjobi, O.A. (1991) "Harnessing the Women Factor in the Nigerian Food Learning Drive: The Role of the University". In: Proceeding of the National Conference of the Ibadan Socio-Economic group between July 7th and 8th at University of Ibadan, Olowu, T.A. and Akinwumi, J.A. (eds.) pp 41–49.

Ipaye, G.A (1995) Analysis of Role Performance of Contact Farmers in Training and Visit Extension System of Lagos State Agricultural Development project. An Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Agricultural Extension. University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Kerlinger, F.N (1973) *Foundation of Behavioural Research*. 2nd edition; Holt, Rinehart and Winsten, London.

Koons, A.S. (1989) Reaching Rural women in the Northwest Pronvince: A Presentation of More ways in Which Women are not Men. Development in Cameroon: The role of Food and Agriculture. Centre for Africn Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

Lele, U. (1975) The design of rural development: Lessons from Africa. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Washington D.C

Oladele, O.I. (1999) Analysis of the Institutional Research –Extension – Farmers Linkage system in South western Nigeria. An Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Developemnt. University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Olowu, T.A and Windapo, O. (1994) Managing Research -Extension-end Users Interface Lessons from Nigeria. A paper presented at the Society of Agricultural Extension of Nigeria Inaugural National Conference. ARMTI Feb. –March 4.

Pickering, D.C (1983) "Agriculture extension: A tool for rural developement" In M. Cernea, J. Coulter and J Russell. (eds) Agriculture Extension by Training and Visit. The World Bank, Washimgton, D.C

Saito, K.A. & Weidemann, C.J. (1990) *Agricultural extension for women farmers in Africa*. World Bank Discussion paper No 103. Washington D.C

Walker, T.S. (1989) "Innovative Programming for Women in Agricultural Extension: The case study of MIDENO in Cameroon". Report submitted to Women in Development Division, World Bank. Washington D.C. June p. 15.

World Bank (1980) "Bauchi State Agricultural Development Programme Staff Appraisal Report No. 30409-UNI. 83p.

About the author

Dr Oladele O. Idowu *is a lecturer in the department of agricultural extension and rural development University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is currently a JSPS fellow with the College of Agriculture Ibaraki University Japan. His research interest revolves round the dissemination of appropriate technology to farmers in Africa. Closely related to this is the study of underlying socio-economic factors that determines the appropriateness of technologies to farmers' situations. He has researched extensively into this area with the aim of balancing the socio-cultural milieu with the technological needs.*

Contact Details

Oladele O. Idowu
Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural development
University of Ibadan Nigeria
Tel: 2348035528780
Email: Oladele20002001@yahoo.com

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

In the same breath: learning, adults with an intellectual disability and the partner assisted learning system

Judy Buckingham
Doctoral candidate
Deakin University

Since adults with an intellectual disability are accessing not only adult education but the workforce and recreation centres as part of government policies towards greater inclusion, it should be in the interest of educators and workplace trainers to understand more about this particular impairment and its impact on learning. This article considers both intellectual disability, and learning and then describes how these concepts were used to develop the Partner Assisted Learning System – this being the end product of a three year research and development project instigated by Deakin University and Gawith Villa Inc to look for ways to incorporate participatory learning into the everyday experiences of people with an intellectual disability in adult education, recreation and the workplace.

On the ground, in the hundreds of community education centres and TAFE colleges around Australia, adults with an intellectual disability attend classes, and their learning is of great importance and discussed at length. Yet within much of academia, it sometimes seems that "learning" and "adults with an intellectual disability" are not phrases used in the same breath. It has been claimed, in fact, that that adult education has yet to develop theoretical frameworks around adults with an intellectual disability (Riddell, Baron, & Wilson, 1999). Yet people with an intellectual disability do learn. Because theirs is a learning impairment this learning may be slow, and it may be very slow. It may take place in very, very small increments, but there is evidence that the "vast majority of students with an intellectual disability" (Van Kraayenoord, Elkins, Palmer, & Rickards, 2001:450) can and do learn even such an abstract skill as literacy, given the right teaching and learning conditions and the motivation (Bach, 1990; Bochner, Outhred, & Pieterse, 2001; Moni & Jobling, 2000; Van Kraayenoord *et al*., 2001; Young, Moni, Jobling, & Van Kraayenoord, 2004; Ziebarth & Van Kraayenoord, 2000).

Since adults with an intellectual disability are accessing not only adult education but the workforce and recreation centres as part of government policies towards greater inclusion (Department of Human Services, 2002), it should be in the interest of educators and workplace trainers to understand more about this particular impairment and its impact on learning. I want to consider in this article both intellectual disability, and learning and then to describe how these concepts were used to develop the Partner Assisted Learning System – this being the end product of a three year research and development project instigated by Deakin University and Gawith Villa to look for ways to incorporate participatory learning into the everyday experiences of people with an intellectual disability in adult education, recreation and the workplace.

Intellectual Disability

I intend to start with a discussion of what we mean by intellectual disability since this is not as straightforward as it might seem. The World Health Organisation definition states that it is:

> ...a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind, which is especially characterised by impairment of skills manifested during the developmental period, skills which contribute to the overall level of intelligence, i.e. cognitive, language, motor, and social abilities. Retardation can occur with or without other mental or physical condition (World Health Organisation, 1992, cited in Wen,1997:9).

The Victorian Department of Human Services definition which determines whether or not a person has an intellectual disability for the purposes of receiving services under the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Service Act 1986 states that a person with an intellectual disability has significantly below average intelligence (an Intelligence Quota (IQ) of about 70 or less) plus shortcomings in everyday life skills: such as self care and communication, which are inadequate compared with other people of the same age and culture (Department of Human Services, 1999). Such a reductionist definition might be considered questionable. Bogdan and Taylor suggest, for instance, that intellectual disability is a social construct (Bogdan, 1995; Bogdan & Taylor, 1976; Taylor, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1989). While this is valuable, since it positions people with a disability politically, economically and socially within mainstream society, and places the responsibility for their being marginalised with the community, it may also sideline the very real impact the impairment can have on the day to day lives on people with an intellectual disability, whatever their environment.

IQ tests purportedly measure intelligence. Even though there seems to be some doubt as what exactly this intelligence is that is being measured (Brody, 2000; Sternberg, 2000), as Brody points out it has

been shown to be a prediction of performance in academic settings. Therefore IQ is a measure of potential learning ability and those with a low IQ can be said to have a "learning" disability. This distinction, I think, is important when considering adult education and disability because since the impairment is so directly connected with learning, it cannot in, learning contexts, always be subsumed with disability in general. This conflicts with the social model of disability which prefers not to divide the group in terms of medical conditions, functional limitation, or severity of impairment (Oliver, 1999). Nevertheless as Baron *et al.* state (citing Christie (1922)) the reality of cognitive impairment needs to be accepted (Baron, Riddell, & Wilkinson, 1998). In learning contexts this reality means that a person with an intellectual impairment is likely to pick up information more slowly; there is sometimes a reduced memory capacity and a short term memory span; and conceptualisation may be difficult (Jenkinson, 1984).

Slowness in information processing, memory and attention spans may be addressed by strategies of timing, rehearsal and task analysis. But the difficulties with abstraction have more implications, I think, than simply needing to present material in a concrete and immediate fashion.

Firstly, learning is change (Barber & Goldbart, 1998; Falk, 1992; Sidorkin, 2002). Although a dislike of change is not peculiar to people with an intellectual disability, research undertaken in the development of the Partner Assisted Learning System showed that people with an intellectual disability often seem particularly resistant to change, and that this could be because change is itself an abstract concept. Therefore, people who have difficulty conceptualising the differences that change may bring are likely to mistrust it. Another aspect is that they may have had previous bad experiences of change. To learn therefore, it is necessary to create a climate in which change can be trusted.

Secondly, learning requires a self belief in ability to learn. Again, research in developing Partner Assisted Learning showed that some adults with an intellectual disability had been persuaded by family (and sometimes teachers) that they were not able to learn. They therefore conceived themselves as non learners. Jenkins (1996) posits self identity as being initially that which is reflected by others, but which is then changed through a process of reflexivity. Because of the nature of the impairment and the difficulties posed by the abstract nature of reflexivity for people with an intellectual disability, it would be reasonable to suppose that for people with this particular impairment, they would be more reliant on the reflection of others in establishing their concepts of self identity. Learning for people with an intellectual disability therefore requires that they are reassured of their ability to learn by someone they trust. To extend this further, learning requires a relationship.

Learning and relationships

The concept of relationships in learning is not new. Earlier educational theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky posited that learning is socially based and therefore requires social interaction and this concept has remained as a core of socio-cognitive learning (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975; McNally, 1973; Salmon, 1980; Sidorkin, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 2000). There has been substantial research undertaken within the framework set by Carl Rogers on the positive effect of relationship and feelings on student learning and behaviour (Neville, 2004). Similarly emancipatory education which relies on dialogue and reflection also depends on such interactions (Foley, 1996; Freire, 1972; Shor & Freire, 1987). In other words, there is considerable evidence to suggest that learning relies on a relationship between teacher and taught – even more so when the teaching/taught boundaries become indistinct.

Collaborative learning is not a new idea either. This is the broad term used to cover learning in which two or more learn together

within a structured curriculum. Emphasis is placed on social and goal interdependence (that is, participants have an interest in the social development and the achievement of the learning goal both by themselves as individuals but also for each of the other members of the team) and reciprocity between peers. It has been successfully used with groups and pairs of primary school aged children including those in which one member has an intellectual disability (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975; R. T. Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Putnam, Rynders, Johnson, & Johnson, 1989; Sapon-Shevin, Ayres, & Duncan, 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1994) and with adults (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).

Collaborative learning is based on a combination of the cognitive development theories of Piaget and Vygotsky and behavioural learning theories (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975). Vygotsky (1978), for instance, proposed that knowledge is social and that mental accomplishments originate in social relationships. His theory of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) asserted that when a learner collaborates with a more capable peer, his/her development is greater than that which he/she can achieve on their own. That is, a 3–5 year old may be able to do what a 5–7 year old can do if it is done collaboratively. Running alongside this, are those learning theories which espouse dialogue and reflection as the mainstay of cognitive learning (such as Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Freire, 1974; Shor & Freire, 1987; Sidorkin, 2002; Wells, 2000). It was within these perceptions of the need for relationships in learning, especially where a learner had an intellectual disability; the ideas behind collaborative learning, and the efficacy of dialogue and reflection in learning that Partner-Assisted Learning was conceived.

Partner Assisted Learning

In 1996, the Open University in conjunction with Mencap and People First (London Borough) developed a learning package *Learning Disability: Working as Equal People* (usually referred to as *Equal*

People) which encouraged people with and without an intellectual disability to work and learn together (Fairchild & Walmsley, 1996). In the year 2001, a project managed by Gawith Villa Inc and Deakin University, in association with a number of community organisations, was funded by ANZ Trusts to develop a learning package based on *Equal People*. This would be appropriate for the Australian community and would retain the partnership component but would also be applicable for use within paid employment, recreational and educational contexts. The project's goal was to create a learning package for adult partners learning together when one partner may have an intellectual disability – the Partner Assisted Learning System. The package would aim for recognised learning for both partners, connections between partners, and both partners gaining skills, confidence and pathways to education or work. The essential components of the package were to be learning and relationships.

As well as a literature review, we (that is myself, as researcher; my co-researcher who had an intellectual disability; and a Reference Group, half of whom also had disabilities) conducted research in the field over three contexts where it was considered adults with an intellectual disability might be learning: adult community education, recreation and the workplace. Thirteen pairs of learning partners, one of whom had a disability were observed and interviewed. Another 25 people who had long term involvement in teaching and/or managing people with a disability in learning environments and 10 organisations in which learning was taking place were also involved in the investigation part of the research. This looked at good teaching and learning practices, what people wanted and needed to learn, how people formed relationships and what were the barriers to learning and relationships. From the data collected a prototype set of learning modules was developed. These were then action researched with four small focus groups of pairs of people with and without a disability and finally tested with five learning organisations, both generic and disability specific, across all three contexts. Toolkits to

support learning modules, once created, were also critically reviewed by a number of disability practitioners, academics and people with a disability.

Space does not allow for a full account of all research findings, but the following paragraphs give an outline of a few of the most important to the package. The research confirmed the place of relationships in learning. Lack of confidence in learning was cited as a major barrier to learning. Also confirmed was the need for on going dialogue, review and assisting in the process of reflection as a teaching strategy. There was a concern amongst most of those interviewed that learning partners, either as teacher/student or co-learners should understand what and how to learn, and that both should explore their own and each others' learning styles. There was almost universal support for curriculum which could encompass social skills, and not only for people with a disability. Many non disabled people have difficulties, it seems, in being able to facilitate social introductions, to help those they support to fit into the general culture of a community setting or to help them negotiate the support they might need in a generic setting. It was people's lack of access to such social skills which was identified across all three contexts as being one of the biggest barriers to inclusion.

The Partner Assisted Learning System is a set of learning modules and learning materials; it includes tool kits which are support materials for both management and co learners and which cover aspects of disability and support, plus basic teaching strategies and good practices; accreditation guidelines (since the competencies gained fit within GCEA General Curriculum Options); and further information on the literature and research processes. The modules cover those areas that research showed those with and without a disability felt it was important to learn:

- *Learning Together* is an introductory session for partners to get to know each other, their learning styles and about learning;

- *Making Friends* shows partners how to look at different kinds of friendship and suggests ways of introduction into social groups;
- *Being Safe* lets partners discuss what it means to be safe, safety issues pertinent to partners themselves and emergency procedures;
- *Fitting In* assists partners to look at ways of fitting into the cultures of workplaces, recreational and other community groups;
- *Looking Out for Each Other* gives partners some basic self advocacy and advocacy strategies and promotes discussion on rights and responsibilities;
- *Getting Out and Joining In* assists partners to work out ways to research, enrol and undertake a community activity at the same time as making sure they have the support they need;
- *Meeting Together* assists partners to support each other to attend and contribute to meetings.

Partners are expected to work cooperatively through the modules using a process which involves dialogue and reflection and which allocates each partner interdependent roles at a pace which suits both of them.

Not just learning materials

The important point about Partner Assisted Learning is that it is a process, not just a set of learning materials: it requires that a relationship be developed between the partners. However the nature of the partners can vary. They may be one non disabled person such as a friend, a co-worker, a volunteer, or support person working with a person with an intellectual or other disability; or they can be two people both of whom have a disability. There is a requirement, however, for one person to have basic literacy skills, even though wording and concepts have been kept as simple and easy to read as possible.

Some of the ways that this package can be used beyond conventional teaching structures include the induction of people or volunteers who have not before experienced working with people with a disability; induction of people with a disability into new environments such as the work place; the integration of people with a disability into non disability specific community activities; the involvement of people with a disability into planning and governance. One innovative use already implemented has been to assist small groups of people with a disability along with non disabled people to work together to produce an organisational Code of Practice using the *Looking Out for Each Other* module.

Further information

More information about Partner-Assisted Learning can be found on the website: www.pal.org.au; or by contacting Gawith Villa, PO Box 234, Armadale, 3143; or by ringing (03) 95094266.

References

Bach, M. (1990). Are we blaming the victims? *Entourage*, 3–5.

Barber, M., & Goldbart, J. (1998). Accounting for learning and failure to learn in people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. In P. Lacey & C. Ouvry (Eds.), *People with profound and multiple learning disabilities: A collaborative approach to meeting complex needs* (pp. 102–116). London.: David Fulton Publishers.

Baron, S., Riddell, S., & Wilkinson, H. (1998). The best burgers? The person with learning difficulties as worker. In T. Shakespeare (Ed.), *The disability reader: Social science perspectives* (pp. 94–109). London: Continuum.

Bochner, S., Outhred, L., & Pieterse, M. (2001). A study of functional literacy skills in young adults with Down syndrome. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 48*(1), 67–90.

Bogdan, R. (1995). A "simple" farmer accused of murder: The case of Delbert Ward. In S. Taylor, R. Bogdan & Z. M. Lutfiyya (Eds.), *The variety of community experience* (pp. 79–100). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

Bogdan, R., & Taylor, S. (1976). The judged not the judges: An insider's view of mental retardation. *American Psychologist, 31*, 47–52.

Brody, N. (2000). Theories and measurements of intelligence. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of intelligence* (pp. 16–33). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Brookfield, S. D., & Preskill, S. (1999). *Discussion as a way of teaching: Tools and techniques for democratic classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass Publishers.

Department of Human Services. (1999). *Intellectual disabilities: Some questions and answers*. Melbourne: Disability Services Division, Victorian Government Department of Human Services.

Department of Human Services. (2002). *Victorian state disability plan 2002–2012*. Melbourne: DisAbility Services Division, Department of Human Services.

Fairchild, B., & Walmsley, J. (1996). *Using "Equal People"*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University.

Falk, I. H. (1992). *The social construction of literacy needs: A case study of adult learners*. Unpublished Master of Education, James Cook University, North Queensland.

Foley, G. (1996). Bread and sex: Learning in Brazilian women's organisations. In P. Willis & B. Neville (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice in adult education* (pp. 359). Ringwood, Victoria: David Lovell Publishing.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

Freire, P. (1974). *Education for critical consciousness* (Centre for the Study of Development and Social Change, Trans.). New York: The Seabury Press.

Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social identity*. London, UK: Routledge.

Jenkinson, J. (1984). *What is mental retardation?* Burwood, Victoria: Victoria College Press.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1975). *Learning together and alone* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Johnson, R. T., & Johnson, D. W. (1994). An overview of cooperative learning. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning* (pp. 31–43). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

McNally, D. W. (1973). *Piaget, education and teaching*. Hornsby, Australia: Angus and Robertson.

Moni, K. B., & Jobling, A. (2000). Ignoring the frontiers: Poetry and young adults with Down syndrome. *Social Alternatives, 19*(3), 36–39.

Neville, B. (2004, 2002). *A brief review of the proposition that the retention, well being and academic achievement of at risk students is related to the quality of relationships offered them by teachers: Submission to ministerial review of post compulsory education and training pathways in Victoria 2000*. Retrieved 27 May, 2004, from www.latrobe.edu.au/fe/staff/review.doc

Oliver, M. (1999). Capitalism, disability,and ideology: A materialist critique of the Normalisation principle. In J. R. Flynn & R. A. Lemary (Eds.), *A quarter - century of normalisation and social role valorisation: Evolution and impact* (pp. 163–173). Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

Putnam, J., Rynders, J. E., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989). Collaborative skill instruction for promoting positive interactions between mentally handicapped and non mentally handicapped children. *Exceptional Children, 55*(6), 550–558.

Riddell, S., Baron, S., & Wilson, A. (1999). Social capital and people with learning difficulties. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 31*(1), 49–66.

Salmon, P. (1980). Introduction. In P. Salmon (Ed.), *Coming to know* (pp. 1–16). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

Sapon-Shevin, M., Ayres, B. J., & Duncan, J. (1994). Cooperative learning and inclusion. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning* (pp. 45–58). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

Sidorkin, A. M. (2002). *Learning relations: Impure education, de-schooled schools and dialogue with evil* (Vol. 173). New York: Peter Lang.

Stainback, W. C., & Stainback, S. B. (1994). Introduction. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning* (pp. xxiii–xxvi). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

Sternberg, R. J. (2000). The concept of intelligence. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of intelligence* (pp. 3–15). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, S. (1995). "Children's division is coming to take pictures" Family life and parenting in family with disabilities. In S. Taylor, R. Bogdan & Z. M. Lutfiyya (Eds.), *The variety of community experience:* (pp. 23–46). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

Taylor, S., & Bogdan, R. (1989). On accepting relationships between people with mental retardation and non disabled people: Towards an understanding of acceptance. *Disability, Handicap and Society, 4*(1), 21–36.

Van Kraayenoord, C., Elkins, J., Palmer, C., & Rickards, F. W. (2001). Literacy for all: Findings from an Australian study. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 48*(4), 445–456.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wells, G. (2000). Dialogic inquiry in education: Building on the legacy of Vygotski. In C. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskyian perspectives on literacy research: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry* (pp. 51–85). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

World Health Organisation. (1992). *International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems: tenth revision*. Geneva: WHO.

Young, L., Moni, K. B., Jobling, A., & Van Kraayenoord, C. (2004). Literacy skills of adults with intellectual disabilities in two community-based day programs. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 51*(1), 83–97.

Ziebarth, K., & Van Kraayenoord, C. (2000). Literacy and students with intellectual disabilities. In C. Van Kraayenoord, J. Elkins, C. Palmer & F. W. Rickards (Eds.), *Literacy, numeracy and students with disabilities: Volume 2 – the literature reviews* (Vol. 2, pp. 201–250). Nathan, Queensland: Centre for Literacy and Language Education Research.

About the author

Judy Buckingham *has been the researcher and project officer for the Partner Assisted Learning System for the past three years. The processes involved in the development of the resulting learning package, which were undertaken collaboratively with people with an intellectual disability, formed the basis for her PhD thesis* Towards Inclusion *which is currently under examination.*

Contact details

Postal address: Gawith Villa Inc, PO Box 234, Armadale, Victoria, 3143
Telephone: (03) 9251 7390 Mobile: 0438 502220
Email: judy.buckingham@deakin.edu au

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

The public sale of funds for Indigenous education: a perspective from Tranby Aboriginal College

Kate Munro
Tranby Aboriginal College

The discussion begins with an overview of the historical struggle for independence in Indigenous education and highlights the success in the provision of quality education by the community-controlled sector, and more specifically, Tranby. The right to self-determination is then contextualised against a backdrop of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC) and within a framework of international legal authority. Finally the diminution of funding for Indigenous education is discussed with reference to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005, and its potential impact on Tranby and the community-controlled sector.

Introduction

This article raises concerns about the future independence and viability of community-controlled Indigenous education due to the introduction of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Bill 2000* (The Bill). The Bill seeks to reduce funding to the Independent providers of Indigenous education by approximately $4 million. The Bill also proposes to change funding arrangements for access to funds hitherto quarantined for Indigenous community-controlled education providers so that they will now be forced to tender for those funds against each other and all registered training organisations. This means a new era of uncertainty for the Independents which could jeopardise the continuation of their success into the future.

The discussion begins with an overview of the historical struggle for independence in Indigenous education and highlights the success in the provision of quality education by the community-controlled sector, and in particular, Tranby. The right to self-determination is then contextualised against a backdrop of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC) and within a framework of international legal authority. Finally the diminution of funding for Indigenous education is discussed with reference to the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005*, and its potential impact on Tranby and the community-controlled sector.

Historical location of Indigenous independent community-controlled education

The historic provision of education offered to Indigenous people since colonisation has been described as long and contradictory (Durnan and Boughton 1997:3). It was often concerned with efforts to suppress language, culture and promote assimilation. The type of education most offered to Indigenous people was under the control of government administration in the form of 'native' or 'welfare' programs (Durnan and Boughton: 1997:3). It was not until the 1950s

and 1960s that the work of Indigenous people and their allies working in the civil rights movement challenged this type of education. Tranby was the first independent college to emerge in Australia. The documentation of its history indicates its establishment was due to the work of Indigenous people, the clergy and its socialist affiliates and sectors of the trade union movement (Goodall 1996: 306–7).

Tranby was established in 1958. A decade later, in the Northern Territory, the Institute of Aboriginal Development (IAD) was established against the backdrop of the 1967 referendum and the civil rights movement. With the assistance of Commonwealth funding during the 1970s further community-controlled education providers were established. All of the independent providers (Independents) who now make up the Federation of Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP) were established by the end of the 1970s (Durnan and Boughton 1997:3). Tranby Aboriginal College, Taundi Incorporated in Adelaide, Aboriginal Dance Theatre Redfern, and IAD are all subject to changes in funding which could now threaten their existence mooted under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005* (the Bill).

Tranby Aboriginal College

Tranby originally provided courses to assist people with technical and trade skills. The Independents generally began by running mostly non-accredited courses in areas such as literacy, health, living skills and co-operative management. By the late 1990s with pressure arising from the emergence of the TAFE sector the situation had changed significantly and the Independents were operating as registered training organisations delivering VET accredited courses (Durnan and Boughton 1997: 4–5).

Tranby today offers three accredited courses: the Diploma in Development Studies in Aboriginal Communities (DSAC); the Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Studies (AAS) and the Diploma in

National Indigenous Legal Advocacy (NILA). Students attend the College from across Australia and undertake their studies on a block release basis. This means that they attend the College for one week blocks of study six times per year over the two years of each course.

Delivery of the courses is done through seminars, workshops and field trips with guest lecturers when time permits. The teaching is undertaken by Coordinators in each course together with guest lecturers. Most of the study is undertaken in an interactive environment with students working through role-plays, case studies and student presentation. To date there are 147 students enrolled across the three courses.

Retention and completion rates of the College are far higher than elsewhere. Last year in the NILA Course, the retention rate of students was 92.5 per cent. The students graduating this year after two years of study at the College will produce similar if not better results. The trend of these figures is reported annually to Parliament. In the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2001 it states that most improvements in retention and completion rates occurred in the sector controlled by Indigenous organisations and communities (National Report: 2001). Tranby, as part of this sector, prides itself on delivering these courses in a culturally sensitive environment which places the principle of self-determination at the forefront of its work.

The Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody and self-determination

Self-determination is widely recognised as a fundamental aspiration for Indigenous people. It is a complex principle but several points are relevant in the context of Indigenous education: first, that Indigenous peoples have a right of self-determination; second, that other rights depend on this basic right; third Tranby and the Independents offer education that assists students to understand their rights and

advocate for their defence; and fourth the programs offered by Tranby are themselves an expression of the exercise of these rights.

One of the first places to look for commentary on self-determination and Indigenous education is the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC). The Commission was established in 1987. By its completion in 1991 it had investigated the deaths of 99 people and delivered a five-volume report, regional reports, and a two-volume report on underlying issues from Western Australia (Cunneen 1997:3). Most of the recommendations were supported in a national response by State and Territory governments and specific funding was set aside by the Commonwealth for their implementation (Boughton and Durnan 1997:1).

The Commission found that Indigenous people were massively over-represented in Australia's custodial systems, and that to address this issue reform had to take place in the criminal justice system, but governments also needed to address the problem of the fundamental reason why Indigenous people come into contact with the criminal justice system – the underlying issues relating to over-representation (RCIADIC Volumes 1–5).

The Commission found that a lack of formal education was a major factor in the disproportionate representation of Indigenous people in custody and noted that adult education represented a 'second chance' for many who regarded it as fundamental to taking control of their lives (RCIADIC Vol.4: 338). The Commission drew a strong link between self-determination and adult education and stated that appropriate education and training programs should be developed to assist the greatest number of people possible.

All of the Independents were mentioned positively in the Commission's report with Tranby being described as 'a pioneer in Aboriginal adult education', providing education that was described as 'highly responsive' to Aboriginal needs and learning styles

(RCIADIC Vol. 4: 343). The Commission stated further that even if duplication of courses occurred by delivering through such an independent provider, it was worth it because 'Aboriginal people are trying to catch up on past disadvantage' (RCIADIC Vol 4: 343).

The Commission also found that it would be appropriate for Indigenous students enrolling in such independent colleges to have the same financial support through Abstudy as those students attending in the mainstream (RCIADIC Vol. 4: 343). It then went on to make Recommendation 298, that:

> '(a) Governments support Aboriginal community controlled adult education institutions and other institutions which provide a program of courses which have the support of the Aboriginal community' (RCIADIC Vol 4: 345).

In supporting the Independents, the Commission was advocating that the principle of self-determination be upheld in an educational context. Interestingly, the Commission stated that community-controlled organisations 'receive the most broad-based support from the Aboriginal people as the appropriate agencies to address concern' and that they had 'overwhelmingly…stood the test of time and are by far the most effective and informed means by which Aboriginal opinion may be articulated' (RCIADIC Vol 4: 6). It was against this backdrop that Recommendation 188 was made:

> 'That governments negotiate with appropriate Aboriginal organizations (sic) and communities to determine guidelines as to the procedures and processes which should be followed to ensure that the self-determination principle is applied in the design and implementation of any policy or program or the substantial modification of any policy or program which will particularly affect Aboriginal people' (RCIADIC National Report 'Overview and Recommendations' 1991: 78).

These findings and recommendations are as relevant today as they were in 1991. Recent custodial figures show that as of June 2003

Indigenous imprisonment rates were 13 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous persons (Australian Institute of Criminology 2004:1). Indigenous prisoners comprise 21 per cent of the total prisoner population, an increase from 14 per cent in 1992, the year after the Commission released its final report (Ibid). These are alarming figures considering that Indigenous people make up little more than 2 per cent of the overall population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005).

The underlying issues that bring Indigenous people into custody are the same today as they were in the early 1990s, particularly in relation to the lack of educational opportunities. Keeping Indigenous people out of custody requires governments to address the issue of the type and quality of education offered to Indigenous communities. To attract and retain Indigenous people within the education system, what is offered must be responsive and sensitive to the needs of communities and delivered in a culturally affirming environment. Tranby and the Independent providers have delivered such education with great success since the 1950s. Tranby's success is due largely of its adherence to the principle of self-determination, which is not simply a catch-phrase of 'do-gooders'. It is an inherent right of all peoples and its international significance to Indigenous education warrants discussion, to locate it in a human rights framework to which adherence by governments is essential to uphold the rule of law.

Indigenous education and self-determination

Self-determination is an internationally recognised human right which is affirmed by Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, and enunciated by Article 1 of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). It is worded thus:

> '(1) All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.' (ICCPR; ICESCR Article 1).

The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Draft Declaration), still under consideration by the UN Commission on Human Rights, replicates the above but rewords it, simply by replacing 'all peoples' with 'Indigenous peoples' (Draft Declaration Article 3). Part IV of the Draft Declaration upholds the right of Indigenous peoples to establish and control their educational systems and institutions; while maintaining that their culture, histories and traditions be reflected in all forms of education and public information (Draft Declaration Articles 15 and 16).

The clearest representation of Indigenous peoples' aspirations in education is probably the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Education (Coolangatta Statement). It represents a clear and concise position of Indigenous peoples' desire to determine the course of their education and describes itself as 'a living document which address the educational rights of Indigenous peoples now and into the future' (Coolangatta Statement: Preamble).

Part One of the Statement articulates the dissatisfaction with the assimilationist nature of hitherto offered education. It states that the 'failure' of Indigenous peoples to stay in mainstream education should be viewed for what it is – rejection of the status quo. This sentiment has been expressed by other commentators in Australia (Beetson 1997; Boughton and Durnan 1997).

Part II of the Statement is headed 'Rights In Indigenous Education' and gives possibly the clearest enunciation yet of self-determination in Indigenous education. As such it states that among other things, self-determination embodies the right of Indigenous peoples to control and/or govern Indigenous education systems; to develop and

implement culturally inclusive curricula; to establish the criterion for educational evaluation and assessment; to define and identify standards for the gifted and talented; to establish the parameters and ethics within which Indigenous education research should be conducted and to design and deliver culturally appropriate and sensitive teacher training programs (Coolangatta Statement Paragraph 2.2.4). This is not an exhaustive list of that Paragraph but offers some understanding of the overall aspirations of its contents.

The final Paragraph of the Statement speaks of self-determination as an inherent right, central to the preservation of culture and the development of expertise required for life in the twenty-first century (Coolangatta Statement Paragraph 3.5). It has been described as a right supported by international law; a right around which others flow and as simply a right to make decisions (Social Justice Report 1993: 41).

The effect of the Bill before Parliament could well create further disadvantage to a particular racial group in society as it refers exclusively to funding set aside for the Indigenous independent colleges. The Federal Government has already abolished ATSIC which worked closely with the Independents and hitherto gave voice to their concerns on a range of issues. Attention has now been turned toward the Independents with the sole purpose of reducing and possibly denuding them of funds. The Government may argue that it is not legally bound to fund such organisations but it should implement policies and laws that uphold the spirit of international conventions to which Australia is a party.

The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) upholds the right of all peoples to education and training (ICERD Article 5 (e)(v), and declares that each State Party shall review, amend and rescind policies, laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination (ICERD Article 2 (c)).

Australia is also party to the Convention against Discrimination in Education. That convention clearly states that discrimination includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion has the purpose or effect of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level (Article1 Paragraph 1(a)). It further states that 'education' refers to all types and levels, and includes access to education, its standard and quality and the conditions under which it is given (Article 1 Paragraph 2).

I have drawn attention to international conventions to make it clear that self-determination is very much a universal concern, and a fundamental human right. Self-determination is born out of an international human rights framework and has been described by Indigenous commentators as being useful 'as a kind of belated State-building' (Daes: 1993: 4) and as a configurative principle complemented by human rights norms which enjoin the governing order (Anaya 1996: 77). Its importance to Indigenous education cannot be overstated and if educational outcomes are to be improved in this area, it will not happen without adherence to the principle of self-determination.

Nature of Funding

Tranby receives funding from the State Contracted Training Provision (CTP), the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) and through IESIP it receives an allocation of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS). The State funding at present represents a very small amount of Tranby's overall funding. The bulk of the funding comes from the Federal Government in the form of IESIP supplementary funding which is allocated according to student retention and module completion rates. It is allocated according to figures given to the funding bodies from up to two years prior to the funding allocation, as the outcomes

are reported to the State office, which passes them to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) which then turns the data over to the Federal Department. So by the time the allocation of funding is granted, its relevance is outdated. The major problem with the funding is that it is not recurrent which leaves questions unanswered about how committed the Government is to providing quality Indigenous education.

The Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005

The latest threat to funding has arrived in the form of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005*. Funding is released currently pursuant to *the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*. The main provisions of the Bill provide for a decrease in the appropriation of funding to Indigenous providers of education by a net $3.7 million over 2006 to 2008. The Bill will transfer $10.9 million of funds otherwise provided to the four independent Indigenous community-controlled education providers to be spent under the *Skilling Australia's Workforce Bill 2005*. What this means is that Tranby, the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD), the Aboriginal Dance Theatre Redfern, Taundi Incorporated and every other registered training organisation in each State and Territory will be required to compete against each other for funding in a joint funding pool hitherto quarantined for Indigenous education.

The Bills are of great concern to Tranby which has a rich history of success in the provision of quality education, which is offered in a culturally sensitive manner and learning environment. By reducing funding and leaving what is left to open tender, the Federal Government's message is clear: that there is little value attached to the work of Tranby and the Independents, and that Indigenous cultural methods of teaching cannot deliver appropriate outcomes to Indigenous peoples. This is not helpful to Indigenous aspirations,

and ignores the fact that independent colleges such as Tranby deliver accredited vocational courses that provide skills which are relevant and meaningful to its students. The courses delivered empower individuals and communities to address their needs and challenge the disadvantage they face. This disadvantage, Tranby's success in its retention and completion rates and those of the community-controlled sector, is evidenced in the most recent Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training.

The 2003 Report states that 'educational equality is some way off for Indigenous Australians' and that recently there has been a sharp decline in the number of Indigenous VET students in the government system (National Report 2003: ii-iv). It reported further that compared to other VET providers, Indigenous controlled organisations indicated the best progress in literacy and numeracy in recent years, and that completion rates in this sector although down from 57.5 per cent in 2000–2001 were well above the overall national Indigenous rate of 54.7 per cent (Ibid iv-xix). Clearly this indicates that the community-controlled sector is succeeding; that what is in place is working, and that it outstrips the standards delivered by other providers, including government.

At this point it is worth noting the expenditure on Indigenous education. In a discussion paper written in 1999 it was stated that if programs which Indigenous students are likely to avail themselves of because of their low income, remote location or special needs are left out of the sums, the per capita amount estimated per Indigenous person is only 89 per cent of that for non-Indigenous people, and only 52 per cent at the tertiary level (Neutze, Sanders and Jones 1999). The paper noted that overall funding per capita on Indigenous education was only 18 per cent higher than for non-Indigenous people (Ibid). Given the disadvantage faced in Indigenous communities and the intensive resources required to assist people to engage in the education system, this data should concern the Federal Government.

However, the Government is now proposing to further cut financial assistance by reducing close to $4 million of funds from the sector that has delivered to date the best results in attracting and retaining Indigenous students. It is important to stress that all governments need to provide significantly more resources for Indigenous education due to the effect that two centuries of disadvantage and social dislocation have had on these communities throughout Australia. Reducing funds to colleges like Tranby will have a detrimental effect upon Indigenous students and communities and may ultimately come at a huge cost to government. Custodial figures are rising sharply while at the same time Indigenous people disengage with government education. The Federal Government should rethink the implications of the introduction of legislation that could further exacerbate these trends.

Conclusion

Providing equality for Indigenous people in the education system will not be delivered by the imposition of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005*, and its reduction to funding of almost $4 million. Indigenous education requires investment at a rate greater than that for non-Indigenous people because government needs to address past and present disadvantage faced in communities and allocate funding where it is most likely to be taken up by Indigenous students: in the community-controlled sector. The funding allocated to independent colleges should be recurrent, secure and certain. Without certainty of funds the disengagement of Indigenous people with the sector is assured.

The education of Indigenous people should be invested in carefully and appropriately with attention to what Indigenous communities need and with their express consent. It should not be left to the whim of government to auction off funding for Indigenous education in a tender process that will reward the lowest bidder.

The imposition of the Bill, the diminution of funds and the tender process are all indicators of a government agenda to move Indigenous education into the mainstream where cultural sensitivities and self-determination will be further marginalised. Such a move is unlikely to improve participation rates of Indigenous people in the education system. A more likely scenario is that the history of Indigenous people's lack of engagement in education will be replicated. In the meantime, the 'pioneer in Aboriginal adult education' that is, Tranby and the community-controlled sector which has educated thousands of Indigenous students and 'stood the test of time' may be consigned to the annals of history.

Bibliography

Anaya, J. 1996, *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Year Book Australia; Crime and Justice, Article: *Indigenous Prisoners,* Online Retrieved 4 July 2005 from http://www/abs.gov./Ausstats/

Australian Government, Australian Institute of Criminology: *Australian Crime: Facts and Figures 2004* Retrieved 6 July 2005 from http://www/aic.gov.au/publications/facts/2004

Beetson, J. 1997, *Self-determination and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations*. Workshop presentation. FIAEP/AIATSIS, Canberra.

Boughton, B,. and Durnan, D., 1997, *Education for Self-Determination: A Review of the Implementation for Recommendations of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody in Relation to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Adult Education*. FIAEP/AIATSIS, Canberra.

The Charter of the United Nations, Online 'About the UN', Retrieved 24 June 2005 from http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/

Commonwealth of Australia (1993), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner First Report, AGPS, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia, (2004), Department of Education, Science and Training Annual Report, AGPS, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia (2001), National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, AGPS, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia (2003), National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, AGPS, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia (1991), National Report, Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody, vols. 1–5, AGPS, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia (1991), National Report, Overview and Recommendations of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody, AGPS, Canberra.

The Convention against Discrimination in Education, Online Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, Retrieved 4 July 2005 from http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d/_c_educ.htm

The Coolangatta Statement On Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Education (1999), Hilo, Hawai'I, Online Alaska Native Knowledge Network, Retrieved 24 June 2005 from http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/cool.html

Cunneen, C. 1997, *The Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody. An overview of its establishment, findings and outcomes*, ATSIC, Canberra.

Daes, E. 1993, '*Explanatory note concerning the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples*', Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, Online Economic and Social Council, Retrieved 7 June 2005 from http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Hurdoca.nsf/TestFrame/8e97ee

The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Online Centre for World Indigenous Studies, Retrieved 24 June 2005 from http://www.cwis.org.drft9329.html

Durnan, D., and Boughton, B., 1999, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, NCVER, Adelaide.

Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000, Online Australasian Legal Information Institute, Retrieved 7 June 2005 from http://www.austlii.edu.au/legis/cth/consol_act/ieaa2000383/

Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005, Online Parliament of Australia Department of Parliamentary Services, Retrieved 7 June 2005 from http://aph.gov.au/library/pubs/BD/2004-05/05bd/174.pdf

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Online Human Rights Web, Retrieved 20 June 2005 from http://hrweb.org//legal/cpr.htm

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Online Human Rights Web, Retrieved 20 June 2005 from http://hrweb.org//legal/escr/htm

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Online Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, Retrieved 20 June 2005 from http://unhcrch/html/menu3/b/d_icerd.htm

Neutze, M., Sanders, W., and Jones, G. 1999 *Public Expenditure on Services for Indigenous People: Discussion Paper no. 24*, The Australia Institute, Parliament of Australia Online, Retrieved at http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rn/2004-5/05rn/18.htm

Skilling Australia's Workforce Bill 2005, Online Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, Retrieved 7 June 2005 from http://aph.gov.au/library/pubs/BD/2004-05/05bd/160.pdf

About the author

Kate Munro *works at Tranby Aboriginal College in Australia where she is Coordinator of* National Indigenous Legal Advocacy. *Her qualifications include BA, MA and LLB.*

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

BOOK REVIEW

The wounded storyteller: body, illness, and ethics

Arthur W. Frank
Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1995
231 pages, ISBN: 0-226-25993-5, rrp. $33.95

and

The renewal of generosity: illness, medicine, and how to live

Arthur W. Frank
Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2004
166 pages, ISBN: 0-226-26015-1, rrp. $55.95

(Both books available from Footprint Books Pty. Ltd., Unit 4 / 92A Mona Vale Road, Mona Vale, NSW 2103)

There has been a great deal of interest shown in recent years in the place of storied accounts of people's own experiences. This has been linked to what Jerome Bruner (Bruner 1986) has called

'narrative knowledge' a way of "ordering experience, of constructing reality"(p.11) and is seen as an important complement to the rational scientific modes of knowledge production. Arthur Frank is one of those academics who have explored the area of narrative knowledge within the experience of illness and medical care at both a personal and a professional level

At the Will of the Body

People often say that life begins at forty but for Frank, Professor of Sociology at the University of Calgary, life threatened to finish then. For him, mortality was announced not once but twice in the space of a couple of years, first by a heart attack when he was thirty nine, and again the next year when he was diagnosed with cancer. In his first book "*At the Will of the Body*",(Frank 1991) Arthur Frank reflected on his two recent, life-threatening illnesses at the level of human experiences rather than focusing solely on medical details. Frank articulated the paradox he, himself, lived through when he found that life threatening illness "teaches the danger as well as the value of the everyday". For Frank, the modernist understanding of illness, privileged by the scientific discourse of western medical culture was experienced as a form of medical colonization. Within his own experience of illness he discovered that it was a major source of demoralization to hand over the embodied person totally to medical discourse. This demoralization he contends applies to the experience of both patients and doctors and is in urgent need of redress. He asserts that illness stories at the present time may be understood as a form of resistance made necessary and legitimated by our world's post colonial and post modern articulations. As such, illness itself may be seen as a moral 'call to stories' that is underpinned by an ontological necessity.

In his next two books, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (1995) and *The Renewal of Generosity; Illness, Medicine and*

How to live (2004) which are the subjects of this review, he develops this insight.

> "Serious illness is a loss of the '*destination and map*' that had previously guided the ill person's life: ill people have to learn '*to think differently*'. They learn by hearing themselves tell their stories, absorbing others' reactions and experiencing their stories being shared"(p1).

These stories he points out are told not so much about but **through** wounded bodies – bodies which then 'need voices'. Frank talks about the personal and social value of illness narratives, the stories people tell about their experience of illness, by explicating the topic of types of bodies and types of stories that this venture into narratives of illness reveals. He particularly develops the idea of a moral value in the learning potential behind such stories.

In Frank's own illness narrative, *At the Will of the Body* (1991) he shared brilliant insights into the various transformations that both illness and recovery can engender and the potentialities we may discover when our bodies and our emotions are pushed to the limit. "For all you lose, you have an opportunity to gain: closer relationships, more poignant appreciations, clarified values. You are entitled to mourn what you can no longer be, but do not let this mourning obscure your sense of what you can become. You are embarking on a dangerous opportunity. Do not curse your fate; count your possibilities."

In doing so he also gave a first hand account of the use of reflection and storytelling in illness and of the possible benefits of such activities. It is this that he has gone on to develop in his next two books which explore the wider relationship between bodies and narratives and the part they play in the 'remoralization' of illness and medicine.

In both of these books, Frank uses his professional expertise to extend and ground his personal experience. Although Frank's own experience is central to his writing and researching, these books show a great breadth of excellently referenced views and arguments. They are not easy reading but are crammed with rich veins of possible thought, implications and applications that may need to be dialogued with in group situations to appreciate their full potential. Frank brings together the thought and findings of notable writers and practitioners from several disciplines in both the main text and in his endnotes which can provide a map for anyone else who wishes to investigate the literature in greater depth.

The Wounded Storyteller

Following on from his own personal narrative, *The Wounded Storyteller,* looks at patient narratives through a wider lens. Frank claims that "bodies need voices" because we are not just an embodied species but also an 'enstoried' one. It is through stories that the body speaks and that "selves are perpetually recreated" (p.53). Frank examines the dynamic interplay of the 'body-self' with particular reference to the experience of illness, an experience that 'interrupts' the story, until then generally accepted, but which now needs to be repaired or re-drawn in order to find a "new map and a new destination" (pp.1& 53). He discusses both different types of bodies and different types of narratives and the relationship between these. First of all he lays the ground work for this discussion through his examination of four possible ideal types of body;

1. the disciplined body,
2. the mirroring body,
3. the dominating body and
4. the communicative body

and he invites us to consider the various ethical choices that result from our reading ourselves or others within such texts. It is this last

"idealized type" which he shows "provides an ethical ideal for bodies." (p.48) Thus he opens for us the subject of the purpose and use of narratives in the construction of self and meaning particularly in times of illness, a time when we discover that we can no longer be as we were before but may not know how we can be now or what we can become. The body's problems with illness, he says are problems of control, relatedness and desire, and these problems are related to and expressed in a continuum of possibilities of action; "What are the types of action I invent in order to speak of the bodies in illness stories" p. 40. This is an important question because it is these stories that illumine for us and others the "different *choices* that body-selves then act out" p.40.

Throughout both these books Frank emphasizes this connection between stories and the moral imagination, because "...the body is," he says "ultimately, a moral problem, perhaps *the* moral problem a person has to address" p.40. In the next book he goes on to develop this further through the Bakhtinian understandings of awareness and responsibility and the importance of dialogue to this.

Three types of narratives

But first building on the insights of the psychoanalyst Roy Schafer, Frank asserts that "Stories do not simply describe the self; they are the self's medium of being."(p.53) and goes on to consider how illness therefore may be seen as "a call for stories". Although he does not directly describe it as such here Frank illumines illness and illness stories as possible educators in the field of transformative learning.

Having put forward a typology of bodies Frank also reflects on three types of narratives within which these bodies may find their voices. He outlines three types of illness narratives provided by our culture through which people tell their own unique stories and which therefore reveal "strong cultural and personal preferences" (1995:77).

He puts the ***Restitution Narrative*** first because of its dominance in our medical and general culture. There is truth in such narratives as well as cultural power because they reflect the hope and the wonder of the successes of modern science. This is the narrative where we, doctors and patients alike, do battle with disease and win. This is the narrative that recognizes the normal desire of the human species to be and to be in control. It is also the generally preferred story of institutions who are looking for research funds and public support. In this type of story illness is merely an interruption and the main thing we can learn from it is that we are stronger and smarter and need not be overcome by it. While we can all rejoice with those for whom this is the outcome Frank points out that it leaves many in silence and isolation since they will not achieve this outcome or even if they get part way to it they will always know themselves as vulnerable. While restitution stories he says can have a legitimate sphere "The problem arises when the ill person does not find restitution, or when someone who can only tell restitution stories encounters another whose health will not be restored"(p92).

Its opposite is the ***Chaos narrative***. There is no proper order here. Everything collapses with little or no hope of return to order and predictability. This narrative "tells how easily any of us could be sucked in" (p97). It acknowledges the possible vulnerability, futility and impotence that is inherent in the human condition. It is not a narrative that others may want to read. Frank says that it may not even be able to be written at the time of the chaos since "To turn the chaos into a verbal story is to have some reflective grasp on it" (p98) so that at the time" these stories cannot literally be told but can only be lived. Yet if the chaotic story cannot be told, the voice of chaos can be identified and a story reconstructed" (p98)

The third type of narrative that Frank describes is the ***Quest narrative***, as told through a body that can communicate an experience. "Quest stories meet suffering head on" says Frank "they

accept illness and seek to use it. Illness is the occasion of a journey that becomes a quest."(p115). It is the reflective quality of these narratives that sets them apart and allows them to develop the 'moral imagination' in both writers and listeners. They talk about what it is like to be in pain, or in fear, about the person's hopes and fears, about the struggle with meaning in suffering and the possibility of death. In some parts the voice of chaos will be heard in them because unlike the restitution narrative which only admits the positive, the quest includes both light and shade. They allow people to acknowledge that they have indeed 'experienced the experience' and to give testimony to this fact.

His following chapter on testimony is, for me, the highlight of this book. In this chapter Frank clarifies his experience of quest narratives' power. Rather than providing a prescription for what one ought to do to return to a former acceptable healthy state, they illumine a possibility by bearing witness to the experience and they share the wisdom the experience has brought them. But my own experience has taught me that to be aware is also to be responsible, and so I have to accept Frank's argument that while this narrative may not be prescriptive it is ethically challenging and therefore capable of shaping and transforming. "People who tell stories of illness are witnesses, turning illness into moral responsibility" (p.137). Their stories confront both storyteller and listener with an ethical dilemma. They present possibilities and they present them not so much by what a person does or has done but rather by what they reveal he or she **is** and what, it follows, I could be. "Quest stories" he contends "are one ethical *practice* of … (the communicative) body" (p.126) and as such these "stories are not material to be analyzed; they are relationships to be entered" (p.200). This is a relationship within which he thinks with stories "a process closer to letting the stories analyze us."(Frank 2004). So although testimony can be complete in itself it can also be part of what Frank calls a "pedagogy of suffering" which can only be taught by those who have traveled in that domain and are willing

and able to meet others through the narrative ethics of their self-story. One of the social values of this is that "by conceiving suffering as a pedagogy, agency is restored to ill people" (Frank 1995, 145) the balance of power is altered where there is possibility of mutual need and mutual benefit. Frank also points out that "illness is *only one form of pedagogy* that can teach the need to become a moral person" p.154 because suffering is a universal experience.

The Renewal of Generosity

He then goes on to develop this mutuality in learning to live and the resulting remoralization of living and working it offers in his third book, *The Renewal of generosity; illness, medicine and how to live*. This book is primarily about the power of stories to learn, teach and transform. In it Frank uses the 'show don't tell' method of expressive writing, disclosing his use of a particular 'reflecting team'. Frank not only talks **about** stories but shows us how to talk and think **with** stories. He explains

> "We begin to think *with stories* when situations in our lives recall these accounts so often that they settle into our awareness and become habits of thought, tacitly guiding our actions"p.7

The story of the tunnel with which he begins becomes such a theme. He looks at it through the eyes of each of his reflecting team (a technique he has borrowed from the field of narrative therapy)

Frank now carries the implications of narratives and their dialogical relationship outwards into the various medical encounters in which we may find ourselves and considers the challenge it offers to both sides of such encounters. Here Frank's identification of the crisis of medicine's own demoralization echoes the palliative care physician Michael Kearney (Kearney 1992) who says that modern medicine has stripped the medical encounter of its humanity for both the

professional and the patient. Frank offers a way to recapture 'compassion' the loss of which Kearney says has been the price of the huge technical competence that has been gained. The book draws on a wide range of writers, both among the ill and among physicians to show how generosity and gratitude are central features of any ethically sound practice that transforms merely competent medical care into humane caring relationships. Although these stories are restricted to 'illness, medicine, and how to live', the context need not be exclusive. I am sure there are also similar stories that could be entitled: learning, education and how to live which would point to the same central need of generosity and gratitude, making these books of interest to a wide audience.

The place and importance of dialogue lies at the heart of these encounters and thus also of this third book. Having argued for the communicative body as the preferred option and the quest narrative as it's most potent and productive expression, Frank now shows how a reflective dialogic relationship within any encounter opens both participants to the mutual benefits and challenges life offers through such moments. His method is reminiscent of Victor Frankl who claimed that it is not we who question life but rather "Life questions us and we must give answer" (Frankl 1959). Frank calls such an experience "the moral moment" and shows through the stories he relates how this is a moment in and through which we are seen and are enabled to see ourselves. Thus Peschel, the reflecting medical practitioner in the tunnel, is revealed and potentially shaped by his response, or lack of response, to Mr. B. What Peschel is thrust into experiencing in the tunnel is that circumstances, over which we have no control, can deliver us without warning into situations that both offer us "the promise of intimacy" but also "the fear of our own undoing" (Barnard 1995) and the choice is ours.

Frank's description of his internal 'reflecting team' and his enactment of the part it plays in the dialogue which frames his use of the stories

is worthy of a paper in itself. His choice of other voices through which he can hear the stories spans a wide range of times and cultures. Although the stances of both Aurelius and Levinas are known to me, I must admit that meeting Mikhail Bakhtin here was meeting an old friend and mentor, and I wondered if this biased my appreciation of Frank's method. But no, though what it did do was help me to see the methodological benefit of a number of voices, the polyphonic aspect of the benefit of dialogue in Bakhtin's terms. Bakhtin asserts that in conversation as dialogue, the speaker (or writer) has an implicit question. The expressive exposition says 'I am here' and the implicit question is 'where are you?'(Patterson 1991). This is the question of Frank's 'moral moment' within which the listener either ignores it and thereby absents him(her)self demoralizing both or implicitly answers 'I am here (I hear)' thereby offering presence, solidarity and possibly consolation in what Frank calls "The art of generously sharing our humanity at its profoundest levels".

Conclusion

These three books written by Arthur Frank seem to form a set of concentric circles showing the ripple effect of the boon he discovered in his own experience. In the first, Frank made a personal discovery about the value and power of his own story. In the second, he validated and developed his finding by exploring the stories of others with reference to the relationship between bodies and stories. In the third he goes on to show how all this has a much wider implication in a mutuality of benefit. These books are about illness experience, about patient care, about medical education as well as about alternative methods of research. They are books that I, for one, feel a need to keep handy on my own bookshelf so that I will be able to dip into them for inspiration, consolation and guidance.

Publication notes

Arthur, W. Frank (1991). *At the Will of the Body*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, Australian Retail (paperback) $37.95 (approximately, but before student discount)

Arthur, W. Frank (1995). *The Wounded Storyteller; body, illness and ethics*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Australian Retail (paperback) $51.50 (approximately, but before student discount)

Arthur, W. Frank (2004). *The Renewal of Generosity; illness medicine and how to live*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Australian Retail (paperback) $51.50 (approximately, but before student discount)

References

Barnard, D. (1995). "The promise of intimacy and the fear of our own undoing." *Journal of Palliative Care* **11**(4): 22–26.

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge MA., Harvard University Press.

Frank, A. W. (1991). *At the Will of the Body*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company.

Frank, A. W. (1995). *The Wounded Storyteller; body, illness and ethics*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Frank, A. W. (2004). *The Renewal of Generosity; illness medicine and how to live*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Frankl, V. E. (1959). *Man's search for meaning*. New York, Washington Square Press.

Kearney, M. (1992). "Palliative medicine – just another speciality?" *Palliative Medicine* **6**: 39–46.

Patterson, D. (1991). "Bakhtin on Word and Spirit: the religiosity of responsibility." *Cross Currents* **41**(1): 33–51.

Margaret Byrne
Doctoral candidate
Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work
University of South Australia

Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Volume 45, Number 2, July 2005

JOURNAL SCAN

Clegg, S 2005, 'Evidence-based practice in educational research: a critical realist critique of systematic review', ***British Journal of Sociology of Education***, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 415–428.

The discourse of evidence-based practice is becoming more widespread, particularly in social policy spheres where 'getting value for money' has become a key goal. The author posits that debates relating to the efficacy of evidence-based practice have their roots in the paradigm wars, specifically in relation to debates around what constitutes evidence. The old arguments of qualitative verus quantitative are very difficult to overcome- despite what the author recognises as the 'messy reality of practice'. In this article the author argues for greater clarity about the epistolomological as well as the socio-political roots of this debate. The author uses a critical realist perspective to unpack what is meant by 'evidence-based'.

The author commences by tracing the roots of evidence-based practice to the rise and influence of New Labour, with their strong emphasis on needing to know what works and why in order to determine what policy initiatives work best. This thinking, in turn

is linked to the quest for great effectiveness, value for money and measurable outcomes – familiar language to many professionals in a wide range of fields of practice!

The author points to the rapid establishment of institutes and other organisations established with the expressed purpose of enhancing policy development and implementation largely by conducting systematic reviews. This model is derived from bio-medical fields of study. Proponents argue that because knowledge is changing at such a rapid rate, it is not possible for practitioners to keep up. Rather, they need to rely on systematic reviews to summarise the research for them and to inform their decision making. In these reviews, randomised control group studies are accredited the highest ranking of all forms of research (they are often referred to as the 'gold standard'). As the author acknowledges, these sorts of experimental research methods are held in high esteem for their robustness but there have also been strong critiques of their positivist and reductionist approaches to weighing research evidence. The author argues that in this context, the value of professional wisdom is down played. The 'weight of evidence' is provided outside of practice and is in keeping with arguments about the need to reign in professional power.

The second half of the article is devoted to a critique of evidence-based practice. The author points to the fact that evidence-based practice rests on the premise that it is possible to experiment and examines the question 'what must the world be like for experimentation to be possible?, using a case study of a systematic review of personal development planning programs in the UK.

Dawson, J 2005, 'A history of vocation: tracing a keyword of work, meaning and moral purpose', ***Adult Education Quarterly***', vol. 55, no. 3, pp. 220–331

The term 'vocation' often appears in the adult education literature, but like many concepts, has changed in meaning over time. Tracing the various shifts in meaning and understandings of concepts offers the potential to see more contemporary understandings in a critical light. It can also open up potential new possibilities where current meanings might be challenged and alternative perspectives offered.

The author commences this article with a brief overview of the different ways in which the term 'vocation' is used in contemporary adult education literature. The analytic approach taken in this article is influenced by the work of Raymond Williams, an English cultural critic. His work highlights the manner in which particular words or phrases can become riddled with symbolic power 'where tacit assumptions about social experience are embedded and contested' (page 222).

The author then traces the shifts in meaning of the word 'vocation' through a number of different points in history including:

- the earliest origins of the word and its connections with the Christian monastic tradition;
- its transformation under the influence of the Protestant reformation – particularly through the writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin;
- the influence of the spirit of entrepreneurialism of the 18th and 19th century, where increasingly secular understandings of vocation were promoted
- and finally its transformation under the influence of 20th century writers like Max Weber and Thomas Mann.

The article concludes by addressing the 'so what' question, where the author argues for the value of this approach in offering a backdrop upon which to consider the current understandings of the notion of 'vocation' which are strongly infused with capitalist notions. She further argues for broadening the concepts of work in ways that will open it to critique and the pressing importance for the field of adult education to further this work as part of its on going scholarship.

Fuller, A & Unwin, L 2005, 'Older and wiser?: workplace learning from the perspective of experienced workers', ***International Journal of Lifelong Education***, vol. 24, no.1, pp.21–39.

This article focuses on older workers and how they experience learning in the workplace. Among a range of issues (social, political and economic) the ageing workforce will also need to face questions as to the best ways to approach the tasks of workplace and individual development. The study reported in this paper draws on theoretical perspectives from Lave and Wenger's work on situated learning and communities of practice. It examines the types of learning opportunities that are afforded to experienced, older workers at two sites in the United Kingdom.

The literature review presented in the paper commences by examining debates around the emergence of new forms of work and the implications these have for skill levels and knowledge production in enterprises. The review provides a succinct summary of literature examining the organisation of work, noting that assumed links between new ways of organising work and the opportunities these create for learning rest on very few empirical studies. The final section of the literature review tackles the issue of workplace learning – particularly the importance of understanding learning at work within an organisational context. The authors argue that 'learning as participation' has become the dominant approach to understanding

and analysing learning in the workplace. This perspective draws heavily on theoretical frameworks developed by Lave and Wenger which particularly emphasise the social and situated nature of learning in the workplace. They posit that this theoretical perspective appear to say little about the learning of workers once they have moved to the centre of a community of practice; nor does it place any significant emphasis on the degree to which organisational factors effect the way learning might be constructed and experienced by workers.

The research findings reported in the article are based on research in two companies – a steel processing mill and a steel stockholder. Case studies using multiple data collection methods were used to collect data from a small number of older, experienced workers. The findings from these sites are reported under three broad headings:

- how respondents perceived they learned their jobs;
- attitudes and perceived relevance of learning to their jobs; and
- relationships between learning at work and organisational change

Based on the analyses of the data around these themes, the authors conclude that the workplace is a site for continued learning by older, experienced learners and is particularly influenced by organisational culture and history, job design, approaches to the management of workers and the ways in which work is organised. The study confirms the interrelationships between introducing new forms of work organisation and the impact this has on the ways people might be managed, supported and encouraged to develop. The relationship between strongly embedded learning cultures and individual attitudes to workplace learning were also reinforced by this study. The authors conclude by arguing for increased research activity in order to better understand the relationship between work organisation and learning.

Michele Simons