AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

Non-refereed articles

Book reviews
Coordinated by Peter Willis

EDITOR'S DESK

Come with me for a moment as we step back in time ...

In search of inspiration late in the year and in the busyness that this period brings, I pulled off my shelf the issue of this Journal dated December 1965. I deliberately chose this issue because it was the equivalent to this one, only forty years earlier. The journal had been in existence only five years. Not only did it titillate my latent love of history (being the discipline in which I originally studied at university so many years ago), and remind me of that tumultuous period of the mid-sixties when so much was happening in the world (and when I was personally transitioning from school to university), it was fascinating to reflect on that journal issue with this one I was editing four decades on.

The *Australian Journal of Adult Education* at that time was published twice a year (July and December) and edited by John Shaw, from the University of NSW. The two issues would set you back the princely sum of eight shillings! Its stated policy was, simply, "to

provide a forum for discussion on adult education matters" (inside cover). This issue contained six articles and two book reviews, and as far as I could ascertain, all but one of the reviewers was male (interestingly, half of the authors used initials, not first names). The other features to note about these eight contributors were that they were all writing from within Australia, and seven were employed in departments of Adult Education within universities (Sydney 4, Adelaide 1, Western Australia 1, ANU 1) – a structural entity of the past! – with the other from a State Department of Adult Education (Tasmania). That half of the contributions emanated from the University of Sydney was probably because the fifth national conference of the Association had been held there only four months previously. There was no editorial, and very noticeably, gender-neutral language throughout the journal had not yet become the norm.

The content of the articles focused heavily on practice in adult education. One paper wrote on adult education language classes, another defended class programs, another discussed informal educational television (relatively novel at that time!), and yet another on leadership in the "Great Books" movement (a technique founded by Robert Hutchins in Chicago for discussing the great issues in human history written about by authors whose works were open to controversy, the technique focusing on educational process rather than imparting book learning). A fifth discussed dynamics and voluntaryism in adult education – a critique of Partridge's paper published in the journal of December 1964 – and the sixth was a long article on UNESCO's campaign against illiteracy. The emphasis on practice was reinforced by one of the reviews which was of an annotated bibliography on "Adult education procedures, methods and techniques" (1965) from Syracuse University, while the other was of H.W. Burns' book on *Sociological backgrounds of adult education* (1964).

I thought the opening paragraph (p.3) in this 1965 journal issue was well worth reproducing here, as a statement on the position of adult education in Australia forty years ago (and because its author was from my *alma mater*):

> Adult Education is regarded as a marginal activity stuck on to our education system somewhere between our leaving primary school and our going senile; we have to run it with meagre budgets, leftover facilities and other people's spare time. British adult education from which our ideas and systems derive was substantially a lower class, self-help movement meant to make up for the lack or deficiencies of primary education, and later of secondary and technical education systems. Once it may rightly have been called remedial education, but in this generation there has been a phenomenal growth of adult education in spite of improvement and extension of primary, secondary and tertiary education. In fact it is quite evident the improvement in formal education has led to the advance of adult education, and this contradicts the remedial theory no matter how true it may have been in the last century. As Margaret Mead sums it up, "Now it is the elite among the adults of the educationally elite countries who 'go back to school'" [in 'The contemporary challenge to education', *Fundamental and Adult Education*, 12(3), 1960]. Though the situation is improving slightly all the time, adult education has not achieved a recognised standing in this country. In spite of a well-reasoned submission sent by the A.A.A.E. [Australian Association of Adult Education] to the Martin Committee, there has been no real recognition of adult education in the Committee's report on tertiary education in Australia. (Ian Hanna, Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide)

While the Cinderella reports in the 1990s may have afforded some relief apropos the final point in this quotation, and the raised status of the Association [now Adult Learning Australia] may have provided a stronger political voice, perhaps adult educators in 2005 can still hear reverberating echoes from Hanna's assessment of the status of their profession in 1965.

In this issue, we have a smorgasbord of interesting articles – on self-evaluation, Chinese leaders' thinking styles, the Victorian Workers' Educational Association (WEA), recognition of prior learning (RPL), learning communities, learning and development in health, concepts of adult education and the Nigerian teaching profession.

The first four papers are refereed articles, having been double, blind peer reviewed. **James Athanasou** discusses self-evaluation in adult education and, in particular, reviews its accuracy. He argues that in adult education, where learning is "freely chosen and freely pursued in a non-threatening and non-judgemental context", the emphasis ought to be on the formative uses of self-evaluation and there is evidence to support the value of its use. **Francesco Sofo** examines the thinking styles of Chinese leaders, using two different inventories. He concludes that Chinese leaders favour 'exploring' and 'independent' thinking, not the conditional style as might be anticipated given that country's history, indicating that they may be at the forefront of change in an historically conditional China. **Gordon Dadswell** re-interprets the relationship between the University of Melbourne and the Victorian WEA. His view is that it was not the poor management skills and personality of the Director of University Extension that was responsible for the failure of the University of Melbourne Extension Board to work effectively with the WEA, but rather the complete misunderstanding by the University of the WEA's role. **Tricia Fox** examines RPL in universities, labelling it a "white elephant". She contends that the varied interpretations and applications of RPL are problematic for adult learners with diverse experiences and expectations, and calls for universities to establish RPL practices that are transparent and consistent.

In the second group of four papers, **Peter Kearns** writes about two learning community initiatives, in Bega Valley and Thuringowa, where council libraries took a prime entrepreneurial role. He believes that trends evident in these examples – of local initiatives being responsive to the needs and opportunities confronting 21st

century Australia – are likely to become more important in other communities, and draws some lessons for adult and community education. **Ross Hartley** reflects on the struggles and achievements in establishing a culture of learning and development within the New England Area Health Service over the past decade. The journey had not been without resistance. With the emphasis more on strategic development now, he ponders on the future of these efforts in transforming learning culture. **Kaethe Schneider** from Germany outlines a conceptual system for adult education. She argues that the lack of uniformity in its basic concepts characterises the its immaturity, in contrast, for example, to the maturity of a long-established, natural science discipline such as physics where its maturity manifests itself in the rigor of its conceptual system. Finally, **A.U Osunde** and **F.E.O Omoruyi** from Nigeria report on their empirical study of 400 post-primary school teachers in that country. The study found that teachers are not well financially remunerated and are looked down upon because of delays in payment of salaries and allowances. Poor conditions of service, wider negative influences and teachers' negative personal and professional behaviour are other critical factors responsible for the low status of teachers and the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Happy reading!

The Editorial team wishes everyone a merry Christmas and a safe New Year.

Roger Harris
Editor
(on behalf of the Editorial Board)

P.S. Corrections to the July 2005 (vol. 45, no.2) issue:
Kate Munro writes that in her article: (1) the four references to Durnan and Boughton on pages 252 and 253 should read as '1999' (not 1997), and (2) the Act referred to in the first paragraph on page 252 should read as the 'Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005' (not 2000).

Self-evaluations in adult education and training

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This paper focuses on two key aspects of self-evaluation in adult education and training through the perspective of (a) a social-cognitive framework which is used to categorise those factors that enhance self-efficacy and self-evaluation, and (b) the accuracy of self-evaluation. The social-cognitive framework categorises the factors that enhance self-evaluation, namely, social messages (e.g. comparison with others, feedback from others, social and cultural stereotypes), personal factors (e.g. the ability level of the rater, the standards and goals of the rater) and situational factors (e.g. the content area being evaluated). The paper reviews the accuracy of self-evaluations and concludes (a) that there is prima facie support from previous meta-analyses for their accuracy, (b) that the accuracy of self-evaluations is likely to be underestimated, and (c) that a focus on individual rather than group comparisons may be more useful for adult education. The educational value of formative self-evaluation for adult education and training contexts is supported.

Introduction

An adult learner who monitors his/her performance or estimates what might be their future achievement engages in a form of self-evaluation. Adult self-evaluation can occur in an evening college class, technical education, higher education, in a workplace situation or whenever someone is engaged in informal learning tasks. People may self-assess in order to determine their past or future response to situations such as their likelihood of success or the value of their investment of time and effort or the extent of their learning. The purpose of this paper is to consider two aspects of the nature and value of self-evaluations in adult education and training. The first of these contexts relates to a theoretical framework for studying self-evaluations and the second deals with the accuracy of such self-evaluations.

At the outset it may be helpful to clarify some aspects of terminology since a number of terms seemingly refer to the same phenomenon, namely, 'self-evaluation', 'self-assessment', 'self-rating' or 'self-estimate'. A self-evaluation is the judgement of the merit or worth of a self-estimate that has been produced. Typically, self-evaluation follows a self-estimate or a process of self-assessment and it can be a formal public process or an informal private perception. Both self-evaluation and the psychological concept of self-efficacy focus on capability, and the following section outlines a theoretical framework of self-evaluation from a social-cognitive perspective.

Social-cognitive theory and self-evaluation

Self-efficacy indicates a person's probability of engaging in a task depending on how capable they believe they are in carrying out the task successfully. This concept emanates from the work of Bandura (1986) who noted that people have a sound idea of their talents. Factors that influence self-efficacy include: previous successes, reassurances from others, and the observations of the success of

others (Ormrod 2005, pp. 144–145). Elements of self-regulation that are also linked with self-efficacy are: the performance standards that people set, the observations of our own behaviour, and self-reinforcement. If one were to depict this schematically it would be a recursive model with some of the components outlined in Figure 1. This framework may offer a helpful basis for studying self-evaluation and the following paragraphs provide an analysis of the components of the social-cognitive process that are linked to self-evaluation and self-efficacy under three broad headings: social messages, personal factors and situational factors.
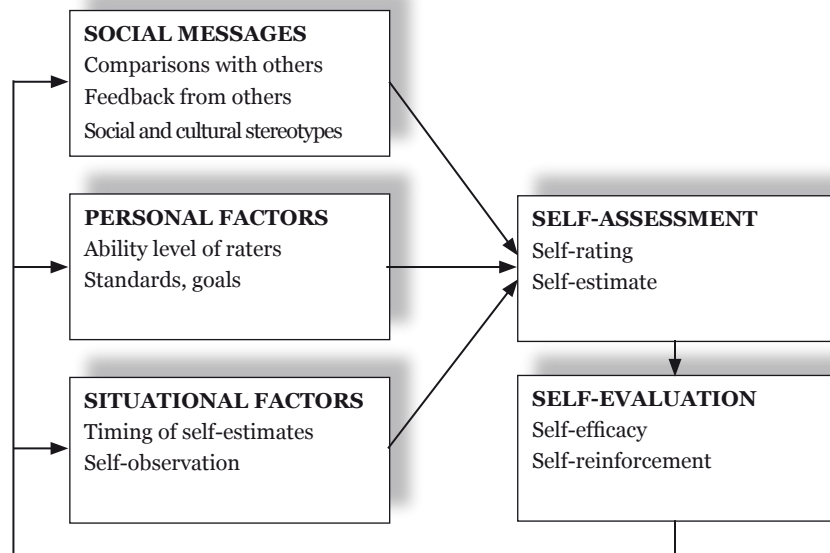

Figure 1   A recursive social cognitive model for self-evaluation

Social messages

Three social messages that have an impact on self-evaluation have been defined in previous research. These are the comparisons that we make with others, the social and cultural stereotypes that form the background of our perceptions and the feedback that we receive from others.

Rather than have people rate themselves on some amorphous concept such as 'average', 'above average' or 'below average', Mabe and West (1982) advocated the use of directions that accentuate comparison with others. Indeed, the practice of making self-evaluations that are norm-referenced (that is, ratings such as high or low, average) implies that the person has an implicit understanding of the normal distribution or a detailed understanding of the likely performance in a comparison group.

Accordingly, there is an increasing emphasis on realistic comparisons with others taking into account the ability levels of these proxies. Recently, Martin, Suls and Wheeler (2002) reported that self-raters' perception of the ability levels of others influenced their self-ratings. People rated themselves lower in relation to superior proxies and higher in relation to inferior proxies. In considering ways to improve self-ratings, they included the use of a competent role model as a basis for comparison in order to overcome gender differences and the use of feedback.

As far back as 1902, Cooley described the 'looking-glass self' in which the feedback provided by others is centrally important to the development of an individual's perceptions of himself or herself. Bergee and Cecconi-Roberts (2002) reported that the use of discussions about performance and group feedback improved the congruence between self and other ratings with music education and music performance majors. Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull and Pelham (1992) described a desire to elicit self-confirmatory feedback

especially amongst people who were clinically depressed or people with negative views about themselves. They wrote mainly about unfavourable appraisals of social interactions and interpersonal relations, but the same phenomenon has been reported amongst children and adolescents in relation to perceived competence in a particular domain, such as athletics, arts and crafts, social acceptance or scholastic competence (Cassidy, Ziv, Mehta & Feeney 2003). The general conclusion was that of a vicious circle in which people with negative self-views tend to seek negative feedback to confirm the original negative self-evaluations (see also Bernichon, Cook & Brown 2003).

Other social characteristics also contribute to the type of self-evaluations that people are likely to make. At a macro-level, culture has also been reported to influence workers' perceptions of their ability. Farh, Dobbins and Cheng (1991) compared the job performance ratings of 982 supervisor and subordinate pairs in Taiwan and the USA and found that Chinese employees displayed a modesty bias. They rated their job performance less than their supervisors whereas US employees were reported to be more lenient with their ratings than their supervisors. Enduring characteristics from our socialisation also have an impact on self-evaluation. For example, Betsworth (1999) reported that women continue to underestimate their abilities. Marx and Roman (2002) demonstrated that there was a limit in the level of self-estimates in the presence of a competent role model for women who had already been identified as motivated with mathematics, who had obtained a minimum SAT score of 650 out of 800 and who had enrolled in at least one mathematics course. The correlation (that is, r – a statistical measure of relationship varying from −1 through 0 to +1) of their self-estimates with a 15-problem mathematics test was low ($r = 0.28$).

Personal factors

One key personal factor in the ability to self-evaluate appears to be the ability or level of achievement of a person. Although the ability levels of raters have long been recognised as moderating the ability to accurately self-rate, there is recent evidence in some studies (for example, Kruger & Dunning 1999) that under-performers and under-achievers were more likely to overestimate performance than high performers on tasks related to humour, logical reasoning or grammar. Correlations between the grade point average and ratings for above average students were moderate ($r = 0.61$) compared with low ($r = 0.34$) for below average and low ($r = 0.33$) for average students (Wright 2000). Finally, not all individuals have the same training to make accurate self-perceptions. There may be rating errors and biases or they may use inappropriate judgemental heuristics.

A second personal aspect relates to relevant standards and goals. While self-evaluation is relevant to the field of adult education and training, it is not clear that studies of the accuracy of self-evaluations involve contextually relevant comparisons. For instance, what might be a useful basis for comparison with a self-evaluation of adult reading? Tousignant and DesMarchais (2002) demonstrated that prediction of performance was much better than prediction of ability. Klein and Buckingham (2002) also concluded that ambiguity of one's own performance led to bias, but this effect was lessened when the ambiguity of the task was reduced and the criterion was clearly defined and verifiable (for example, typing speed).

Situational factors

Situational factors in an adult context may have a greater impact on the self-evaluation process than first imagined. These factors include *inter alia*: (a) the specific content area; (b) the prior experience with the criterion; (c) whether the self-assessment is made prior to or following learning; (d) whether there is any social desirability

associated with the judgement; (e) whether the criterion is norm-referenced or criterion-referenced; or (f) the format or manner in which the self-assessment is elicited.

An additional situational factor is that people do not apply similar calibrations before and after tests. Tousignant and DesMarchais (2002) compared the degree of certainty in estimating ability to perform before and after an exam. The correlation between pre-examination and oral presentation ranged from no relationship (r = 0.04) to a low relationship (r = 0.24) while post-examination and oral presentation correlations were low (ranging from r = 0.25 to r = 0.33). In other words, there was a slightly higher correlation or relationship between the self-evaluation after an assessment rather than for self-evaluation prior to an assessment. In a sample of undergraduate students, correlations (gamma) between pre-test estimates of reading ability and the number of comprehension questions correct were very low (0.14) compared with low (0.28) for the post-test (Lin, Moore & Zabrucky 2001).

As noted previously, there is scope to use this framework for research and the preceding comments provide some indication of how the social-cognitive perspective of self-efficacy might be linked quite usefully to self-evaluations. More importantly, it highlights a heuristic framework that can be adjusted in order to improve the process of self-evaluation. There are, however, divergent views on the value and accuracy of self-evaluations for adult learners.

The accuracy of self-evaluations

One view of self-evaluations from an adult learning perspective is that they are not valid. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998, p. 130) concluded that '...if adult learners rely on proxy measures – *self-assessment* of anticipated outcomes, they will most likely make false conclusions based on invalid data' (p. 130; italics in original). This is consistent with a self-enhancement effect known as the 'above

average effect' (van Lange & Sedikides 1998) where it has been noted that people rate themselves more favourably than they should.

As one would expect, there has been considerable attention on educational aspects of public self-evaluation but this has been mainly in classroom contexts and has involved a number of studies using school and college students. These have examined the ability of people to estimate their performance on formal educational assessments (Lunneborg 1982). For example, Mihal and Graumenz (1984) reported that individuals could accurately rate their performance on more objective and easily measured dimensions.

Longitudinal research in the area is still rare, but one study (Obach 2003) pointed to the predictive value of self-ratings in determining future performance. The correlation between perceived competence and standard achievement tests was 0.37 and 0.35 for a year later; and between perceived competence and grade point average was 0.52 and 0.36 for a year later. Obach (2003) suggested that self-perceptions of ability predicted performance a year later but these results could be interpreted as suggesting either a longer-term stability in self-ratings or potentially a self-fulfilling prophecy in operation.

The relation of self-evaluation to assessment results has been studied in two separate meta-analyses. From their review of self-evaluation and achievement in a higher education context, Falchikov and Boud (1989) reported a moderate mean effect size of 0.47 (1989, p. 419); a mean correlation between teacher and student marks of 0.39 (1989, p. 420); and that 64% of self-assessors had grades that agreed with those of faculty markers (1989, p. 420). In a psychological context, Mabe and West (1982) undertook a substantial meta-analysis of the literature and found that the average correlation between self-ratings and abilities was 0.29. They reported that 88% of the correlations were greater than zero. Accordingly, there is some *prima facie* support for the accuracy of self-evaluations across a range

of aptitudes and abilities but there is also evidence that the ability to self-evaluate may itself vary from person to person. Moreover, any variation in the reported values of the different studies when comparing groups is likely to be a function of sampling error. The important point is that, even with large groups across diverse abilities, the correlations are all positive when self-evaluations are compared with criteria. The correlation would increase if there was a correction for attenuation, in other words, some correction needs to be made for the fact that self-evaluations are typically made across a few points on a rating scale and have a narrow range compared with assessment results which often vary across a wide range.

Understandably, earlier research has focused on the congruence between self-evaluations and formal assessments mainly through correlation coefficients, but this does have some technical problems. Typically a group of people is asked to estimate their performance and the estimate is compared against educational achievement, teacher ratings, supervisor ratings or peer ratings. The correlation or other statistic is produced and any comparison of a self-evaluation with respect to a criterion assumes that the criterion itself can be determined reliably, that is, consistently and in a stable fashion. This resulting correlation is difficult to justify because every educational phenomenon has a degree of unreliability. Since a quantitative or qualitative self-evaluation also has a degree of unreliability, then the comparison is confounded by the interaction of both unreliabilities. Statistically, it is possible to attenuate the correlations so that the unreliability in the criterion is controlled, but this is applicable only to group data and is not of great assistance to an individual learner. Thus, if self-evaluations and a criterion correlated only 0.3 and each had a reliability of only 0.5 (a low reliability for an assessment), then in theory the attenuated correlation between the two imperfect measures could be as high as 0.6.

Furthermore, any correlation from group comparisons automatically standardises the self-assessments (that is, rescales them to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one), and also standardises the performances on the criterion in the same way allowing a comparison to be made on the same scale. The first problem is that converting descriptive ratings to numbers is problematic and may not represent true measurement since ratings are not additive units of behaviour. Moreover, this only answers the question of whether the group's relative ordering of self-evaluations is comparable to the group's relative ordering of performance. It does not indicate the accuracy of self-evaluation.

As noted previously, most investigations of self-evaluation focus on nomothetic or group comparisons. If one wished to investigate the accuracy of self-evaluations, then an alternative approach is to focus on ipsative or idiographic approaches. With an ipsative approach, the person is compared within a set of his or her potential achievements. For instance, they may be asked to rank their relative achievements (best, second best, third best and so on) and this rank ordering is the basis for comparison. If these measurement limitations were controlled, then the relationship between self-evaluations and assessment results would be substantially higher.

The educational value of self-assessments for learning

The self-evaluation approach to adult learning involves individuals becoming the direct source of information about themselves. Especially in those contexts where there is no reason for disguise or concealment, Mischel (1977) contended that '…what the person tells us directly turns out to be as valuable an index as any other more direct sign' (p. 248). Writing from a perspective of self-evaluation of personality characteristics, Burisch (1984) concluded:

> … if self-ratings are (a) directly communicable, (b) the ultimate in economy, and (c) also more valid than their questionnaire counterparts, then we will have to face the embarrassing

question of just why we continue to construct personality inventories at all … (p. 225)

There would, however, hardly be any substantive community acceptance for a program of research that sought to introduce self-evaluation for summative purposes such as certification or high stakes assessments; but there would in all likelihood be widespread acceptance for self-evaluation as a formative process, as an indicator of learning, or as a benchmark against which a more formal assessment might even be compared. While assessment for learning is now a popular term (for example, Fancourt 2005), it is really little more than the positive use of formative evaluation as an instructional or educational tool. A social learning theory framework may be helpful in improving the basis of self-evaluations.

While one rationale for educators' interest in educational self-evaluations has related to finding alternative approaches to formal assessments, a more important consideration has been the role of self-evaluation as a component of any learning process. Commenting from a higher education perspective, Falchikov and Boud (1989, pp. 426–427) noted '[s]elf-assessment may be regarded as a skill and, as such, needs to be developed… Self-assessment can be a valuable learning activity, even in the absence of significant agreement between student and teacher, and can provide feedback to the student about both learning and educational and professional standards'.

For too long the spotlight in education has been on the intricacies of formal methods of summative assessment (Athanasou & Lamprianou 2002). Adult education, however, that is freely chosen and freely pursued in a non-threatening and non-judgemental context really obtains little value from these advances in educational measurement. Here the emphasis ought to be on the formative uses of self-evaluation as a key ingredient of one's learning or achievement and there is some evidence to support the value of such self-evaluations.

Acknowledgements

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Thinking styles of modern Chinese leaders: Independence and exploration in an historically conditional China

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The research examined how Chinese leaders view the thinking process, what thinking styles they value and how they prefer to think. The methodological framework used quantitative analyses of two thinking styles inventories. The survey included a sample of nearly 300 leaders from a wide representation of industry sectors across China who completed Sofo's Thinking Style Inventory (TSI) (Sofo 2002). Additionally, 22 of these leaders completed three forms of thinking style (Sternberg 1997). Another sample of 172 non-education leaders' thinking styles were compared with 48 educational leaders' thinking styles using independent sample t-tests and supported by analysis of variance. The findings showed that Chinese leaders have strong preferences for 'executive', 'judicial' and 'legislative' styles of thinking as well as high preferences for independent and exploring styles. They reported moderate preferences for 'inquiring' and 'creative' styles and low preference

for 'conditional' style, an indication that Chinese leaders may be at the forefront of change in an historically conditional China.

Introduction

The Chinese culture has a long history of recorded intellectual and philosophical traditions; however, the entrenched legacy of the Chinese communist rule infers that citizens are expected to think conditionally – that is, to think like their leaders and the governing party of the day. China's social values and structures are different from Western ones, and this means that understanding ways of thinking is important, especially given the increasing profile that China is taking in the world. The collapse of conventional communism, the waning of socialism and the emergence of a global capitalist system in China has posed a new set of uncertainties for some Western countries.

According to Fishman (2005), China is everywhere these days and it is influencing the lives of consumers, employees and citizens through its rapidly changing massive economy, resulting in leaders and executives being at the forefront of cultural change brought about by reform and decentralization in the new global economy that China has entered with alacrity. China's keenness to learn from, and work with, the West, while equalling or indeed surpassing them at the innovation and economic game, is gathering momentum. There is a mystery and fascination with Chinese ways of thinking, and one wonders to what extent leaders Chinese leaders and executives use styles of thinking that can be analysed gainfully with Western frameworks. Previously there was no choice but to begin with Western conceptions as a search of Chinese literature does not yield any accessible research tools or frameworks. Studies on thinking styles conducted in China tend to be laden with perspectives originating from the West, notably Sternberg's (1997) theory of thinking style (Cheng, Chen & Yu 2002,

Cheng & Chang 2000). One consequence has been the importation of Western theories to Chinese settings with unproven appropriateness, and since little research has been conducted in the field of thinking style, it is not possible to say if such approaches have been successful in the non-Western setting. Cross-cultural understanding in the emerging globalised world is increasingly imperative and any theories or practices used as the foundation for investigation should be aligned with the specific contextual factors.

This paper explores a theory of reality construction based upon styles of thinking developed by Sofo (2004). In this theory, style of thinking is not an ability, but instead a preference to use various abilities in particular ways. Thinking style may correspond to the way we like to acknowledge, process and use information to perceive and interpret the world around us. It denotes conscious, semi-conscious or unconscious constructions of elegance in a mental strategy to optimise the use of personal resources in effectively responding to a particular situation or to certain information. A person's style of thinking is used to deal with routine as well as non-routine situations that are encountered and a particular thinking style profile may allow a person to use their thinking flexibly. If a person has a very strong aversion, either consciously or unconsciously, to a conditional style of thinking, they may not be able to employ that style if a situation demands it; instead, they may find themselves adjusting their thinking in a way to achieve the outcome they want but doing so less efficiently and effectively. A person's preferred style of thinking, therefore, is a comfortable way to create an individual and shared view of the world, and this level of comfort is part of whether or not they feel their thinking is dominated by what others say and do.

In order to explore the theory of reality construction, this study analyses ways of thinking that are characteristic of managers, supervisors, decision-makers and executives in China. The two key research questions are:

- What is the thinking style profile of Chinese leaders?
- Do Chinese education leaders differ from non-education leaders across Sofo's five thinking styles using Thinking Style Inventory (TSI) measures?

In answering these questions, thinking styles are defined as preferences that provide an alternative perspective to performance and ability. As intelligence tests are not strong predictors of individual functioning (Sternberg 1997), thinking styles are said to be better predictors of academic variables, employment variables and self-rated abilities (Grigorenko & Sternberg 1997). Thinking style inventories such as those designed by Sternberg (1997) and Sofo (2002) are useful as they produce a unique profile of preference for each individual.

The study focuses on thinking style profiles of Chinese leaders by first reflecting on Hofstede's cultural elements that may impact on thinking style. This then sets a basis from which cognition, personality and learning focused theories of thinking style are reviewed. From here it is possible to outline Sternberg's theory of mental self-government and Sofo's theory of reality construction – both of which are underpinned by thinking style. Finally, the data are analysed to provide insight into the two key questions posed in the paper which leads to the construction of a model indicating the confluence of Chinese and Western conceptions of thinking style.

Review of the literature

It is questionable if cultural differences presuppose different thinking styles. Hofstede (2001) postulated a dichotomised way of representing cultural differences that may lead to unjustifiable generalisations and may ignore the subtleties and frequent contradictions inherent in many national cultures. Contrary to his views, there may not be national cultures or national ways of thinking, since subcultures within a country can vary greatly in their values and beliefs while the

rapid progress of globalisation may be having homogenised effects. Nevertheless, Hofstede's framework for understanding national differences has been one of the most influential and widely used frameworks in cross-cultural studies. Hofstede's original dimensions of culture (power distance – a society's acceptance of the unequal distribution of power; individualism/collectivism – the extent to which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group within society; and masculinity/femininity – the relative strength of masculine versus feminine values in a society) tend to split the 53 countries he studied into an East-West division.

Thinking style refers to a set of variables that influences how a task is accomplished such as intelligence, personality and degree of difficulty of a task itself (Grigorenko & Sternberg 1997). Thinking style (amongst other things) bridges intelligence and personality (Tang 2003). The field of thinking styles can be approached from a number of broad perspectives since thinking style has been conceptualised in various ways. Here, three broad categories are reviewed that include cognition, personality and learning theories. Overall these approaches to thinking styles represent an historical analysis of the field in its infancy, and the theories generally are not clear if thinking style is an intellectual capacity, a preferential personality trait or a learning style.

Various authors have identified and supported a number of cognition-centred thinking styles including *category width* (Gardner & Schoen 1962; Petigrew 1958), *conceptual style* (Kagan, Joss & Sigel 1963), *impulsivity – reflective* (Kagan 1966), *compartmentalization* (Messick & Kogan 1963), *conceptual integration* (Harvey, Hunt & Schroder 1961), *tolerance for unrealistic experiences* (Klein, Riley & Schlesinger 1962) and *scanning* (Gardner 1968). The psychological literature is replete with thinking styles such as *divergent and convergent* (Hudson 1996), *relational or female and abstracting or male* (Shouksmith 1972), Harrison and Bramson (1982) posited five

styles: *synthesist, idealist, pragmatist, analyst and realist*, and the Herrmann Brain Dominance styles (Coulston & Strickland 1983).

Thinking style bridges intelligence and personality. The most well-known personality type conceptualisation of thinking style is the Jungian model operationalised into the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. There are sixteen personality type combinations grouped in the following personality traits: *introversion or extroversion, sensing or intuiting, thinking or feeling, and judging or perceiving*. Gregorc (1982) posed a theory of the energetic mind, suggesting four groups: *concrete sequential thinkers* who prefer to process information in an ordered sequential way; *concrete random thinkers* who like to think as experimenters; *abstract sequential thinkers* who like to think in ordered theoretical terms; and *abstract random thinkers* who tend to prefer unstructured and people-centred environments as the basis for their thinking. The conceptions that inform this model include how information is processed, whether the preference is along abstract or concrete terms or using sequential or random patterns. Understanding thinking styles from a personality perspective attempts to acknowledge human flexibility and diversity in spite of classifying people into 'types'. However, the experimental basis of studies from this perspective is not strong and often the factor structures lack rigorous support and there is not always a clear distinction between personality type and thinking style (Tang 2003).

Learning-centred theories of thinking style tend to focus more on learning and developed from a need to improve learning and to match differences in individual abilities with instructional strategies and learning environments. Thinking styles may not be too different from learning styles as these refer to unique ways that individuals prefer to process information. Through the preferred ways of using our senses, we are able to learn (assimilate information) and to acquire understanding, appreciation, skills and attitudes. Style of learning is how we prefer to perceive, interact with and respond

to the environment and is focused on 'sensory' modalities such as auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, olfactory and visual, while thinking style is more focused on the cognitive process such as governing, creating, constructing, implementing, analysing, evaluating, obeying, questioning, exploring, acting independently (Sternberg 1997, Sofo 2004). Thinking style tends to be equated to learning style research that maintains that there is a strong genetic disposition to learning in a particular way that can be influenced and changed by the environment, by life demands and by personal effort. Sternberg (1997, 2000) recognised that only something like 50% of performance is attributable to intelligence and ability, while the other half is attributable to style of thinking.

Watkins and Biggs (2001) asked if teachers can change their thinking and if they can be persuaded to adopt different practices. If this is possible, how should innovations be introduced to facilitate such changes? These questions about learning and teaching hinge on questions about ways of thinking or thinking styles. Kember (2001) proposed five dimensions to studying conceptions of teaching and one of these is the preferred styles and approaches to teaching. We know from research into the relationship between teaching styles and thinking styles that students perform better when they match their thinking style with that of the teacher. It would appear that teaching style has a component of thinking style embedded within it. Similarly, conceptions of learning have preferences or modes for memorising, reproducing, applying, understanding, seeing things differently and changing a person as their basis (Marton, Dall'Alba & Beatty 1993).

Sternberg's theory of mental self-government overcomes many of the flaws found in cognitive, personality and learning-centred theories of thinking style because it can account for both external (social) and internal (cognitive) processes, it integrates various styles already described and simultaneously distinguishes them from cognitive abilities or personality traits by demonstrating how they

are preferences (Tang 2003). Sternberg's triarchic theory of the mind postulates the existence of three types of intelligence that are abilities to achieve adaptation and recognises that it is more important to understand and use one's intelligence than to know how much intelligence a person has. The three elements of the triarchic theory include the mental processes underlying behaviour, the experiential and the socio-cultural contextual impact on one's thinking. The model of self-government suggests that governing systems reflect how the human mind functions since both need to marshal their resources, organise their lives and set priorities. The theory postulates thirteen thinking styles that differ along five dimensions of self-government: functions, forms, levels, scopes and leanings. Each dimension has its own sub-categories of preferences. Of relevance here is the functions dimensions which refer to different goals of thinking and include *legislative*, a preference for creating legislation, structures and strategies; *executive*, a preference for implementing strategy within set structures and guidelines; and *judiciary*, a preference for evaluating products of others within existing structures.

There is some support for Sternberg's (1997) assertion that thinking styles are different from abilities and that they lie at the interface between cognition and personality. Exactly where they lie is unclear, since it appears that some styles may be closer to being abilities (monarchic or hierarchic; local or global) while others may be closer to being personality characteristics (introversion and extraversion). People may not have one static style of thinking since they vary across tasks, situations and personalities. Thinking styles are only effective or ineffective depending on the fit with the situation. The research seems to indicate that people have a profile of styles that varies contextually rather than over their life (Tang 2003). The complexity of thinking styles seems to defy the either-or logic since some people can be legislative, executive and judicial simultaneously. Furthermore, there are numerous possibilities of thinking style profiles and it appears that styles are socialised, teachable and that

the flexibility and strength of these vary across individuals and their life spans. Thinking styles vary with age, sex, level of education, work and travel experience (Sternberg 1997, Zhang 1999, Zhang & Sachs 1997).

Sofo's philosophy of teaching and learning conforms to andragogical frameworks derived from the work of Boud and Miller (1996), Knowles (1990), Mezirow (1981) and Schon (1987). These theorists emphasise experiential learning, lifelong learning, learning that is problem-based and a constructivist model of development and knowledge creation founded on cooperative critical reflection. In this study, thinking is seen as an essential component of learning that can enhance learning and performance and this is then underpinned by the belief that people have preferred styles of learning and differences in thinking that show particular strengths. It may be that some people can choose to use their thinking to suit different situations while others may not be able to adapt their thinking to different circumstances very easily (Lacy 2000). No thinking (or learning) style is better or worse than any other style for individuals, although some can be more efficient than others or be better deployed (Sofo 2004). Within any group of people, one would expect to find that there are as many differences in thinking styles as there are similarities (Vos & Dryden 2004).

Independence in thinking may be an ambiguous concept for some, since a person may have their own thought and decision while either considering other perspectives or ignoring the points of view of others. A person who asserts independence in thinking is one who feels and prefers to believe that they have ownership of their thoughts and the conclusions derived from their thinking. According to Sofo (2004), there are five thinking styles, each with its own advantages and disadvantages (as outlined in Table 1).

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of five thinking styles

Thinking style	Advantages	Disadvantages
Conditional	Benefit from expert advice and trust of others – mentorship	Unthinking and lose your identity – authoritarian
Inquiring	Understand reasons and details of a given situation	Avoid decisions by focusing on seeking answers
Exploring	Appreciate complexity and generate options	Confused and unwilling to commit to action
Independent	Enhance your identity	Arrogance or enthusiasm lead to failure
Creative	Imagine new ways	Fail to apply ideas

Conditional thinkers are people who tend to use their understanding, logic, analysis and synthesis of a situation as a basis for accepting what they are told about the world without really inquiring or challenging very much. This is a type of convergence in thinking where people do not move beyond what is presented to them as they prefer this since it feels comfortable and safe and may work well for them. Divergent (creative) thinkers move away from convergence or one-dimensional concrete analysis and synthesis of information by questioning, exploring, evaluating and imagining different information as a basis for formulating and co-creating their own distinctive views about the world. In life, we need to be able to think in both convergent and divergent ways depending on what different situations demand of us and what we want to make of them. For example, situations of safety or danger may be more efficiently handled through a convergence in thinking (e.g. you follow the fireman's instructions to exit this way swiftly), whereas city planners

solve a city's traffic problems through using a divergent style of thinking.

Some assumptions made in Sofo's theory of reality construction shown in this model of thinking styles follow. The thinking styles vary in strength, are not hierarchical and the boundaries between them are sometimes ambiguous; an independent thinker may never have been a strong dependent or conditional thinker; people generally are able to think across more than one thinking style at different strengths and this is determined in part by the demands of the situation; people can think in one style but not be deeply skilled, expert or confident in that style, so there is room to improve within a category or style of thinking as well as across the styles; sometimes it may not be a lack of expertise that prevents a person from using a different style of thinking, but a lack of motivation or feelings of inadequacy or threat; the thinking styles have both advantages and disadvantages and any one thinking style should not indicate a particular weakness or strength overall but simply a style that a person might like to improve in or move away from depending on their life situation; and a person with one particular thinking style profile should not regard themselves as a better thinker than someone with a different profile as people may be able to achieve their goals in life using any thinking style profile depending on the goals, the situation, the personalities and the political and social context. Regardless of the advantages and disadvantages, all thinking style profiles are useful and the challenge is to construct and utilise a thinking style profile that will work best for a person in dealing with information and situations.

Sternberg (1997, 2000) maintains that many people change with age in their styles of thinking, whilst Kolb (1976) maintains that learning style is stable throughout one's life. Seifert's (2005) work on adult learning styles supports Kolb's position. Generally speaking, thinking and learning style are adaptive processes but seem to remain constant throughout one's life (Seifert 2005, Sofo 2004). To explore this, Sofo

(2002) developed a thinking styles inventory where factor analysis identified five thinking styles based on how we like to accept, process and deal with information (as detailed below).

Method

Two thinking style inventories were used: the Thinking Style Inventory (TSI) (Sofo, 2002) and Sternberg's three Forms of Thinking Styles (1997). Scores were interpreted according to instructions established by Sofo's TSI (2002) and Sternberg (1997) to identify patterns of thinking styles for individuals and groups. Data from all sources were compared and contrasted in order to consider the findings in the light of the literature to suggest a framework that is culturally sensitive.

Sofo's (2002) TSI consists of ten items each with five alternatives. Each of the alternatives represents a response that indicates a preference for one of the five styles of thinking measured by the TSI. The five thinking style categories are:

- *Conditional:* the individual likes to accept what others think and say without questioning. Conditional, a form of convergent thinking, focuses on accepting the information and situation presented.
- *Inquiring:* the individual likes to question and to understand the reasons behind what others are saying. As a form of convergent thinking, *inquiring* individuals only ask about, not challenge, the cohesion and unity of the information and situation.
- *Exploring:* the individual likes to search all sides of an issue. *Exploring* is divergent thinking because the individual searches for options and likes to create options or alternative ways of thinking about the context itself by discovering new contexts.
- *Independent:* the individual likes to form their own views. The individual may accept the given views as their own because they have good reasons or perhaps intuition for accepting them.

Similarly, the individual may have good reasons or perhaps intuition for rejecting parts or all of the given information and formulating their own conclusions.

• *Creative:* the individual likes to create vivid pictures when they think. This is divergent thinking because they are inventing images for themselves that create a sense of the whole or broader perspective.

A high score in one of the five thinking categories indicates a preference for that style of thinking, while a lower score indicates a lesser preference. The styles are not arranged in a hierarchy and you do not need to be skilled in any particular stage of thinking before you can achieve another stage. The stages are not mutually exclusive as the boundaries are semi-permeable and overlap. It is likely that we can all operate at several stages depending on the situation; however, people act best when they adopt a thinking style profile in a given situation that is comfortable for them and appropriate to the context.

When constructing the instrument, Cronbach's alpha measures were used to establish the reliability of the TSI. For each of the five dimensions of thinking style, the reliability coefficient for n = 220 cases was: Conditional alpha = 0.7; Inquiry alpha = 0.5; Exploring alpha = 0.6; Independent alpha = 0.6; Creative alpha = 0.8.

The three Forms of Thinking Styles developed by Sternberg and Grigorenko (Sternberg 1997) are built on the metaphor of forms of self-government as outlined earlier. The inventory has demonstrated its reliability and validity in a Hong Kong population (Zhang 1999), but has not been used with educational leaders from China or from Australia.

This study used both a quantitative and qualitative approach. The sample includes 290 leaders from a wide representation of industry sectors who were surveyed using the TSI (Sofo 2002). A sample of 22 Chinese educational leaders volunteered to provide information on thinking styles at a deeper level and thus completed Sternberg's

(1997) three Forms of Thinking Styles. The thinking styles of a further 172 non-education leaders were compared with 48 education leaders using independent sample t-tests.

Approximately 60% of the sample (n = 220) who completed the TSI were leaders on educational tours to Australia to discover new theories and practices. Twenty percent (20%) of these were leaders from Beijing working in the oil and petroleum industry and another 20% were educational leaders from the Zhejiang Province. All the research instruments were translated into Chinese characters. An overview of the methodology is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Research questions and methods of data analyses

Question	Data collection instruments	Analysis method
1. What is the thinking style profile of Chinese leaders?	TSI (Sofo 2002) Five dimensions: Conditional, Inquiring, Exploring, Independent, Creative	• 1. Compute reliability co-efficient of Sofo's TSI (n=220) • 2. Compare means of TSI using repeated measures ANOVA (n=220)
2. Do Chinese education leaders differ from non-education leaders across Sofo's five thinking styles?	Three Forms of Thinking Style (Sternberg, 1997) TSI (Sofo, 2002)	1. Correlations between Sofo and Sternberg (n=22) 2. Compute five "independent sample t-tests" on education (n=48) vs non-education (n=172) leaders

Results

To answer the first question on Chinese leaders' preferred ways of thinking, descriptive statistics were calculated for both the Sofo (Table 3) and Sternberg (Table 4) thinking style inventories.

Table 3: Means and standard deviations of Chinese leaders on Sofo's
Thinking Style Inventory (N = 220)

Total scores across 5 dimensions	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Conditional	20.87	6.36
2. Inquiry	30.09	5.19
3. Exploring	35.79	5.47
4. Independent	36.68	5.57
5. Creative	26.53	7.95

When interpreting the TSI, a lower score indicates an individual's less-preferred thinking style while a higher score indicates a higher preference. Table 3 indicates that the least preferred style of thinking among Chinese leaders was the conditional style (mean=20.87), while the independent style was the most preferred (mean=36.68). These styles are quantitatively different (supported by ANOVA at $p < .001$) from each other as far as conformity in decision-making is concerned. The exploring style (mean=35.79) was preferred almost as much as the independent style.
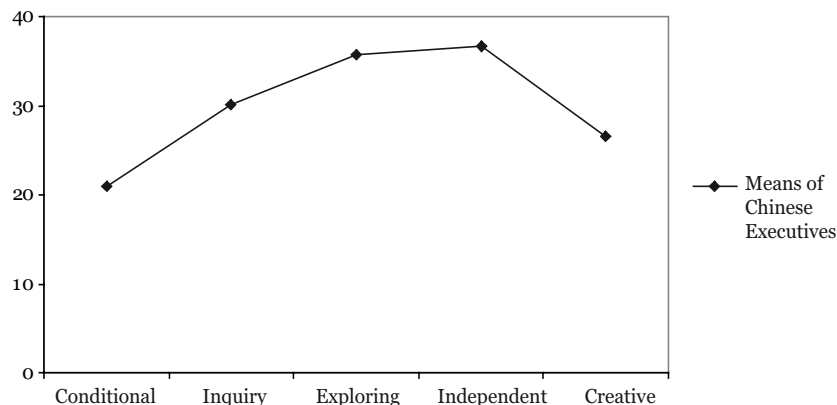

Figure 2: Profile of Chinese leaders on Sofo's TSI (N = 220)

A thinking style profile of Chinese leaders of the five preferred styles is depicted in Figure 2. Both Table 3 and Figure 2 show that the exploring and independent styles were highly preferred among the Chinese leaders. A repeated measures ANOVA indicates that each mean of the thinking styles is statistically significantly different ($p < .001$) from each other except for the exploring and independent styles where there was no significant difference. A Bonferroni adjustment was used for the 10 pairwise comparisons of the five means. This procedure is used to strengthen the robustness of the statistical significance among the means since the results help to avoid increased possibility of falsely obtaining significant differences among the means.

A smaller sample of Chinese leaders who completed the Sternberg questionnaire saw themselves having a 'high' to 'very high' ranking on the executive thinking style as indicated in Table 4. On average, a 'high' ranking was found on the judicial style and a 'high middle' ranking on the legislative style.

Table 4: Means and standard deviations of Chinese leader rankings
on Sternberg's (1997) Forms of Thinking Styles

Thinking style	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Executive Style	1.92 (Very high ranking)	1.17	38
Judicial Style	2.29 (High ranking)	1.35	38
Legislative Style	3.24 (High middle ranking)	1.22	38

Figure 3 shows that on average no leaders ranked themselves as 'low middle', 'low' or 'very low' on any of these three styles (a mean of 4 or higher indicates low ranking).
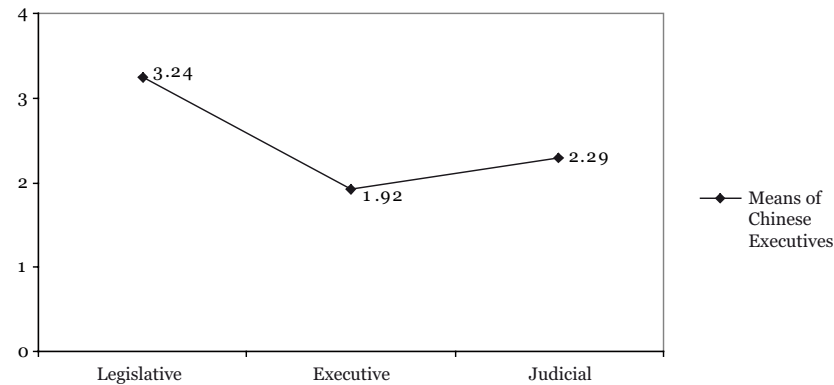
Figure 3: Chinese leader thinking styles on Sternberg questionnaire
           (N = 38)

The second question examined if education and non-education leaders had similar thinking style profiles on Sofo's TSI. Generally the profile of these two groups of leaders was similar, that is the strongest preference was for the independent and exploratory styles followed by the inquiry and creative styles while the least preferred was for the conditional style. Table 5 presents the results of five independent sample t-tests of the scores of 48 education leaders and 172 non-education leaders on Sofo's five dimensional TSI. All leaders were aged over forty years and consisted of approximately 20%-25% women.

Table 5: Education versus non-education leaders thinking styles:
           5 independent sample t-tests

Thinking style	p-value	Significance	Education mean	Non-education mean
Conditional	0.019	✓	22.33	19.73
Inquiry	0.347	✗	-	-
Exploring	0.027	✓	34.35	36.41
Independent	0.254	✗	-	-
Creative	0.077	✗	25.10	27.48

The results show that the education leaders scored themselves significantly higher (p< .01) when compared with the non-education leaders on the conditional style. The non-education leaders scored themselves significantly higher (p<.02) compared with the education leaders on the exploring style. Similarly, the non-education leaders scored themselves more highly (p<0.7) than the education leaders on the creative thinking style. Although this difference is not statistically significant at the p=0.05 level, the mean difference is approximating statistical significance and may be worth considering.

Discussion

The use of Sternberg's three Forms of Thinking and Sofo's TSI has given some insights into the thinking style profile of Chinese leaders. In a historically conditional China, the results indicate that Chinese leaders' least preferred style of thinking is conditional whilst their most preferred styles are independent and exploring. In this study, the exploring style (mean=35.79) was preferred on average almost as much as the independent style (mean=36.68) indicating that Chinese leaders reported that they feel most comfortable when they are able to generate options and explore possibilities in decision-making

and can follow this by preferring to make independent decisions. Even though the means of the exploring and independent styles are very close, this indicates that these two styles are the most preferred styles. Traditionally, those under a Communist regime were duty-bound to think like their superiors – that is, to use a conditional style of thinking. There now appears to be unwillingness for accepting information and situations without questioning. The findings suggest that Chinese leaders prefer to think more broadly and holistically through imagining, visualising and inventing options and also prefer to free up their thinking by searching for differences of opinion, alternative viewpoints and desiring independent thought.

Overall, the Chinese leaders rated themselves as having high to very high styles of thinking as measured by Sternberg's Forms of Thinking Styles (1997). Sternberg's model describes Chinese executives as 'legislative', enjoying creating policies, generating their own rules and operating with non-structured information and tasks; as 'executive', enjoying dealing with information and situations by implementing projects already planned and working within a structured framework; and as 'judicial', enjoying analysing, critiquing and evaluating ideas within existing structures. These styles are depicted at the core of Figure 4 to indicate high preferences. Even though the differences in the rankings were not statistically significant, the spread of preferences all in the high category shows a very high preference for executive style (a preference for working with existing structures) and only middle high for legislative style which is a preference for creating one's own rules and structures. A middle high preference for judicial may be interpreted as a keenness to maintain a proper balance in situations. This reflects yin and yang, an equilibrium among the three thinking styles to create harmony which is important in Chinese culture.

Figure 4: A composite model of Chinese and Western thinking styles

Key:
Western concepts are indicated in bold.
Chinese concepts are in italics and not bold.
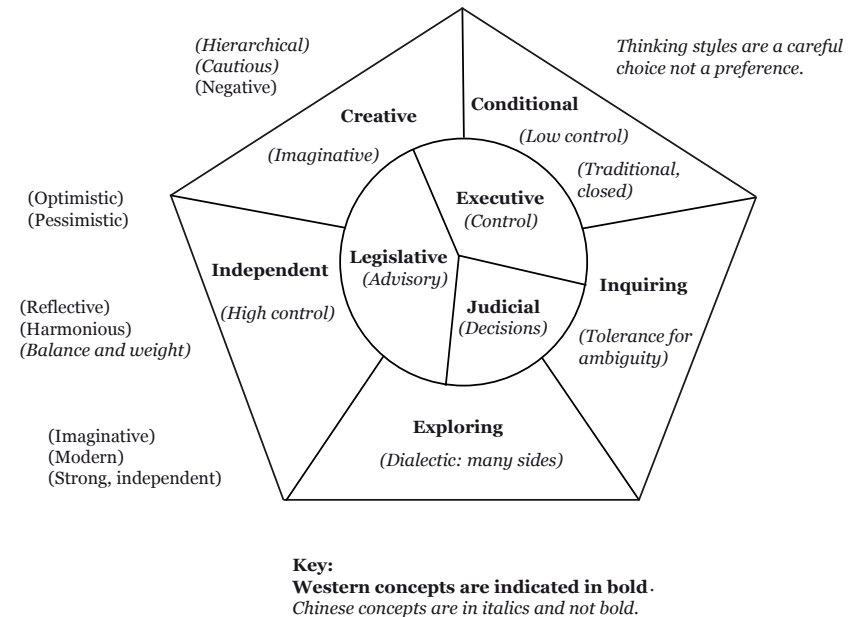
Taking into account the results above, a model is suggested to depict a convergence of Chinese and Western conceptions of thinking styles. The confluence depicted in Figure 4 is derived from two sources: the results of the analysed data above using Sofo and Sternberg instruments and also from the views of Chinese colleagues and over 100 Chinese leaders who expressed their opinions mostly in class discussions about Chinese thinking styles and their own styles. Contributions on thinking styles from Chinese leaders are listed in the lefthand column, as well as in brackets within the pentagon in Figure 4 where it was thought that those expressions of thinking styles parallel Sofo and Sternberg categories and framework.

Some Chinese leaders expressed a view that thinking style is not a preference but comprises a careful choice based on an assessment of the context and a desire for a balanced and effective use of the various cognitive styles and personality preferences in the decision-making process. Some new thinking styles more suited to Chinese leaders and the Chinese culture are suggested and these are listed in a column on the left side as well as in brackets within the pentagon and circle in Figure 4. For example, an advisory thinking style may be relevant to Chinese leaders since some executive positions in China do not permit decision-making but rather are solely advice-giving in nature; this type of leader mainly contributes to policy-making. It may be that the 'advisory' thinking style actually reflects Sternberg's 'legislative style' and so is indicated in Figure 4. Another style is one stressing tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity which reflects Sofo's TSI 'conditional' and 'inquiring' styles in that all of one's trust is put into the opinions and decisions of the superior and questions may be asked for clarification purposes only since there is an acceptance of the rules and status quo. This style is indicated as a 'tolerance' thinking style similar to Sofo's TSI 'inquiring' style shown in Figure 4. Thinking styles of low and high control reflect Sofo's TSI 'conditional' (low control) and 'independent thinking style' (high control).

The findings indicate some sense of uniformity of thinking styles among education and corporate Chinese leaders, and this can improve our approaches to teaching while also contributing to developing better relationships across different cultures. For example, to optimise performance, it would be sensible to match thinking style profile with the environment since thinking styles are reflected in routine activities such as working, leading, learning and teaching. Chinese leaders have expressed a learning preference for lectures where a familiar format is followed first giving the thesis or the topic, then giving some definitions and then illustrating through examples and case studies. It is also true that, when this preference is not adhered to, generally there may be some resistance but

nevertheless cooperation since their history has demonstrated the ability to work for the common good in contrast to Western concepts of individual rights and freedom. Findings can also provide a deeper understanding of the different ways in which people make sense of the world which can be applied to organisational behaviour so it can contribute to successful decision-making, improved leadership, teamwork and effectiveness of individuals, groups and communities overall. Awareness of thinking style increases our understanding of effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace. A style that is appropriate at one point in the career path is not necessarily helpful later on, even though people may persist with the same style profile. It is uncertain whether a thinking style profile changes throughout one's career. A thinking style profile correlating positively to problem-solving tactical performance might serve to identify leadership and individual potential. Such information may also assist in matching the appropriate selection of instructional media and teaching strategies to learner preferences (Diaz 2004).

Conclusions

A dominant thinking style profile of Chinese leaders emerged from this study that favours 'exploring' and 'independent' thinking as well as high levels of mental self-government. Both thinking style inventories used in this study allowed participants to report high and/or low preferences across a number of styles. Given this capacity, it is noteworthy that the Sofo TSI includes styles on which Chinese leaders rank themselves quite low, yet they rate all three styles of Sternberg as high preferences. This implies that Chinese leaders are reporting unequal but high preferences on Sternberg's three key areas of mental self-government – that is, the legislative, the executive and the judiciary – and this is somewhat at odds to the historical China we know, but consonant with the fact that China is going through significant political and cultural change (for example, the freeing up of decision-making in the Chinese Communist Party). The Chinese

leaders in this study prefer a thinking style profile that places a high premium on these three forms of mental self-government. This suggests that their thinking styles could be as diverse and liberated as those of Western leaders in a free and democratic society – a suggestion that only further research can confirm.

The second research question explored the thinking style profiles of Chinese education leaders and those of non-education leaders using Sofo's TSI. The results demonstrating that the education leaders scored themselves significantly higher when compared with the non-education leaders on the conditional style suggests that they perceive themselves to be comparatively more comfortable with accepting rules and decisions without question. With regard to the exploring style, the non-education leaders scored themselves significantly higher compared with the education leaders indicating that they have a comparatively stronger preference to search all sides of an issue, to engage in divergent thinking and to generate options. Similarly, on the creative thinking style, non-education leaders scored themselves more highly than education leaders indicating that they perceived themselves to have a greater preference for creating broad perspectives and a sense of the whole. The significant differences between the two categories of leaders suggest that the non-education leaders tend to see themselves as independent thinkers, and prefer to be more exploratory and open to ideas in their thinking styles than do the education leaders. The thinking style profile of the non-education leaders suggests a comparatively stronger preference for creativity, exploration and independent thought processes than education leaders indicating they are perhaps more at the forefront of the widespread change that China is currently experiencing.

The work has given some insight to the discipline knowledge on thinking style and culture and in particular there is the potential to help improve our understanding of preferences and perceptions of Chinese leaders. Only a portion of performance is attributed to intelligence and ability, the rest is due to one's preferences for thinking and dealing with information and situations. It is important to appreciate the thinking styles of Chinese leaders as the basis for their unique operation in the world. The study has developed a culturally sensitive model of thinking style for leaders based on empirical analysis of thinking style inventories plus the experiences of the author working with Chinese leaders. This in itself contributes to our knowledge of Chinese leaders' conceptions of thinking and problem-solving.

Given that this work is exploratory, it could be useful to conduct further study to confirm the findings and also to monitor the impact of unparalleled changes that are being revealed in China as it continues to penetrate the modern globalised world. Indeed, the different cognitive frameworks acknowledged by Chinese leaders inform cultural frameworks which in turn impact on the interactions between diverse cultural traditions. As China continues to reach out and as Western countries enter their culture and exchanges occur, learning and development may be seen within a framework of intercultural dynamics that restructure all of the players' cognitive frameworks. Further study of thinking styles in Chinese and Western leaders will also assist us to gain additional insights into the contributions that are being made. This, in turn, may add to mutually dynamic and constructivist exchanges across economic, educational, political and social dimensions as people from China continue to interact with those from the West.

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The Workers' Educational Association of Victoria and the University of Melbourne: A clash of purpose?

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The paper challenges an argument made by Alf Wesson in 1972. His argument was that the failure of the University of Melbourne Extension Board to work effectively with the Worker's Educational Association of Victoria was almost exclusively as a result of the poor management skills and personality of the Director of University Extension, Professor John Gunn. The paper argues that in fact it was the failure by four University of Melbourne inquiries to resolve a difficult situation. The lack of resolution was due to a complete misunderstanding by the University of the role of the Workers' Educational Association.

Introduction

> The W.E.A is an organizing body representative of the general public and of the various organisations affiliated with it. The aim of the officers and council of the W.E.A. is to encourage its members to become tutorial class students and thus carry out the principal object of our movement. (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria Council 1927:2)

> … the primary responsibility for developing adult education must rest largely on [the Director], and he must leave nothing undone to secure the wholehearted support of both the University and the Workers' Educational Association. (University of Melbourne 1927:3)

In these two quotations lies the key to the relationship between the University of Melbourne and the Workers' Educational Association of Victoria (WEAV) during the period 1924–1939. The relationship could be described as the failure by the University, and in particular the University Extension Board, to understand that the role of the Workers' Educational Association was in the organisation of adult education – that is, the planning of courses, arranging lecturers and venues, purchasing and supplying books, meeting with prospective participants, and paying costs associated with the courses.

This paper challenges the thesis, argued by Wesson, that the inability of the Extension Board to work amicably with the WEAV lay exclusively with the second Director of Tutorial Classes and later Director of University Extension, John Gunn (Wesson 1971: chapter 4). Wesson considered that there may have been some responsibility due from the Extension Board, and the WEAV. In his view, they should have '… realized within a few years … of Gunn's arrival, that [his] major policies, … were, in fact, in utter ruin' (Wesson 1971:186–187). The paper argues that the failure was caused by the University not understanding the implications of entering into a relationship with a voluntary adult education organisation, the WEAV, in 1913. The paper also suggests that Gunn did identify

problems and solutions, but due to the failure by the University to understand the role of the WEAV, his opinions were considered to be irrelevant. The problems identified by the University and the WEAV were the subject of four inquiries conducted by the University in the period 1924 to 1938.

The paper forms part of an on-going re-evaluation of the models that were considered by Badger, Bentley, Portus, Wesson and Whitelock to be the dominant adult education paradigms in the 1920s and 1930s. These writers have suggested that the model was dominant across Australia (Badger 1984, Bentley 1970, Portus 1953, Wesson 1971, Whitelock 1974). The model of the Workers' Educational Association organising and promoting tutorial classes, supported by academic staff from a university who delivered the programs and examined the students, with the whole managed by a Joint Committee, has been viewed as, '… the main provider of systematic adult education programmes in Australia' (Bentley 1970:85). This view has been challenged by Boughton, Merlyn and Taksa on the basis that there were other less obvious models, including those established by workers, unions and political organisations (Boughton 1998, Merlyn 2001, Taksa 2003). This paper attempts to continue the challenge by demonstrating that the substantial tensions between the university extension/WEA model resulted in the 'dominant' model failing in Victoria. The paper also suggests that the failure of the dominant model allowed for the idea of the place of the voluntary organisation in government-funded adult education to be taken seriously in Victoria.

University extension

The aim of university extension was to provide university lectures to an interested public. The lectures were to be delivered by academics who were specialists in the fields of literature, science, history and philosophy. The lectures were delivered either externally or internally within the university.

University extension was established in all Australian universities by 1901, a time that coincided with the mechanics institutes 'approaching their nadir' but with a similar philosophy to that which led to the establishment of the Institutes (Williams 1972:185). This was '… educational evangelism, [with] hopes that education would sweep the adult community (particularly the working classes)' (Williams 1972:200).

Lectures started at the University of Melbourne by 1891 and were enormously successful in terms of attendance. The new movement was seen as a useful way to publicise the work of the University to the Victorian public, but more importantly to the politicians through the provision of lectures to rural Victoria. The development of the extension movement at the University of Melbourne has been well described by Wesson (1971: chapter 2).

Williams has suggested that the peak years for extension in Victoria were between 1892 and 1899. The major reasons for the decline after that period were the lack of permanent staff, an unwillingness to commit financial resources to the program, and the inability of the movement to appeal to a cross-section of the community (Williams 1972:192–193). The Extension Board was concerned enough about the failure of extension to seek a review of future options. This concern was finally made explicit as part of a major report by the University Council into the future of the University where there is a substantial section on extension and its future. The recommendations included the development of tutorial classes with the WEA, and extension services that should include lectures that stimulated interest in longer study, correspondence study, evening classes and a summer school (University of Melbourne Council 1913, University of Melbourne Extension Board 1911).

The extension activities continued at the University of Melbourne during the period covered by this paper. The success of the movement was, however, severely compromised as a result of the relationship with the Workers' Educational Association of Victoria and amounted to very little in the way of adult education other than that delivered in conjunction with the WEAV.

The Workers' Educational Association

The development of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in England is well known. It was formed by Albert Mansbridge in 1903 when he and his wife initiated the Workers' Educational Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men, which became the Workers' Educational Association in 1905. The founders of the WEA had as their main purpose, '… the provision of a university education for working-class people …' (Fieldhouse 1996b:166).

In Australia the universities of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide all became affiliated to the English WEA by 1911. The model developed by Mansbridge was based on using the expertise of university lecturers through the methodology of the tutorial class that was to be organised and promoted by a voluntary organisation, the WEA. This arrangement was to be managed by a Joint Committee consisting of representatives from university extension boards and the WEA. This Committee would control the subjects to be taught in the tutorial classes and the engagement of lecturers. The WEA itself was to be managed by a Central Council consisting of representatives of affiliated groups, particularly the trades unions. The day-to-day operations of the WEA were to be carried out by a General-Secretary.

The main educational instrument of this new development was the tutorial class. This class had the following characteristics: not more than 30 students; the class was to continue for three years; each class must have 24 lessons, each of 2 hours' duration; and 12 fortnightly essays were to be submitted for assessment. Students were expected to pledge to attend and no one under 18 years of age was to be admitted. This model was to be used wherever a WEA class was held (Workers' Educational Association 1913a).

The Workers' Educational Association of Victoria, 1913–1923

In 1912, Mansbridge and his wife were formally invited to visit Australia by James Barrett, an influential member of the Council of the University of Melbourne. As a result of the visit, the first Australian branch of the Workers' Educational Association was established in Melbourne on 19 September 1913, followed by the commencement of classes in Footscray (Leathley 1963:32, Workers Educational Association of Victoria 1913c). From this meeting a sub-committee was formed to develop a constitution that was endorsed on 25 March 1914 at a meeting of the WEAV chaired by Barrett. At this meeting he addressed the attendees on the subject of the relationship between the WEA and the University through the tutorial class process (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1914).

William Harrison Moore, founding President of the WEAV and Professor of Law at the University of Melbourne, reinforced the interest of the University in the WEA at the first Annual General Meeting of the WEAV in 1915. He added another dimension: the possibilities for the University; that is, the opportunity for the University of Melbourne to demonstrate to the government that the University was concerned with the broader education of the adult Victorian population (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1915).

At the 1916 Annual Meeting, the original constitution was amended. The revised constitution clearly set out the role of the WEAV: the Object of the organisation was: 'To promote the higher education of workers'. This was to be achieved:

(b) by inquiring into the educational needs of the workers and by representing them to the proper authorities, and
(c) by providing, in conjunction with the Department of Public Instruction, the university, and other educational institution, or by any other means, facilities for studies of interest to the workers (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1916).

Meredith Atkinson

Atkinson was to implement the above objective and methodology when he was appointed by the University of Melbourne Council as Director of Tutorial Classes in 1917 (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria Council 1918a). He was a disciple of Mansbridge, and had moved from the University of Sydney where he had been Director of Tutorial Studies. Atkinson was convinced that the WEA was the most appropriate vehicle for conducting adult education that would not be vocationally focused and that would reach the workers, but not using the model noted earlier (Atkinson 1915a:16). He considered that the role of the WEA was effectively reduced to that of merely supporting the work of the university. He believed that the relationship between the WEA and the universities needed to change: the tutorial class as a methodology, and the Joint Committee as a management model, had to go. His model was to achieve the wholesale shift of responsibility for the provision of adult education from the University to the WEA (Alexander 1955a: 50,51,54–55, Wesson 1971:135).

Following his appointment to Melbourne, he set about establishing the WEAV. His first action was to appoint a General Secretary, Samuel Thompson (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria, Council 1918b). There is very little known about Thompson other than that he was apparently completely absorbed in his work. His actions over the next twenty-one years define him as determined and focussed about what the WEAV should be doing: organising, promoting, and delivering a variety of learning opportunities to all adults as well as working in conjunction with the University Extension Board.

Atkinson then moved to ensure the growth of the WEAV. The University Council agreed to the merging of the Joint Committee and the Extension Board, and ensured that the Director of Tutorial Classes was the Chairman of the revised Extension Board. The Council amended the relevant Statute so that there would be parity

of membership on the Extension Board between the University and the WEAV. The Statute also provided for a Secretary whom it appears had a vote. The Extension Board engaged the General-Secretary of the WEAV, Thompson, as the Secretary of the Extension Board. It is suggested that Atkinson realised that the attendance at Extension Board meetings by the university representatives was at best minimal and frequently non-existent, therefore he had ensured that the WEAV would effectively dominate the Board, and policy and the delivery of government-funded adult education (Atkinson 1919a; University of Melbourne Council 1921).

The final change made by Atkinson occurred in 1920 with two important decisions. First, the tutorial class methodology as established by Mansbridge was abandoned, and second, the WEAV formally noted that, although their aim was still to attract workers, their main responsibility was not to target the delivery of adult education to any specific group. These changes effectively established the Workers' Educational Association of Victoria as a highly significant organisation that not only organised and promoted courses in conjunction with the University but also became a deliverer of teaching for its own courses (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1920:6, Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1921). Atkinson resigned in 1922.

John Alexander Gunn, 1923–1938

When the selection panel met to appoint Atkinson's replacement, there were three final applicants. They were Douglas Copland, Professor of Economics, Dean of the Faculty of Economics, and Director of Tutorial Classes at the University of Tasmania; and Herbert Heaton, Director of Tutorial Studies and Lecturer in History and Economics at the University of Adelaide. The successful candidate was Gunn, Fellow of the University of Liverpool, and Lecturer in Psychology and Economics at the University of Liverpool

Extension Board. He commenced work in 1923, and immediately clashed with Thompson. At the Annual General Meeting of the WEAV in 1924, he asked about the representation of the University on the WEAV Council (Bourke 1983:251, Harper 1993, University of Melbourne 1922a:497, University of Melbourne 1922b). He was advised:

> … that the University was not affiliated to the Council of the WEA, and that the University of Melbourne was included in error in the list of affiliated organisations appearing in the 1922 Report. (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1924)

The Schutt Inquiry

Gunn was left in no doubt about the strength of the WEAV and the weakness of the University. In 1924, in an attempt to clarify the relationship, the University established what was to be the first of four inquiries. The chairman, Mr Justice Schutt, was asked to investigate claims made by Gunn. The claims were first, that the fusion of the Extension Board and the Joint Committee was not working, second that Thompson was administratively inefficient, and third that Thompson's attitude towards the University was 'one of declared hostility', and that therefore he should be removed. After making these claims directly to the University Council rather than through the Extension Board, he suggested three possible options to overcome the impasse.

- Dispense with the WEA altogether on the ground that it is not doing classes for working men and has no standards and is merely battening on the province of extension classes and lectures.
- Remove the WEA and its secretary right out of extension and give the authority to the present director to direct free from the WEA. Have a new Extension Lectures Committee for Town and Country consisting of university men and other qualified educational persons, without the WEA.

- Appoint an organising secretary who should be secretary to the Board (University of Melbourne Extension Board 1924).

Gunn's position about the role of the WEAV is quite clear. The Workers' Educational Association of Victoria was there to support the university in delivering education to a particular group and implicitly using an explicit methodology: the tutorial class, with the whole process managed by a Joint Committee. It was also obvious that Gunn realised that the structure of the Extension Board had effectively given control to the WEAV and not to university people. That is, the WEAV was effectively organising and not just promoting activities that were, or should have been, the prerogative of the Extension Board. He had accurately recognised the crux of the relationship: a dominant voluntary body managing a University Board.

The Committee did not agree with him and in their recommendations indicated that there should be 'more frequent consultation and fuller co-operation between the Director and the WEA and its officials' (University of Melbourne 1924: Recommendation 1). Gunn was also explicitly directed to ensure reports about the work of the Board and its officials should go through the usual channels, that is, to the Extension Board first, rather than direct to the University Council. There was no attempt to recognise that the University had misunderstood the basis for the relationship with the WEAV. The WEAV was now organising, promoting and delivering learning to all adults, and the University only wanted an organisation to promote university level courses to workers. The University upheld the role of the WEAV as being the dominant partner in the relationship (University of Melbourne 1924). Instead of making recommendations that reflected the need to resolve the situation, the committee concentrated on issues of protocol and communication. They had lost an opportunity.

The MacFarland Inquiry

Having failed to contain the WEAV, yet another enquiry ensued, this time in 1926. The Extension Board asked the University Council to consider the abolition of the position of Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes that had been established and filled at the request of Atkinson in 1921. The University Council did not automatically accept the recommendation and established an inquiry into the recommendation as well as the constitution of the Board (Atkinson 1921, University of Melbourne 1927).

The report of the Inquiry suggested that the most important activity for the WEAV was the organisation of the tutorial classes. The committee also indicated that as far as the University was concerned the only role for the WEAV was the promotion of such classes. The report clearly articulated that the WEAV should not have any active role in organising or conducting tutorials, correspondence, University extension, or vacation classes. The report correctly noted that the existing constitution of the Extension Board and the WEAV meant that the latter organisation was effectively able to decide what educational activities were carried out (University of Melbourne 1927:3).

It is considered that the recommendations were founded on confusion. What the report of this Inquiry demonstrated was a considerable misunderstanding again by a Committee about the relationship between the WEAV and the University. By 1925 tutorial class enrolments represented only 22% of the total activity of the WEAV. The most significant activity arranged and conducted by the WEAV were public lectures that used speakers from the University. The Committee failed to understand that the role of the WEAV had always been one of organisation as well as promotion (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1925, Workers' Educational Association of Victoria Council 1927).

The Committee concluded that, first, the University should take back financial control of all monies applicable to adult education; second, that the Secretary of the WEAV should cease to be the Secretary of the Extension Board; third, that all Association positions paid for by the university be approved by the University Council; and fourth, that the WEAV be encouraged to develop high quality materials for participants in tutorial classes, and secure the co-operation of organised Labour. The report also defined precisely the role of the Director and adult education.

a.   The organization and conduct of tutorial classes
b.   The organization and conduct of correspondence tuition
c.   The organization and conduct of University Extension lectures
d.   The organization of Vacation Schools
e.   The broadcasting of lectures on approved subjects by persons possessing special qualifications for this work.

It should be recognized that provision for other forms of educational activity may be required from time to time as social conditions alter (University of Melbourne 1927:3).

The Committee also recommended that a special sub-committee of the Extension Board be established with equal membership between the University of Melbourne and the WEAV. This was in effect the re-establishment of the Joint Committee that had been abolished in 1921 (University of Melbourne 1927:3). The apparent reason for this change was to ensure that the WEAV should only be involved with the University in the context of promoting tutorial classes. The identification of the role of the Director and the form adult education was to take, was strongly opposed by the WEAV on the basis that their Objective and Methodology also required the same role (Worker's Educational Association of Victoria 1927:9).

The tension between the organising of courses, selection of tutors and the promotion of programs was still unresolved. Indeed, the Committee concluded that:

The Workers' Educational Association should furthermore be requested to keep continually in mind:

(a)   The desirability of setting before intending members of tutorial classes a high standard of performance, and of endeavouring by this and other means to improve the quality of the material upon which the Director and tutors have to work.

(b)   The necessity of making a concerted effort to secure the co-operation of the leaders of organized Labour (University of Melbourne 1927:4).

Recommendation (a) is completely at odds with the requirements the Committee had established for the Director of Extension. Recommendation (b) also completely ignored the reality of the work being done by the WEAV. Confusion was paramount and the University really had no idea what to do with an organisation on which they had come to depend. Once again the University failed to resolve the situation.

The recommendations were implemented, but in 1931 Gunn went overseas on sabbatical leave. Thompson was appointed to carry out the routine work associated with the provision of adult education in Victoria through the Extension Board. Once again the WEAV was in a position to maintain its dominance of government-funded adult education delivery in Victoria as well as continuing to influence the Extension Board (Workers' Educational Association of Victoria 1931:12).

Inquiry, 1933

In 1933 Gunn's contract was up for renewal and, at a meeting to discuss the options available to the University, the WEAV this time expressed concern about the work of the Extension Department. The President of the WEAV, Tucker, made the following comment about Gunn: '… the Director had shown no disposition to make a very definite contribution to the educational activities of the country' (Tucker 1933:3). The University chose to ignore this and agreed to extend his contract until December 1934, ostensibly because of the parlous financial position in which the Extension Board found itself (University of Melbourne Council 1933). The University response was understandable; it was not about to dismiss its Director of University Extension on the basis of a complaint by the President of a voluntary body, not even one on which they had come to depend.

The Priestley Inquiry

In December 1935, the University Council instituted another enquiry into the work of the Extension Board, intrinsically to look at the work of the Extension Board in rural areas. The terms of reference were expanded to include: first, the allocation of resources between extension lectures and tutorial classes; second, the objectives of extension lectures; and third, whether; '… Mr. Thompson's organising work is apt to give a somewhat wrong orientation to the work of the Board' (Bainbridge 1936a, University of Melbourne 1936d).

The Committee questioned Gunn and he made it clear that the Extension Board had lost power in rural areas due to the work of Thompson. He also reiterated the points he had made in 1924. He was also concerned about the financial relationship between the University and the WEAV (University of Melbourne 1936c). Tucker was also interviewed and reiterated what he had said to the 1926 Enquiry: that the work of the Director needed to be controlled and that the Extension Board was failing in this regard. Thompson

followed and indicated that the problem was not with the Director, indeed there was no mention of Gunn at all, but rather a lack of funds (University of Melbourne 1936c:3).

In 1937, the Draft Report of the Committee was referred to Gunn for his comments. His response was a mixture of considerable hurt and reiteration of points made in 1924, 1926 and 1932. The most telling comment was:

> I came to Australia in 1923 on the definite understanding that I would have control of University Extension, but found in fact an unworkable Extension Board because of the overwhelming W.E.A. representation. (Gunn 1937a:1)

The report of the Committee reflected the frustration felt by the University and was critical of the work of Gunn and also of the role of the WEAV. In particular, they commented:

> While recognising the value of the organising work done by the President and Secretary of the W.E.A., … the Committee feels that a system under which the Secretary of the W.E.A. in effect represents the University in its contact with country districts is not satisfactory. The work or organisation should be done by a man who is a graduate of the University. (University of Melbourne Council 1937:5)

and

> The Secretary of the W.E.A. could then … devote his whole time to work which is essentially and distinctively that of the W.E.A. As already stated, the scope of the W.E.A. work, as indicated by the occupation of the persons whom it reaches, is by no means satisfactory. (University of Melbourne Council 1937:6)

The University wanted it both ways. The WEAV was being criticised for having represented the University inappropriately and also for not promoting extension lectures appropriately to the 'right' people.

The Council adopted the report in June 1938. The attitude of the University to the WEAV had also taken on a less positive note possibly because they were attempting to prevent certain information from moving outside the walls of the academy. The WEAV would have been most interested in a statement that clearly acknowledged that the work being carried out was exclusively that organised by them, a point made by Gunn in 1924! (University of Melbourne Council 1937)

Conclusion

The above inquiries demonstrate that the WEAV/Extension Board relationship was untenable. The actual provision of adult education in Victoria through the joint arrangement was not meeting the main goals of either organisation. The University wanted to increase its public and political acceptance; the WEAV to deliver adult education to all adults. This was not what was supposed to happen – the WEAV was meant to support the University.

Gunn, a philosopher and economist, came to the University from Liverpool. He had an understanding of university extension and the role of the WEA that was historically accurate but that was considerably outdated in the Victorian context. It was hoped he could rejuvenate the static, almost moribund, extension program of the university. This was not to be. Gunn never really understood the adult education environment into which he had walked. He had wrongly assumed it would be as it was in England. When he made his initial claims to the University Council, he accurately summed up the situation: the Atkinson model was not that which was considered to be the norm in England. He was unable to make the University understand that there should be a separation of responsibilities. He was left in a position where he never understood why the University held the views it did about his role. Wesson's argument that it was the Director's fault cannot

be sustained. Gunn had made it abundantly clear in 1926 what the situation was, and how it could have been resolved. The University failed to act: it needed the Workers' Educational Association of Victoria too much.

The role of the WEAV was never in doubt. Its understanding of adult education remained clear from 1920 to 1938 and was quoted at the beginning of this paper. It saw its role as organising, managing and when necessary delivering adult education using the services of University staff. They refused to acknowledge the straight-jacket of promotion imposed by the University of Melbourne. At the end of 1938, the WEAV was looking towards the replacement of Gunn as Director and the arrival of a new Director of Tutorial Classes. However, they had made a bad enemy in the University. The result of this animosity has been discussed elsewhere (Dadswell 2004).

The 'dominant' model expounded by some historians of adult education in Australia can now be seen as not valid in Victoria. The evidence allows for consideration of a different model for government-funded adult education, one that acknowledges the role of voluntary organisations as opposed to formal, professional bodies. This model would be placed under stress in the 1940s, but would re-appear albeit briefly in the 1970s.

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[UM = University of Melbourne]

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Adult learning and recognition of prior learning: The "white elephant" in Australian universities

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Adult learners are being attracted to university programs based on the granting of either academic credit or the recognition of prior learning (RPL). Typically, this attraction is being aligned to fast-tracking degree attainment or student cost effectiveness. It appears from the literature that there are varied interpretations and application of RPL within Australian universities. This can be problematic for adult learners with diverse experiences and expectations. Given the uniqueness of university learning, the future political changes to occur in Australian universities, and the problems with RPL that adult learners experience in university learning, it is timely for Australian universities to establish RPL practices that are transparent and consistent.

Introduction

Australian universities, like many of their international counterparts, are in an ongoing process of adaptation and transformation as they adjust to what Coaldrake and Stedman (1998) referred to as the "new realities" in academe. Although these "new realities" may vary and be applied differently both nationally and internationally, their impact has seen a move away from the traditional function of universities "for dealing in knowledge for its own sake…" to providing service to various stakeholders in government, industry and for the students (Coaldrake & Stedman 1998, p.1).

> They [the universities] have been encouraged to increase significantly their numbers of students, to make better use of their budgets, and to raise money from industry and the professions … students also have a level of expectation that if they have paid for their studies, they have better prospects of employment or, if they already have a job, that their career opportunities will be improved by their studies (Coaldrake & Stedman 1998, pp.2–3).

Noting student expectations as they relate to the "new realities" can be seen as a fundamental tenet of adult education and learning dealing with why adults return to study. However, this limited recognition of adult learning interests and expectations can only be viewed, at best, as being marginal. A more realistic appraisal of the impact of the "new realities" in Australian universities is that they have overlooked critical elements of adult learning associated with *recognition of prior learning* (RPL).

At the risk of being polemic on the question of the value of RPL in Australian universities, there are significant issues in determining each university's position in respect of the value, impetus and usefulness of RPL for adult learners.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that the "new realities" in Australian universities have not realistically applied adult learner characteristics, especially in respect of the learner's experiences as

they relate to RPL. This major oversight has led to a commercially-oriented, university-centred framework with limited or no consistency in advancing RPL. Rather, the utilisation of RPL has been referred to as a means to increase adult learners as aggregate entities – that is, to raise "participant numbers" foregoing adult learner experiences, knowledge and/or expertise. This has led to a haphazard, unclear commitment to RPL with most Australian universities opting to foster the more succinct, administratively manageable process of academic credit.

The benefits and values of RPL have become a conceptual academic phenomenon that is entangled in notions of accelerated learning paths and cost effectiveness. Crucial elements for advancing and administering RPL, focusing on adult learner characteristics, development and the acknowledgement of adult learner experiences and needs, have been substantially overlooked. The impact of these shortcomings has led to significant factors as to the appropriate use and implementation of RPL in Australian universities, justifying the notion that RPL in contemporary Australian universities is a "white elephant".

The 'alphabet soup' for defining RPL

As a basis for understanding debate and discussion, it is imperative that there is a clear, consensual understanding of the concept being addressed. This understanding lays the foundation for logical and informed positions on the issues being considered. This is not the case with RPL because there is prevailing confusion about its definition. This is supported by Smith (2004), who writes that "there is no clear agreement among writers, researchers and major policy-influencing agencies regarding what RPL is, does or encompasses" (p.11).

In order to understand the general Australian definition of RPL, it is necessary to appreciate its emergence in the Australian tertiary sector. RPL, according to Michelson (1996), developed in the United States of America during the late 1960s and early 70s. This was in response to large, adult student numbers necessitating "structural innovations" in addition to linking RPL to educational fairness and social mobility. It must be acknowledged that the formal introduction of RPL in Australia is relatively 'new' and this may have contributed to difficulties in its definition and function (see Cameron, 2004). Moreover, there is evidence that, at its introductory level, RPL was more aligned to the training and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sectors within Australia and not the university sector.

Pascoe (1999), in his succinct presentation on admission to Australian universities, outlines the growth and expansion of university student numbers in the 1980s in addition to the existing range of university admission systems. Noting that RPL made a formal appearance in Australia's National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) policy documents during 1991, whereby one Australian university adopted a system of questionnaire and interview for student recruitment and was responding to "industry representatives in the course design team who successfully argued the case for RPL in a course that so strongly interacted with cutting edge technologies" (p.8). However, the emerging problems for RPL are raised by Bateman (2003) who noted that the literature on RPL was written before the introduction of Training Packages and the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). It could be argued that the early interest in RPL demonstrated the "cart before the horse" phenomenon, and the introduction of the AQTF led to the interest and impetus of RPL for the university sector diminishing and not appearing relevant. Bateman (2003) writes:

> The national data collection requirements specified in the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information System (AVETMIS) Standard distinguish between RPL (an assessment) and credit transfer (an administrative process):

- Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is based on evidence which confirms that the student already has the required knowledge and skills. RPL involves an assessment or some other form of evaluation of the student's knowledge and skills. The AVETMIS Standard does not capture information about 'partial RPL" situations, such as the granting of RPL for units or elements of competency which form part of a larger unit of delivery.
- Credit transfer arrangements are based on the completion of the same subjects with another VET provider (known as 'mutual recognition' under the AQTF),or of equivalent subjects at another education or training institution such as some other VET provider, a higher education institution or a secondary school. Credit transfer arrangements can also encompass overseas courses or subjects, such as those administered by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR). Each Australian state and territory has a reciprocal recognition authority to support mutual recognition arrangements within and across the various education and training sectors. The granting of credit though credit transfer arrangements is essentially an administrative process (p.2).

Cameron (2004) writes that RPL was introduced in Australia as part of an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) in 1993. The Australian National Training Authority (abolished in 2004) provided the following definition of RPL, which became part of the AQTF Standards for registered training organisations (RTOs) delivering accredited training:

> Recognition of prior learning (RPL) means recognition of competencies currently held, regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred. Under the AQTF, competencies may be attained in a number of ways. This includes through any combination of formal or informal training and education, work experience or general life experience (ANTA 2001, p.9).

RPL literature refers to various descriptors which have included:

- Advanced standing
- Accelerated progression
- Special entry
- Special admission
- Alternative entry, and
- Experiential learning record.

Given the difficulties in establishing a concise definition or understanding of what constitutes RPL, it is easy to concur with Michelson's (1996) assertion that:

> The alphabet soup that serves English language shorthand for the assessment of prior experiential learning includes PLA (Prior Learning Assessment) in the USA and Canada, APL & APEL (Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning) in Britain and Ireland, and RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (p.195).

As a means for consistency and general consensus amongst Australian adult educators and practitioners, the ANTA definition of RPL forms the basis of this paper.

Contemporary issues with RPL in Australian universities

Although emerging from the United States of America in the 1960s and 1970s, RPL, Michelson (1996) suggests, was based on assumptions about experience and knowledge that went largely unexamined. Aligning this assertion with the 'cart before the horse' phenomenon with respect to Bateman's (2003) observation that RPL literature was written before Training Packages and the AQTF, in addition to a propensity to view RPL as not relevant to university learning, the fundamental shortcomings in acknowledging and exploiting the value of RPL in Australian universities can be seen to be emerging.

In a substantial study investigating RPL information on Australian university websites, Childs, Ingham and Wagner (2002) established that there were many problems in gaining information about RPL. They found the quality of information varied widely, was often absent, poorly written or hard to find. However, information about 'credit transfer' of prior formal studies was available. Further attempts to address RPL practices in Australian universities were made by the Vice-Chancellors' Committee Credit Transfer Project (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee 1994) in its report, *Recognition of prior learning in Australian universities*. The Committee advanced a policy paper dealing with university recognition of education and training offered by industry, private providers and professional bodies. The purpose was to make associated recommendations in the area of industry-based training. However, the Committee focused more on the allocation of a fixed credit value to a particular training course or development program; realistically, it advanced a credit transfer model. The practice of credit transfer is a process with which university faculties had been engaged for a substantial period of time prior to the Committee's endeavours. It is interesting to note that the title and operations of the Committee's activities laid claim to the prevailing confusion regarding RPL in Australia. The Committee (1994) reported that:

> The development of RPL arrangements, in the broad sense, is now so dynamic in so many industry, industrial and educational domains that the situation represented here is a snapshot of a rapidly changing scene (p.1).

What appeared to be an exciting process for addressing RPL in Australian universities by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee only verified differing interpretations of RPL and its understanding shows that it aligned RPL to the definition of academic credit. Also, given the recognition of the 'rapidly changing scene', the snapshot process fell short of identifying realistic needs and directions for RPL in Australian universities.

Is RPL viable in Australian universities?

As RPL now stands, which in general terms is difficult to ascertain given the myriad of problems previously identified, it can be argued that it is not viable in Australian universities. Michelson (1996) reported that student-centred educational movements of the day linked RPL to educational fairness and social mobility. Similar themes are noted by Pascoe (1999) who reports that, in Australia during the 1980s, the federal government was committed to increasing university student numbers and to ensuring that "a fair share of those new placements went to groups of Australians who had historically missed out on educational opportunity" (p.2). Yet, this did not seem to be adopted by the universities and Pascoe (1999) notes, "Seldom did the universities themselves proclaim a rhetoric about equity" (p.2).

Given the social and cultural influences linked to the introduction of RPL and the subsequent impetus of equity in the 1970s and 1980s, adult educators are now being challenged to consider if these elements are outdated and irrelevant. Rather, the contemporary commercially-oriented "new realities" in Australian academe (Coaldrake & Stedman 1998) have surpassed the influences and trends of the 1970s and 1980s. It can be argued that changing social structures, economic underpinnings, internationalism and globalisation demand a new, specific and transparent adaptation of RPL in Australian universities. This position is enhanced by Cameron's (2004) research on RPL and the mature-age job seeker which noted that:

> Since its inception, RPL has carried with it promise and potential for recognising the life and work experience of those who have been marginalized from formal learning... Unfortunately, the reality of RPL practice and up-take in Australia paints a very different picture. Those most likely to utilize RPL are students who work fulltime, are established in the workplace and already have educational capital to draw from (p.6).

Elaborating on the changing nature of political and economic influences on contemporary adult education policy, Foley, Crombie, Hawke and Morris (2000) in referring to postmodernist theory argue that:

> The role of education and learning in a restructuring capitalism needs to be analysed at macro and micro levels, at the level of policy formation, and at the point of practice in particular sites (p.119).

Herein lies the challenge for advancing and applying RPL in Australian universities. Its intent, purpose and function must be seen to reflect and complement the economic, political and social changes that are rapidly occurring in Australia and the western world. This can be established by advocating professional links with industry, appreciation and understanding of what is actually occurring in industry, knowledge and understanding of the demographic changes and characteristics of communities, and professional links and service with educational policy-makers.

Current RPL evaluation issues

The evaluation process in RPL has led to extensive criticism in that it is too subjective and lacks consistency. Stehlik (1998) argued that credit decisions are made usually by a course coordinator who may occasionally consult with others. He suggests that the whole area becomes vague, and there is some inconsistency, when comparing credentials amongst various Australian universities. Further, in discussions on RPL evaluation, Day (2002) notes that RPL is:

> … a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of learning (i.e. skills, knowledge and values). This learning may be acquired through formal and informal study including work and life experience, training, independent study, volunteer work, travel and hobbies and family experiences (p.3).

These elements raise questions about how this information will be collected and presented and how the information will be assessed and administered in the RPL process. Day (2002, p.4) has suggested six areas which are vital in producing RPL information and documentation; these include:

- identification of learning whenever it has taken place
- the selection of learning which is relevant to a desired outcome, career or occupation
- demonstration of the validity and appropriateness of the learning
- matching learning outcomes to those stated within our accreditation framework
- assessment of evidence against criteria to ensure the validity of the claimed learning, and
- accreditation within an appropriate and recognised accreditation framework.

Benson (1995) sees the value of the creation of an RPL portfolio as the means for a systemic assessment of what people already know and understand, to ensure that the quality of their prior learning can stand scrutiny and become the foundation of new learning. It is the notion of scrutiny that in part warrants further discussion in terms of credentialism, expertise and knowledge, in addition to consistency and fairness. The process and level of investigation into RPL varies. While some researchers advance the creation of a portfolio (Benson 1995, Day 2002), it is evident that elements addressing contents and criteria for evaluation of the portfolio are not consistent. Typically, alignment and relevance to the aims and objectives of academic programs and curriculum content are fundamental. However, some applicants may be impeded based on their existing assumptions about their experiences which may not conform to the specifics of program aims and objectives or the curriculum content. Kamp's (2003) research on mature-age New Zealand women and RPL demonstrates these problems, indicating that "there was no process of RPL in place

that gave the women opportunity to critically evaluate their prior experiences and the expertise gained by way of these experiences" (p.22).

The demands associated with the creation of a portfolio and its ultimate assessment as being irrelevant or having marginal relevance to the academic program could be detrimental to any mature-age student's self-esteem and self-concept. It can lead to extra demands on the student and RPL assessor based on university processes dealing with academic appeals. The worst case scenario for universities would be if students opt to withdraw completely or "shop around" until the portfolio contents are accepted (Stehlik 1998). Such practices could lead to negative competition in which universities that accept such students are considered 'easy' to get into which inadvertently undermines their credibility. Those institutions that reject the RPL application for legitimate reasons face being labelled as 'difficult' institutions to gain admission resulting in diminished student numbers. Both scenarios could influence student choices which inadvertently could be detrimental to Australian universities.

Finally, another consideration in this area, which has not been addressed in most of the literature about RPL in Australian universities, is the evaluative skills and insights of the academic charged with the responsibility of granting RPL. This position is not meant to undermine academic roles *per se*; however, it must be acknowledged that admission to programs often falls to course coordinators. They may be faced with an evaluation in a profession or industry role of which they have little or no professional experience or understanding as to the nature of the role and duties carried out by the applicant. While their theoretical knowledge in many areas is superior, their 'real world' understanding of experiences and learning gained from the workplace may be limited for some applicants.

Adult education and RPL

Fundamental to the characteristics of the adult learner are four crucial assumptions according to Knowles (1988) – as an adult matures:
- their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being
- they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning
- their readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental task of their social roles. and
- their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centredness to one of performance-centredness (p.45).

It is suggested that these characteristics should be major considerations in RPL: however, in Australian universities, operations and strategies are significantly influenced by organisational models aligned to profits, marketability, student numbers and graduate output. RPL has in one sense become an attractive option to stimulate potential student enrolments, yet the adoption of the four characteristics of adult learners as they relate to RPL has been negated.

In Australia, we are seeing RPL being used in an *ad hoc* basis and in some instances being used at a significant impost on students, academics and institutions. This situation verifies Stehlik's (1998) argument that RPL can have a negative impact on the legitimacy of the quality of education, the credibility of tertiary qualifications and the actual process of learning through life. Research by Gravoso, Pasa and Morie (2002) determined that students granted RPL still struggled with direction and "university learning".

Meeting the needs of the adult learner

There have been studies concerned with the impact of RPL on university learning for students with industrial backgrounds, equity groups and women (see Blezer 2004, Bateman 2003, Cantwell & Scevak 2004, Gravoso, Pasa & Mori 2002, Kamp 2003). Generally, these studies allude to various issues and problems associated with RPL and academic credit awarded to students. The problems have included: reliance on educational experiences and learning practices from non-university environments, the relevance of RPL to some university programs, differing expectations and needs of learners, student preparedness and their adjustment to university learning. This situation warrants further analysis of the criteria, evaluation and application of RPL with respect to the differing 'frameworks of operation' in which students find themselves. Universities approach student recruitment on a competitive, managerial model. This can in some regard be viewed as commercial exploitation. Using RPL as some form of reward for "fast-tracking" degree attainment has major implications for students who already possess varied expectations and needs from their university engagement. For students, it is necessary to question their realistic preparedness for university learning based on their assumptions and interpretations of their knowledge in relation to being granted RPL (Cantwell & Scevak 2004). It is imperative to question if the student's current knowledge allows them to conceptualise, analyse and reflect on their learning – elements which are fundamental to university learning. Cantwell and Screvak (2004) determined that:

> For students entering university directly via RPL, however, there is a generally tacit presumption that the developmental changes typically associated with completion of enabling study are in fact present on enrolment – that the prior learning in cognate fields has seen, *a priori,* the construction of an appropriate presentation of the discipline among RPL students (p.133).

Consequently, RPL issues emerge which naturally raise consideration of the 'difference' in university learning compared with vocational education.

The uniqueness of university learning

This section is not intended to create a controversial argument about the value and benefits of vocational education compared with university education. For the purposes of this paper, 'uniqueness' refers to 'being different' from non-university learning environments.

Although it is acknowledged that Australian universities are in a process of transition due to political implications and the "new realities", it is reasonable to suggest that university learning is unique. There is a myriad of research in the area of learning associated with academic disciplines that include education, psychology, sociology, ethics and the sciences. Typically, university learning focuses on what learning involves and where it can go, whereas vocational education is more aligned to practical knowledge and skill attainment. These differences have been problematic for RPL and academic credit students with vocational education experiences. Trowler (1996) asserts that:

> … there are significant qualitative differences in the kind of knowledge expected of students learning in a university environment and the kind of knowledge more typically associated within other contexts (cited in Cantwell & Scevak 2004, p.232).

Researchers have identified previous learning experiences whether primary, secondary or within the vocational sector that have influenced students' approaches and ability to adjust to university learning (see Blezer 2004, Cantwell & Scevak 2004, Gravoso *et al.* 2002). In addition, Trowler (1996) argued that assumptions about prior learning lead to three problems:

• a failure to identify the ontological limitations to the presumed everyday learning

- the presumption of reflectivity in everyday experience, and
- the presumption that the reflection that does occur is necessarily equivalent to the assumed requirements for university study (cited in Cantwell & Scevak 2004, p.233).

At the risk of becoming embedded in knowledge and learning theory, it is evident that prior learning can be problematic for RPL students in Australian universities for various reasons stemming from their entrenched practices and application of their previous learning experiences. Drawing on this dilemma, Michelson's (1996) contention that only *experience* can be exceptional and that *knowledge* must be presented as being similar to that of others and recognisable in terms set by university academic norms, enhances the uniqueness of university learning which is founded on contemporary learning theories with processes drawing on knowledge, analysis, synthesis, debate, reflection and application. This, according to Stehlik (1998), encourages adult educators to develop a "critical and reflective approach to their practices that is linked to theoretical constructs as well as being grounded in applied practice" (p.7).

RPL in Australian universities – where to from here?

The problems of RPL in Australian universities can be equated to a lack of preparedness for students and institutions in understanding its intent and purpose. This has led to RPL in Australian universities being problematic, detrimental and inconsistent. Researchers have valiantly suggested more studies and investigation into formulating a consistent approach to RPL evaluation and use (Bateman 2003, Childs *et al.* 2002, Stehlik 1998). However, given the diversity of academic programs, teaching and learning styles, adult learning needs, industry demands and institutional integrity, it would appear such research would only garner more contention and problems for RPL in Australian academe.

Initially, when researching RPL in Australian universities, and based on a personal commitment to advancing adult learning and adult education practices in Australian academe, there was some defence to being perceived as being polemic in relation to the value of RPL in Australian academe. Yet, given the myriad of problems and issues about RPL currently in Australian universities, this is difficult. Contemporary RPL in Australian universities can be viewed to a large extent as a 'white elephant'. Its value and usefulness can and should be questioned in respect to its relevance and viability for adult learners. Presently, too many students, especially those with industrial experience, face problems with university learning and adjusting to university demands. Academics must consider whether students are being academically jeopardised if they are granted RPL, and whether this disservice could ultimately impact on their lifelong learning.

With the 'revolution' occurring in Australian academe through the impact of the "new realities" taking hold on academic duties and requirements, and the emerging political implications which currently leave many Australian universities in the wilderness, perhaps it is time to set right current RPL practices in Australian universities. Until the political agenda is clearly identified and starts setting directions, it is timely to reassess RPL practices. By taking this step, efforts to create a RPL model or strategy that would be relevant, logical and transparent across Australian universities could and should be advanced. If anything, this strategy would be consistent.

Conclusion

There needs to be a concerted effort to create a university practice aligned to university learning, learner characteristics, operations, language and expectations. Based on the issues and problems of RPL discussed in this paper, adult educators face a challenging situation given the political, social and economic influences now being faced by

Australian universities. Drawing on the writings of Foley, Crombie, Hawke and Morris (2000), it is suggested that adult educators in advancing RPL must consider:

- the composition and educational needs of stakeholders and the ways in which they might be used in formal education – this would include industry representatives, policy-makers, economists, politicians and potential students
- encouraging the federal government to formalise a generic adult education service that ensures all adults have access to good quality learning opportunities throughout their lives
- promoting educational equity, appreciating a policy environment that is characterised by:
  - diminished funding arrangements
  - competition in the provision of services that have been government monopolies, with some safeguards for disadvantaged groups
  - technology and telecommunications allowing more finely tuned services, and
  - attention to 'who benefits and who pays' – there will need to be a push to improve 'fairness' (Foley *et al.* 2000, pp.123–5).

Adult educators committed to RPL in a university environment must, according to Foley *et al.* (2000),

> … consistently improve access to systematic, good-quality learning opportunities for a growing proportion of adults, so as to enable them to realise their full potential…This might most appropriately be expressed in terms of a national policy and strategy for the development over time of a system of lifelong learning, whereby education and training opportunity becomes available in realistic terms throughout the lifespan (p.125).

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A tale of two towns: Learning community initiatives in Bega Valley and Thuringowa

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Current learning community initiatives in Bega Valley and Thuringowa illustrate trends that are likely to become more significant in communities across Australia. In both cases, local government councils have supported the projects with the council library taking a leading entrepreneurial role in the initiative. This role reflects the growing interest of libraries in lifelong learning, and in their role as community learning centres. These initiatives are discussed against the background of wider issues in the development of learning communities in Australia.

Australian experience in building learning communities since 1998 poses the question as to how learning communities may be initiated in a range of contexts and sustained over time.

Whereas early Australian initiatives, such as Victorian Learning Towns and the ANTA National Learning Community Program 2001 received government funding to initiate these projects, progress up to now has been slow when such government funding is not available. Moreover, a number of projects supported by ANTA in 2001 did not continue after the period of start-up funding ceased, so that the question of how to sustain initiatives assumes significance in this context.

I have addressed this question on several occasions, and in the keynote address at the 2002 National Learning Community Conference, I suggested that we stood at the threshold of a new generation of learning community initiatives in which development would be supported by a wider range of key stakeholders apart from Commonwealth and State governments (Kearns 2002). These stakeholders included universities, libraries, councils, industry, community organisations, as well as governments in whole-of-government strategies.

Local government assumes particular significance among these stakeholders because of the need for local frameworks to promote collaboration and partnership among stakeholders, and build social capital. While relatively few councils up to now have been leaders in innovative learning community initiatives, this situation is starting to change, and current initiatives in Bega Valley and Thuringowa may be seen as the forerunners of what is likely to be a significant pattern of local community development. A tale of two towns may become a tale of many towns, cities and villages.

Moreover, both developments are of interest in respect of the key role played by the council library in the initiation and development of the project. There is a significant trend emerging in Australia and overseas for libraries to be seen as community learning centres, so that libraries are well placed to take a leadership role, as has happened in Bega Valley and Thuringowa, in gaining the support

of councils for learning community initiatives, and building the necessary alliances and partnerships to sustain such initiatives.

The Bega Valley and Thuringowa initiatives are discussed below in terms of how these initiatives came about, and the lessons for adult and community education and other sectors of education.

The wider issues

Governments across Australia are examining the question of how to respond to a context of constant and unpredictable change, solve recurring skill shortages, build an innovation economy able to respond to change and seize opportunities, and sustain communities. These issues were examined in my recent report for Adult Learning Australia on future directions for lifelong learning in Australia (Kearns 2005).

Whereas various aspects of responding to this context have been addressed in government policies and strategies, community learning aspects – apart from the formal education sectors – have seldom received the attention they deserve as key contributors to social, cultural, and economic change and innovation. However, the reality is that building an innovation economy and society will require considerable cultural change and learning strategies at all levels to drive this process of cultural change. Local and regional learning community initiatives assume significance in this regard.

The key requirement for local infrastructure to build collaboration, partnerships, and social and human capital was the main conclusion of a review of policies and strategies to build a learning and training culture in five OECD countries that George Papadopoulos and I undertook in 2000 (Kearns & Papadopoulos 2000). This study of policies in Sweden, United States, Germany, UK and the Netherlands concluded that, whereas local infrastructure was significant across these countries in encouraging and supporting local initiatives,

Australia, with its history of state government delivery of services such as schooling and health, was less well placed to build a learning culture through local collaboration and partnership across a range of sectors.

This situation is starting to change with such initiatives as the Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks, and the emerging interest of a number of councils in learning community initiatives and the general strengthening of social, cultural and economic planning by councils. Moreover, the growing interest of State governments in issues involved in engaging and sustaining communities – reflected, for example, in the recent Queensland/ UN Conference on Engaging Communities – has focused attention on issues involved in building social capital in communities as an instrument for engaging and sustaining communities.

The discussion of the Bega Valley and Thuringowa initiatives that follows should be seen in this context as examples of local initiatives responsive to the needs and opportunities confronting twenty first century Australia. The key roles of libraries and councils in both initiatives may be seen as a tale of a sleeping giant awakened with a kiss of life.

The Bega Valley Learning Communities

The Bega Valley Shire is located in the far south-eastern coast of New South Wales, approximately half-way between Sydney and Melbourne. With 6,279 square kilometres, the shire is the largest coastal council in the State. The mix of farming and tourism in the Shire is reflected in a population pattern stretched across six towns and twelve villages in the Shire. Well known tourist destinations, such as Merimbula, Bermagui and Tathra, co-exist with Bega as the service centre of the shire, and with the network of villages (such as Bemboka, Candelo and Cobargo) across the shire. This pattern produces considerable diversity in the shire.

The population at the 2001 Census was 30,524 involving an increase of 1.1% since the 1996 Census. Of this population, 6,956 (22.8%) live in rural areas outside the towns and villages. Whereas the population of all towns grew between the 1996 and 2001 censuses, that of the villages was more mixed with about half declining and the same proportion growing.

The unemployment rate in the shire in 2001 was 9.6% compared with the State average of 7.2%. The average gross income in the shire was $470 for men and $330 for women which were 29% and 23% below the NSW average respectively. Average family income was similarly 32% lower than the State average.

While this pattern reflects a common situation in much of rural and coastal Australia, I found in the Bega Valley Learning Communities Seminar held in September 2005 a strong assertion of the significance of lifestyle in the Bega Valley community. In this way, Bega Valley appears to reflect much of the shifts in values and lifestyle found across many areas of Australia.

Origins of the initiative

The Bega Valley Learning Community initiative had its origins in consultations undertaken by the Bega Valley Shire Council in the development of Social and Cultural Plans for the Council. Consideration of the role of education and learning by a broadly representative Education Focus Group led to the conclusion that the possible development of learning communities across the shire should be examined, along with the possible development of an educational roundtable or network. It was decided that these questions should be taken up at a working seminar with broad community representation.

The seminar

The seminar to consider these questions was held on 7 September during Adult Learners' Week. Planning for the seminar was

undertaken jointly by the Manager of the Bega Valley Shire Library Service, Janice Biggin, and the Chair of the Far South Coast Community College (FSCCC), Gordon Beattie, so that the initiative developed around a core library/ACE partnership. Forty seven people participated in the seminar representing a broad cross-section of education, cultural and community organisations in the shire. Senior council staff also participated. Debbie Best, the Lithgow Learning City Coordinator, and myself participated in the seminar to bring some external perspectives.

The seminar showed support for the proposals coming from the Education Focus Group and confirmed these directions for developing the Bega Valley as a network of learning communities. The outcomes of the seminar therefore involved the following developments:

- a **Bega Valley Learning Communities Network** to be established
- a **Learning Communities Network Working Group** to serve as the executive arm of the Network
- **Learning Gateways** to be developed to serve as a framework for collaborative projects including research and on-going dialogue, and for building social capital in the shire.

The starting point for the development of the Learning Councils Network will be the organisations and individuals that participated in the seminar. The Library / Community College partnership will continue to be central to progressing this initiative. The Network Working Group will associate the key stakeholders for collaboration including LandCare, the Bega Education Access Centre, begavalley. com, the Library Services and FSCCC.

Two initial research projects will enable the impetus of the seminar to be maintained. These involve:

- a **University-Community Engaged Research Project** to be funded by Wollongong University and undertaken by a local upper level student from the Bega Education Access Centre, and

- a **Study Visit by the Manager of Library Services to the United States** under a NSW Country Public Libraries Association Colin Mills Scholarship to examine public libraries engaging with their communities in building lifelong learning in a rapidly changing environment.

In addition, Bega Valley will host the 2006 annual conference of the NSW Country Public Libraries Association so that this will provide an opportunity for a wider discussion of the current initiatives in the Bega Valley.

Embedding in the work of the Council

A key aspect of sustaining the learning communities' initiative in the Bega Valley will be to find ways to embed learning strategies in the work of the council. The current development of Social and Cultural Plans by the council provides an opportunity for this to happen. The draft Bega Valley Social Plan is currently on the council website for comment (www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/community/draft_social_plan/default.htm). The draft Social Plan recommends that the council facilitate lifelong learning in Bega Valley Shire and that the council is developed as a learning organisation. The Social Plan should provide a platform to progress lifelong learning objectives.

Thuringowa Learning Community

Thuringowa City Council is based on an area in northern Queensland that surrounds Townsville. The population in the 2001 Census was 50,946. Continued population growth up to 2024 is forecast, with a projected population of between 98,245 and 100,905 persons by 2024. While Thuringowa, like Bega Valley, has a high proportion of residents born in Australia, it differs in having a relatively young population with a lower proportion of older people, and with a relatively high proportion of Indigenous persons (6.3%). These characteristics go along with a fairly high Year 12 completion rate, and with high average household income.

Origins of the initiative

The origins of this initiative owed much to the interest of the chief executive officer of Thuringowa City Council who became aware of the learning community concept through a visit to the Hume Global Learning Village. The development of Thuringowa as a learning community was noted in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2005–2010 which included the aspiration for an inclusive and strong community which facilitated community learning of all kinds, and the development of a 'Smart City'. This interest provided a platform for the Council library to take a leadership role in the initiative of the project with both Library Managers, Susan Coker and Ron Store, actively involved.

An application was made to the Queensland State Library for a Strategic Development Grant. This grant of $21,500 provided for the conduct of a learning audit, and for the convening of a Learning Communities and Public Libraries Workshop held on 12–13 October following the completion of the learning audit.

The learning audit

The learning audit was undertaken by Kim Harrington for Harrington Projects, with the report of the audit then considered in the workshop held on 12–13 October. The Learning Community Audit Report highlighted both learning strengths and needs, and proposed fourteen strategies which were grouped under four key learning drivers:
- civic capacity
- education and lifelong learning
- health and well-being
- employment.

These strategies involved a broad approach to the role of learning in a community such as Thuringowa in which the wider benefits of learning, in sectors such as health and well-being, were recognised. The strategies range across broad areas that build social and human

capital, and include objectives directed at both young people and the ageing workforce.

Two priorities were recommended for progressing the proposed strategies. These were to:
- develop a strategic leadership group to link across sectoral and community levels in Thuringowa, and
- develop and support a marketing, communication and coordination strategy for learning.

It was recommended that the second priority be implemented by Council as an important function of service delivery.

The Learning Communities and Public Libraries Workshop

The learning audit report was considered at the workshop held on 12–13 October, together with case studies and presentations on developments across Australia. The workshop was interesting in having both Thuringowa and national perspectives, with the program including presentations on developments in Hume, Portland, Pine Rivers, Caloundra and Caboolture, as well as on Thuringowa development.

There was a strong representation of Thuringowa City Council staff with the chief executive officer of the Council, Lyn Russell, an active participant along with Council senior managers and library staff. The Queensland State Librarian, Lea Giles-Peters, was also a participant so that the strength of the workshop resided in the interaction of Thuringowa, library, learning community, and national perspectives throughout the course of the discussions.

Much of the discussion focused on the next steps to be taken, clarification of roles, how to achieve ownership by the community, and the forming of a broadly-based leadership group. The workshop endorsed the general directions of the learning audit report and agreed on a process for follow up. Key points in the consensus included the following:

- there should be an early report to Council on the proposed follow-up action
- achieving community ownership of the initiative should be a guiding principle
- a broadly representative leadership group should be established with key stakeholders such as business and industry, education institutions, and community organisations represented, as well as the Council and library
- an organic view of the development process was necessary with implementation dynamic and flexible, and proceeding through a number of stages of development – achieving early 'runs on the board' was seen as necessary through picking 'low hanging fruit'
  - while the initial focus will be on Thuringowa, development may be towards broader regional perspectives involving Thuringowa/ Townsville partnership in key areas, and possibly an ultimate North Queensland learning region.

These conclusions supported the strategic priorities of the learning audit report, and provide a mechanism to carry forward the initiative that had much in common with the outcomes of the Bega Valley seminar.

The broader implications for the role of the Queensland State Library in supporting community learning through the role of libraries, and insights for national perspectives on the role of libraries as community learning centres and active partners in learning community initiatives, were also outcomes taken away from the workshop.

General comment

While the Bega Valley and Thuringowa initiatives are at an early stage of development, both initiatives are of interest in terms of roles and processes that drive learning community development in regional areas. These lessons relate, in particular, to ways in which learning community developments may be initiated, and to the partnership building process. The support of councils in each case is significant, and holds promise of the initiatives being sustained through potential connections with current planning and development.

In the initiation of each project, the role of the library was significant. This reflected the interest of the libraries concerned, in the developing role of the library as a community learning centre. As council libraries, each was well placed to secure the support of senior council officers and councillors for the initiative.

The initiative taken by the libraries in these cases may also be seen as an expression of the civic entrepreneur role which is likely to become more significant in twenty-first century Australian society with the evolving role of civil society (Schauder 2005). These are grounds for taking the view that the conditions of this society will require a redefinition of the roles of government, market and civil society with new forms of partnership increasingly important. Engaging and encouraging local and regional communities will be a critical challenge.

Case studies of social innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives in America and Australia illustrate this emerging trend. In America, a recent book by Heaton, Melville and Walesh (2004) illustrates a range of cases with initiatives by "civic revolutionaries" engaging and mobilising communities. In Australia, a recent collection of case studies and discussion papers from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA 2005a, b, c) shows a wide range of initiatives taken in harnessing the potential of information technology to extend learning opportunities in communities and build social capital.

The role of technology in furthering learning in communities attracted considerable discussion in both the Bega Valley seminar and the Thuringowa workshop, and it was clear that further guidance and

dialogue in this area is necessary, building on the lessons of projects under the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (including, in particular, the e-learning Creative Community Partnerships projects), and the work of the Australian Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts on technology/ community relationships, building social capital and transforming the non-profit sector, and the overall impact of ICT on civil society. The National Networking Workshop on the e-learning Creative Community Partnerships to be held in Canberra on 24 November should provide useful insights in furthering progress in the critical area of technology – learning – community relationships.

The Bega Valley initiative is of interest in the partnership that developed between the Library and Far South Coast Community College in carrying forward the outcomes of the seminar held on 7 September. There is substantial potential for ACE providers to be active partners, along with libraries, councils, education institutions and community organisations, in the development and sustaining of learning community initiatives. Such active involvement will serve to re-define the role of adult and community education, perhaps along the lines outlined in the Achieving Australia report with the learning broker role increasingly significant.

While there are various similarities between the Bega Valley and Thuringowa initiatives, in such areas as providing for ongoing leadership and network building, there are also differences that point to the range of ways in which a learning community project can be initiated and developed. Whereas the Thuringowa initiative adopted the usual learning audit approach to assessing need and involving the community, the Bega Valley project arose from the development of council Social and Cultural Plans, with a seminar then used to gain community support and devise machinery for partnership and collaboration, and with a research phase to follow these events.

It is likely that the best approach for other communities will depend on local circumstances, so that the existence of options for the development process adds to flexibility in the response to local needs and conditions.

Both the Bega Valley seminar and Thuringowa workshop confirmed my view that the significance of informal learning in many contexts is not well understood in Australian society, and is still commonly confused with formal learning in the education system. For this reason, some councils have been reluctant to undertake learning community initiatives as this is seen as a State government education responsibility.

The question of sustaining these initiatives lies in the future. However, the active support of each council holds promise for embedding the initiatives in the future development of each community. As models of a pattern of community-building that is likely to become increasingly common across Australia, there are grounds for optimism that a tale of two towns may become the tale of many towns and communities.

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About the author

Peter Kearns has had a lifetime of experience working in education and training in a range of contexts, in Australia and overseas, as a teacher, public servant and consultant. He has worked as a consultant since 1990, with a special interest in lifelong learning and in innovative strategies for learning in organisations, institutions and in communities. He is currently a Visiting Research Fellow with Adult Learning Australia.

Peter wrote on these two communities as library-led/council initiatives. He says that libraries are becoming increasingly interested in their role in lifelong learning and learning communities, so he hopes his article may have a general interest for libraries and councils. He presented a workshop in Thuringowa on 12–13 October which reviewed the Thuringowa learning audit, and discussed some general aspects of building learning communities. He also gave the keynote address at the annual conference of the Victorian Council of State School Organisations on 15 October which had the interesting theme, "From schools to vibrant learning communities".

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And now it's time to say goodbye – a decade of learning and development in rural and remote health

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The halcyon days of learning and development in New England Area Health Service ended with the 2005 NSW Health restructure. The previous decade had been one of creativity, innovation, risk-taking and major reform. The new order's focus is workforce capability and learning, touting strategic development rather than learning and development per se. What changes are effected remains to be seen.

This paper takes a collage approach to the context and issues that drove innovation and reform in learning in the bush. Apart from providing a single repository for these, the attempt is made to reflect on the worth and value of the journey undertaken. Given the major difference in our approach to learning, compared with that from the other (then) seventeen area health services, the question is asked of our efficacy in transforming the learning culture.

Introduction

Learning and development (L&D) was a devolved responsibility to area health services across NSW Health, having no centralised department or unit within the health department itself. Where previously eighteen L&D Units served the 100,000 workforce, the 2005 health restructure now operates through eight. Significantly, traditional L&D has morphed to strategic workforce capability, as health governance contracts back to the department. Noticeable is the emergence of a new generation of managers.

Hunter New England Health is an amalgam of what were Hunter, New England and part of Mid North Coast area health services. It provides care for 840,000 people, covers a spread of 130,000 square kilometres (the size of England), has 14,500 staff, and a budget of $919m covering some 70 facilities. It is unique in being a mixture of metropolitan (Newcastle), rural and remote. New England Area Health Service, by contrast, had 3,000 staff in 30 facilities across an area the size of Tasmania.

For its last several years, three staff ran L&D in New England Area Health Service, contrasted with eight a decade earlier. At the time of merger, there was but one person remaining. This paper reflects on the journey from *ad hoc* classroom-based teaching and learning, to Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board accreditation, through a sole focus on vocational education and training (VET), to flexible, online and blended learning. Along the way, a slew of grants, awards and our raft of published research informed this evolution (Mills 2003). Now it is timely to step back and reflect on what was achieved, and the extent to which success was effective and, indeed, worthwhile.

Milestones, themes and chronology

The seminal events and other influences on our journey out of pedagogy are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1   Milestones in the evolution from sole reliance on pedagogy to flexible, blended and online learning: 1995–2005

Year	Significant events
1994	Research and publication strategy endorsed as a quality adjunct
1995	VETAB (Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board) accreditation achieved following two years of preparation
1998	VET certificates & diplomas became sole focus of L&D
1999	All L&D Units across NSW Health unite under the one Registered Training Organisation
2000	LearnScope grant Flexible learning completely replaced classroom teaching
2001	Reframing the Future grant NSW Health Baxter Award for Embracing Innovation Commendation in Premier's Public Sector Awards
2002	Flexible Learning Leader NEAHS Quality Award for Better Value Online discussion facility rented for communication, support and learning First online course across NSW Health developed and trialled
2003	LearnScope grant Re-accreditation of NSW Health Registered Training Organisation, following successful audit of New England Area Health Service as third and final audit site Withdrew from *all* training to execute strategic organisation development projects New England Area Health Service Quality Award for Education and Training
2004	LearnScope grant New England Area Health Service Quality Award for Education and Training Finalist – NSW Health Baxter Award for Information Management
2005	New England Area Health Service merged with Hunter to become Hunter New England Health *Virtual Class,* online learning management system, created and trialled Finalist – Hunter New England Health Quality Award for Information Management

The seminal event that transformed learning in New England Area Health Service was accreditation. It, initially in our own right as a Registered Training Provider and later as the united and integrated NSW Health Registered Training Organisation, was hugely significant. From 1998 through to 2003, core business for our L&D Unit was management of up to fifteen VET qualifications, notably from the business, community services, and public sector national training packages (Hartley 2000).

Hand-in-hand with the Unit's refocus to VET training was the decisive and strategic move in 2000 to cease all face-to-face teaching and fully embrace flexible learning. Had we continued the then *modus operandi*, we could have, and would have, tied up the complete L&D resource running relatively insignificant soft courses in the classroom, with little measurable return to the organisation (Cupitt 2000).

That flexible learning segued to online delivery was predictable (Mills 2001). The initial decision to forego the classroom was daring for its time, and indeed, New England Area Health Service was the only are health service to have done so. But subsequent grants (LearnScope, Reframing the Future, Flexible Learning Leaders) from the Australian National Training Authority certainly smoothed the journey. More than that, they both led and validated the directional change in our thinking.

The ultimate manifestation of this evolution in thinking and practice was the birth of our very last milestone attributable to what was L&D in New England Area Health Service, namely, the creation of V*irtual Class*, a home-built, online management platform for learning (Hartley & Anderson 2005, in press). Before this, there was no platform for delivering and managing learning anywhere in health, despite NSW Health itself having a workforce of 100,000.

Virtual Class established a benchmark in having standardised learning packages, in one location, for three learning pathways:

- Recognition of Prior Learning (advanced standing)
- Self-directed (online)
- Classroom or tutorial presentation.

Thus, issues of currency, ownership, consistency, accuracy and so on were automatically addressed. The potential for efficiency gain in removing duplication was enormous. This innovation was a truly amazing feat, forged as was our norm, in a resource-poor environment.

The remaining stand-out from Table 1 is the array of awards our work attracted in recent years – some local to New England Area Health Service, others NSW Health-wide and one Public Service-wide. More interestingly still is the menu of categories in which the work was recognised, seldom restricted to categories pertaining to education and training alone, and instead extending to domains covering access, equity, innovation and information management. In other words, there has been considerable objective and external recognition for our vanguard thinking.

What is not so readily apparent from Table 1, however, is the research and publication output from the Unit, which underpinned and showcased our work. During the ten years, more than fifty papers were published by the team, mostly journal articles but some conference and other papers. Whether it was subject-based (Cupitt 1997, Smith 1997, Streeter 1997, Turner & Hartley 1997, Hayes 1999, Owens & Hartley 1999), pedagogical philosophy (Cupitt 2000, Hartley 2001a) or evaluation studies (Hartley *et al.* 2004a, Mills 2003), every aspect of our undertakings was published for others to critically assess, emulate or learn from. In this regard too, as with our focus on flexible and online learning, New England Area Health Service stood alone across NSW Health.

Given the demise now of what would be seen as traditional L&D, and without entering into debate over the directional change presaged

by the recent restructure in health, how might we realistically judge performance of L&D in New England Area Health Service? How might history come to judge what we did, and at what cost to what we in fact did not do?

Reflections

Aggregating the above reduces the discussion to two over-arching and interrelated themes: accreditation and flexibility in learning.

Accreditation

Accreditation first came in 1995, and despite withdrawing from all training a decade later, the gist of the accreditation methodology vaccinated and shaped our thinking on reform in learning. Despite the then Unit's reluctance to assume the mantle of accreditation, the team did come to accept its necessity. We were particularly disadvantaged at the time, the combination of our ignorance of any accreditation frameworks and what they actually meant, and our rurality (Hartley & Garrett 1996).

Back in 1993 when our journey to accreditation began, we were unusual among what were then 'rural districts' across NSW Health, in seeing the need for, and getting, accreditation. We also became the lead proponent in driving the evolution of the single Registered Training Organisation for NSW Health (Hartley 2001b). Because of the relative autonomy among health districts, and subsequent area health services, notions of cooperation and collaboration in L&D were challenging concepts indeed. And while the NSW Health Registered Training Organisation was finally birthed, integrating its management proved yet another challenge, resolving itself some years later, and that forced largely by the re-accreditation auditing process late in 2003.

NSW Health is arguably among the largest registered training organisations in Australia. Its survival to date has depended solely on the goodwill of L&D managers across health. It's their major achievement in collaboration, and as already indicated, was itself a tortuous journey.

The future of the Registered Training Organisation is now very much at stake. The self-managed *modus operandi* of the Registered Training Organisation, spread across various L&D managers, is quickly disappearing, as their numbers have been halved and most incumbents replaced. Coincidentally, NSW Health itself is starting to show unprecedented interest in the survival of the Registered Training Organisation, previously absent, with many a division's workforce development plan predicated on a viable NSW Health Registered Training Organisation.

With workforce planning now the 'flavour' in health, it seems quite possible the Registered Training Organisation will finally morph into the potentially powerful driver of change across the health workforce that it always might have been. Reflecting on its evolution, it is reasonable to conclude that formidable, visionary and unequivocal change was wrought across health under the rubric of accredited learning, even though, at the time of its (disparate) conception, we ourselves may not have fully understood its future and potential. Nevertheless, there was sufficient astute leadership to tackle the journey and make it happen, despite the fact that some area health services have never provided VET.

As previously flagged, New England Area Health Service withdrew as an active site of the Registered Training Organisation at the end of 2003, immediately upon being the third and last delivery site to have been audited by the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board for re-accreditation. This was due to resourcing issues largely, and the need to execute a suite of visionary organisational development projects to provide the scaffolding off which future learning and development might more aptly hang (Hartley *et al.* 2004b). In New England Area Health Service at least, L&D existed

very much in a limbo of its own, not being core business in health, and certainly not integrated across all divisions and functions. One of the big improvements the current restructure across health brings is that it attempts, on paper at least, to integrate more fully this functionality – not that the previous limbo-like existence didn't accrue benefits of its own.

On balance, and with the benefit of hindsight, accreditation was undoubtedly the path to have taken. Nowadays, accreditation of whatever ilk and industry is largely mandated and therefore ubiquitous. Sooner or later it would have been forced upon us any way. The importance and need for standards like compliance with legislation, recognition, access and equity, learning and assessment strategies, and competent L&D staff, simply cannot be argued with any more.

More locally to New England Area Health Service, not only did this period constitute a complete revamp of core business in L&D, in so doing it essentially re-engineered how learning was managed and delivered. That 2,000 instances of accredited short courses, certificates (II, III & IV) and diplomas were issued (to a staff of 3,000) clearly reflected massive change, and more importantly wide-scale adoption of that change. The thrust of running accredited learning, for us, was not so much that learners gained qualifications (important as this was, of course). Rather, that the whole notion of learning itself be challenged and modernised.

Many staff, however, notably those with tertiary education, initially scorned the very notion of VET qualifications, despite aged care (as in an overall aging population) being core business of the health service. However, astute marketing, followed by a domino effect, did result in uptake, albeit slowly at first. What really won over staff was the personal benefits from the newish concepts of recognition of prior learning, articulation to higher qualifications, on-the-job learning and

assessment, competence and competencies, flexible, team and self-directed learning, and so on.

Once these concepts were understood and embraced, learning in New England Area Health Service was rejuvenated. There are numerous anecdotal stories of whole-of-facilities, or teams or like-minded individuals working together, sometimes online, towards gaining qualifications. It became evident staff were becoming empowered and excited about lifelong learning, which certainly challenged some managers. Educators in particular, in the early days of our metamorphosis, were challenged by our innovations. Five years later however, they have become the very champions of what we set out to achieve.

Flexibility in learning

As previously indicated, we were the only L&D Unit across NSW Health to totally embrace flexible learning, and in so doing, eschewed all classroom-based teaching, though regular tutorials were run. (Flexible learning for us was something of a blend therefore.) This occurred back in 2000 and was highly controversial at the time. It went hand-in-hand with relinquishing any responsibility for learning other than VET, another facet of development which set us apart from mainstream L&D providers across health.

Interestingly our contraction to dealing with VET qualifications only, in lieu of more traditional L&D functions, caused little discontent among the 3,000 staff. Traditional L&D covered subjects like safety, communications, quality and so on. Orientation, annual mandated in-services and computer training, often included in this suite, had never been our responsibility.

What became apparent over time was the fact that management for generalist-type learning devolved to divisions, facilities and teams. While it was not our specific objective that it occur, this spin-off was welcome nevertheless, and consistent with our philosophy to get staff

excited about and responsible for much of their own learning. What this meant in practice was that, if managers deemed some particular learning or training important to their team's performance, then they sourced and recorded it.

Opposition to our directional changes and innovations was fairly limited, but unbelievably vociferous, largely coming from self-interest groups who foresaw the sweeping change it would mean in their *modus operandi*. What we hadn't anticipated was the irrationality of the antagonists, many of whom were undertaking higher studies in various aspects of pedagogy. It was a tumultuous time for the L&D Unit, who themselves were not entirely united about what was unfurling.

Devolution in responsibility for managing learning is an interesting concept, juxtaposed against notions of centralist control and accountability. Despite New England Area Health Service having purchased *Pathlore*, an integrated management system for learning, only data provided by the L&D Unit itself were ever entered. *Pathlore* was a very under-utilised resource, purchased by most L&D Units across health, one by one. (A decade later, a single purchase would have been possible.)

One of the Unit's organisational development, big-pictured projects previously alluded to was the strategic rollout in use of *Pathlore* so that every manager had carriage of data entry and reporting. Tied into this was to have been revamped position descriptions, including key competencies important to all staff, and from which learning needs could be identified through appraisal and subsequently registered in *Pathlore*. This project went on hold at merger, its fate to be re-examined.

Grants, awards and publication

Our Unit was not unique in attracting its slew of Commonwealth grants dealing with modernising pedagogy, for this was replicated over many area health services. We were somewhat unusual, however, in attempting the cooperative and collaborative approach in engaging all L&D Units across health in our forays into flexible and online learning, away from the classroom. As had been the case with the accreditation debate, our engagement was troublesome and not particularly productive. For whatever reasons, it was never forthcoming. Having said this however, over time a gradual opening up to experimentation with flexible learning has been detected among other area health services.

What this means, on reflection, is that perhaps we were a little ahead of the herd, as with accreditation. Flexibility in learning is inevitable nowadays. It was never going to be an 'if' debate, simply a 'when'.

Awards are spurious indicators of achievement, at best, not unlike the Oscars in many ways. And not everyone sees value in nominating for them. For us, it was as much about marketing and showcasing our work as winning.

Publishing our work, predominantly in refereed journals, was an objective validation of our contribution to learning. Whereas grants and awards could be contested in terms of the significance they confer, publishing our work could not. This present paper finalises that opus – every aspect of our thinking and practice is now documented in the literature.

And finally …

After leading reform in L&D for over a decade, one thing is certain – it comes at a price and with no guarantee of success. The decade of innovation presented above galvanised opinion, both within New England Area Health Service and, most interestingly, across L&D in NSW Health. Some joined our journey, others actively advocated against it.

Furedi's (1997) sociological perspective on fear has relevance here. He writes about the pervasive culture of fear in organisations and the morality of low expectation, arguing that fear of change limits once-welcomed experimentation, and perpetuates conservatism. All of this is predicated on the risks decision-makers face in adopting change. Increasingly, managers and others seem to want to know the entire risk spectrum before endorsement and adoption, and without these (sometimes unrealistic expectations) being met, change and innovation can get shackled and shelved.

Much of the L&D journey in New England Area Health Service was unplanned, relying very much on the freedom we had to think through issues and solutions, and very much on serendipity. The previously mentioned limbo-like existence enabled considerable freedom in what we did and how. Gaining a Flexible Learning Leader in 2002 opened hitherto unseen worlds to us. And despite the fact of our resources ever diminishing, as in staff and budget, our imaginations took hold of the "what could be possible", especially given our rural and remote location.

For everything we gained from our creativity and innovation nevertheless, we lost equally in not providing the bread-and-butter of traditional L&D, including for example a sound management development program. The fundamental question we faced was how best to use three staff, with very little budget, to meet the learning needs of 3,000 staff. Our focus on flexible learning, more blended in reality, using VET qualifications to introduce the modern (ANTA) learning concepts seemed the logical, and perhaps only, choice.

Whether the direction we took has had any influence on key performance indicators of health's core business, who can tell, without detailed comparative studies benchmarking L&D outcomes among other area health services. Having said this however, it is worth recording that New England Area Health Service never had difficulty throughout its own accreditation cycles, nor did it perform badly against most state-wide performance indicators and benchmarks.

In the final analysis, therefore, perhaps it is simply that L&D in New England Area Health Service was somewhat ahead of its time in trailblazing L&D solutions that would have come to the health workforce inevitably. How much of what we achieved carries on in the new order remains to be seen. But given our innovations were more concept-based than topic-based, it is hard to imagine much being relegated. Irrespective of what happens now, it is unlikely that accreditation standards, flexible and online learning will not continue, now that there are a few more educators only (all metro-centrically based) over an even large geographical spread.

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Basic concepts of the educational science sub-discipline of adult education

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In this study, a conceptual system is outlined for the educational science sub-discipline of adult education. Adults' attending instruction or not attending instruction is conceptually specified. Focusing as it does on a cardinal event of adult education, this represents a first step toward a system for the educational science sub-discipline of adult education. Attending instruction is mainly understood as action, and non-attending instruction as behavior. Instruction is a system of educational actions in which the teacher orients a subject to the educand in order to change his or her psychic dispositions.

If we examine questions of adults' attending or not attending instruction, we find numerous concepts in the relevant literature that are meant to describe this event. These include concepts like

participation, taking part, further education and formal learning processes (Schneider 2004). The lack of uniformity in its basic concepts characterises the immaturity of educational science, in this case, of its sub-discipline of adult education. The maturity of a discipline manifests itself, among other things, in the rigor of its conceptual system, as is clear from the example of the long-established natural science discipline of physics.

Below, a conceptual system will be presented for designating the event of adults' attending or not attending instruction. Besides creating unambiguous concepts, this conceptual system has the function of helping arrive at theory groups, on the basis of the higher-order concepts obtained, with which to explain adults' attending or not attending instruction.

I will start by clarifying the concept of the adult: I define the concept of 'adult' by drawing on the juristic understanding of adulthood. First, juristic norms are dominant norms, and second, the juristic definition is, in comparison with the anthropological definition (Stroß 1994), operational. In the German legal system, persons who are legally of age are adults. This involves acquiring the right to vote, complete professional and testamentary rights, the right to marry, legal responsibility for one's actions and military service obligations. A generally applicable definition cannot, however, indicate what adulthood means in a particular legal system. Therefore, I call persons 'adult' if they are regarded as adults in their respective legal system. Because the age-related determination of adulthood depends on the respective legal system, calendar age is not used here to define the concept of 'adult'.

I specify instruction with the higher-level concept of 'differentia specifica'. I will draw on definitions by prominent educational scientists: Both Herbart (1806, 35) and Brezinka (1992, 222) regard instruction as education. Sünkel (1996, 40), in contrast, defines the concept of 'instruction' as a situation whose chief purpose is

learning. In both definitions, the function of instruction is found in learning, because education also aims to change psychic dispositions. The definitions differ, however, in the higher level concepts of the concept of 'instruction'. While Herbart (1806, 35; Brezinka 1992, 222) understands the concept of education as the higher level concept to that of instruction, for Sünkel it is the concept of situation. The precise difference between the definitions can be worked out from the meanings of the higher level concepts: Brezinka (1990, 95) defines education as action guided by the intention to create psychic dispositions in a person or to improve already existing ones. The concept of situation refers to the totality of external conditions of acting and experiencing. Thus instruction is a form of acting in the one definition and the external condition of acting in the other. If both meanings were combined into a single definition, the concept would be ambiguous.

Scientific concepts, however, are distinguished by their precision. Thus the question arises of whether the concept of 'instruction' refers to the action or to the external condition. To answer this question, I will examine the everyday use of the word 'instruction': we speak of instruction, of participation in instruction or of attending instruction. These forms of expression show that instruction is not an action, since an action is neither attended nor participated in. In addition, it is not the concept of instruction, but rather that of instructing which refers to a behaviour or an action. For this reason, instructing and not instruction should be understood as education, thus as action. What is the 'differentia specifica' of the concept of 'instructing'? Viewed generally, education can be specified through the intention or the means to the intention, but not through the effect, since the concept of education is not a product concept. Therefore, we should ask whether what is specific about instructing is the type of intention or the way the attempt is made to achieve this intention. Expressed more concretely: is instructing characterised by the fact that specific psychic dispositions are changed, or by the fact that psychic dispositions are

changed in a particular manner? The specific intention cannot be the distinguishing characteristic of the type, since none of the 'agogical' aim categories, such as cognitive, psycho-motor and affective, would not be acquired through instructing. For this reason, the specific aspect of instructing should be sought in the manner in which the intention is realised. The definition of the concept of 'instruction' given by Herbart and the etymology could help here. Herbart (1806, 35) understands instruction to mean "everything that someone makes the object of the pupil's attention". The English word 'instruct' comes from the Latin 'struere', meaning to build, thus 'instruct' is related to the notion 'to build on'. The German word for instruction ('Unterricht') includes the word 'richten', which means to aim at, focus or '... bring into a specific direction or position, coordinate with something, guide toward something ...' (Drosdowski 1989, 593). The component word 'unter' means, among other things, 'between' (Drosdowski 1989, 772).

Before the background of these word origins, I develop the following definition of 'instructing'. By the concept of 'instructing', I mean the orientation of the subject to the pupil with the aim of changing the pupil's psychic dispositions. The classificatory concept of non-instructing, which I still cannot assign to a specific concept and which is likewise understood under the concept of education, refers to the orientation of a not yet understood subject to the pupil in order to change his or her psychic dispositions. If the situation refers to the condition of action, it is logically implausible to use 'instruction' as the condition of instructing. It is provisionally assumed that instruction is characterised by the system of actions involved in instructing. It is possible to attend instruction. Below I consider the instruction that occurs in institutions, not private instruction.

I now come to the event of attending instruction: The concept of action is, in my opinion, a possible higher level concept of attending. Behaviour refers to observable physical movements and changes of state in humans and animals. (Böhler 1978). It is a higher level

concept for the concepts of action and unintended experience (German: Widerfahrnis) (Kamlah 1973). To specify the concept of action, I refer to the sub-discipline of action logic developed by Wright. For Böhler (1978), the concept of action means goal-oriented doing as not merely the sum of physical motions and changes of state. To precisely define the concept of 'action', Lenk (1978) does not regard intentionality as sufficient, but rather what characterises action is a description of a mode of behaviour as intentional. The characteristic of an action is thus to be designated by the description of its wanting to bring about a specific event. "Instead ... of speaking simply of all actions as intentional, one should instead speak of statements and descriptions of action" (Davidson – K. Sch.). Actions can only be designated through their description/describability – thus it is a matter of semantics. 'Action' must, in contrast to behaviour, be a semantic concept whose designation contains linguistic elements (Lenk 1978, 283). Lenk's notion (1978) points in a similar direction: actions are not absolute phenomena existing *sui generis;* they are rather interpretations and only graspable through interpretation. (Lenk, 1978) Nor is the describability of intentionality, however, a sufficient attribute of action, "... for an uncontrollable movement can correspond to my intentions even though one could not speak of an action. If I, for example, am unable to open a door on a train, but then through a sudden braking of the train am thrown against the door so that it opens, this corresponds to my intentions but is not an action" (von Kutschera 1980, 69). In addition to this, something has to be brought about which a person intends in order to be able to speak of an action. Marek (1978) also makes it clear that besides the describability of intentionality, thus of a mental aspect, an external moment, a behavioural aspect, is also innate to action. "The description of an event as an action is always complex, namely, insofar as intentions are linked to behaviour in the sense of physical movements and their causal consequences" (Marek 1978, 264). Lenk (1978, 281) does not agree with the view that action manifests itself in observable movements: "Failure to aid, even though one recognizes

the distress of a needy person, can under certain circumstances be understood as action – to what extent intentional failure to act is action is a problem ... – but not as an (observable) behaviour". Von Kutschera (1980) defines the concept of action with a further attribute, the presence of choice. One can only speak of action if a person could have chosen not to act. The possibility of choice is, however, implicit in intentionality, since to form an intention means *eo ipso* that one decides not to choose the alternative, and this implies choice.

I define the concept of action before the background of the above-given definitions as follows: physical movements or changes of state in a person that are verbalised by the person as intentional. Characteristic of the concept of unintended experience is that a person verbalises effects as unintentional. The concept of unintended experience refers, in agreement with Böhler (1978, 183), to "unintended effects ... that cannot be expressed in terms of our intention". The difference between the concept of action and that of unintended experience lies in the quality of the behaviour. An example will clarify the difference. The reason why a person smiles can be a perceived schema. The reason why a person writes a letter, consequently, can be a verbalised intention to please someone else and therefore a desire not to fail to write this letter. I understand the concept of unintended experience as referring to physical motions or changes of state of a person that are verbalised by the person as unintended.

Not yet systematically studied is whether an adult's attending instruction is fundamentally intentional. Before turning to this question, I will show that 'intentional' versus 'unintentional' are not dichotomous variables. Connected with this is the difficulty in identifying intentional and unintentional behavioural processes in a person. Since in most cases action is a "complex action event" (Lenk 1980, 144), due to the limits of cognitive capacity, a person cannot be aware of all parts of the action or "complex action event". Action is, as Feather states (1982), not a result of discrete episodic events, but rather a continuous flow. Von Kutschera (1980, 85) also emphasises that the object of a person's intention is not cognitively represented with maximal clarity. Most verbs used to describe actions are success verbs. The strived-for result of the action that is, for example, expressed with a specific success verb is in principle unknown to the person. If we chose to understand as an action the claim that a person wants to insult someone else, but not the insult itself, we would understand the word 'action' in a much narrower sense than in everyday language usage. In addition, mental representations, thus also aim-directing cognitions, change in rapid succession and have only a short duration (Sokolowski 1996). The state that underlies the striving for an aim, from intention to realisation, lasts longer, but is unconscious (Klinger 1996).

The unambiguous identification of a behaviour as intentional is furthermore made difficult by the interaction of automatic and conscious processes: "Automatic processes are modulated by intentions, while conversely, intentional actions do not necessarily have to be initiated by a directly preceding, consciously experienced act of intentional control" (Goschke 1996, 640). Even though it is difficult for a person to verbalise attending as an intentional or unintentional action, I assume that in general adults intentionally attend instruction. Since the specific instruction, as well as its results and the consequences of its results, are not as a rule repeated, the probability of an automatisation of attending is low. It can likewise be assumed that attending instruction is not elicited exclusively by a need, since the person, for example, reflects on the complex situation of the specific instruction, the opportunity, the time, etc. Not just a low probability of the automatisation of attending, but also the fact that attending is not exclusively conditioned by need (Sokolowski 1996) show that adults' attending instruction occurs intentionally.

I now come to the event of not attending. In contrast to attending, not attending occurs not only intentionally, but also non-intentionally. I will clarify intentional not attending using the following examples: a person X, along with a girlfriend, stands in front of an institution of further education and considers whether she should attend a presentation; she decides not to attend instruction, informs her girlfriend and returns home. Or another example: a person decides not to attend instruction Y and might therefore look for an alternative. In both cases, action clearly occurs, because the person expresses an ostensible intention and openly performs a motion toward a goal, specifically, that of not attending instruction or that of not attending instruction and of forming a further intention.

I will now consider non-intentional not attending. I distinguish between two forms. In the first case, non-intentional not attending results from a need as a state of deficiency in an organism which triggers specific behaviour directed at relieving this state of deficiency. A need for rest, for example, could be an unconscious reason for not attending instruction. In the second case, the adult cognitively represents the possibility of attending or of not attending instruction, but does not form the intention of not attending. This category implies two cases. First, there will be no intention after cognitively representing the possibility of attending or not attending. A stage preliminary to the intention could be a wish in the genesis of the action that the person could possibly have here. Second, a person forms an intention of attending instruction, but this intention does not elicit any goal-furthering modes of behaviour. Non-intentional not attending can *in both cases* be designated as unintended experience (Widerfahrnis), as the non-intended effect of the behaviour. I will not consider the case in which the adult does not cognitively represent the possibility of attending or of not attending instruction; in this case, there would be basically no behaviour, no physical motion or change in the person's state which can be explained.

I now come to the 'differentia specifica' of the concept of attending. The concept 'to attend' has etymologically the sense of 'to go to a place, to someone', but also of 'to direct one's attention toward' someone or something. In German, the related concept, 'besuchen', means to go to someone or something, and also to 'search harder for something'. 'To search' means to make an effort to find something. In connection with an adult's attending instruction, the concept of 'besuchen' means that the adult goes to a place of instruction. The concept of attending instruction is generally demarcated from the concept of attending places that do not primarily support the aim of learning.

Now the conceptual system that we have acquired will be specified for the cardinal andragogical processes of attending and not attending instruction, in that the definitions of the concepts of 'attending' or 'non-attending' and 'instruction' will be related to one another. By an adult's 'attending instruction' is understood the action of the person in seeking the system of actions in which a subject is oriented to the person in order to change his or her psychic dispositions. By 'not attending' is meant a behaviour including the sub-forms of action and unintended experience. Action in this case is characterised by the intention not to seek out the system of actions in which a subject is oriented to the person in order to change his or her psychic dispositions. This intention elicits specific modes of behaviour. Not attending as unintended experience means that the person has in fact formed the intention to attend instruction, but does not display modes of behaviour that would serve this intention and thereby does not attend instruction. Not attending as unintended experience means as well that the adult has not formed the intention to attend, but may have developed a wish to, or it could also mean that the adults has a need which is incompatible with attending instruction. In the following table, the higher level concepts of attending and not attending instruction are summarised.

Table 1: Higher level concepts of adults' attending and not attending instruction

Event	Characteristics			Higher level concept
Attending instruction	Intentional			Action
Not attending instruction	Intentional			Action
	Not intentional	Need which is incompatible with attending		Unintended experience
		Cognitively represented possibility of attending or not attending instruction	No intention, probably only wish	Unintended experience
			Opposed intention which is not realised	Unintended experience

From this sketch, the following conclusion can be deduced. The question of whether an adult's attending or not attending instruction is action or unintended experience has fundamental theoretical consequences, since actions are to be explained differently than unintended experiences. This means that attending and not attending cannot be explained in all cases using action theory, but rather can also be explained in terms of a theory of unintended experience. Theory groups should be worked out for the explanation of not attending. Schneider (2004) has already done this for the concept of attending or not attending as action. Knowledge of these explanations provides a foundation for forming theoretically-based homogeneous groups of non-participants. These are needed in order to be able to develop methods which can aid in motivating adults to attend instruction.

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An assessment of the status of teachers and the teaching profession in Nigeria

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The study attempted to obtain empirical evidence on the status of teachers and the teaching profession in Nigeria. To undertake this study, 400 post-primary school teachers were randomly drawn from 40 post-primary schools in Midwestern Nigeria. The teacher's status questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Results of the study indicated, among others, that teachers are not well financially remunerated and that they are looked down upon because of delay in payment of salaries and allowances, thereby having a loss of sense of belonging. This situation has resulted in the low esteem and status of the teachers and the teaching profession in the society. Findings also revealed that poor conditions of service, wider negative influences and teachers' negative personal and professional behaviour are critical factors responsible for teachers' low status. Some recommendations to enhance the image and status of the Nigerian teachers and the teaching profession were made.

Introduction

Recent events in Nigeria show that the traditional respect and prestige enjoyed by teachers in the society have been eroded quite considerably (Awanbor 1996) and indeed, there has been a loss of interest in and attraction to the teaching profession. Consequently this situation, occasioned by low enrolment of teachers in preparation institutions, has become a source of worry to teacher trainers. Awanbor (1996) reported that some teacher trainees in the College of Education did not appear to be particularly enthused by the training goal of teaching as they indicated that the teaching profession was really not an attractive profession to them. Recently, it was revealed that of the more than 700,000 candidates processed by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for admission into the various universities' courses, only about 10,000 (0.0147%) applied for education, yet teachers are needed to teach the far more than 20 million children in the Nigerian school system (Awanbor 1999). According to Nwaokolo (1993), the cause of this problem is traceable to the low status accorded the Nigerian teacher by the Nigerian public.

In a study by Taiwo (1980), he observed that the teaching profession had gone down on the scale of respectability and that was causing a number of teachers to drift into what were perceived to be more respectable forms of employment. In another development, Omoregie in 1994 reported that the attrition rate of teachers, particularly secondary school teachers, was attributable to the general poor attitude to the teaching profession. Similarly, Ojo (1971) stated that the university graduates who form the bulk of the teaching staff in the post-primary institutions were leaving the profession at an alarming rate, while Nwangwu (1997) observed that the crisis in Nigerian education system is traceable to lack of interest and low morale due to poor social status. Equally problematic, according to Nwaokolo (1998 & 1999), was the fact that teachers themselves were experiencing low

morale and poor self-esteem. Afe (1998) opines that the standing of the teaching profession is affected by social background, adding that the low status constitutes a problem in recruiting competent people into the profession. Therefore, one of the challenges facing the profession and teaching is to raise the status of the profession.

The teachers, as noted by Awanbor (1998), have become a shadow of themselves, having lost out in professional competence and social regard. The difficulty in recruiting and training teachers has been traced to the low status accorded the Nigerian teachers and the apparent loss of interest in and attraction to the profession. Nwaokolo (1993) broadly categorised the factors responsible for the low status to include poor conditions of service, teachers' negative personal and professional behaviours, teaching occupation's semi-professional status, and wider society negative influence. Therefore, the present study sought to obtain empirical evidence on the status of teachers and the teaching profession in Nigeria and propose a way to enhance the image of the Nigerian teacher and the profession.

Methodology

The study employed a simple survey method to gather data on the status of teachers and the teaching profession. The target group for this study comprised 400 post-primary school teachers randomly drawn from 40 post-primary schools in Midwestern Nigeria. From each post-primary school, 10 teachers were selected through simple random sampling. Thus a total of 400 post-primary school teachers constituted the research sample for the study.

The major instrument for data collection was the teacher's questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument sought teachers' general attitudes towards teaching and rating of factors responsible for teachers' low status. The data were analysed using mean response and rank order.

Results

The results of the study are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Post-primary school teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession

Item	Attitude	Mean response	Decision
1	I feel great about being a teacher	1.28	Disagree
2	Teachers are not well financially remunerated	3.09	Agree
3	I opted for teaching because of interest I have in children	2.76	Agree
4	Teaching profession provides opportunity for acquisition of wealth	1.14	Disagree
5	Teachers are looked down upon because of delay in payment of salaries and allowances	3.02	Agree
6	Teaching environment is poor	2.46	Agree
7	I became a teacher by accident	2.68	Agree
8	As a teacher, I have a sense of belonging	1.54	Disagree

The data in Table 1 showed that respondents considered that teachers are not well financially remunerated. They also agreed that teachers are looked down upon because of delay in payment of salaries and allowances. Respondents also agreed that they opted for teaching because of interest they have in children, that they became a teacher by 'accident' and that the teaching environment is poor.

However, respondents disagreed with the fact that as teachers they have a sense of belonging. They also disagreed that they feel great about being a teacher. Nor did they agree that the teaching profession provides opportunity for acquisition of wealth.

Table 2: Mean response and rank order of the factors responsible for teachers' low status

Item	Factors	Mean response	Rank order
1	Teachers' negative personal and professional behaviour	4.36	3rd
2	Teaching occupation's semi-professional status	2.60	5th
3	Poor conditions of service	6.08	1st
4	Poor social image of the teacher and teaching profession	4.19	4th
5	Wider society negative influence	5.14	2nd

From the results presented in Table 2, poor conditions of service represented the most important factor responsible for teachers' low status. It ranked first among the factors responsible for teachers' low status. This was followed by wider society negative influence and teachers' negative personal and professional behaviour, which ranked second and third respectively among the factors responsible for teachers' low status. Poor social image of the teacher and teaching profession and the teaching occupation's semi-professional status ranked fourth and fifth respectively.

Discussion of results

Results of the study have shown that post-primary school teachers in Nigeria are not well financially remunerated and that they are looked down upon because of delay in payment of salaries and allowances. These findings corroborate earlier research findings by Awanbor (1996) who stated that government in different parts of the country finds it convenient to withhold or delay teachers' salaries sometimes for up to four months in arrears and that teachers' promotions are slowest to eventuate, among other debasements. He concluded that this state of economic dystrophy is also inevitably accompanied by

lack of social muscle or might and hence the low social rating of teachers and the teaching profession generally.

Results of the study also point to the fact that teachers opted for teaching because of their interest in children. This result agrees with Obanya (1978) who found that teachers opted to teach because they enjoyed working with children. However, Awanbor (1996) reported that teachers who opted to teach said they would do so because they needed the time after school hours to be with their families and to do extra jobs that would augment their income from teaching. Findings of the study also point to the fact that the teaching environment is poor. As a conducive working environment is desirable for any worker to perform their job effectively, the poor teaching environment may affect adversely teachers in the discharge of their duties and functions. Results of the study revealed that some of the respondents became teachers by 'accident', meaning that they originally would not have opted to teach but that circumstances pushed them into the profession. This situation, coupled with the fact that payment of their salaries and allowances are delayed and the public looks down upon them, leads them therefore to experience a loss of sense of belonging.

The results of this study showed that poor conditions of service and wider society negative influence are crucial factors responsible for teachers' low status. In Nigeria, poor conditions of service for teachers range between salary irregularity, salary insufficiencies, poor physical environment, poor promotional prospects and stagnation (Nwaokolo 1998). These poor conditions of service have adversely affected teachers' status in Nigeria and hence the low rating of the teaching profession. The Nigerian society as a whole has become materialistic and, since teachers are faced with poor conditions of service, and thus are not able to perform like other workers in Nigerian society, they are treated with disdain and lack of respect.

These results have pointed out that teachers' negative personal and professional behaviour and the poor social image of the teacher and teaching profession are serious factors responsible for teachers' low status. These findings tally with those of Awanbor (1996) who reported that teacher trainees had a negative attitude towards teaching. He also stated that even those teacher trainees who had a positive attitude towards teaching had strong reservations which ranged from the poor social image of the teaching profession and the comparatively poor financial remuneration for teachers, to the general lack of encouragement by educational authorities.

Supporting the results of this study, Nwaokolo (1998) claimed that teachers have not done much to improve their image. He noted that teachers are perceived as stingy, guilty of an inferiority complex, always complaining, shabby dressing and inability to assert their rights or project their professional image when necessary. He concluded that in work ethics they are adjudged wanting and so their prestige is adversely affected.

The findings also indicated that the teaching occupation's semi-professional status contributes to teachers' low status. In the Nigerian context, research has made it abundantly clear that teaching has not become a full profession and this has lowered the occupation's status in society.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the image of the Nigerian teacher and the teaching profession.

The Nigerian government should provide teachers with a separate salary structure and allowances for such matters as teaching/research and examination supervision which should be incorporated into the separate structure. Teacher salaries and allowances should be paid promptly and promoted when due.

The teaching environment should be made conducive for effective teaching/learning to take place.

The teaching profession should resist the temptation and pressure to admit unqualified and under-qualified persons as teachers. Government should as a matter of urgency to set up the Teachers' Council as contained in its policy document. The Nigerian Union of Teachers and the Teachers' Council should ensure that the bachelor degree in education (B.Ed.) is made the minimum qualification to teach at both primary and post-primary school levels. The formal admission of teachers into the profession should be made by the Teachers' Council.

It is strongly recommended that cases of professional misconduct of members should be seriously dealt with by the Teachers' Council and the Nigerian Union of Teachers.

Conclusion

Nigerian teachers, this study has revealed, have become a shadow of themselves, having lost out in professional competence and social regard. However, in normal situations, the teacher, according to Ema (1972), is the spark that can fix the whole development process – the key master in the drive to progress. From the village square to the city's roundabout, the teacher can remain a model, an epitome of knowledge and one whose opinion is highly prized.

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BOOK REVIEW

Towards re-enchantment: Education, imagination and the getting of wisdom

Peta Heywood, Tricia McCann, Bernie Neville & Peter Willis (eds.)
Flaxton, Queensland: Post Pressed, 214 pages
ISBN: 1 876682 80 9, A$39-95
Available from Post Pressed or from CREEWBOOKS, Mawson Lakes
Campus, University of South Australia

This book is about challenging a failure of the imagination and heart, bedevilling and deadening, so it is argued, contemporary education. The spirit of learning, especially in institutional contexts, so the argument proceeds, has been deadened by a reduction of educational purpose to preparation for employability, narrowly defined, by an obsession with measurement, and assessment, to separate and categorise people. And by the marginalisation of diverse ways of knowing in the continuing power of reductionist science and the deification of reason. The Gradgrinds and bean-counters rule. Re-enchantment will come, so the argument proceeds, by recovering the

idea of learning as, potentially, a deeply emotional, relational, awe-inspiring and life-enhancing space. There is a poem, at the end of the book, which captures some of this spirit: 'come to the edge the voice demanded...life is not measured by the number of breaths you take... but what leaves you breathless.... with an unshakeable belief that the space between deeply shared human engagement would ignite the passion for better, not larger things to be done'. Here lies some of the enchantment of the book.

The preoccupation, in the main, is the crisis of schooling, but difficulties in adult and higher education get space too. The impetus behind the colloquium – which led to the book – lay with people, like three of the editors, Peta Haywood, Tricia McCann and Bernie Neville (from La Trope University), whose job is to teach about and research into schooling. A fourth editor, Peter Willis, works in the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work at the University of South Australia, and he brings the perspective of the adult educator. Schooling, we are told, from the outset, or institutionalised learning, need not be soulless, and members of the colloquium struggled with how to bring more soul back into learning and the collective conversation about what education is for. But words like soul or enchantment, can be illusive, even irritating to some, while 're-enchantment', as an idea, troubled some contributors, implying a previous golden age, or worse, an escape into primitivism, potentially reductionist and dangerous in its own right.

The book reminded me of similar conversations in other discursive spaces: in psychotherapy and health care, for instance. These conversations are concerned to bring back notions of the spiritual, of connectedness, oneness, of the importance of subjective and intersubjective life, and of love, at least of a non-narcissistic kind, into understandings of healing and well-being. If the long duree of Enlightenment positivist empiricism – with its retreat from the inner life – has given us a great deal, in both medicine and

education, it can also leave us feeling deadened. The rise of neo-liberalism, individualism, materialism, the worship of markets and the corporation, and an associated abuse of the planet, has added to a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction, emptiness and anxiety, which pervades our whole culture, including education and health care. This book, for these wider reasons, is timely.

Its 20 chapters are broad in scope and the authors employ a range of analytical frames, including Jungian psychology, eco- rather than ego-psychology, phenomenology, cultural, social and educational theory as well as more holistic perceptions of science, to build their case. The collection begins, appropriately, with an essay on the 'living death', which can characterise secondary education – a result, it is suggested, of oppositional thinking, duality and rationalism, abstraction and obsession with the future, producing much barrenness in the present for many teachers and students. There are chapters on transformative learning and the need for support but also challenge – the approach here is no soft, mushy escapism – from teachers, to enable students to go to an edge, where mind, heart and spirit can coalesce and risks taken. There is a chapter on the importance of reconnecting with the planet – and to see ourselves in a damaged relationship with it – where depression is a healthy not a pathological response to a greedy, manic world. Qualities of relationship lie at the heart of learning, at all stages and ages, and of wider struggles.

The quality of writing in the book can sometimes be variable and frustrating, unsurprising, perhaps, given the nature of the topic. Words and ideas were left, once or twice, bobbing on the surface of things. But there is much to savour in work that more often than not gets beneath the surface. Peter Willis' contribution on education for democratic educators is a characteristically engaging piece on how notions of transformation have to move beyond concerns with power relations in educational practice – as in critical theory – towards how an educator's sense of him or herself 'embodied in residual images

and 'self stories" can be deepened. Willis sees a central role here for what he terms 'imagistic process of reflection', shaping the underlying consciousness of self. He shows how film can be used – from *Army Intelligence* to *Dead Poets Society* – to speak to us in mythic, archetypal, imaginal ways, to help transform what we do and who we are as democratic educators.

Peta Heywood, in her chapter on transformative learning, reminds us, echoing the work of Karen Horney and Wilfred Bion, that cognition is not being disparaged, but requires imagination and heart to really join things up: to produce sustained thinking as against loose thoughts. Thinking, for instance, about learning itself, as a struggle to build connections across disparate experience, both outer and inner: social, psychological, relational, cognitive, affective, conscious and unconscious, and between self and the other. Andrea Gallant, in her essay on secondary education, touches on how mental/rational consciousness is obsessed with measurement; but how our understanding of measure has shifted from 'right inward measure in all parts and processes of the body', to an externally rationalised comparison. What was once viewed as a means to understand beauty and harmony has degenerated into a crude tool to separate and categorise people. David Tacey takes us into the importance of feeling for spiritual awareness; deadness lies in the educational neglect of interiority, a theme echoed in a number of chapters. Bernie Neville brings Gaia and the abuse of our planet into the equation, not the least in an ego-centric rather than eco-centric psychology. Marian de Souza's chapter on "Teaching for connectedness" raised, for me, the importance of space for rumination and the unconscious – space frequently denied in a manic world.

I have some concerns about the book. The emphasis on enchantment, as some of the authors also recognise, brings the danger of neglecting the shadow side of learning. Jan Allen, towards the end of the book, in a section of personal narratives, tells a story of escaping, just for

a while, from her home. Her story is about more than enchantment and white rabbits: it touches on escapes from conformity, on fear and loss, and of being lost, and the pain of growing up, and trying to break free. There is a danger of creating false heavens under the mantra of re-enchantment: of neglecting some of the disenchantment, pain, suffering, messiness, meaninglessness, disillusionment and despair that learning, of any deeper kind, encompasses. The struggle for soul and wisdom is more complex, including engaging with the envy, destructiveness, denial, illusions as well as defensiveness that can bedevil us all.

Where does this book lead us? The conversations continued after the colloquium, using email, and informed by a spirit of collaborative enquiry and the insights of interpretative phenomenology. Key words and phrases were selected from these messages, and woven into a narrative, poetic structure. If the material was diverse, there were also many common themes, as expressed in that final poem's passionate imagination. I recommend this book to educators, of all kinds, accepting the spirit of the editors' invitation that all of us need to engage with these issues: the book will speak to those, and we are many, who are tired of the illusion that a disembodied cognition and rampant materialism can deal with the confusions, conflicts, messiness, muddle, and anxiety bedevilling our world. And who are aware of the need to move beyond words, surfaces, abstractions, towards re-engagement, in ultimately loving ways, with each other, with the planet and ourselves. Recognising, always, our fragility and need for others, but also the insight, energy and determination that can come when we truly learn.

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BOOK REVIEW

Learning later

Brian Findsen has worked in the field of adult education for more than 20 years across a range of higher education organisations in NZ, Scotland and the USA. Findsen suggests that his book is a blend of adult learning theory, relating specifically to older adults, coupled with critical perspectives on social gerontology. As he notes, there is much complexity in the learning undertaken by older adults, and his book is an attempt at providing a clarification of issues and inherent complexities. In 1996, he co-edited *The fourth sector: Adult and community education in Aorearoa / New Zealand.*

The author aims this book at a wide range of readers, from both the gerontology and adult learning fields, and pulls together both

these areas under the one cover. This pulling together, he suggests, should be appealing to students of both disciplines as they often need to access a range of articles across each of them. In relation to our understanding of what constitutes learning, Findsen states that he uses the term 'learning' in its widest sense, so as to encompass the informal patterns of learning wherein adults 'acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and aptitudes' (p.11). At the same time, Findsen points out that there are many inequalities in participation of formal learning that can face the older adult who wants to take on this type of educational endeavour.

In the earlier part of the book, the author attempts to define who might comprise this 'older adult' cohort who undertake learning and, interestingly, Findsen appears to take a bet each way. He first suggests that they are adults in the 'third age', here citing Laslett's (1989) identification of the four ages. 'In the *third age* an individual usually exercises fuller autonomy in self-fulfilment, having been released from the trammels of the second age' (characterised by the pursuit of career and financial gain, forming families and taking responsibility for others). Yet Findsen also argues that the definitive age of an 'older learner' is less easy to define, as the previous 'young-old' adults of 55–65 appear to now be doing what middle agers used to do. Hence Findsen neatly sidesteps the issue of actual age figures.

The structure of the book guides the reader through a number of discussions on the philosophies and developments surrounding older adult education, gerontology, and understandings of the ageing processes to lifelong learning. The discussion then moves on to overview older adults and their differing levels of participation in learning and how these relate to various needs. He also examines the various types of institutions that offer learning for older adults and in one chapter provides three exemplars from Australia, Canada and the United States. The overview also ranges across other less formal ways in which learning takes place under the auspices of organisations

or institutions. Findsen follows general adult learning theory by suggesting that learning also takes place through interaction within the family, through the media, the church, community organisations and volunteering.

These initial chapters provide a useful basis for the following discussions on how social change is impacting on the experiences of growing older in western society. It is pleasing that the author has joined the (small but) growing number of other authors who are exploding some of the myths surrounding ageing and the stereotypical assumptions these myths create. For example, Findsen argues that the assumptions about older adult learners only accessing expressive rather than instrumental forms of learning – because it is "in retirement" that older adults are meant to have more time to devote to personal development (p.83) – is simply stereotypical. Given the recent and growing push by governments in Australia and elsewhere to keep older adults in the workplace, it would seem timely that this author is ready to explore the differing social and economic circumstances in which various older adults want to, or need to, access learning. Indeed, Findsen poses a number of questions around this issue, suggesting that while the jury is still out on what impact the removal of compulsory retirement will have on the workforce, the attitude of employers towards older adult workers is still a key stumbling point.

It is important to note that anyone looking for a straightforward 'how to' guide to devising programs for older adults or best ways to assist in the teaching and learning areas for older adults needs to look elsewhere. This book is very much a discussion of policy and conceptual issues that impact on the older learner, and its concluding chapter encourages a critical analysis of older adult educational provision. This in itself is a useful approach for any student of the disciplines of either gerontology or adult and workplace/vocational learning to undertake. The discussions encourage the reader to try

and view the various issues outlined from both the bureaucratic and the older learner stance. At the same time, the author provides a number of key suggestions as to how the reader might approach their own critical analysis of older adult educational provision and a critique of current attitudes towards educational gerontology. If nothing else, these suggestions should provide the reader within these disciplines with a great deal of food for thought.

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BOOK REVIEW

Family learning: Building all our futures

Family learning is not generally recognised as a field of practice in adult education in Australia although there is a strong adult education dimension to many of the strategies currently in place to support families. A great deal of federal and state money is being spent on initiatives such as the Stronger Families and Communities strategy ($225 million from the Commonwealth) or the Families First program in New South Wales ($55.6 million), but the educational input is far more likely to come from early childhood and school education professionals than adult educators. Programs like the highly innovative Family Learning Program at Para West in Adelaide are rare. In the United Kingdom, however, family learning is a recognised area of concern for adult educators and for government

policy makers looking to develop and support the practice of family learning as a tool for regeneration and social inclusion.

The National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) report, *Family learning: Building all our futures*, is presented as a tool for discussion and debate. It shows how the field has developed in the nine years since the first NIACE discussion paper on family learning, *Riches beyond price* (Alexander & Clyne, 1995), and its thirty two pages provide a useful overview of research and practice in family learning in the UK. Although the focus is clearly on the UK experience and therefore addressing issues arising from a very different historical and political context, there is a great deal of interest and relevance here for Australian adult educators.

Margaret Lochrie begins with a discussion of some of the research which provides evidence of the value of family learning for children, their families and the wider community. Research in this area is complicated by the wide variety of approaches and the range of different agencies involved in offering support to families, but it is clear that evidence is already available to show the positive outcomes of some of the more traditional forms of family learning such as family literacy programs and programs to encourage greater involvement of parents in the schooling of their children. Lochrie cites a major research report published by the UK Department for Education and Skills (Desforges and Aboucharr 2003, p.4):

> Its key finding is that spontaneous parental involvement, through "good at-home parenting", has a major effect on children's achievement. In the primary age range, the impact of parental involvement is so significant that it overshadows other differences associated with the quality of schools themselves.

Given this kind of research evidence, it is not surprising that the Blair government has made a firm commitment to "policies which are cross-cutting and which engage parents as partners in tackling educational under-achievement" (p.1).

However, family learning has the potential to be far more than a way of supporting schools in educating children and Lochrie has these broader perspectives firmly in view. She points out that concern for their children's education may bring disaffected adults back into contact with learning for themselves as well as their children and that

> [i]f intergenerational transmission of education success is a key driver of social class differences and persistent inequality, family learning as a driver for directional change assumes an added significance. (p.4)

As a way of portraying the various benefits of family learning to children, adults, families, schools and communities, Lochrie has developed a model, the 'Benefits of Family Learning Model', which maps a variety of "core" and "extended" outcomes. For example, the core benefit of "enhanced confidence" is seen to lead to "improved attitudes and behaviour" for children, an outcome which has positive impact on families, schools and the community. This model is a useful aid to understanding the potential, far-reaching effects of family learning initiatives and also makes it easier to identify possible questions for evaluation and research.

When Lochrie moves on to discuss the family learning dimension of various Blair government policy initiatives, an Australian reader will note the contrast in political approach where, for example, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy is seen as "central to tackling poverty and social exclusion" rather than a weapon for revealing the supposed failings of teachers. Some of the more detailed discussion here is very distinctive to the UK context and the plethora of acronyms can be bewildering for a non-UK reader (although they are generally spelt out in full on their initial use).

The development of "extended and full-service schools" offering health and welfare services, community education, childcare and out of school activities, is perhaps the most striking example of the kind of collaboration between public services that is necessary in order to provide effective support for families, especially families in situations

of poverty. In reviewing some of the literature about progress towards productive school family partnerships in the UK, Lochrie comments that

> [s]ome schools appeared to see activities involving parents and families as part of their efforts to provide additional support for children's learning, whereas in others there was a real attempt to bring about a transformation in attitudes and culture. In the case of the latter, extended schools activities were more likely to be associated with a multiple agency approach. (p.15)

The sections of the report dealing with social inclusion and the professional development needs of educators working in family learning programs hold particular interest for Australian adult educators. It is in the discussion of the possible links between family learning and social inclusion that Lochrie moves most clearly beyond the idea of family learning as a form of support for children's learning to suggest its wider potential for community regeneration:

> The case is a persuasive one. If family learning and other similar interventions lead people affected by social exclusion to become better qualified, to find work and to become more involved in schools and the community generally, it is not unreasonable to expect that, as a corollary, the community will become a better place to live. In this context family learning becomes a means of not only sustaining families and their children, but of transforming the lives of individuals and the community as a whole. (p.17)

In Australia, such an approach is already under way in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly in Cape York, but this work does not seem to connect very strongly with "mainstream" adult education.

When it comes to professional development, interesting questions arise about the broad range of skills and knowledge needed to work effectively in the family learning context. Understanding of child development and adult learning are clearly needed but maybe unreasonable to include in a single job description. However, the ability to understand and work collaboratively with professionals across a range of disciplines will certainly be important. The UK National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents and Family Learning were launched in October 2005 at the annual conference of the Parenting Education and Support Forum (www.parenting-forum.org.uk) and these standards could form a useful basis for discussion among the different professional groups involved in family support work in Australia. They should also be of interest to those universities offering academic programs in adult education.

So there is plenty of food for thought for adult educators and professionals concerned with supporting families to be found in this brief report. Since its purpose is to suggest policy directions, it may disappoint those looking for practical information about implementing family learning, but they can find this in other NIACE publications such as the excellent toolkit, *Walking ten feet tall*, and Jeanne Haggart's *Learning legacies: A guide to family learning* (NIACE 2000). Others may be frustrated by the lack of a clear definition of family learning but Lochrie resists the temptation to go down that pathway, pointing out cheerfully that "[f]amily learning has enjoyed an energetic rate of growth in the absence of agreement about its core definition and identity" (p.19). The concentration on parents and children as the sole focus of family learning also seems to miss out on the opportunity to encompass a wider view of the kinds of learning families require and in particular the issues now arising in many families as they confront the challenge of supporting elderly family members in a way that recognises their rights to dignity and independence. Hopefully Australian adult educators will have an opportunity before long to contribute such perspectives to our own national debate regarding the best way to promote and sustain productive family learning.

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JOURNAL SCAN

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Dhillon, J. (2005). 'The rhetoric and reality of partnership working', ***Journal of Further and Higher Education,*** vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 211–219.

The notion of 'partnership' is a cross-disciplinary concept that is used in a variety of contexts and defined in a range of ways. In this article, the author examines a partnership called the Midlands Urban Partnership which was developed between organisations committed to widening participation in post-16 education and training. The partnership included a university, six further education colleges, the local Learning and Skills Council, a careers guidance service, private training providers and voluntary groups. The partnership was established in 1997 and is remarkable for its longevity in the absence of any external funding specifically directed to sustaining the partnership.

The author reports on a qualitative study which aimed to explore the process of partnership working. Data were collected through non-participant observation of meetings and semi-structured interviews with members of the partnership board. Extensive document analysis of minutes of meetings, newsletters, discussion papers and actions plans was also undertaken.

The findings of the study reveal that the partnership rests upon multiple layers of collaboration between the various individuals responsible for bringing the partnership into life and sustaining it over time. Persons appeared to engage in various activities (bidding for external funding projects, joint curriculum development initiatives) according to their own individual motivations, as well as the motivations of the organisations to which they belonged. The 'lifecycle' of the partnership is traced through its development and expansion. After these stages, the partnership then went through a 'period of ambivalence' where its future was actively discussed by members. From this emerged a 'reinvigorated partnership'. The author attributes this lifecycle development of the partnership to two particular themes that emerged from the data.

The first of these themes relates to the reason why the partnership was initiated in the first instance – as a *pragmatic response to policy imperatives*. The actions behind this response gave impetus to the formation of the partnership and a rationale for collaborative activities in order that the partnership undertake functions required by these policy initiatives. Access to resources and funding, however, was not the sole reason for the partnership working.

Secondly, at a deeper level what held the partnership together was the '*shared values and trust*' that led to a range of 'intangible outcomes' accruing to members of the partnership – for example, sharing expertise between organisations where the partnership became a 'facilitator of learning'. Much of the work that produced these outcomes was not funded, but rather arose out of talking and networking among members of the partnership and a commitment to learning about the partnership itself. It appears that these values and commitment were able to transcend barriers such as a history of competition between organisations, enabling a shift in the

relationships between organisations. Members of the partnership were not unaware of some of the barriers to making the partnership work but all agreed that the end goal resulted in considerable gains for each organisation.

The author concludes that it is the 'social capital' (trust and shared values) that ultimately held the partnership together and that social relationships play an important part in the development and sustenance of partnerships over time.

Glade, A., Bean, R. & Vira, R. (2005). 'A prime time for marital/relational intervention: a review of the transition to parenthood literature with treatment recommendations', *The American Journal of Family Therapy,* vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 319–336.

Recently announced initiatives to amend the Family Law Act and fund a number of Family Relationship Centres across Australia has renewed interest in the development and implementation of initiatives to support healthy family life. One familiar intervention is parenting education, particularly those programs that aim to provide learning opportunities for individuals and couples at the time of transition into parenthood. This article provides an overview of the literature that the authors believe should inform attempts to develop such programs. This approach is based on the assumption that 'best practice' in prevention and early intervention is evidenced-based and should be directed at addressing those issues which are most likely to result in positive outcomes for participants.

Three specific groups of research are examined in making a case for the value of interventions aimed at the transition into parenthood. Research relating to changes and adjustment difficulties is first examined. The authors particularly highlight the extended nature of the transition to parenthood which can often begin with initial

thoughts about whether to conceive a child through to the early years of a child's life. This is a time of considerable change for individuals when they can question and change views about themselves and question their self-efficacy. Personal values, maturity and emotions can all be challenged during this period. The authors also point to changes in psychological states which can manifest most commonly in women as postpartum depression and the impact this has on an individual's ability to parent effectively.

The second theme in the research which is examined relates to the changes that occur to relationships during the transition period to parenthood – particularly how men and women view their role identities, the decline in marital/relational satisfaction that has long been associated with the birth of a child and the impact that the birth of a child can have on the division of household labour and paid labour. The link between the quality of the relationship and the impact that this has on an individual's ability to parent effectively is strongly featured in this analysis.

The third group of research studies examines the factors that contribute to positive adjustment to parenthood. These studies emphasise the mutual nature of the transition process in which the new child and the parents constantly influence each other. Factors such as gender, marital/relational satisfaction and the extent of social support are examined in detail as well as research that has tracked programs that had been developed to address specific factors.

The final section of the article draws out lessons from the research. The authors make suggestions for ways in which educators might recruit participants for education programs aimed at addressing the transition into parenting, the value of assessment in determining individual and couple needs in relation to the focus of these interventions and possible content for curricula. The authors conclude by way of caution, noting that much of the research that they examined relates to the experiences of white, largely middle

class, heterosexual couples and therefore may not be immediately applicable to other groups of individuals and couples.

Sanguinetti, J., Waterhouse, P. & Maunders, D. (2005). 'Pedagogies on the edge: researching complex practice in youth and adult community education', ***Studies in Continuing Education,*** vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 271–287.

This article reports on a research project which examined adult and community education (ACE) teachers reflecting on their teaching. For the purposes of this project 'teaching' was viewed as 'pedagogy'. While acknowledging the contested nature of this term, the authors argue that it provides a way of examining issues related to values, theoretical understandings and the nature of knowledge. Pedagogy was defined as 'the processes and dynamics of teaching and learning, including the purposes, methods, multiple literacies, relationships, strategies, management, physical environments, power relations and social contexts involved in learning' (p. 275). Another purpose for the project was to examine the issue of 'generic skills' that are currently the source of much debate and to better understand how these skills are fostered and developed with adult learners (using the framework developed by Kearns, P. (2001), *Generic skills for the new economy – review of research,* NCVER, Adelaide).

The aims of the project were four-fold:
- to investigate teaching and learning practices in ACE classrooms to better understand how ACE pedagogies contribute to the development of generic skills with learners;
- to document instances of 'good practice' in a way that would make transparent the kinds of pedagogies most associated with ACE;
- to identify ACE teachers' professional development needs in relation to the development of generic skills with learners; and

- to apply a model of professional development that invited ACE teachers to act as participant-researchers.

Data were collected for the project using a participatory action research methodology. The research involved the three authors of the article and 22 ACE teachers. After an orientation workshop, research participants agreed to keep a journal about their teaching practice in relation to generic skills development for their learners. The researchers met as small groups to discuss their journals and what they were learning about their teaching practice. The three authors (as lead researchers) also undertook observations of the teachers in their workplaces.

The data analysis yielded four main categories which were labelled the 'dimensions of ACE pedagogy' (representing the vertical axes of a matrix):
- the teacher;
- the teaching;
- the pedagogy of plACE; and
- the curriculum.

Under each of these dimensions a number of elements were listed. As this matrix was developed, elements across each of the dimensions could be grouped to create a set of principles (the horizontal axes of the matrix). These principles were:
- focus on learners and their needs;
- continuous learning to work and life;
- building learning on and within real-life contexts;
- sharing power – empowering people and communities; and
- many roads to learning.

The final section of the article then describes one dimension – that of the teacher in more detail. The authors conclude by arguing that their study provides a detailed analysis of the 'sophisticated repertoires' of teachers which should be documented and disseminated as an alternative 'discourse' in ACE.

Van De Veen, R. & Preece, J. (2005). 'Poverty reduction and adult education: Beyond basic education', *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* vol. 24, no. 5, pp. 381–391.

This article introduces a thematic edition of the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* examining the role of adult education in the alleviation of poverty. The authors note that where adult education has been featured in policies to address poverty, attention has usually focused on the provision of literacy or basic education. They argue that in order to make a significant impact on poverty adult education programs should also focus on agricultural extension programs, vocational education and training, community development and education for active citizenship. In examining this diverse range of strategies, the authors adopt an eclectic approach and embrace a range of ideologies, each of which offers a different pathway for the alleviation of poverty.

The article commences with an exploration of some of the key concepts associated with these forms of adult education including poverty, poverty reduction, learning and adult education. The authors then provide some examples of the broader range of adult education programs. Basic education needs to move beyond reading and writing to encompass ideas of:

- functional literacy – that is, the integration of reading and writing skills with other lifeskills that prepare individuals for the 'modernisation tendencies in developing countries';
- the development of learning critical communication – best exemplified by the literacy methods of Paolo Freire; and
- the inclusion of initial and non-formal vocational education.

The authors argue that formal provision of vocational education needs to move to more flexible models of development that overcome existing problems such as the lengthy duration of programs in schools and colleges and the tendency to train more people for vocations than

are needed, resulting in qualified people being frustrated by labour markets and economies where they are classed as 'working poor'.

In a similar view it is argued that understandings of alleviating poverty also need to embrace strengthening social capital but that this must not be interpreting narrowly as an interest in communitarianism – which is only concerned with the immediate geographical locale rather than addressing systemic issues associated with social isolation, poor social support networks and ineffective personal coping strategies brought about by disease and disability.

Finally, attention is turned to the work of those who advocate the alleviation of poverty by way of creating governance systems which actively guarantee the social rights and active participation of citizens.