AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

EDITOR'S DESK

Journals are interesting beasts. They vary so much in all manner of ways, yet fufil the similar function of disseminating knowledge to their interested subscribers. We reflect on the plethora of influences upon them: nature and interests of readers, predilections of editors and editorial boards, quality and flow of contributions, external policy decisions and so on. As this year begins to draw its curtain, it has just been announced that the Research Quality Framework (RQF) is indeed going ahead, and as editor, I am ruminating over its likely effects on journals, and in particular, this one ...

Since 1960, the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* has continued to function as a lively forum for adult educators in Australia and beyond. It has had a very interesting 46 year history — it's had its ups and downs, format changes, varying flavours of content etc. Undoubtedly, however, a continuing pattern has been that quite a high proportion of contributors has been university connected — staff or postgraduates — even though the bulk of work directly related to adult education has gone on in non-university settings. How I have wished that more practitioners would write for the journal!

In the late 1990s, I wrote in editorials that the journal was accepting refereed (double blind peer reviewed) as well as practice (non-refereed) papers. This was an attempt in part to enhance the quality of papers and in part to increase the flow of contributions. My rationale for the second of these reasons was that DEST was increasingly lifting the bar in terms of what publications 'counted' in the higher education system, and that university-connected writers were likely to by-pass the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* unless their papers were able to be refereed. Seven years on, the decision for both reasons has to a degree been vindicated. Peer refereeing (despite the extra work in managing the processes) has polished articles to a higher standard, and the flow remains adequate, though it could always be greater.

Now, the RQF will have a further influence on journals (among other aspects of our research lives). This is yet to be played out. However, we might speculate that Australian writers wanting brownie points will be increasingly searching for high impact journals. We might also speculate that those in higher education may reduce the quantity of their writing for publication and, instead, concentrate more exclusively on writing one or two top notch papers.

This journal, as it always has, will have to keep monitoring these influences and weighing what type of journal it desires to be. It has never pretended to be a 'sandstone' international publication. Rather, it strives to be one that appeals to its readers who are, in the main, academics and practitioners in adult education across Australia primarily interested in the sharing of practice, research and ideas within their discipline. *So ... please keep writing!*

In the last three issues, we have selected the counterpart issue from 40, 30, 20 years ago and briefly whetted the appetite on what the journal was like in those decades. This time, it is the turn of November 1996 (vol. v36, no. 3). I had taken over the editorship from Barrie Brennan by this time, and the Association had adorned the journal front cover in pale green with a single. 'Christmas tree' logo. The editorial was followed by six articles relating to professional development, training reform, Aboriginal students, adult education history (in PNG and Britain), fourth sector education (in Australia and NZ) and ACE management. There was also a feature article on Papua New Guinea, and a paper on an approach to evaluating research as developed by five Aboriginal health workers. Four book reviews were coordinated by Peter Willis and a journal scan was developed by Michele Simons. The subscription rate stood at A$30 in Australia, and there were three issues per year. The 1996 issue, in short, was not much different from today's — except that now we have a different format, the subscription has risen to A$70 and there are refereed in addition to practice papers.

This issue includes four refereed articles, all very different in their focus. **Stephen Black**, **Jo Balatti** and **Ian Falk** call into question the human capital skill emphasis in adult literacy and numeracy policy and practice and argue for greater recognition of social capital outcomes. Their claim is that social capital has to date been neglected or concealed, relative to human capital. **Robyn Benson** focuses on new learning technologies. She reports a survey of 309 students at Manchester Metropolitan University on their expectations and preferences for various modes of study. There was a strong preference for traditional study arrangements, though there was evidence of increased interest in alternative study options as experience of university life increased.

Peter Jones contends that social workers have an important, yet largely unexplored role to play in environmental practice. Thus social work education needs to provide more opportunities linking conceptual and practical environmental issues to social work's more traditional social justice concerns. He discusses one example of how transformative learning processes have been used in a social degree course. **Linda Rainey** focuses on an evaluation of an *Australians*

Working Together program conducted in South Australia for long-term, unemployed people. She explains how she tracked 49 participants through and out of the program, and grappled with the challenge of obtaining measures of resilience and employability.

The issue also highlights two brief research reports — one on language and cultural learning of Taiwanese students on study tour in Australia, the other an extract from a book being written on the history of The Parks High School in Adelaide. Six book reviews discuss books ranging from liturgical speech, transformative learning and language teaching, to teaching defiance and an audio exploration of lifelong learning in action.

I note that the last paragraph of my 1996 editorial can stand as the last one again for 2006:

> "I take this opportunity to wish all subscribers to this journal a blessed Christmas and a safe and productive new year. Thank you for your support as a contributor and/or reader [and I now add referee]. May I strongly encourage you to put pen to paper and send in contributions for publication in [2007]."

Roger Harris
Editor

Social capital outcomes: the new focus for adult literacy and numeracy courses

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Since the early 1990s in Australia, adult literacy and numeracy courses in vocational education and training (VET) have been focused on human capital outcomes, that is, on developing the literacy and numeracy skills believed to improve the economic performance of individuals, enterprises and the nation generally. However, some researchers have expressed the concern that these outcomes are insufficient in explaining the socio-economic impacts of these courses. This paper reports on a recent study of the social capital outcomes of adult literacy and numeracy courses (Balatti, Black & Falk, 2006). The findings indicate that it is a complex mix of both human and social capital outcomes from these courses that results in socio-economic impacts. The authors contend that social capital outcomes should be recognised and accounted for, along with human capital skills, in a reframing of adult literacy and numeracy policy and practice.

Introduction

By the word 'capital' we usually mean a stock of wealth which in turn can be employed to create yet more wealth (Macquarie Dictionary, 1992). Educational policy-makers and planners prefer to use instead the term 'resources', and in times of scarce and shrinking resources, the different types of resources (capital) and how they are developed and used become vitally important. Portes (1998:7) differentiates the three types of capital – economic, human and social – in the following way: '[w]hereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is in their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships'. This paper is about the role and value of the latter form of capital, a less tangible form of resource involving relationships and networks. In relation to adult literacy and numeracy courses, social capital outcomes have to date been relatively neglected.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, adult literacy and numeracy courses within the Australian vocational education and training (VET) system have focused exclusively on human capital outcomes. That is, these courses have focused exclusively on developing the adult literacy and numeracy skills which are believed to lead to greater economic productivity. The research reported in this paper reveals that this exclusive focus on human capital outcomes has concealed the presence of social capital outcomes from participation in adult literacy and numeracy courses and their contribution to socio-economic wellbeing.

This contention is timely in view of the current state of play in the field of adult literacy and numeracy. It is now fifteen years since the publication of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (DEET, 1991) and there are new agendas and new policy imperatives. In recent years there have been calls for a new national policy on language and literacy in which social capital features prominently (Castleton, Sanguinetti & Falk, 2001). Literacy forums have been grappling with the need for new definitions of literacy and numeracy (DEST/ANTA, 2004), and currently there are policy tensions as the field is influenced both by the need for community capacity models involving cross-sectoral partnerships (Wickert & McGuirk, 2005), and by industry and business groups promoting the concept of 'essential skills' (DEST/ANTA, 2005). In this fluid and contested environment, we argue that social capital outcomes from adult literacy and numeracy courses should be an important factor influencing policy and practice in this field.

Human capital outcomes

The concept of human capital should be well recognized by everyone who has worked in the VET system over the past fifteen or more years; it is the idea that improving people's education and training skills will automatically lead to greater economic productivity for individuals, enterprises and the nation generally. As Marginson (2005:4) recently explains, the focus is on the attributes of the educated (and in this paper, the more literate) individual: 'Educated individuals carry intrinsically higher productivity which becomes translated into higher earnings and in aggregate terms, greater economic production'.

This argument is applied especially in the field of adult literacy. The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) which has guided the field since the early 1990s states literacy is a 'pre-condition' for success in life, including obtaining work (DEET, 1991:1). Another federal government publication at the time utilizes a resources metaphor in claiming that literacy (and language) skills are 'just like farmland and goldmines, we can use them to help our country grow and prosper in the 21st century' (DEET, 1992:1). Thus these skills are seen to be investments which add to the economic value of people, to produce in effect, *economic* citizens (Marginson, 1997:147). It needs to be stated that the adult literacy and numeracy skills referred to

here are usually viewed as so-called 'basic' or 'functional' skills, that is, the set of autonomous literacy and numeracy skills that are taught in the formal schooling system (Falk & Guenther, 2002:4–5).

The argument for human capital outcomes constitutes the dominant discourse underpinning adult literacy and numeracy policy and provision in Australia (e.g. Black, 2002; Castleton & McDonald, 2002) and indeed internationally in the developed world as various Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) publications demonstrate (see McKenna & Fitzpatrick, 2004). In view of this underpinning rationale, it should be no surprise that since the early 1990s the federal government has given priority in its adult literacy and numeracy funding to jobseeker and workplace literacy and numeracy programs where a direct link with increased productivity and workplace performance can be assumed.

The need for both human and social capital outcomes

This focus on human capital outcomes from adult literacy and numeracy courses has been criticized for a number of reasons, including the argument that there is 'no across-the-board connection' between increased work literacy skills and economic productivity (Luke 1992:11). But the focus of this paper is not to critique the value of human capital outcomes, rather it is to argue that the exclusive focus on human capital outcomes is insufficient for explaining socio-economic impact or wellbeing which results from adult literacy and numeracy courses. An exclusive focus on human capital outcomes suggests firstly, that only a particular type of skills, vocationally relevant skills like 'basic' reading and writing, will lead to jobs and increased productivity, and secondly, that adult literacy and numeracy courses only produce these types of skills. Thirdly, it suggests that these job-related skills are the only ones that are of value. It is these claims we wish to counter in this paper.

Falk (2001) attacked the first claim several years ago in relation to federal government funded jobseeker literacy programs. He argued that for the desired employment outcomes to be attained, students need to acquire not only improved literacy skills in a technical sense (that is, the human capital outcomes believed to lead to greater productivity), but also social capital outcomes, including social networks involving bridging ties. He explained that getting a job can be as much about who people know and what networks they can tap into as the work-related skills they may possess. The other claims noted above, that adult literacy and numeracy courses only produce human capital outcomes, and that these are the only ones that are of value, are both addressed later in this paper in the description of our research study on social capital outcomes. Certainly, Falk's (2001) early social capital argument in relation to jobseeker literacy programs reflected much of the broader discussion in Australia and overseas involving the role of human and social capital in society, and in particular the role of adult and vocational education, and it is to this discussion we now turn.

Social capital

In our work we use the definition of social capital that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004:5) has adopted from the OECD (2001) which describes social capital as the 'networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or amongst groups'. When we talk about people acquiring social capital, we usually refer to the number and the type of groups (networks) they relate with, and the qualities of those relations, including levels of trust, and how people support one another. The point needs to be made that the concept of social capital remains contested. While social capital has gained considerable popularity within the last decade or more, there is lack of consensus over the precise understanding of the concept and how it can be applied in

adult education or VET generally (e.g. Ecclestone & Field, 2003; Kilpatrick, Field & Falk 2003).

Social capital has been popularised largely through the work of researchers such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1990) and Putnam (2000). The last two researchers in particular, have linked the extent of social capital in a community to the health of that community, and society generally. The greater the extent of social networks and membership of community organisations, and the higher the levels of trust within them, then the healthier society is considered to be. Thus social capital can be seen as a valuable resource with largely favourable benefits (though there can be negative social capital such as when the internal cohesion of a group acts at the expense of outsiders). This approach to social capital with its emphasis on networks and increased civic engagement is sometimes referred to as 'communitarian' and is influencing policy-makers in advocating education as a central part of social renewal (e.g. Gewirtz, Dickson, Power & Whitty, 2005).

Bourdieu (1986) represents a different interpretation of social capital insofar as he sees social capital as another form of capital (along with economic and cultural) which interacts within the processes of social reproduction to essentially maintain society's social class structure. Thus Bourdieu is considered to adopt a macro social class viewpoint on social capital while researchers such as Coleman focus on the micro – for example, particular neighbourhoods and disadvantaged schools. Our work to date has stronger affinity to that of Coleman and Putnam than to that of Bourdieu.

While the concept of social capital is not new, what is new is the extent and rate at which it is being recognised as important. Major international organisations such as the OECD (2001) and the World Bank (1999) are embracing the concept, and they are doing so precisely because it is seen to be linked, with human capital, to socio-economic development and well-being. Similarly in this paper,

we are not arguing human capital *versus* social capital, rather that social capital has to date been neglected or concealed relative to human capital. In fact, both forms of capital need to be recognised for their combined contribution to socio-economic well-being. As researchers have pointed out, the skills and knowledge of human capital are only able to be brought into socio-economic circulation through social means (Balatti & Falk, 2002). Certainly in Australia, at a national political level, social capital is now on the agenda (Costello, 2003) and national agencies are developing the concept further (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006; Productivity Commission, 2003).

In recent years there have been many studies which have sought to unravel the links and relationships between human and social capital, especially in terms of the wider benefits of adult learning, both formal and informal (Field, 2003; Kilpatrick, Field & Falk, 2003; Schuller, Preston, Hammond, Brasset-Grundy & Bynner, 2004). Australian studies feature prominently, indicating in particular the role of adult learning to community development (Kearns, 2004), and especially rural communities (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). But these relationships are complex. Balatti and Falk (2002), for example, explain how the learning process, seen in terms of change in knowledge and identity resources, both draws on and builds social capital in making socio-economic contributions to communities. Their findings are based on a study of ten adult community education (ACE) programs in Victoria (Falk, Golding & Balatti, 2000) which demonstrates the significance of ACE programs in producing socio-economic benefits at individual and community levels and how social capital is produced at each of these levels. One of the conclusions of the study is that social capital production is the *modus operandi* of ACE and not a by-product. This encourages the question: if social capital within ACE programs can result in important socio-economic benefits, what role might adult literacy and numeracy courses have?

A research study: social capital and adult literacy and numeracy courses

Recently the authors of this paper undertook a Commonwealth-funded research study to consider specifically the social capital outcomes of adult literacy and numeracy courses and the implications they may have for policy and practice (Balatti, Black & Falk, 2006). What follows is a summary of the main elements of the research project and its findings.

Methodology

A total of 57 students and 18 teachers were interviewed from adult literacy and numeracy courses in Sydney (two student cohorts), Townsville and Darwin. All courses were 'stand-alone' literacy and numeracy courses conducted in formal VET institutions. The student cohorts were chosen to represent a wide spectrum of demographic groups, including young (under 25), non-English speaking background, Indigenous and mature-aged (45 years and older) people. Taped, semi-structured interviews were conducted with these students and teachers and these interviews were later transcribed in full.

In the interviews with students, questions sought information about why they participated, what they got out of the course, and what they were involved in now that they weren't before. Students were also asked if they could attribute the changes, if any, to participation in the course. Teacher interviews sought information about the outcomes that their students experienced and the pedagogies that they used to encourage such outcomes. Because the teacher data about outcomes were secondary data, they were not used in the analysis described below

From the interview transcripts, data segments were extracted that referred to outcomes. A segment may have consisted of a few short words; the segment was much longer if the student chose to talk of outcomes in story form. Data were then analysed and coded according to two frameworks. The first framework was based on an application of the ABS (2004) social capital framework (see Figure 1). A segment was considered to be evidence of social capital outcomes if it contained evidence of one or more changes listed in the third column of Figure 1.

The second framework was based on the OECD (1982) indicators of socio-economic well-being and comprised the eight bands or categories of: health; education and training; employment; time and leisure; command over goods and services; physical environment; social environment; and personal safety. This table was used to code the data segments according to their location in one or more bands.

Figure 1: Application of ABS Social Capital Framework (ABS 2004)

Groupings	Elements	Indicators for the Study
		Does participation in adult literacy and numeracy courses result in:
1. Network qualities (including norms & common purpose)	• Trust and trustworthiness • Sense of efficacy • Acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness	1a. Changes in trust levels?
		1b. Changes in beliefs about personal influence on his/her own life and that of others?
		1c. Action to solve problems in one's own life or that of others?
		1d. Changed beliefs and interaction with people who are different from the student?
2. Network structure (including norms & common purpose)	• Size • Communication mode • Power relationships	2a. Change in the number and nature of attachments to existing and new networks?
		2b. Change in the number or nature of the ways that student keeps in touch with others in their networks?
		2c. Change in the nature of memberships?
3. Network transactions (including norms & common purpose)	• Sharing support • Sharing knowledge, information and introductions	3a. Change in the support sought, received or given in the networks to which the student is attached?
		3b. Change in the ways the student shares information and skills, and can negotiate?
4. Network types (including norms & common purpose)	• Bonding • Bridging • Linking	4a. Changes in the activities undertaken with the main groups with which they interact?
		4b. Changes in the activities with groups that are different from the learner?
		4c. Changes in the links that the student has to institutions?

Findings and discussion

The study found that almost 80% of the interviewed students experienced social capital outcomes from participating in the courses. There were many examples of changes in their lives which resulted from this participation, and by way of illustration we include some of them below:

A 17-year-old boy now has his mother's trust because she knows he spends his days at TAFE, unlike previously when he was truanting from school (*change in trust levels within his family network*).

A 50-year-old woman originally from China can now make phone calls to institutions such as banks and the local council to lodge complaints or make enquiries (*change in action to solve problems in one's life, and also bridging ties*).

A 47-year-old Indigenous man has made new friends with people in the course and with whom he socialises out of class time (*change in the number or nature of attachments to existing and new networks*).

A 15-year-old boy is now prepared to help out at home in a reciprocal relationship with his parents, whereas in the past he resisted being told what to do and was hardly at home (*change in the nature of memberships in networks, e.g. power differential).*

A 50-year-old Indigenous man no longer relies on others to read his mail for him (*change in the support sought, received or given in networks*).

A 54-year-old woman originally from Columbia is now able to be more effective at work because she can communicate and work in teams better (*bonding ties*).

A 50-year-old woman originally from China and who has been attending classes for two and a half years recently went on a cruise

knowing that fellow passengers would not be Chinese. She would have refused to do so earlier (*bridging ties*).

Of course, students also reported human capital outcomes such as an improvement in their spoken and written English skills. Participants also spoke about the impact of the course in the whole range of bands of socio-economic well-being. The categories most evident from the OECD list were social environment, command over goods and services, and health.

The dual coding of the data segments on the social capital framework and the socio-economic well-being framework revealed that social capital outcomes do impact on socio-economic well-being. This suggests a relationship exists between the social capital outcomes that students experience and the socio-economic impacts that participation in adult literacy and numeracy courses has on their lives (see Balatti, Black & Falk 2006: 20–27). This suggests that social capital outcomes are, in fact, socially and economically worthwhile.

The interviews with students revealed some interesting mixes of human and social capital outcomes. Take the case of Bill, a 17-year-old student, who participated for a year in an adult literacy and numeracy course for young people. His teacher commented that he was making very little progress in completing his course modules and actually improving his literacy and numeracy skills. Thus in terms of human capital outcomes he was achieving little. But in terms of social capital there appeared to be strong outcomes, as Bill explained:

> Teachers at school treat you like you're six years old. When I was at school I figured that older people, adults who had power over me, would all be like that, but now once I come here I seen that they can treat you as though ... treat me the way they should ... So I treat them with a lot more respect, because I realise they are not all like that... Although they have authority over us, they speak with us as equals, sort of makes it easier to speak to authority figures.

According to Bill, as the result of now being able to speak with 'authority' figures, he has obtained work in casual jobs such as landscaping and bricklaying and he can mix better with adults and other students. In his case, it was the social capital outcomes from the adult literacy and numeracy course that led to important socio-economic impacts (indicators of well-being) including work and an improved social environment.

With another student in a mainly non-English speaking background adult literacy and numeracy course, the social/human capital mix was different. Amy, a Chinese-born student with a teenage son, improved her language skills sufficiently to enable her to interact better with her son's school. She can now write absence letters independently, attend parent/teacher meetings and negotiate for her son to receive English as Second Language assistance. In her case therefore, human capital skills (better English language skills) led to social capital outcomes (relating better with teachers at her son's school).

The findings indicate that the role that social capital outcomes have in the learning process and their relationship to socio-economic impacts are complex. In some cases, the social capital outcomes experienced were as a result of the language/literacy skills acquired; in other cases (for example, Bill) where social capital outcomes were experienced, there was no evidence in improvement in language/literacy skills; and yet in others, it was not possible to determine if the social capital outcomes were a prerequisite to the student achieving human capital outcomes or vice-versa. Furthermore, not all students experienced the same social capital outcomes. There were differences within each demographic group and between groups. For example, for the young people in the study, social capital outcomes were derived principally from changes in network qualities (see Figure 1), while for the Indigenous students, changes in network transactions were most significant. Finally, another set of outcomes related to self-confidence and self-esteem that students reported in this study but not discussed

here adds further complexity to how social capital outcomes are produced. These aspects require further investigation, as does the issue of **how** these outcomes occur.

Conclusions: the need to reframe adult literacy and numeracy policy and practice

This research represented an initial foray into analysing social capital outcomes from adult literacy and numeracy courses and aspects of our methodology were necessarily problematic. To begin with, as we have indicated, the concept of social capital is relatively new and contested. The means of measuring social capital are in the process of development and frameworks for accommodating the type of qualitative data produced in our study were not available, thus we adapted our research data to a recent framework designed by the ABS primarily for large scale quantitative and survey-style research work. Furthermore, the ABS social capital framework excludes outcomes such as self-confidence and self-esteem that are considered social capital resources in other interpretations of social capital (e.g. Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000).

Further, the outcomes documented by the respondents can be challenged as being a conclusive assessment of what they got out of their courses. For example, for ease of access, students were interviewed during their participation in the courses and not following completion. Thus, we cannot determine if students experienced further social capital outcomes after completing the course. This can only be established through longitudinal studies which to date have not been funded within the adult literacy and numeracy field in Australia (the one exception is Griffin & Pollock, 1997).

We consider the findings from the above research project are significant in that they provide evidence of the extent of social capital outcomes from formal VET adult literacy and numeracy courses and

their contribution to socio-economic well-being. Notwithstanding the above qualifications, we consider this research is particularly important in view of the prevailing policy directions currently influencing both the adult literacy and numeracy field and the broader fields of adult learning and VET. In the former, the role of social capital would appear to be having an influence with the call for greater cross-sectoral partnerships in order to improve community capacity building and to address issues of social exclusion (for example, ACAL, 2004; Figgis, 2004; Wickert & McGuirk, 2005; Black *et al.*, 2006). And in the VET field generally, there is now a strategic focus not just on business and individual skills but on building inclusive and sustainable communities (ANTA, 2004) and promoting partnerships (Billet *et al.*, 2005; Guenther *et al.*, 2006). Developing social capital is seen to be integral to these policy directions (Kearns, 2004, 2005).

In view of the research evidence on social capital outcomes from adult literacy and numeracy courses outlined in this paper and in light of the current policy imperatives briefly outlined above, we suggest there is the need to reconsider adult literacy and numeracy policy and practice and to reframe them by taking into account the role of social capital. As we indicated at the beginning of this paper, it is timely that we should focus on these issues because currently there are significant debates over the role of literacy and numeracy in society, including how literacy should be defined and the relative focus on the needs of local communities and specifically those of business and industry communities (ACAL, 2006). In light of the research on the social capital outcomes from adult literacy and numeracy courses described in this paper, the social capital perspective should play a significant role in informing these debates.

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Alternative study modes in higher education: students' expectations and preferences

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Two features of the recent higher education environment, which have implications for university policies and practices, are the changing nature of the student population and the impact of alternative study modes, particularly as a result of developments in new learning technologies. Both of these features have implications for the characteristics of students as adult learners.

This paper outlines an exploratory survey which was undertaken to investigate students' preferred modes of study, including full- and part-time, conventional and online, university-based and workplace-based, in order to inform university planning in this area. The study indicated that, although there was some willingness by students to engage with non-traditional options, particularly as experience of these options or of university life increased, the strongest preferences were for traditional study arrangements.

Many students were more interested in increasing the flexibility of their study through extended access to the campus and improved timetabling than through studying off-campus and/or online.

Introduction

Two features of the recent higher education landscape which have major implications for university policies and practices are the changing nature of the student population and the impact of alternative study modes, particularly as a result of developments in learning technologies. An increasingly diverse student body, resulting from broader participation both nationally and transnationally, would appear to be well-served by the availability of alternative study modes, especially given the effects of economic and social factors which result in students spending more time away from the university campus. The potential of e-learning in offering extension of traditional face-to-face methods of university teaching, both by enriching the resources available in the classroom and by facilitating learning beyond the campus and outside the previous constraints of the university timetable, seems to be favourable to the changing nature and circumstances of the student population.

This paper reports on an exploratory study to examine students' expectations and preferences in relation to conventional and alternative study modes, in order to help inform university planning in this area. The study is placed in the context of some of the recent factors affecting student demographics in higher education, and the options available in terms of modes of study, both of which relate to characteristics of students as adult learners.

The changing student population

The changing nature of the student population in higher education is a transnational phenomenon with a number of dimensions.

For example, Australian studies which indicate increasing disengagement as a feature of the undergraduate student experience highlight a need for universities to rethink policies and practices which support student learning (McInnis, 2001). While a range of reasons for this disengagement are suggested, participation in paid employment as a distinctive feature of the undergraduate experience is one factor that brings younger students into the domain of the adult learner. In addition, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) note, from a North American perspective, the blurring of younger and older students in higher education, resulting in the greying of the student population, and also the blurring between higher education, business and industry, which adds to the diversity of the student body. In the United Kingdom, increasing diversity has been explicitly supported through the emphasis on widening participation by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2001) which provides for the needs of students with a broad variety of previous life and educational experiences. The aim 'to promote and provide the opportunity of successful participation in higher education to everyone who can benefit from it' is seen as 'vital for social justice and economic competitiveness' (HEFCE, 2006, p.1). A further impact on the changing nature of the student population has occurred through opportunities for borderless education (Cunningham, Ryan, Stedman, Tapsall, Bagdon, Flew & Coaldrake, 2000), with teaching across national boundaries encouraged by social, political and economic factors as well as the availability of new learning technologies.

Each of these factors suggests an increasing need to consider the requirements of students as adult learners, either because they are adults biologically, legally, socially or psychologically, or because study away from the campus requires levels of autonomy and self-direction frequently associated with adult learning, but not always with higher education. These factors also suggest the potential relevance of a range of study modes to support diversity in the time, place and pace of study, reflecting the diversity of forms of adult education in the current global era (Foley, 2004).

Alternative study modes

Concurrent with the diversifying student population has been the recent acceleration in the availability of alternative study modes, fuelled especially by the rapidly expanding availability of new learning technologies. Before these advances, distance education provided a major form of access to higher education for adults unable to participate in campus-based education, with ideas from adult education strongly underpinning its nature and focus. In the 1980s, Moore (1985) judged that the field of adult education was about thirty years ahead of distance education in its development, thus providing the opportunity for relevant ideas from adult education to flow into evolving theory in distance education. However, the arrival of electronic forms of communication reduced the significance of distance as new alternatives became available to on-campus as well as off-campus students, facilitating the concept of convergence with the mainstream which was already on the agenda of distance educators (Smith & Kelly, 1987).

During the 1990s, increasing use of the term 'flexible' to describe learning and learners using the new technologies brought concepts previously associated with distance education closer to the mainstream offerings of higher education institutions. In 1993 the term 'flexible' appeared in the title of a study by Van den Brande for the European Union in which flexible learning was explained as enabling learners 'to learn when they want (frequency, timing, duration), how they want (modes of learning), and what they want (that is, learners can define what constitutes learning to them)' (1993:2). Van den Brande stated that 'these flexible learning principles may be applied at a distance', in which case the term 'distance learning' was used. In 1994 the term 'flexible' began appearing in titles from the Kogan Page Open and Distance Learning Series (Mason, 1994) and was also used in the title of the report by Wade, Hodgkinson, Smith and Arfield (1994) on outcomes at the Loughborough University of Technology resulting from funding by the 1992 United Kingdom Universities Funding Council Program on Flexibility in Higher Education. The concept of flexibility also spread quickly through the higher education sector in Australia. For example, by 1999 Monash University was committing to 'a flexible and student-centred learning and teaching environment' as part of its strategic direction for the next 20 years (Monash University, 1999:12).

More recently, the focus of flexible learning has been on the implementation of e-learning. In Australian universities there was evidence of widespread adoption of online learning technologies by 2001 (Bell, Bush, Nicholson, O'Brien & Tran, 2002). Within the vocational education and training (VET) system, the Flexible Learning Toolboxes Project , a component of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000–2004, was established to provide quality online resources as the basis of qualifications and accreditation in the Australian VET sector (Oliver, 2001). Subsequently, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (2005) has reinforced the new directions offered by e-learning, explaining it as the application of electronic media in the delivery of flexible student- and client-focused VET programs. In the United Kingdom, the implementation of e-learning, defined as 'learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communications technology (ICT)' is supported by a number of higher education and further education initiatives (Joint Information Systems Committee, 2004, p.1). The emergence of the term 'blended learning', as a form of e-learning which involves 'the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences', and sits beside 'enhanced classroom' or 'fully online' opportunities (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004:96), illustrates the range of study modes now available to on-campus students. Facilitating this has been the rapid uptake of learning management systems such as WebCT® in universities across the world (Coates, James & Baldwin, 2005) which assist teaching staff in providing students with anywhere and anytime access to learning environments, whether they are studying on- or off-campus.

The purpose of the study outlined in this paper was to conduct an exploratory survey in a higher education institution to determine students' expectations and preferences in relation to some of these alternative study modes to assist university planning, particularly given the increasing diversity of the student population. This initial survey was seen as a means of highlighting trends to inform possible directions for further exploration or intervention. Potentially fruitful avenues for further research included qualitative examination of the experience of learning and the factors affecting perceptions of this experience, in order to consider the impact of aspects of learners' characteristics and contexts on their attitudes to learning, and especially to include the circumstances of the e-learner. For example, investigations could draw on experiential learning concepts (Kolb, 1984), particularly those that acknowledge the relationship between learners and the learning milieu (Boud & Walker, 1991), or they could be based on perspectives related to the student learning research movement in higher education (Marton, Hounsell & Entwistle, 2005). Previous studies had shown the need to prepare students for the experience of flexible learning to counter possible negative reactions to it (Benson & Kiegaldie, 2001), and had suggested the benefits of research based on a number of theoretical viewpoints unified through a process of critical reflection for understanding and improving this experience (Benson & Kiegaldie, 2002).

Context of the study

The study was undertaken at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in the United Kingdom based on the need acknowledged in its revised *Learning and Teaching Strategy and Action Plan* (MMU, 2002) for the university to accommodate aspects of the changing higher education environment. Such aspects included the increasing age and heterogeneity of the student body, and the accompanying likelihood that an increasing number of learners would wish to study flexibly and employ the most appropriate media, including communications and information technology. The immediate impetus for the study was the intention documented in the

Corporate Planning Statement 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 to survey students to 'explore their preferred mode(s) of study: full-time and part time, conventional and online, university-based and based in the workplace' (MMU, 2004a:6) in order to identify ways of increasing learning opportunities at the university. Formalising a more flexible approach to learning appeared timely because of the increasing use of WebCT® for supporting blended learning since its introduction at the university in1998, and because of evidence of 'non-traditional' chararacteristics of the student body in terms of gender, mode of attendance and age on entry to higher education, which included the following:

- of the 32,955 students enrolled in the 2002–2003 academic year, 41 percent were male and 59 percent female (for all years and for first years);
- the mode of attendance for 39 percent of all students (36 percent of first years) was sandwich or part-time; and
- the age on entry of 51 percent of all students (56 percent of first years) was 21 years or over. One third of all students were 25 years and over when they began their studies (MMU, 2004b).

Method

The exploratory study was planned as a means of gaining an initial 'snapshot' of students' expectations of and preferences for alternative study modes and approaches by surveying a targeted sample of students covering all faculties, campuses and study modes, and a range of year levels from undergraduate (UG) to postgraduate (PG), beginning with Foundation year (F) students, in groups of 30–50 students. A brief paper-based survey was administered at the beginning or end of a selected class in the first term of the 2004–2005 academic year. To accommodate a range of understandings about what alternative study modes might involve, the survey covered aspects of learning and teaching which might be seen as 'traditional' and 'non-traditional', and a range of media and communication options which could be associated with more flexible learning modes.

As a result, the survey form contained:

- 20 statements requesting 'yes/no' responses about students' expectations and preferences, in the current year, on options ranging from conventional, campus-based study to online and/ or off-campus study in relation to four aspects of learning and teaching:
  - ways of receiving information and advice
  - ways of communicating with staff and other students
  - ways of undertaking learning activities
  - ways of completing assessment tasks;
- 11 media and communication options which students were asked to rate on a five-point scale (conventional audio-tapes; conventional video-tapes; web-based audio resources; web-based video resources; web-based interactions; resources on CD-ROM; telephone communication; email communication; web-based discussion; web-based chat; mobile phone text messaging); and
- two open-ended questions which asked for suggestions about expanding study options.

Some basic biographical information was also requested: gender, current mode of attendance and age on entry to the current study program.

Quantitative information on expectations and preferences was compiled to show frequency distributions of responses, while the mean scores of the ratings for the 11 media and communication options were calculated. Responses to the two open-ended questions were compiled and coded to identify major themes.

Results

Survey sample, response rate and biographical information

The survey sample and response rate are summarised in Table 1. Two groups were larger than the intended sampling size: in the case of first year Computing, the intention had been to sample either students enrolled in Computing *or* Software Engineering *or* Multimedia Computing but as these groups are combined at Level 1, all were included; the second year Sport with Exercise and Coaching Science group was larger because the lecturer expressed an interest in including this group in the survey as a variation in study mode was being trialled with these students who attended tutorials but not lectures. Anecdotally, the major factors affecting response rates appeared to be the number of students attending the class in which the survey was administered, and the scheduling of administration — with a better response achieved if it occurred at the beginning rather than the end of a class. Mode of attendance is indicated by the following abbreviations: FT = full-time; SW = sandwich; and PTDE = part-time/distance education. However, a number of students whose enrolment information indicated sandwich mode recorded their enrolment as full-time, while five third year Childhood Studies students who were enrolled as full-time students indicated they they were studying part-time. Table 2 provides the gender and age on entry of respondents (with NR indicating no response).

Table 1: Survey sample and response rate

Level	Mode	Program	Students enrolled	Respondents (and response rate)
UG-F	FT	LLB (Hons) Foundation	41	24 (58.5%)
UG-1a	FT	BA (Hons) Communication	52	22 (42.3%)
UG-1b	SW	BSc (Hons) Computing	200	106 (53.0%)
UG-2a	SW	BA (Hons) Clothing Design Technology	41	28 (68.3%)
UG-2b	FT	BSc (Hons) Sport with Exercise and Coaching Science	72	35 (48.6%)
UG-3a	FT	BA (Hons) Photography	39	35 (89.7%)
UG-3b	FT	BA (Hons) Childhood Studies	30	30 (100%)
PG-2	PTDE	MA Human Resource Management (Year 2)	37	29 (78.4%)
TOTAL			**512**	**309 (60.4%)**

Table 2: Gender and age on entry of respondents

Level	Program	Gender			Age on entry				Respondents
		M	F	NR	<21	21–24	25+	NR	
UG-F %	LLB (Hons) Foundation	11 45.8	11 45.8	2 8.3	16 66.7	5 20.8	0 -	3 12.5	24 100
UG-1a %	BA (Hons) Communication	3 13.6	1 81.8	1 4.6	15 68.2	4 18.2	0 -	3 13.6	22 100
UG-1b %	BSc (Hons) Computing	88 83.0	13 12.3	5 4.7	72 67.9	18 17.0	7 6.6	9 8.5	106 100
UG-2a %	BA (Hons) Clothing Design Technology	5 17.9	23 82.1	0 -	18 64.3	8 28.6	1 3.6	1 3.6	28 100
UG-2b %	BSc (Hons) Sport with Exercise and Coaching Science	23 65.7	12 34.3	0 -	29 82.9	3 8.6	2 5.7	1 2.9	35 100
UG-3a %	BA (Hons) Photography	12 34.3	23 65.7	0 -	15 42.9	13 37.1	7 20.0	0 -	35 100
UG-3b %	BA (Hons) Childhood Studies	1 3.3	29 96.7	0 -	13 43.3	10 33.3	6 20.0	1 3.3	30 100
PG-2 %	MA Human Resource Management	6 20.7	23 79.3	0 -	0 -	4 13.8	24 82.8	1 3.5	29 100
TOTAL %		**149 48.2**	**152 49.2**	**8 2.6**	**178 57.6**	**65 21.0**	**47 15.2**	**19 06.1**	**309 100**

Table 1 indicates that the sample contained a larger percentage of part-time or sandwich mode students than the 2002–2003 university enrolment (53% compared with 39%), largely because of the size of the first year Computing group. Table 2 shows that the gender balance of respondents was more even than the 2002–2003 university enrolment, although there was substantial variation within program areas, with the predominantly male Computing group again having

a disproportionate impact. The age on entry of the students sampled was also lower than the 2002–2003 university enrolment.

Expectations and preferences

Table 3 provides the responses by group (using the code for year levels from Tables 1 and 2) and then by all respondents to the 20 'yes/no' items on expectations and preferences. The number of students who expected (E) each statement to be true in the current academic year is listed above the number of students who indicated that they would prefer (P) it to be true. The three highest scores for expectations and preferences by each group appear against a shaded background, while the scores indicating the widest gaps between expectations and preferences are indicated in **bold.**

As the table demonstrates, overall the most frequently mentioned expectations were:

- communicating with staff and other students by attending regular on-campus tutorials
  (Q6: 83.8%)
- receiving most information and advice by attending regular on-campus lectures
  (Q1: 82.5%)
- undertaking most assessment tasks as assignments and examinations submitted on paper
  (Q15: 73.1%)

The most frequently expressed preferences were:

- communicating with staff and other students by attending regular on-campus tutorials
  (Q6: 82.2%)
- receiving most information and advice by attending regular on-campus lectures
  (Q1: 81.2%)

- receiving most information and advice from handouts and lecture notes on paper
   (Q4: 73.1%)

Overall, the largest gaps between expectations (**E**) and preferences (**P**) were:

- receiving most information and advice by combining occasional on-campus lectures with studying online
   (Q3: **E**: 45.3%; **P**: 60.8%)
- receiving most information and advice by studying online
   (Q2: **E**: 33.3%; **P**: 46.9%)

undertaking most assessment tasks as assignments and examinations submitted on paper
(Q15: **E**: 73.1%; **P**: 60.5%)

Table 3: Frequency distribution of students' expectations and preferences

	Statement	Code	UG-F	UG-1a	UG-1b	UG-2a	UG-2b	UG-3a	UG-3b	PG-2	All
		n=	24	22	106	28	35	35	30	29	309
1	I will receive most of the **information and advice** I need from teaching staff by attending regular lectures on campus.	E	21	18	95	28	34	6	28	25	255
		%	87.5	81.8	89.6	100	97.1	17.1	93.3	86.2	82.5
		P	23	16	90	26	28	19	23	26	251
		%	95.8	72.7	84.9	92.9	80.0	54.3	76.7	89.7	81.2
2	I will receive most of the **information and advice** I need from teaching staff by studying online using a program website.	E	16	8	36	9	9	19	5	1	103
		%	66.7	36.4	34.0	32.1	25.7	54.3	16.7	03.5	33.3
		P	18	10	54	9	15	15	12	12	145
		%	75.0	45.5	50.9	32.1	42.9	42.9	40.0	41.4	46.9
3	I will receive most of the **information and advice** I need from teaching staff by combining occasional lectures on campus with studying online using a program website.	E	13	15	56	16	12	15	8	5	140
		%	54.2	68.2	52.8	57.1	34.3	42.9	26.7	17.2	45.3
		P	18	15	64	12	19	28	19	13	188
		%	75.0	68.2	60.4	42.9	54.3	80.0	63.3	44.8	60.8
4	I will receive most of the **information and advice** I need from teaching staff through handouts and lecture notes provided on paper.	E	16	11	79	26	22	9	27	21	211
		%	66.7	50.0	74.5	92.9	62.9	25.7	90.0	72.4	68.3
		P	20	19	79	23	23	20	21	21	226
		%	83.3	86.4	74.5	82.1	65.7	57.1	70.0	72.4	73.1
5	I will receive most of the **information and advice** I need from teaching staff through handouts and lecture notes provided online.	E	13	8	50	14	18	24	9	5	141
		%	54.2	36.4	47.2	50.0	51.4	68.6	30.0	17.2	45.6
		P	19	11	61	10	21	21	17	16	176
		%	79.2	50.0	57.6	35.7	60.0	60.0	56.7	55.2	57.0
6	I will **communicate** with staff and other students on program-related matters by attending regular tutorials on campus.	E	22	17	88	24	34	25	30	19	259
		%	91.7	77.3	83.0	85.7	97.1	71.4	100	65.5	83.8
		P	22	18	84	21	31	32	25	21	254
		%	91.7	81.8	79.3	75.0	88.6	91.4	83.3	72.4	82.2
7	I will **communicate** with staff and other students on program-related matters by participating in regular online tutorials available from my program website.	E	14	1	40	6	4	1	7	1	74
		%	58.3	04.6	37.7	21.4	11.4	02.9	23.3	03.5	24.0
		P	17	2	48	5	8	6	15	7	108
		%	70.8	09.1	45.3	17.9	22.9	17.1	50.0	24.1	35.0

Table 3: Frequency distribution of students' expectations and preferences (continued)

	Statement	Code	UG-F	UG-1a	UG-1b	UG-2a	UG-2b	UG-3a	UG-3b	PG-2	All
		n=	24	22	106	28	35	35	30	29	309
8	I will **communicate** with staff and other students on program-related matters through a combination of email messages and attending regular tutorials on campus.	E %	17 70.8	19 86.4	69 65.1	19 67.9	23 65.7	26 74.3	17 56.7	16 55.2	206 66.7
		P %	17 70.8	16 72.7	72 67.9	16 57.1	23 65.7	26 74.3	28 93.3	22 75.9	220 71.2
9	I will **communicate** with staff and other students on program-related matters by participating in a combination of occasional on-campus tutorials complemented by online tutorials available from my program website.	E %	15 62.5	9 40.9	43 40.6	10 35.7	6 17.1	10 28.6	9 30.0	5 17.2	107 34.6
		P %	16 66.7	10 45.5	55 51.9	15 53.6	9 25.7	9 25.7	19 63.3	7 24.1	140 45.3
10	Most of the **learning activities** I undertake in my program will be individual tasks I am required to undertake as part of my on-campus tutorial work.	E %	20 83.3	14 63.6	81 76.4	24 85.7	18 51.4	24 68.6	22 73.3	18 62.1	221 71.5
		P %	16 66.7	10 45.5	75 70.8	21 75.0	17 48.6	25 71.4	19 63.3	20 69.0	203 65.7
11	Most of the **learning activities** I undertake in my program will be group-based tasks I undertake with other students as part of my on-campus tutorial work.	E %	12 50.0	17 77.3	43 40.6	13 46.4	23 65.7	4 11.4	13 43.3	20 69.0	145 46.9
		P %	16 66.7	17 77.3	47 44.3	16 57.1	20 57.1	8 22.9	14 46.7	18 62.1	156 50.5
12	Most of the **learning activities** I undertake in my program will be practical tasks I complete on-campus in areas similar to the workplace (e.g. computer labs, studios).	E %	9 37.5	10 45.5	79 74.5	24 85.7	19 54.3	25 71.4	7 23.3	12 41.4	185 59.9
		P %	19 79.2	13 59.1	82 77.4	25 89.3	24 68.6	29 82.9	7 23.3	13 44.8	212 68.6
13	Most of the **learning activities** I undertake in my program will be individual online tasks completed via my program website.	E %	17 70.8	6 27.3	36 34.0	9 32.1	1 02.9	0 00.0	0 00.0	2 06.9	71 23.0
		P %	12 50.0	5 22.7	38 35.9	7 25.0	3 08.6	3 08.6	8 26.7	7 24.1	83 26.9

	Statement	Code	UG-F	UG-1a	UG-1b	UG-2a	UG-2b	UG-3a	UG-3b	PG-2	All
		n=	24	22	106	28	35	35	30	29	309
14	Most of the **learning activities** I undertake in my program will be group-based online tasks completed via my program website.	E %	13 54.2	9 40.9	30 28.3	5 17.9	0 00.0	0 00.0	1 03.3	1 03.5	59 19.1
		P %	11 45.8	7 31.8	30 28.3	6 21.4	4 11.4	1 02.9	8 26.7	8 27.6	75 24.3
15	Most of the **assessment tasks** I undertake will be assignments and examinations submitted on paper.	E %	19 79.2	19 86.4	67 63.2	22 78.6	30 85.7	10 28.6	30 100	29 100	226 73.1
		P %	19 79.2	18 81.8	57 53.8	20 71.4	26 74.3	7 20.0	22 73.3	18 62.1	187 60.5
16	Most of the **assessment tasks** I undertake will be assignments and examinations submitted online via my program website.	E %	11 45.8	6 27.3	63 59.4	6 21.4	1 02.9	4 11.4	0 00.0	1 03.5	92 29.8
		P %	11 45.8	6 27.3	65 61.3	8 28.6	7 20.0	2 05.7	12 40.0	16 55.2	127 41.1
17	Most of the **assessment tasks** I undertake will be a combination of assignments and examinations submitted on paper and online via my program website.	E %	18 75.0	14 63.6	80 75.5	11 39.3	8 22.9	7 20.0	3 10.0	4 13.8	145 46.9
		P %	19 79.2	10 45.5	72 67.9	11 39.3	13 37.1	7 20.0	15 50.0	20 69.0	167 54.1
18	Most of the **assessment tasks** I undertake will be practical tasks I complete on-campus in areas similar to the workplace (e.g. computer labs, studios).	E %	12 50.0	11 50.0	71 67.0	27 96.4	20 57.1	25 71.4	5 16.7	4 13.8	175 56.6
		P %	17 70.8	12 54.6	79 74.5	23 82.1	23 65.7	27 77.1	6 20.0	12 41.4	199 64.4
19	Most of the **assessment tasks** I undertake will be practical activities I complete off-campus in the workplace.	E %	14 58.3	10 45.5	43 40.6	10 35.7	3 08.6	23 65.7	11 36.7	6 20.7	120 38.8
		P %	15 62.5	13 59.1	53 50.0	9 32.1	8 22.9	22 62.9	10 33.3	15 51.7	145 46.9
20	Some of the **assessment tasks** I undertake this year will be simulated practical tasks I complete online via my program website.	E %	16 66.7	7 31.8	44 41.5	4 14.3	2 05.7	2 05.7	2 06.7	1 03.5	77 24.9
		P %	16 66.7	5 22.7	57 53.8	6 21.4	1 02.9	1 02.9	8 26.7	7 24.1	105 34.0

Media and communication options

Using the same code for year levels, Table 4 provides the mean ratings for the media and communication options which were scored as follows: very important (5), important (4), neutral (3), not very important (2) and unimportant (1). Scores of 4.0 or above are highlighted in **bold.** Although not all respondents answered every question, most did: from the total of 309 respondents, answers on individual items ranged between 297 and 303. As indicated, overall the preferred option was email communication (Q28: 4.5) and the least favoured option was conventional audio-tapes (Q21: 2.5), with other items scored highly by individual groups including telephone communication, resources available on CD-ROM and web-based interactions.

Table 4: Preferences for media and communication options

	Media and communication options	UG-F	UG-1a	UG-1b	UG-2a	UG-2b	UG-3a	UG-3b	PG-2	All
		Mean scores (scale: 5 to 1)								
21	Conventional audio-tapes (cassettes)	2.8	3.0	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.2	2.5
22	Conventional video-tapes (cassettes)	3.1	3.2	2.5	3.6	3.4	3.1	3.5	2.7	3.0
23	Web-based audio resources	3.4	3.9	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.3
24	Web-based video resources	3.7	**4.0**	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.2	3.6	3.5
25	Web-based interactions (e.g. quizzes, simulations)	**4.2**	3.9	**4.0**	3.2	3.6	2.9	3.3	3.1	3.5
26	Resources available on CD-ROM	**4.0**	**4.3**	3.9	3.4	3.9	3.6	**4.2**	3.9	3.9
27	Telephone communication	3.6	**4.3**	3.2	3.5	3.7	3.5	**4.3**	**4.0**	3.6
28	Email communication	**4.4**	**4.6**	**4.4**	**4.0**	**4.4**	**4.8**	**4.7**	**4.5**	**4.5**
29	Web-based discussion (bulletin boards)	**4.0**	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.9	3.6	3.3	3.7
30	Web-based chat (real time)	3.6	3.4	3.5	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.2	2.9	3.2
31	Mobile phone text messaging	3.6	3.5	2.8	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.4	2.8	3.0

Expanding study options

Recurring comments about improving the convenience of study arrangements referred to the need for improvement in timetabling, support, communication and access to on-campus resources. Comments on timetabling were made by students from all groups and usually referred to a need to make the most efficient use of time spent on-campus. For example:

> More condensed days. I also work full-time and would rather have three days of seven-hours of lectures, than the current five days with large, inconvenient gaps in between lectures and tutorials (UG-1b).

> Timetables which meant the student had blocks of study rather than units spread liberally throughout the whole week (UG-3b).

Comments on support and communication referred to increased access to and responsiveness from teaching staff which was also a widely felt need. For example:

> I would like more tutoring rather than more individual study (UG-1b).

> We have been told we aren't allowed to talk directly to tutors, even if they are free, but have to use email. Frustrating if you have a quick query (UG-3a).

Comments on improving access to on-campus resources were particularly evident from students who were not studying full-time, but were not restricted to them. For example:

> Flexible hours to work after uni e.g. later access to computer rooms so that assignments may be completed (UG-2a).

> Longer working hours until 7pm–8pm in departments (UG-3a).

> Library opening hours during holidays extended. As a part-time student, working full-time, access to library is extremely limited (PG-2).

Comments from most groups indicated that improving the convenience of study arrangements through on-campus study was preferable to online options. For example:

> Less internet use [and] more old-fashioned style interaction (UG-1a).

The main exceptions to this theme were from the Level 2 Sport with Exercise and Coaching Science students and the postgraduate Human Resource Management students who were already experiencing some non-traditional aspects of teaching. The latter group was especially interested in online submission of assignments.

A number of students referred to the benefit of a mixture of modes in their final comments about study mode options but some strong preferences for on-campus study continued to be evident from most groups:

> Students should not be left so independently and be expected to complete tasks (UG-F).

> I prefer mixing with actual people and attending lectures in my learning (UG-1b).

> Prefer on-campus because help is more readily at hand (UG-2b).

> I prefer lectures and studio practice as, if I have too much individual study time, I get bored on my own and lose motivation to work (UG-3a).

Summary of individual group profiles

The main themes which emerged from the individual student groups are summarised below.

Foundation Law. The most frequently expressed preferences by these students were for conventional learning and teaching methods, though there was some interest in online components and four of

the media and communication options were highly rated (email communication, web-based interactions, resources on CD-ROM and web-based discussion). Additional student support through improved contact and information channels was important to some of the students, along with improved timetabling.

Communication. Conventional study preferences were also evident from these Level 1 students. However, email communication, resources on CD-ROM, telephone communication and web-based video resources were highly rated. The need for more support and improved timetabling was also expressed by some of these students.

Computing. The preferences of these Level 1 students followed a similar pattern to those above. However, there was some interest in studying online, undertaking simulated practical tasks online and participating in some online tutorials. Email communication and web-based interactions were highly rated. The need for improved timetabling and more support were again mentioned (along with improved computer facilities).

Clothing Design Technology. The main preferences of these Level 2 students again related to traditional study options, though there was some interest in complementing on-campus tutorials with online tutorials. The gaps between expectations and preferences were generally small in this group. Email communication was again highly rated. More flexibility through improved timetabling and/or extended hours was of interest to a number of students, while the need for improved contact arrangements resulted in some mention of the use of mobile phones and the internet.

Sport with Exercise and Coaching Science. This Level 2 group continued the preference for conventional study modes. However, studying online, receiving information and advice online, and submitting assignments and examinations online received some support, and once again email communication was highly rated.

From the comments of this group, there appeared to be more interest in increasing computer use and/or online opportunities than in the above groups, perhaps reflecting the non-traditional study arrangements they were already experiencing. While several commented on their preference for on-campus study, the benefit of a mixture of modes was expressed by some.

Photography. This Level 3 group was the first to include studying online (combined with occasional lectures on campus) amongst the top three preferences, though all other highly expressed preferences were for conventional options. Yet again, email communication was highly rated. The need for increased contact with tutors appeared to be a major issue with some concerns expressed about increased flexibility through improved timetabling and extended hours. There were several comments about the advantages of a mixture of modes and various uses of the web.

Childhood Studies. This Level 3 group also included one non-traditional option amongst their top three preferences (communicating with staff and other students through a combination of email messages and attending regular tutorials on campus). There was also considerable interest in submitting assignments and examinations online and combining occasional on-campus lectures with studying online. Email communication, telephone communication and resources on CD-ROM were all highly rated. Improved communication, increased access to resources and improved timetabling were issues raised through student comments, while the value of mixed modes and off-campus study was raised by some.

Human Resource Management. For the postgraduate group (who were enrolled as part-time/distance education students), communication through a combination of email messages and attending regular tutorials on-campus appeared among the top three preferences. There were also some quite marked preferences by a

number of students for online submission of assessment tasks, for receiving information and advice from teaching staff online, and for receiving handouts and lecture notes online. Email communication and telephone communication were highly rated. Use of the online environment for increasing the convenience of study arrangements received a number of comments, along with ways of improving the time spent on-campus and improved access to the campus (through extended hours). Several comments again highlighted the value of a mixture of modes and the value of online options, though a few students preferred on-campus study.

Discussion

Table 3 demonstrates the high level of both expectations and preferences in relation to on-campus lectures and tutorials which was evident across most groups. Conventional expectations and preferences were also evident in relation to receiving information and advice from handouts and lecture notes provided on paper, and undertaking assessment tasks as assignments and examinations submitted on paper. While these results indicate that alternative study modes were not a high priority amongst many of the students who were sampled, there were positive responses to some of the media and communication options (especially email communication) and a number of students recognised the advantages of a mixture of modes. It is also notable that, overall, where the largest gaps between expectations and preferences occurred, the preferences supported non-traditional options.

From the individual group profiles, it is possible to see some evidence of increased interest in alternative study options as experience of university life increases (though the Foundation year students and the first year Communication students rated more media and communication options highly than other groups). An important issue across a number of groups was that increasing flexibility by extending

access to the campus and by improving timetabling (especially to remove gaps) appeared to have a higher priority than studying off-campus and/or online. Also important to many students was the availability of support. For alternative study modes to be increased in the earlier years of university study, it appears that there would need to be careful attention given to the support structures accompanying them and the way they are introduced. Even though more students may be enrolling at a later age, it is likely that they still need time to develop their confidence at university and they may not adapt to online options as readily as younger students. These are important issues to consider in relation to the development of students as adult learners. The interest in minimising gaps in the timetable, to reduce time spent at the university, does suggest that students want to 'optimise' their time on-campus which appears to provide an opening to explore the use of well-supported alternative modes.

The acceptance of some alternative study options by students who were already exposed to non-traditional experiences provides evidence of openness to other arrangements despite the strong support for conventional teaching. Exposure to different teaching approaches may have combined with their experience of university life and, in the case of the postgraduate group, their maturity as postgraduate students, to support this. However, more information is needed to explore the impact and interplay of variables such as age, level of study, experience of alternative modes, life experience and discipline-specific preferences.

Conclusion

Overall, while the responses of these students indicated some willingness to engage with non-traditional study options, the strongest preferences were for traditional study arrangements. It is acknowledged that this may reflect to some extent the demographics of the particular student sample, and/or the student population of

the university itself which is drawn predominantly from Greater Manchester and other areas of the North West of England (MMU, 2004b). To broaden understandings about students' expectations of and preferences for alternative study modes, a follow-up study at an Australian university, especially one that included transnational teaching, would add further dimensions to consider, along with strategies to obtain qualitative information about the learning experience. Given that flexible learning options are frequently associated with off-campus and/or online learning, it would be particularly instructive to determine whether or not there is wider evidence of the preferences expressed by many of the students in this study, who saw increased flexibility in terms of tailoring on-campus arrangements to meet their requirements.

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Considering the environment in social work education: Transformations for eco-social justice

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Addressing the global environmental crisis will require both personal and social transformation. Adult environmental education will clearly play an important role in such transformative processes, but needs to broaden its target audience beyond those already involved in, or committed to, environmentalism to include other potential allies in this process. Social work is a profession characterised by philosophical and practical concerns with social justice and human rights. This paper argues that social workers also have an important, yet largely unexplored, role to play in environmental practice. To realise this potential, social work education needs to provide opportunities for the linking of conceptual and practical environmental issues to social work's more traditional social justice concerns. This will involve the incorporation of forms of adult environmental education and ecological literacy into social work curricula. The author discusses how transformative learning approaches have been utilised in a subject on socio-environmentalism as part of a social work degree course.

Introduction

There are many different suggestions as to how humanity should go about raising awareness of, and addressing, the current global environmental crisis. These range from a straightforward 'head in the sand', 'business as usual' approach through to a focus on developing technological fixes for current and future problems. Adherents of 'green' philosophical positions have called for a broader reaching response, arguing the need for major transformation to occur both at the personal and social levels (Eckersley, 1992: 45–46). Education is generally seen as one of the key strategies in moving towards such transformation, and many authors have noted the important role of environmental education in this transformative process (Robottom, 1992; Chapman, 1999: 8; Feinstein, 2004: 110). This linking of environmental education to social transformation points to the inherently political nature of this work (Chapman, 2004: 26).

At a broader level, arguments have been made for the development of new ways of thinking, or as Orr (1992: 85) describes it, the development of an 'ecological literacy' – a deep sense and practical knowledge about humans' interconnectedness with the non-human world. Similarly, eco-spiritualist Berry (1999) calls for an urgent awakening to the wonder of the earth as the way forward to the recognition of a single community that includes human and non-human components. Orr suggests that such a process is radicalising in that 'it forces us to reckon with the roots of our ailments, not just their symptoms' and 'leads to a revitalization and broadening of the concept of citizenship to include membership in a planetwide community of humans and living things' (1992: 88).

However, such social transformation will also require a very practical expression, particularly in the sense of working with individuals and communities to identify relevant environmental issues and to make the required changes as part of this transformative agenda. Clover (2002: 2) notes that the goal of 'greater sustainability will not be met without critically engaging voters, consumers, workers, employers, landowners, media representatives, community activists, nurses, lawyers, doctors, poets and musicians...who play such key roles in society'. To this list could be added social workers. Social work is a profession with a practical orientation underpinned by a foundation of moral philosophy, core values and ethical concerns. The profession has often placed an emphasis on the person-in-environment dynamic, but this has largely entailed an awareness and analysis of the social, rather than natural, environment. However, there is a strong tradition within social work of 'social change' oriented practice, at individual, community and social policy levels.

The development within the social work profession of a clear understanding and analysis of the links between the traditional concerns of practice, such as social justice and human rights, and issues concerning the environment and the current environmental crisis, will be necessary if social work as a profession is to begin to engage at a meaningful level with these issues. The place of environmental education within social work degree programs should therefore be of interest to social workers, environmental educators and environmental activists, particularly if it is seen as a process that promotes the development of both individual and profession-wide ecological literacy.

Social work education is already characterised by a focus on experiential, critically reflective approaches to learning. Transformative learning may present useful conceptual and practical tools for approaching social work education in a manner that promotes an explicitly social change oriented foundation for practice (Jones 2003: 72). This is particularly relevant in the case of those few subjects within social work programs that have a focus on environmental education, as such subjects often involve challenging preconceived notions of human beings' place in the natural environment and overcoming attitudes of apathy or indifference regarding the relevance of the environment to social work practice.

Social work

Social work as a professional activity is notoriously difficult to describe or define. In part, this is due to the wide range of areas in which social workers practice and the diversity of social and personal issues with which social workers are concerned. However, it is also partly because of the dynamic nature of the profession, as its role in society constantly changes and adapts in response to wider social and ideological forces. O'Connor, Wilson and Setterlund (1995: 13) provide a useful, if conventional, definition of the focus and purpose of social work, stating that:

> ... [t]he focus of social work and welfare practice is the interactions between individuals and social arrangements. The purpose of practice is to promote the development of equitable relationships and the development of individuals' power and control over their own lives, and hence improve the interactions between individuals and social arrangements.

This practice takes place across a range of domains, including practice focused at the individual, group, community and social policy levels.

A distinguishing characteristic of social work is that it can be thought of as a 'normative' profession, with its foundations in moral philosophy and theories of ethics. Historically, the core values and philosophical positions that have underpinned social work, and shaped specific forms of practice, have changed over time both in response to developments in knowledge and techniques and as a reaction to the socio-political context within which practice occurs

(Chenoweth & McAullife, 2005: 50–52). It is generally agreed that contemporary, western social work identifies its core values around concepts of social justice and human rights.

For social work practitioners, an acceptance of social justice and human rights as philosophical foundations for practice stems from a recognition that some people are disadvantaged and oppressed through no fault of their own but rather as a result of the way that power, opportunities and resources are distributed in society (that is, 'structural disadvantage'). Furthermore, it is recognised that this situation is inequitable and unacceptable because it denies people's inalienable rights such as those set out in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (Ife, 2001). Such a philosophical basis is also a call to action, pointing to a model of social work that is committed to addressing social injustice and upholding human rights in practice (Allan, Pease & Briskman, 2003; Mullaly, 1997). However such models often demonstrate a lack of concern for the natural environment and ecological justice.

Social work and the environment

Within social work, and particularly in the practice domain of community work, there has always been some interest in environmental issues but this has often related more to an interest in social movements, and social change generally, than a particular desire to link the natural environment and social work concerns (Coates, 2003). Besthorne (2003: 1/20) notes that within social work 'the natural environment is generally ignored, under valued or simply becomes the benign backdrop for fundamentally important personal processes'. Such an interest in the environment, where it has emerged, has usually been associated with a critical or radical approach to social work.

There is ample evidence to suggest that there is a clear and logical fit between the traditional social justice concerns of social work

and concerns for the natural world, and these connections are often demonstrated in the language used within the profession. The rhetoric of sustainability, for example, has penetrated thought within the profession, particularly in domains such as community development work (see, for example, Payne, 1997: 205; Hoatson, 2003: 26). However, the use of the concept in these instances often reflects a restricted view of sustainability as a fundamentally social process. Quinn (2003: 42) provides a typical example of this usage in discussing sustainability as a goal of practice:

> Sustainability, in the sense of 'sustaining developments into the future', is an important goal of community development. These developments are not just material ones like hand-pumps and school buildings, but also the more intangible such as technical and managerial knowledge, capacity for community collaboration and co-operation, networks and connections, and re-ignited hope.

While these aspects of sustainability are important, they do indicate that the concept, as adopted within social work, has been somehow alienated from its relationship with the natural world and is often used in a less than 'holistic' manner.

In this sense social work can be criticised for having followed many other disciplines down the track of separating concerns with humanity from concerns with the natural world. In discussing this disciplinary isolation in general, Orr (1992: 134–135) claims that the result is 'a pervasive anthropocentrism that magnifies the role of humans and their ideas, art, institutions, and technology relative to soil, water, climate, wildlife, resources, geography, energy, disease and ecosystem stability'. In social work, in particular, it has manifested in the attitude that sees concerns for the natural environment as, for the most part, separate from the traditional and central concerns with the purely human and social.

There have been, over the years, some practitioners and academics who have sought to establish clearer connections between the concerns of social work and those of environmentalism (for example, Berger & Kelly, 1993; Hoff & McNutt, 1994). Much of this work has focused on articulating the inextricable links between social and environmental concerns or, more particularly, between the concepts of social and ecological justice (Ife, 2002: 25; Hillman, 2002: 349; Keefe, 2003). Within this debate, there has been a particular focus on the importance of ecological and environmentalist perspectives for the practice domain of community development. Cannan (2000: 365–366), for example, explores the areas of congruence and tension between environmentalism and traditional models of community development, arguing that:

> ... the environmental crisis demands a response from community development with its commitment to democracy and equity. We should not leave 'the environment' to the green movement given its sometimes muted but nevertheless evident anti-human stand, and we should incorporate certain green ideas and practices if we are to respond effectively to the current global situation.

While it can be argued that the perception of an anti-human bias amongst environmentalists simply fuels the social/nature division, nevertheless Cannan's argument points to the need to place the environment firmly on the social work education agenda.

Social work education

In its most simplistic sense, social work education aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for effective practice. The historical and socio-political context clearly influences the definition of 'effective practice' and therefore the nature of social work education will be heavily dependant upon whether the goal of social work is seen to be the maintenance and reproduction of the existing social system or, alternatively, the making of a contribution to social transformation.

In seeking to incorporate an awareness and analysis of the global, environmental crisis into social work education, and to develop a clear vision for the ways in which social work might contribute to the addressing of this crisis, it is the second, transformative approach that is of greater interest. An explicitly change-oriented approach to this issue echoes the concerns of the green philosophical positions mentioned earlier and is congruent with both the transformative perspective on environmental education and the critical or radical tradition in social work. Such an approach also mirrors social work education's long-standing interest in educational practices based around critical reflection, experiential learning and the creation of dialogical spaces (Gibbons & Gray, 2002; Ruch, 2002; Dempsey, Halton & Murphy, 2001; Steiner, Stromwall, Brzuzy & Gerdes, 1999; Gould & Taylor, 1996; Fook, 2002). A number of authors have noted the importance of expanding notions of social justice to include ecological justice within school curricula (Bowers, 2001; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004: 48) and this call for the application of an expanded notion of socio-ecological justice also resonates at the level of higher education in general, and social work education in particular (Noonan & Thomas, 2004; Thomas, Kyle & Alvarez, 2000; Keefe, 2003; Coates, 2003). In seeking to advance the inclusion of environmentalist concerns in social work education, transformative learning is an approach that is highly congruent with social work's core values.

Transformative learning theory

Transformative learning theory has developed as a way of understanding the nature of learning and, in particular, learning experiences which involve a significant shift in the 'meaning structures' of learners. While it has drawn on insights and scholarly

work from a wide range of fields and theorists, two major streams can be identified. The clearest expression of the cognitive processes involved in transformative learning can be found in the work of Mezirow (1991, 1995, 2000). Mezirow's work in this area offers an explanation of how people come to change their understanding, or world-view, as it relates to self and society. Such an explanation is of interest to environmental educators as they seek to understand how and why people acquire an interest in, or concern for, the environment, and what helps in translating this interest into action for change. Mezirow argues that through processes of acculturation and socialisation we acquire 'meaning perspectives', culturally defined structures that act as perceptual filters. As Taylor (1998: 6–7) notes, '[t]hese meaning perspectives support us by providing an explanation of the happenings in our daily lives but at the same time they are a reflection of our cultural and psychological assumptions'. These meaning perspectives are underpinned by sets of unquestioned assumptions about the way the world is, including assumptions about our place in, and relationship with, the natural environment.

In Mezirow's model, transformative learning occurs when there is a significant change in a person's meaning structures, a perspective shift. Such a shift may be the result of a cumulative process, but often occurs as a consequence of a 'disorienting dilemma' that leads a person to reflect critically on the assumptions that underpin their meaning structures. An example of this might be an experience that leads a person to reflect on their alienation from the natural environment. Such reflection may lead to recognition of discontent and the subsequent trial and adoption of a new meaning perspective, incorporating new knowledge, roles, skills and relationships (Mezirow 1995).

As Cranton (2002: 64) notes:

> At its core, transformative learning theory is elegantly simple. Through some event, which could be as traumatic as losing a

job or as ordinary as an unexpected question, an individual becomes aware of holding a limiting or distorted view. If the individual critically examines this view, opens herself to alternatives, and consequently changes the way she sees things, she has transformed some part of how she makes meaning out of the world.

The second stream of work around transformative learning is concerned less with the cognitive processes involved and more with the rich context in which such learning may occur and how this learning is characterised by the relationships between people, between people and their environment, and a range of other dynamics such as power, gender and spirituality. Morrell and O'Connor (2002: xvii) describe transformative learning in this sense as involving a shift in consciousness that includes

> ... our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awareness, our vision of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.

This perspective on transformative learning is particularly interesting for both social work and adult environmental education because of the importance placed on the social context in which change occurs and the inclusion and recognition of other dynamics, such as gender and spirituality, which have been longstanding areas of focus in both fields (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003: 102; Clover, 1995: 245). It also echoes the calls for greater ecological literacy and new, broader definitions of community discussed earlier (Orr, 1992; Berry, 1999). The inclusion of relations of power is of particular significance in social work education where such analyses are central to the critical or radical approach to practice. Transformations are also seen as taking place in a gradual, incremental way, often over longer periods of time, as opposed to the dramatic shifts that often characterise transformation

in the Mezirow model, although disorienting dilemmas may still serve as catalysts for this process.

Socio-environmentalism and community work

In a subject currently being taught in the social work degree program at James Cook University, 'Socio-environmentalism and community work', students are encouraged to develop an understanding of the relationship between environmental and social issues, and to explore ways of responding to such issues using a community development approach. By the time students reach this subject they have spent three years learning about social issues and social work responses to them. These include such traditional social justice concerns as poverty, domestic violence, racism, homelessness, substance abuse and so on. The environment and green political thought is discussed in earlier subjects but not in any great depth, and many of the students entering this subject often have little or no strong feelings about, or extensive knowledge of, environmental issues. This position is summed up by one student who, reflecting on her attitude prior to starting the subject, said her thoughts were 'socio-what?! I'm a social work student, I want to work with people not trees, why do I need to know this stuff? We should be looking at people's problems, not problems in the environment'.

While there is no prescription for the facilitation of transformative learning, a number of authors have identified techniques that may increase the potential for such learning to occur (for example Cranton, 2002). The subject adopts an explicitly transformative approach and this is manifest in a number of aspects of the teaching and learning processes. The first of these is the recognition of students' existing meaning structures and the role that these play in mediating the learning process. In practice, this involves not simply acknowledging the existence of the meaning structures that students bring with them into the classroom, but providing opportunities for

students to reflect upon, and articulate these as a core part of their educational experience. The creation of a 'safe' group environment characterised by acceptance and support is crucial to this process.

The second aspect is the intentional use of the 'disorienting dilemma'. The ability to articulate an existing meaning structure is important but does not necessarily mean that a student will engage in a critical analysis of the nature of that structure. To facilitate this, there needs to be some impetus for critical reflection. In the subject under discussion, students are taken out of the classroom and into the community to look for, and begin to develop an analysis of, socio-environmental issues. During a walk around a local housing estate, for example, students are asked questions about issues such as where our electricity comes from; where our waste goes; and why the houses are designed and situated as they are. While these are straightforward questions, they often act as catalysts for revealing students' alienation from the natural environment and operate to open up the nature and source of this alienation as a topic for discussion and critical reflection.

Another example of a disorienting dilemma often emerges as a result of ecological footprinting exercises. An ecological footprint for a population is 'the area of productive land and water (ecosystems), which is required on a continuous basis to produce the resources consumed, and to assimilate the wastes produced by that population, wherever on earth that land may be located' (Rees 2002: 73). In other words, in a footprinting analysis, human consumption is converted into a single index, expressed as an area of land, that demonstrates sustainable or unsustainable patterns (Lenzen & Murray 2001: 230). Students examine some footprinting analyses for populations and institutions, but also do an individual footprint analysis, usually with fairly confronting results. However, it is not the result of the footprinting *per se* that usually challenges students, but the realisation that traditional ways of thinking about poverty alleviation,

a core concern for social work and social justice, are often based on the assumption that poverty will be alleviated when everyone can live 'like us'. Footprinting reveals the ecological fallacy of this assumption and, in doing so, often acts as a catalyst for reflections on western lifestyles, both socially and individually. As well as field trips, film, music, poetry and other creative media are also used as 'activating events' (Cranton, 2002: 66) to assist students in considering perspectives different from their own.

Transformative learning theory suggests that it is when faced with a situation that challenges the utility of existing meaning structures that students are most likely to re-examine them in a critical fashion, and make judgements as to their capacity to adequately deal with the new situation. It is this reflection that may lead to a transformation of meaning structures. The intentional use of such dilemmas thus becomes a tool for promoting meaningful critical reflection on a student's present way of seeing, understanding and acting upon the world around them, and opens the way for significant change to occur.

Critical reflection is a key feature of the subject, and a key aspect of transformative learning. The major piece of assessment in the subject is a critical learning folio which encourages students to reflect not just on the content of the subject but on their own personal process of learning and coming to know. In the past, students have chosen to present these folios as text documents, but also as multimedia presentations, poems, songs and paintings. Given that critical reflection is a feature of much social work education and practice, students are generally familiar with this approach and it is implemented in many aspects of classroom activities.

Besthorne (2003: 10/20) has written about the use of an 'eco-confessional' as part of the process of helping students to recognise their own place and responsibility in the environmental crisis. A similar approach is used in this subject when, having developed

descriptions and analysis of socio-environmental issues and their relevance to social work, students are at the point of turning their attention to practicalities, to the action stage of the learning cycle. In class discussions it quickly emerges that there is now a disjuncture between students' level of knowledge about the environmental crisis and their level of engagement in action to address this. The creation of a safe group setting allows students to explore in a meaningful way the personal and structural barriers to action and to assist each other in exploring how these might be addressed.

A range of other strategies is also employed in the subject in an attempt to increase the potential for meaningful, transformative learning to occur. Brainstorming, role plays, debates, guided visualisations, and visioning are all strategies that have been used extensively in social work education, but seldom as part of an explicitly transformative approach linked to issues of environmental education.

The final aspect speaks to the issue of how such transformative experiences are linked to the wider struggle to address oppression and create a more equitable society. The work of Freire (1970) is useful here in helping students to develop an understanding of the relationship that exists between their own learning and the hegemonic processes operating in society. Individual transformation must be clearly connected to the social world. As Morrow and Torres (2002: 16) state, 'transformative action can be carried out only by participants who construct their own collective learning process as part of changing their relationship to the social world'. It is this stage of the transformative learning process that creates the link between individual learning, social work education, environmental education and the goals of ecological literacy and transformation.

Conclusion

While environmental education alone will not change the world or solve the major environmental and social issues we face in our society, its accomplishments are nevertheless valuable in moving society towards higher levels of ecological literacy. Maximising the potential for environmental/social transformation requires broadening the base of environmental activism to include people from many walks of life. As professionals with clear concerns for social justice and human rights, social workers represent important allies in this struggle. Environmental education, as an integral part of social work education, is therefore an important way of increasing social workers' awareness of the links between social and ecological justice.

Many of the students who have studied, or are studying, the subject described here have discovered new ways of thinking about and understanding communities and their relationship to the environment. They have spent time generating ideas about how those communities could be. And they have examined a range of practical strategies and tools for addressing social and environmental issues in their community practice. Perhaps most importantly, for some at least, they have examined their own meaning perspectives in relation to the environment and, through critical reflection, begun the process of personal transformation. It is by then linking this personal experience to the wider socio-political structures that shape the environmental crisis that these individuals can also begin to make a contribution to the goal of broader social transformation.

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An evaluation of resilience and employability in disadvantaged adults

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This article analyses the evaluation of a pilot program for long-term, unemployed people conducted at a TAFE institute, and designed to improve their employment prospects. The process undertaken for measuring inferred resilience and employability is described. Tracking of 49 program participants' perceptions of relevant skills, attitudes and learning, together with objective observation, assessment and program outcomes, were employed to obtain a measure of enhanced resilience and employability. The study will be used to assist in the design of future programs for this target population.

Introduction

Australians Working Together (AWT) is a package of the Australian Government for working-age people on income support. Its overall aim is to provide these people with more choices and opportunities so that they may come to rely less on welfare support. Programs administered under the funding strive to provide more support for these people to look for work, learn new skills or get involved in their community in some way; in short, to help working-age people obtain jobs wherever possible.

This paper analyses an evaluation study on one of these AWT programs. During 2003–4, an evaluation of the AWT pilot program conducted at a TAFE institute in Adelaide, South Australia, was undertaken by the author as an independent researcher. The program, which targeted long-term, unemployed people with multiple disadvantages in respect to workforce participation, was aimed at engaging these individuals in learning and development activities that would significantly increase their likelihood of gaining employment, as was proposed in the *Australians Working Together* project submitted to the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Training. The 49 participants were from a broad age range and met the various criteria which made them eligible for inclusion in the program: mature-age women returning to the workforce; sole parents; young people; people from non-English speaking backgrounds; Indigenous people; people with a disability or learning difficulty; and people with various personal issues such as substance abuse and victims of domestic violence.

The AWT program at this institute consisted of four progressive phases over a 20-week period, covering topics relating to personal development, industry exposure and other components of the Certificate I in Preparatory Education, which was then followed by Certificate I and II studies in specific vocational areas (retail, hospitality, food processing). The brief for this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the approach that the AWT program was taking in order to achieve specific outcomes for the participants, especially enhanced resilience and employability. The study was an impact evaluation, in that it focused on the outcomes of the program with a view to informing decisions concerning the program's merit or worth as well as its future use (Owen & Rogers, 1999: 47–49).

The study

The dimensions of the evaluation were as specified by Owen and Rogers in *Program evaluation: forms and approaches* (1999: 72). The focus of the study was the change in perceived employability and resilience of the participants. The aim was to provide feedback to support decisions regarding future implementation of the AWT program. The primary client was the AWT Program Manager and program facilitators, and then the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Training. The resources were the program staff and participants, and the training material used for the program. The program outcomes were what was being evaluated. The questions guiding the study were:

- Have the goals of the program been achieved?
- Have the needs of the participants been achieved?
- What were the unintended outcomes?
- What were the short-term and long-term outcomes for the participants?

As changes in resilience and some aspects of employability were mainly subjective, and staff were informed observers of these qualities, self-reports through questionnaires and personal interviews with participants and staff were selected as the main data collection methods. More 'objective' data such as successful course completion and employment status were also used. Continuous data collection, before, during and after the program, relating to selected themes, supplied information which could be compared and would indicate

any changes in resilience and employability. The data were analysed as a whole, and in groups, according to the vocational program being undertaken by the participants. The evaluator drew conclusions from the evidence, made judgments about the program and developed recommendations. A formal report was prepared and delivered to the Program Manager, together with sufficient copies to form part of a support package for trainers. The ethical guidelines of the University of South Australia were closely followed in regard to document preparation and treatment of participants. A budget, with deliverables, was agreed with the Program Manager.

The study was constrained by various factors relating to the target population and logistics: the participants were demographically very varied, potentially fragile, of broad ranging literacy levels and sometimes sensitive to being identified or reported; program attendance was very variable; and the participants were distributed in three programs at two locations.

The scope of the study required that measurement of participants' inferred resilience and employability take place at three points in time: prior to the program, on completion of the program, and at a point following the program which met the *Australians Working Together* goals described as *long-term*, *sustainable* and *maintained* – this was agreed to be four months after completion of the TAFE program. This introduced a longitudinal dimension which was necessary in order to measure changes in the participants' attitude and skill development. The evaluation, consequently, had three phases. Phase one should have taken place at the beginning of the program but, unfortunately, due to delays in the tendering process, the program was already underway when the study commenced. Consequently, phase one interviewing took place some way into the program and was retrospective, phase two at the end of the program and phase three four months later.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected with a focus on the latter. The data were mainly subjective, in that they were primarily drawn from self-reports of the participants' attitudes and self-assessments of their skill development. Included in the study were also more 'objective' evidence from program outcomes, the participants' employment/study status four months after completion of the program and the opinion of staff.

The survey instruments used were questionnaires and voluntary individual interviews with participants, former participants and some relevant staff. It was deemed that, considering the spread of literacy skills within the target population, the use of Likert scales might be too complex. It was therefore decided that a multiple choice format with identification of one's most preferred option would produce sufficient, meaningful data to obtain a measure of improvement. In addition, considering the potential fragility of the target population in terms of resilience, the wording of the questions and information sheet was carefully chosen to be as appropriate as possible for this target group – positive, non-judgemental and emphasising that it was the program not the participants that was the focus of the evaluation. The evaluator strove to establish a positive relationship with the participants and the interviews were conducted in a non-threatening, client-centred style.

Definitions

The evaluator and the *Australians Working Together* Program Manager agreed upon the definitions of resilience and employability to be used in the study.

Resilience referred to 'patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity' (Luthar, 2003: 4) and, consequently, the definition used for the study was 'maintaining a positive attitude in adversity'. The context of resiliency, as identified by the program, was in respect to taking up employment or further study. Two component

constructs of resilience – risk and positive adaptation/competence – were identified in the *Australians Working Together* program document. The project manager's proposal to the funding body described the participants as facing 'multiple, complex and individual barriers', which put them at risk to their engaging in mainstream training and employment. The program goal was to enhance their ability to 'bounce back' from these and other potential risks which might be experienced in looking for employment or undertaking further study. However, Luthar also stated that resilience is never directly measured, it is inferred based on direct measurement of these two component constructs. Accordingly, the study attempted to measure the participants' *positive adaptation*, specifically the change/improvement in their personal skills and competencies, in respect to the *contextual risk*, which in this case was existing and potential conditions which might be conceived as barriers to employment and further study.

The definition of employability used in the evaluation was 'a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make [people] more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations' (ESECT Briefing No. 2, 2003: 4). However, since there are so many influences affecting one's employability, both external in respect to changing economic, social and political factors, and the personal changes that individuals undergo in a life time, the definition of *employability* is a dynamic one. This requires 'an attitude or approach to assessing oneself in relation to opportunities and challenges, and learning from experience' in order to position oneself to achieve and retain fulfilling work (ESECT Briefing No. 6, 2003: 4).

Themes

In order to obtain measures of inferred resilience and employability at three points in time, the questionnaires were designed with common themes, wording and structures which could be overlaid,

conceptually, for the purposes of comparison, in order to assess improvement. The themes selected for the evaluation were goals, barriers, personal skills, employment skills and industry/vocational skills – most of these themes had elements relating to both resilience and employability.

Goals and barriers

Goal achievement is essential to provide a model of success which is repeatable and thus enhances the protective factors available to the individual, and hence their resilience. The study attempted to identify the potential risks and measure respondents' positive adaptation towards achievement of their goals. Hence, it sought to: (a) identify participants' goals and the perceived risks, or barriers, which prevented them achieving their goals, (b) determine the match between participants' goals and barriers and those identified for the program, and (c) measure participants' goal achievement/orientation and their perception of barriers over a period of time. The goals proposed in the questionnaire were those identified in the program advertising and design, and included both personal development options, such as 'take control of my life', and employment related options, such as 'it gave me the chance to meet employers'. In total, seven goals, together with a negative option (no goal) and a free option (another goal/achievement) were offered for selection by respondents.

In order to create a baseline for measuring participants' resilience, in the first phase of the study participants were asked about barriers to gaining employment or going on to further study, though these questions were worded positively in order not to discourage respondents. Some potential barriers had been identified in the advertising for the program when targeting people with special needs, such as learning difficulties and disabilities, and by endeavouring to provide flexibility and support in the program for the special personal circumstances of participants, such as family responsibilities.

Insufficiency in skills relating to resiliency and employment, such as confidence, perseverance and career planning skills, were also included as potential barriers to employment or further study. The aptness of these barriers was confirmed with relevant staff. Following these discussions, unwillingness to travel outside the northern suburbs for work or study was also identified as a potential barrier and included in the questionnaire. In all, seven options were offered for selection by respondents, together with a negative option ('I don't know, I couldn't work out why I wasn't working at that time') and a free option ('I think there was another reason why I wasn't working'). The themes relating to these goals and barriers are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1:   Themes relating to goals and barriers

Goals and achievements	Perceived barriers
take control of my life	personal situation at home (time, money, transport, children, home duties etc)
learn more about myself/for personal development	special needs (disability/language/ learning/ age)
improve my skills in language / literacy / numeracy	confidence
get industry skills in retail/ hospitality/ food processing	keep trying (perseverance)
help me get a job	finding kind of work/course I could do
meet employers	finding a job/course that I like
undertake further study	finding a job in the right location

The nine possible goals and nine barriers were measured at three time points in the following ways.

Phase one

- As an introductory question, participants were asked which features of the program had initially attracted them.

- They were asked what they wanted to achieve by undertaking the program and, in order to identify barriers, why they were not employed at that time.

Phase two

- In phase two , participants were asked what the program had helped them achieve and whether any of the former barriers presented a major difficulty for them in gaining employment or going on to further study.

Phase three

- At phase three, their current goal orientation was explored: former participants were asked whether they had achieved their own personal goals by undertaking the *Australians Working Together* program and, also, to identify their current career goals. Respondents who were still looking for work or study at that time were asked if they perceived any major difficulties to getting a job or going on to further study.

- Participants' employment/study status four months after the end of the program were objective measurements of goal attainment

Skills development

The development of personal skills, employment-related skills and industry/vocational skills were explored, not only to investigate skill development itself, but to evaluate change in attitude which was important for enhanced resiliency, and adaptation to 'a process of learning that leads to individuals gaining and retaining fulfilling work' (Harvey, Locke & Morey, 2002: 16–17). The rationale behind the selection of these skills was as follows (and the themes are summarised in Table 2).

Personal skills. The development of critical personal skills is a key factor in developing resilience (Brennan & Shah, 2003; Oswald, Johnson & Howard, 2003), and was a major goal of the program. The broad range of personal skills promoted and supported in

the program, as well as those most relevant to resilience, were assessed. All the personal skills were also relevant to employability. Some examples were self-awareness and decision-making. Eleven personal skills were identified, together with a negative option (no personal skill) and a free option (another personal skill). These skills were presented positively to participants, as goals within a self-development framework.

Employment-related skills. Skills, understandings and attributes relevant to employability were specified in sections of the survey instrument relating both to personal skills (above) and employment skills. In the latter, these skills and attributes were generally defined for participants as 'what employers want and how to get jobs'. Critical employment related skills relevant to career planning and employability, and taught in the program, such as 'knowing what job skills I have', 'working well with others, in teams' and 'work ethics', were offered for selection, together with a negative option (no employment skill) and a free option (another employment skill).

Industry/vocational skills. Vocational training was a strong theme throughout the survey, being relevant both to employability and to resilience in an employment-related context. There was some mapping of vocational career choice, industry knowledge and experience, and vocational learning and achievement.

Table 2: Themes relating to skill development

Personal	Employment-related	Industry/vocational
self-awareness	knowing what job skills I have	preferred industry
verbal/interpersonal communication skills	knowing how to apply for jobs	industry experience
how to get help and support from people when I need it	knowing how to use community resources to help me get a job	industry knowledge/ learning
confidence	knowing how to research different jobs	
self-esteem	knowing what employers are looking for	
keep trying/ not give up easily (perseverance)	knowing how to talk to employers	
risk-taking	knowing how to dress for an interview	
goal-setting	working well with others, in teams	
time management	work ethics – what the right thing is to do in the workplace	
decision-making		
problem-solving		

In phases one and two of the survey, self-assessment of skills was included, in terms of intention and achievement as for goals and barriers, but participants were also asked about the level of learning they had achieved in respect to these skills. Then, in phase three, they were asked whether they believed the program elements corresponding to the development of these skills would help them find a job or go into further education and training. Objective outcomes were their success in the certificate training and their employment/study status four months after the program. Staff were

also asked how effective they thought the appropriate program elements were in improving participants' personal resilience and employability.

Outcomes

This evaluation supported the report provided by the *Australians Working Together* Project Manager, where other outcomes were reported, discussed and evaluated. This study predominantly assessed the responses of participants in the program and it is possible that more responses from those who either withdrew from the program or did not complete the TAFE certificate course would have enriched the data and impacted on the evaluation outcomes. Nevertheless, there was a 60–90% response rate in all phases of the evaluation.

The themes of the program were relevant to both resilience and employability. By comparing the data collected at three time points, it was possible to measure inferred resilience and employability.

Participants' goals were realised and a high level of achievement was recognised by the participants. They achieved their vocational and employment-related goals and exceeded their own expectations in regard to personal development. For example, 68% of participants both intended to achieve and felt they had achieved their goal of meeting employers; whereas, while the goal of 48% of participants at phase one was to 'take control of my life', 68% of them felt they had achieved this. Goal orientation was high by the end of the program and, despite employment rates not being as high as expected by the respondents, was maintained at a reduced level four months after completion of the program.

By the end of the program there was a significant change in the participants' perceptions of their own self-confidence, which is a major requirement for resiliency, with 68% of participants identifying

this as a barrier to employment at the beginning of the program and only 11% agreeing it would present them with a major difficulty in getting a job by the end of the program. In general, participants showed a more positive attitude, by the end of the program, towards getting a job. Fewer of them perceived former barriers as obstacles to employment, with respondents having a greater willingness to find a job they could do, would like and with location being less of an obstacle.   While most perceived barriers to employment had significantly decreased by the end of the program, those in the areas of age and disability persisted, although the personal development activities undertaken by participants had helped them to better deal with these in their job search activities following the program.

The achievements in the area of personal skill development were outcomes that were not anticipated by the participants but these were greatly valued. There was improvement in a range of self-empowering and self-management skills which are critical for the development of resilience. The development of 'self awareness' was a goal of only 55% of the participants at the beginning of the program, but was reported as being achieved by 95% of them by the end of the program. Similarly, 'making decisions', increased from 52% to 74%. Results in relation to perseverance were somewhat ambiguous and possibly largely contextual. Improvement in self-confidence and perseverance in adversity were not matched by a similar change in perception that they would be able to stay motivated in their attempts to find a job. This also may be due to many respondents apparently having an external locus of motivation, as results indicated that some participants needed ongoing external support to sustain their motivation. However, by the end of the program, respondents were proud of their achievements and were positive about moving on with their lives.

A main element in improving respondents' resilience was the provision of a caring environment where respondents had the

opportunity, 'to develop those internal assets for resilience such as problem solving skills, autonomy, purposeful, constructive and optimistic outlooks on the future, effective communication and relationship skills' (Benard, cited in Oswald *et al.*, 2003: 51). Respondents benefitted greatly, and sometimes unexpectedly, from relationships with other participants, and peers played an important role in 'providing support, care and attachment needs' (Oswald *et al.*, 2003: 51). This cohort of program participants seemed to need a strong affective dimension in their relationships. It appeared that, for many respondents, a high level of support was required throughout the program in order to sustain motivation and commitment, and continuation of this level of support in the period following the program may affect perseverance in terms of job hunting.

Employability requires the acquisition not only of a range of skills but also of understandings, attitudes and attributes which, together with a willingness for ongoing learning and re-assessment, produce long-term effectiveness and satisfaction with one's career path (ESECT Briefing No. 6, 2003: 8). The study noted enhanced personal skills and attitudes, together with a deeper level of understanding about workplace requirements, such as work ethics, which would facilitate participants' employability. In addition, all employment-related skills showed a significant improvement by the end of the program with a higher level of achievement in some areas than had been anticipated by respondents at the beginning of the program. By the end of the program, participants had a higher level of awareness, both of their own skills and of employers' requirements. For example, 'knowing what job skills I have' went from 52% at the beginning to 79% at the end of the program and 'working well with others, in teams' increased from 52% to 68%. However, for some respondents, lack of success in securing employment impacted on their appreciation of these skills. In summary, the broad range of employability skills, attitudes and characteristics showed a marked improvement which, together with the vocational training, would better equip these participants

to compete in the job market. Staff were very supportive of the program in respect to its effectiveness in improving both the personal resilience and employability of the program participants.

The development of career planning skills resulted in some respondents changing vocational direction at the point of course choice with expressed overall satisfaction in their subsequent career choice. Achievement in vocational skills was highly valued by respondents and was marked by their success in completing all or some of the vocational elements of the TAFE courses. Many respondents were planning ongoing career paths by the end of the program, although many were disappointed that the qualification did not lead directly into suitable employment. Undertaking further study was acknowledged as an achievement: the overall level of learning in the program was high, was consistent with participants' declared goals and a high proportion of former participants included further study in their career planning options.

Four months after completion of the program, one-half of the respondents were in casual employment or further training with the other half still looking. Respondents were often disappointed that they were not working at a higher level in their chosen vocational field or had not found employment but, overall, were still positive and goal-orientated. While in terms of resilience they were still at risk, their coping skills seemed much improved over what they had been before starting the program. In terms of employability, they were still using the employment-related skills they had honed during the program and showed persisting attitudes which would improve their likelihood of success. However, perseverance in respect to job hunting was likely to be an ongoing problem but one which could possibly be enhanced by ongoing support or by some other strategy to introduce graduates more directly into the workforce or to support them in further training. The recruitment practices of some employers in the region, in respect to being reluctant to employ

people with a disability and ageism, continued to be perceived as barriers to employment by some respondents.

It is significant that, at the end of the program, the respondents reported that they had a changed attitude, that is, they were more positive, both about themselves and about employment, and these attitudes were still evident four months after completion of the program despite, in many cases, not actually finding employment.

The findings from this evaluation were presented in a report to the funding body, the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Training together with recommendations concerning future implementation of the program. It was recommended that the *Australians Working Together* program should continue, with some suggested modifications: core features should be retained; adjustment of some program elements and attention given to the affective needs of participants during their TAFE training. Recommendations were also made regarding the administration and management of the program. Finally, some additional program components were suggested, mainly relating to career development needs such as work experience, career planning, career counselling, and mentoring.

Conclusion

This was a challenging study, requiring measurement of constructs which were difficult to assess, and with a complex target population. The methodology employed effectively tracked the perceived development of skills and attitudes from which could be inferred shifts in resilience and employability. The process involved collection of approximately 3,000 discrete data elements, and through careful analysis of the themes, produced meaningful outcomes which can be used in the design of future programs. The study would not have been possible without the assistance of the participants who, in

general, strongly supported the program and would like to see its continuation.

Career development is a construct which encompasses more than the individual and the work environment, and it is now recognised that a much larger range of influences must be taken into account for it to be successful (Patton & McMahon, 1999). The participants in the *Australians Working Together* program faced multiple disadvantages, arguably had a wide range of influences impacting on their employability and therefore required a broad ranging approach to their career development. The observation of Brennan & Shah (2003: 26) that 'for students with fragmented lives, higher education may touch only small parts of the person' certainly applied to the *Australians Working Together* student body. The hope is that this study, and others like it, will contribute to the development of further holistic programs to meet the needs of unemployed people with complex requirements.

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Vocational education services provided by non-government organisations to adult farmers in Oyo and Ogun states, Nigeria

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The objective of this paper is to examine the vocational education services provided by non-government organisations (NGOs) to adult farmers in the states of Oyo and Ogun, in Nigeria. Two agro-based NGOs, the Diocesan Agricultural Development Project (DADP) and the Farmers Development Union (FADU), were purposively selected because of their relevance to the study. A total of 120 members of these NGOs were sampled for the study, 116 of whom responded. They were interviewed using a structured schedule designed to elicit vital information on the NGO extension services of which they were aware, and the frequency with which these services were administered to the respondents. The data collected from the field were analysed using frequency counts, tables, chi-square and t-test.

The findings revealed that the respondents were mostly aware of the extension activities provided by the NGOs. In addition, several

*extension services were received regularly, with FADU members
receiving more extension activities than members of DADP. While a
broad range of extension activities were provided by the agro-based
NGOs to their members, those most frequently accessed by
farmers were mainly advisory. Relationships between some of the
demographic characteristics of the respondents and the extension
activities of the NGOs were also discovered. Conclusions are drawn
concerning the focus of NGO activities provided to farmers and the
relationship between these and government-based programs.*

Introduction

One of the central foci of national development is the sustained
increase in agricultural production, to keep up with growing
population as well as to generate a surplus of raw materials for
industry and export, and hence enhance economic growth. Countries
which depend heavily on agriculture stress the increasing importance
of agricultural education; however, agricultural education systems,
be they formal or non-formal, have not tended to kept pace with
changing conditions of society.

Agricultural education and extension systems have expanded
tremendously, but often the development of new and more efficient
training programs and methodologies has lagged behind. Rural
development can be hypothesised as the result of many interacting
forces, of which education is one. Education is therefore defined as
a continuing process spanning the years from early infancy through
adulthood and necessarily involving a great variety of methods and
sources of knowledge.

Educationists have identified three sources of knowledge which have
been found to be analytically useful, and three modes of education
(recognising that there is considerable overlap and interaction
between them). Informal education is the lifelong process which every
person experiences: by exposure to the environment at home, at work
and at play; from the example and attitudes of family and friends;
from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the
radio, or viewing films or television. Generally, informal education is
unorganised and often unsystematic, yet it accounts for the great bulk
of any person's total lifetime learning — including that of even a highly
schooled person. Formal education is the highly institutionalised,
chronologically graded and hierarchically structured 'education
system', spanning from the lower primary school through to the
upper reaches of university. Non-formal education is any organised,
systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of
the formal system, to provide selected types of learning to particular
subgroups in the population, adults as well as children. Thus defined,
non-formal education includes, for example, agricultural extension
and farmer training programs; adult literacy programs; youth clubs
with substantial educational purposes; and various community
programs of instruction in heath, nutrition, family planning,
co-operatives and the like.

The educational needs for rural development referred to earlier are
numerous and diverse, but they can be usefully grouped under three
main headings:

- General or basic education: literacy, numeracy and an elementary
  understanding of science and one's environment (what primary
  and general secondary schools seek to achieve); and family
  improvement education, designed primarily to impart knowledge,
  skills and attitudes useful in improving the quality of family life,
  on such subjects as health and nutrition, homemaking and child
  care, home repairs and improvements, family planning, and so on.
- Community improvement education: designed to strengthen
  local and national institutions and processes through instruction
  in such matters as local and national government, cooperatives,
  community projects, and the like.

- Occupational education: designed to develop particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities.

Non-government organisations (NGOs) apply these educational types to meet the needs and promote the literacy abilities of their clients. The term 'NGO' is a 'catch-all' phrase that defines something, not by stating what it is but what it is not (Hicks, 1993). This is not only unhelpful but also misleading. According to Sethi (1983), the term denotes organisations that are different from the state apparatus, are organised voluntarily, and endeavour to achieve various goals. A NGO is defined as an organisation that plays an intermediary role between the people and the government and/or tries to promote the welfare of certain groups of people. A NGO can be formed by members to improve their own situation, or by outsiders who try to serve the interests of (usually poor) people (Van den Ban & Hawkins, 1996). According to UNICEF (1994), a NGO is people-focused, and complements government development programs.

The broad nature of the above definitions poses a problem, as many socio-economic organisations – community-based organisations, civil society organisations, professional associations, age groups, unions, tribal and religious organisations – must somehow find a place to fit in. Indeed, some authors have used the term interchangeably with other non-government agencies, such as private firms having an interest in grass-root development. In order to distinguish a NGO (as construed in this study) from such organisations, a more restrictive definition of NGO is adopted: a non-profit, voluntary organisation engaged in the philanthropic pursuit of relief and development activities with the goal of providing services either directly to the rural poor or to grass-root membership organisations. One of the main characteristics of NGOs is that they are not religion, ideology, tribe or race based. All they want to do is be instrumental in the development of those areas where more and better resources are needed; NGOs want to serve communities in such a way as to strengthen the self-reliance of community-based organisations (Gumucio-Dargon, 1993).

NGOs have many advantages over governmental organisations. They are flexible, fast and simple in approach, have clear policy guidelines and dedicated personnel. They are by nature and design participatory, which gives them a helpful orientation towards clients' needs. NGO activities empower grass-root organisations and resource poor farmers for the long term. As a result, when their goals are achieved or a project terminates, the target group is in a position to take over.

Another strength of NGOs is in their alternative, new developments (Gumucio-Dargon, 1993). These include their respect for the cultural identity and positive traditions of the people with whom they work, they support the democratic forms of the organisations with which they work at the community level and they use the bottom-up approach to planning.

Their planning for development is focused; they recognise the importance of addressing the specific needs of each community instead of vertically deciding what a group of 100 or 200 villages in a particular region may need. Furthermore, NGOs are capable of imparting or reinforcing a spirit of solidarity at the community level which should, in the long run, have a positive effect on strengthening democratic organisations (Gumucio-Dargon, 1993). This is a strong foundation for capacity building since NGOs cannot be around all the time; for the sake of continuity, it is their duty to build capacity. This entails showing and teaching not only what but how to do things (FBFI, 1996).

NGOs appear to be prominent players in the national development scene in diverse sectors, including agricultural development in Nigeria. This is largely due to the fact that the activities of NGOs are concentrated in rural areas where about 80 percent of the populace live and are involved in agriculture, providing over 90 percent of Nigeria's total food supply (Olayide, 1980). Increasingly, NGOs in Nigeria are playing a complementary, advisory and advocacy role to develop agriculture; they cover the gap left by governments in

many areas such as input (for example, of fertiliser), and supplying education about better farming methods and improved processing technology, all geared towards increased productivity and improved living standards among farmers.

This study sought to provide a meaningful contribution to NGOs in their agricultural development work by examining the educational component of their services. The study therefore attempted to answer the following questions:

- what services do NGOs provide?
- what are the demographic characteristics of the beneficiaries of NGO services?

Objectives of the study

The general purpose of the study was to examine the education services of NGOs in Oyo and Ogun states. The specific objectives were to:

(i)   outline the level of NGO involvement in educational services
(ii) ascertain the different services received by members
(iii) identify the demographic characteristics of members of the NGOs
(iv) determine the differences between the services provided by the two selected NGOs.

Methodology

Oyo and Ogun states lie between latitude 50° and 9°N. The population density is 195 persons per square kilometer. Ogun state is bounded in the east by Ondo state, in the south by Lagos state, and in the north by Oyo state. Oyo state shares a boundary with Kara state in the north, Osun state in the east, Ogun state in the south and the Republic of Benin in the west. It has forest vegetation in its southern part while it has derived savannah in the north. The climate of these states is typically equatorial, with distinct wet and dry seasons. The rainy season lasts up to eight months, with two peaks in July and September.

The population of the study consisted of all members of the Diocesan Agricultural Development Project (DADP) in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun state, and the Farmers Development Union (FADU) in Oyo state. These two agro-based NGOs were purposively selected because of the relevance of their activities to this study.

DADP operates on a zonal basis. There are six zones within Ijebu-Ode Diocese: Ijebu-Ode, Ijebu-North, Sagamu, Orita J4, Imobi and Iwopin. Two zones were randomly selected, namely Ijebu-Ode and Orita J4. In these two zones, there are 15 societies with 300 members, and a systematic sampling with an interval of five was used to select 60 respondents. FADU also operates on a zonal basis, and again two zones were randomly selected, namely Akinyele and Iseyin Zonas. Within these zones there are 600 members, and a systematic sampling with an interval of ten was used to select 60 respondents.

This sampling therefore gave a total of 120 farmers. Primary data were obtained from DADP and FADU members through the use of a structured interview schedule containing both open and closed questions. Descriptive statistical tools like percentages and charts were used in the description of data collected, and inferential statistics such as chi-square and t-test were used to test for statistical significance.

Findings

Demographic characteristics

The organisations are open to both males and females; however, Table 1 shows that approximately 71% of the respondents were male. This indicates that there are more men in the organisations than

women; being agro-based organisations, it might be that men are more actively involved in farming than are women, and hence the NGOs have more men than women members.

Table 1 also shows that the majority of members are married. This is not necessarily a criterion for membership, but the high percentage of married respondents may be justified by the underlying factors of the religion, custom and tradition of those who are married.

The distribution relating to the nature of the household reveals that 60% of the respondents are from monogamous homes. This might be due to economic reasons, hence many of them married only one partner. On the other hand, it could be explained in terms of religious tenets, given the majority of them are of Christian faith which promotes one man, one wife. This finding is contrary to the general belief that more men in rural areas marry two or more wives.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Results and discussion	Frequency (n=116)	Percentage
Gender		
Female	33	28.5
Male	81	70.7
No response	2	1.7
Marital status		
Single	4	3.4
Married	104	89.7
Widowed	5	4.3
No response	3	2.6
Nature of household		
Monogamy	69	59.5
Polygamy	36	31.0
No response	11	9.5
Family size		
1–4	33	28.5
5–8	45	38.8
9–12	24	20.7
13–16	6	5.2
No response	8	6.9
Religion		
Christianity	79	68.1
Islam	37	31.9
Traditional	0	
Estimated annual income		
10,000 or less	8	6.9
10,001–20,000	30	25.9
20,001–30,000	13	11.2
30,001–40,000	6	5.2
40,001–50,000	6	5.2
More than 50000	19	16.4
No response	34	29.3
Attendance		
Occasionally	2	1.7
Regularly	114	98.3
Financial commitment		
Regularly	114	98.3
Rarely	1	0.9
Occasionally	1	0.9
Membership status		
Executive	21	18.1
Member	85	73.3
No response	10	8.6
Number of years in the organisation		
1–2	3	2.6
3–4	81	69.8
5–6	21	18.1
7–8	3	2.6
No response	8	6.9

Concerning family size, two-thirds of the respondents have a family of between one and eight persons, while one-fifth have a family size of between nine and 12, and five percent have a family size of 13 or more. This might be due to the fact that many in the rural area have extended families; however, it is believed that the extended family setting in the rural area is giving way to the nuclear family.

The distribution according to religion reveals that approximately two-thirds are Christian and one-third are Islamic; no members practice a traditional religion. It would be inferred that people come together to find solutions to common problems despite differences in religious beliefs.

With respect to income distribution, seven percent earn less than N10,000, 26% between N 10,001 and N20,000, 11% between N20,001 and N30,000, 10% between N30,001 and M50,000, and almost 17% make above N50,000. Almost 30% did not respond; this might be due to lack of record keeping or unwillingness to declare their income because of fear of this being used against them. However, it can be seen that the majority fall in the low-income categories, as to be expected in rural communities. This is because they are mostly peasant farmers and they are at subsistence level of production. Moreover, in one of the organisations (FADU), low income is one of the criteria for admittance as a member.

Ninety-eight percent attend group meetings regularly, showing high commitment to the organisations on the part of the members. Regarding the financial commitment of the members, 98% of the respondents indicated that they regularly pay their stipulated dues. This shows that great emphasis is placed on the payment of dues, which is probably a way of ensuring continuous membership of the organisation.

Table 1 also shows that 18% of the respondents are members of the executive and 73% are non-executive members. On length of

membership, 70% have been members for three or four years, and another 18% have been in the organisation between five and six years. This shows that the majority of the respondents joined the organisation relatively recently. This is probably due to increasing awareness of NGOs and their activities.

In summary, these findings on the personal characteristics of the respondents revealed that the majority of them were male (70.7%), were married (89.7%) and practised monogamy (59.5%). The majority received an income below N50,000 per annum (though a considerable number of them did not give any response to this question). The findings also revealed that the majority of the respondents were Christian (68.1%) and had a high level of social participation as shown by their regular attendance (98.3%) at group meetings and financial commitment to the NGOs (98.2%).

Awareness of extension activities

Respondents' awareness of the extension activities delivered by the NGOs is indicated in Table 2. The highest mean was 2.00, while the lowest was 1.43. Twenty extension activities fell in the category of high awareness (above a mean of 1.50). Respondents were predominantly aware of such activities as providing information to farmers, home and farm visits, processing loans, arranging input supply, teaching new ideas in agriculture, giving advice on agricultural problems, communicating recommended practices, and initiating and promoting leadership (all with a mean of 2.00). These were closely followed by organising group meetings, and forming groups (both with a mean of 1.99). The activity of which respondents were least aware was organising film shows mean 1.43). This might be an indication that the NGOs employ limited instructional materials when teaching their members, probably because of the unavailability of such materials or the lack of facilities for operating them in the rural areas.

Table 2: Respondents' awareness of extension activities of NGOs

	Extension Activities	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	Non-response n (%)	Mean	SD	SE
1	Providing information to farmers	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
2	Home and farm visits	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
3	Processing loans	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
4	Arranging input supply (e.g. fertilizer)	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
5	Teaching new ideas in agriculture	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
6	Giving advice on agricultural problems	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
7	Communicating recommended practices	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
8	Initiating and promoting leadership	116 (100)	-	-	2.00	00	00
9	Organising group meetings	115 (99.1)	1 (0.9)	-	1.99	0.09	0.01
10	Forming groups	115 (99.1)	-	1 (0.90)	1.99	0.19	0.02
11	Feeding back farmers' problems to research	114 (98.3)	2 (1.7)	-	1.98	0.13	0.01
12	Teaching the use of input (e.g. fertilizer)	112 (96.6)	4 (3.4)	-	1.97	0.18	0.02
13	Identifying problems	112 (96.6)	3 (2.4)	1 (0.90)	1.96	0.24	0.02
14	Introducing new crop varieties	112 (96.6)	2 (1.7)	2 (1.70)	1.95	0.29	0.03
15	Publishing bulletins and newsletters	111 (95.7)	4 (3.4)	1 (0.90)	1.95	0.26	0.02
16	Securing markets for farmers	108 (93.1)	8 (6.9)	-	1.93	0.25	0.02
17	Farmers day and agricultural show	110 (94.8)	2 (1.7)	4 (3.4)	1.91	0.25	0.02
18	Liaison with ADP	106 (91.4)	9 (7.8)	1 (0.90)	1.90	0.32	0.04
19	Teaching home management	104 (89.7)	11 (9.5)	1 (0.90)	1.89	0.34	0.03
20	Arranging adult literacy	80 (69.0)	27 (23.3)	9 (7.7)	1.77	0.42	0.04
21	Organising film shows	50 (43.1)	66 (56.9)	-	1.43	0.50	0.05

In summary, the findings revealed that the respondents were mostly aware of the extension activities provided by the NGOs (69.8%).

Participation in extension activities

Table 3 shows the distribution of extension services received by the respondents. Twenty of the 21 listed extension activities were received by the respondents, and were above the mean of 2.00. This revealed that the NGOs are more involved in extension activities than other activities. Predominant extension activities received by respondents included: transfer of agricultural information technologies to members (2.98), group formation (2.95) and home and farm visits (2.93). It could be deduced that farmers' advisory services and group formation are the major extension roles being played by the NGOs. Activities like the farmers day/agricultural show (2.47), teaching home management and nutrition (2.37) and arranging adult literacy (2.11) fall around the mean. Organising film shows (1.46) was not prominent among the services received.

Table 3: Frequency of receiving extension services

Extension activities	Rarely n (%)	Occasionally n (%)	Regularly n (%)	Non-response n (%)	Mean	SD	SE
1 Giving advice on agricultural problems	-	2 (1.7)	114 (98.3)	-	2.98	0.13	0.01
2 Communicating recommended practices		4 (3.4)	112 (96.6)	-	2.97	0.18	0.02
3 Providing information to farmers		-	115 (99.1)	1 (0.9)	2.97	0.28	0.03
4 Forming groups		-	114 (98.3)	2 (1.7)	2.95	0.40	0.04
5 Organising group meetings		1 (0.9)	113 (97.4)	2 (1.7)	2.94	0.40	0.04
6 Processing loans							
7 Teaching new ideas in agriculture		4 (3.4)	111 (95.7)	1 (0.9)	2.94	0.33	0.03
8 Home and farmer visits		8 (6.9)	108 (93.1)		2.93	0.25	0.02
9 Introducing new crop varieties		3 (2.6)	108 (93.1)	5 (4.3)	2.85	0.59	0.06
10 Initiating and promoting leadership		13 (11.2)	102 (87.9)	1 (0.9)	2.87	0.36	0.03
11 Arranging input supply		18 (15.5)	97 (83.6)	1 (0.9)	2.82	0.45	0.04
12 Identifying problems		5 (4.3)	106 (91.4)	5 (4.3)	2.82	0.64	0.06
13 Feeding back farmers' problems to research		21 (18.1)	93 (80.2)	2 (1.7)	2.77	0.53	0.05
14 Teaching the use of input (e.g. fertilizer)		15 (12.9)	96 (82.8)	5 (4.3)	2.74	0.06	0.06
15 Publishing bulletins and newsletters	2 (1.7)	17 (14.7)	92 (79.3)	5 (4.3)	2.69	0.72	0.07
16 Liaison with ADP	-	11 (9.5)	95 (81.9)	10 (8.6)	2.65	0.87	0.08
17 Securing markets for farmers	-	27 (23.3)	79 (68.1)	10 (8.6)	2.51	0.88	0.88
18 Farmers day/agricultural show	-	26 (22.4)	79 (68.1)	11 (9.5)	2.47	0.94	0.94
19 Teaching home management and nutrition	2 (1.7)	27 (23.3)	73 (62.9)	14 (12.1)	2.37	1.00	0.09
20 Arranging adult literacy	6 (5.2)	13 (11.2)	71 (61.2)	26 (22.4)	2.11	1.25	0.12
21 Organising film shows	38 (32.8)	10 (8.6)	37 (31.9)	31 (26.7)	1.46	1.20	0.11

In summary, several extension services were received regularly. The major ones were: giving advice on agricultural problems (98.3%), communicating recommended practices (96.6%), providing information to farmers (99.1%) and forming groups (98.3%). This reveals that the extension role of the NGOs to farmers is mainly advisory.

Relationship between participants' demographics and participation in extension activities

In testing the relationship between some of the variables, a significant relationship was found between the extension activities of the NGOs gender ($\chi2$ = 24.91, p<.00), marital status ($\chi2$ = 5.86, p<.05), family size ($\chi2$ = 32.62, p<.00), religion ($\chi2$ = 20.09, p<.00), level of education ($\chi2$ = 24.53, p<.00), membership status ($\chi2$ = 11.05, p<.01) and years of membership ($\chi2$ = 23.12, p<.00). On the other hand, there was no significant relationship between extension activities and nature of the household, attendance at meetings or financial commitment.

Differences between NGOs

Table 4 shows that there exists a difference between FADU and DADP respondents. This is shown by the differences in their mean scores.

Table 4: T-test analysis of difference between FADU and DADP respondents

	No. of class	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean difference	t-value	Degrees of freedom	Level of significance
Awareness of extension services							
FADU	61	41.44	0.59	1.67	5.62	59.29	.00
DADP	53	39.77	2.09				.00
Frequency of extension services							
FADI	61	61.81	1.37	10.39	6.22	101.34	.00
DADP	53	51.43	5.37				

For awareness of extension activities, FADU obtained a higher mean score of 41.44 compared with that of DADP of 39.77. This difference is statistically significant (t = 5.62, p<.05). There is also a difference between FADU and DADP respondents in the frequency with which they received these services. FADU again obtained a higher mean score of 61.81 compared with the DADP's mean score of 51.43. This is also statistically significant (t = 134.70, p<.05).

This finding shows that the awareness of extension activities and the frequency with which FADU members receive extension are both higher than those of DADP members. It can be deduced that FADU provides more extension activities than DADP.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that agro-based NGOs have a wide scope of activities in response to the needs of their clientele. Important extension educational activities have been extensively provided. However, the data and subsequent analysis show that the extension role that seems to be the most prominent activity of the NGOs is still not all-encompassing, but only an advisory one.

Rural development will be enhanced if the government could use specific NGOs as consultants with specific tasks, in areas where the government's hands cannot reach. It is therefore important that, instead of delving into a broad range of activities, the NGOs should streamline their activities and intensify the ones they are most efficient in providing (notably, group formation, supplying credit, capacity building, providing an advisory role to farmers and collaboration with research). This will enable the NGOs to effectively fill only the gaps in which they specialise rather than filling too many gaps left unfilled by government. This will increase their effectiveness and also ensure successful collaboration with government organisations.

The government should develop models to provide a division of tasks closely corresponding to the respective, comparative advantages of the two parties – non-governmental organisations and government organisations.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Experiencing English and cultural learning during study tours

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Significant aspects of my doctorate in adult education, which I studied over the past few years, were related to the exploration of English and cultural learning through study tours. Now, with the hard task done, and thesis completed, it is motivating to reflect on these aspects and their systematic application.

Overview of the study

A study tour with a structured program is one form of travel for education, providing a chance for participants to explore a chosen

site firsthand, and to experience an unfamiliar environment through interaction with qualified instruction. It is for this reason that Ling Tung University, Taiwan, since 1996, has offered study tours with structured experience as one of its academic programs. These tours have been welcomed by many of the university students.

Given participants' generally positive impressions about how they improved their learning, especially of English language and culture, I was intrigued, as tour leader, to undertake research into the nature of their language and cultural learning during these study tours. For this purpose, using an interpretive approach, three different techniques of data collection were employed. Firstly, participants on six study tours to the USA, UK and Australia between 1996 and 2001 (n=66 responses, 60.5% response rate) were surveyed by questionnaire in order to obtain their perspectives retrospectively on their study tour experiences. Second, all participants on the study tour to Australia in mid-2001 (n=16) were invited to write journals, in order that their feelings, perceptions and experiences, as well as the meaning of those experiences for the participants, might be explored in more depth. Third, participant observation of all the participants' activities during these tours greatly assisted me in the interpretation of the data. These data collection techniques were chosen as they were complementary and triangulating in nature.

Data from the questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 10) software, using frequency counts and cross-tabulations by age, gender, year level, tour country and personality characteristics. Text from the journals, comprising 448 (16 students x 28 days) entries, was coded and managed by means of Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorising (NUD*IST, Version 4) software. The journal entries were categorised into three kinds of learning: culture, English language and travel.

These interpretive analyses revealed how the participants perceived the study tour processes and how their perceptions altered over time. They were able to illustrate how the participants viewed, talked about and grappled with 'making meaning' of the various versions of western culture.

Data from both questionnaires and journals showed that the students had a number of concerns and needs that had not been fulfilled in learning English in their home country, Taiwan. They also revealed a significant degree of satisfaction about the study tour programs, including improvement in English language proficiency (particularly listening and speaking skills); knowledge of cultures (people's lifestyles, customs and geography); interactive and communicative learning processes in formal classes; and learning from exposure to a wide range of natural environments.

The data also suggested that participants had encountered some difficulty in their study tour learning, especially related to communication, due to strong accents and intonations in the host countries, their own lack of confidence in and knowledge of topics discussed, and lack of language forms (such as appropriate grammar and vocabulary). To overcome these difficulties, participants reported having used a range of communication strategies to assist them in achieving their learning goals.

It is clear from the data collected in this study that learning most readily occurred when the participants were on excursions in natural and authentic learning environments; were streamed in terms of their English ability and mixed with other non-English speaking students; were having 'fun'; when they cohered together as a group of learners; and when the leader was more 'experienced', relaxed and knowledgeable about the host country. Interesting patterns in the data suggested that the study tours were very important forms of experiential learning, especially for those participants who were more 'extraverted', more 'sensate ' and had a reasonable pre-tour level

of English ability. Study across six study tours to different countries allowed analysis indicating that particular forms of tour organisation were more conducive for learning than others – for example, the capacity for Taiwanese students to mix with other English-learning students, especially Asian, and the location of residence within a community rather than being isolated from it.

The thesis concludes with the stories of my own journey as a tour leader, and how I have grown as a result of these study tours. The implications of these findings for conducting effective study tours are summarised, as well as the ingredients of successful tours and effective tour leadership. Finally, the thesis suggests directions for further research.

The study tour as a popular phenomenon

Travel for education is not a new concept. Many of the world's learned citizens, since the beginning of recorded history, have recognised and endorsed travel as a means of education. Indeed, every year, a growing number of students leave their home environments and relocate to study at universities abroad (Christiansen, Van Horn, Hechanova-Alamopay & Beehr 2002, p.458). For the most part, the British are credited with instituting the 'travel as a means of education' phenomenon (Bodsky-Porges, 1981, p.177).

Definition of a study tour

The phrase 'study tour' consists of two words which, in combination, have a specialised meaning. 'Study' is defined as 'devotion of time and thought to getting knowledge of, or a close examination of, a subject, especially a book', or to 'give time and attention to learning and discovering something' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 1987, p.859), or 'to observe and investigate (e.g. phenomena) closely' (New English Dictionary and Thesaurus 1994, p.574). 'Tour' is defined as a 'journey out and home again during

which several or many places are visited' (Hornby 1987, p.914). Thus, literally, a study tour can be defined as an activity of learning and researching through personal visits to one or more unfamiliar sites, where those sites (the human participants, their interaction, lifestyles, cultures and so on) are the subject of study. Furthermore, a study tour can last a few days or several months and can serve a wide variety of purposes, the most common of which is satisfying curiosity about language and culture. In this instance, the study tour is usually made to a country which is 'foreign' to the participants and is normally undertaken as a group activity. This is the nature of the study tours which were the focus of this investigation.

Interaction in English as a second language

English can be learnt either in the classroom or in natural settings. These two environments may offer different kinds of learning experience. In the classroom, students learn under the guidance or facilitation of a more knowledgeable adult, called a teacher or facilitator and, in many cases, this learning is based on prescribed books with a future expectation of examination. In language learning, learning in the classroom may focus discretely on 'form' – the grammar, vocabulary and functions of language – to prepare students for real communication in the outside world. On the other hand, learning in natural settings is generally independent, and sometimes the student is unaware of the learning. Students will inevitably engage in communication in the target or second language if they want their message to be understood. Krashen (1985) and Krashen and Terrell (1983) labelled the learning of language in the natural setting as 'acquisition' rather than 'learning', which only occurs consciously, as in the classroom. However, in this thesis, these two terms are not necessarily differentiated, as it is believed both conscious and subconscious learning can contribute directly or indirectly to acquisition.

Taking students into English-speaking countries required them to use English all the time (particularly when they were not interacting within the tour group). In other words, the students had to participate and interact in English. Learner attitudes toward language learning play a role in students managing their interaction, which consists of three main elements: input', 'interaction' and 'output'.

Cross-cultural experiential learning

Cultural information can become the subject-matter being taught, with the language used as the tool rather than as the focus of study. One of the best ways for learners to optimise their cross-cultural learning is for them to experience a cross-cultural setting, for example through study tours to the target language and culture, as in the present study. Cross-cultural experiential education works on mental, physical and emotional variables. It concerns itself with developmental and personal change as the learner matures.

According to Hull (1981), the goals of cross-cultural experiential learning should include the following. First, learners would develop personal awareness of contexts where the values and customs that operate may be, and usually are, subtly and distinctly different. Second, learners would develop their personal competence; that is, at some point, they need to learn that they are able to cope effectively with their new environment. Third, learners would understand and accept other peoples and other ways; that is, an awareness of how different people can be from those with whom they are used to living. Fourth, learners would develop perceptual knowledge; that is, in the cross-cultural setting, they are often forced to deal with personal and group perceptual stereotypes and personally inhibiting behaviours. Finally, in cross-cultural settings, learners would develop a practical understanding of theoretical knowledge by being able to test academic theories and concepts in a context where they can be used.

In short, the setting of cross-cultural experiential learning offers students opportunities not only to increase knowledge and skills but to mature in an environment capable of stimulating growth and development in ways different from the ones traditionally available in any single educational institution.

The goals stipulated above can be achieved through developmental stages. For example, Bennett (1993) argued that a cross-cultural learner would go through the stages of ethnocentrism to defensiveness and minimisation of perceived differences before being able to accept, then adapt, and finally adopt and integrate selected aspects of the other culture. Ethnocentrism constitutes a simple denial that differences exist. A pure ethnocentric believes that the whole world is like her or him, but this kind of person is rarely found. Defensiveness is the perception that the differences one meets are threatening. As a result, one who is at this stage of learning often raises barriers and makes negative judgements against those who are different. At a later stage, the learner would find the differences are not as threatening and important as they were perceived earlier. Further, the learner would recognise that the presence of differences that are substantial and important can be both positive and negative. In the next stage, the learner would be willing to accommodate and adjust her or his behaviour to the patterns and styles of the host culture. Finally, the learner would adopt and integrate selected components of the host culture into her or his own cultural identity or patterns of thinking and behaving, becoming a bi- or multi-cultural person.

Hull (1981) contends that the purpose of cross-cultural experiential learning is to draw students out from a narrowly-conceived academic situation to permit other ways of learning some of the things traditionally assumed to be important by academic institutions. Thus, the point is not to get the student out of the academic situation simply so that learning experiences identical to those already available at the

institution can occur in a different environment (city, institution, peer group, climate or country). The function of cross-cultural experiential education is, indeed, not the duplication of experiences, delivery systems and learning activities available at the home campus. Rather, it is concerned with complementing the education available at the home institution, with the aim of turning out a more competent and mature graduate capable of moving in directions that are self-chosen and open.

In line with the above, trends in cross-cultural teaching have also shifted from mono-cultural, to intercultural, multicultural and finally transcultural approaches (Risager 1998). The mono-cultural approach assumes that learners need to achieve native-like proficiency and cultural identities. The intercultural approach is different, as it assumes that to be able to understand the target culture, learners need to use their own culture as a starting point. Wan (2001), in a study of Chinese students at American universities, identified that the main influence on these students' positive and negative experiences was their difficulty in understanding and interpreting, from their own perspective, differences in culture, language and social and political system between China and the USA. This author recommended that host institutions and educators can assist such students by developing greater awareness of their home culture, different learning styles, frustrations in adjusting to academic life and overcoming cultural shocks by assisting them to adjust to the American educational system and learn about American culture. In this respect, Langton (2002) illustrates, in one case study, how Macquarie University in Australia, responding to the popularity of short-term study programs, restructured and consolidated its programs of this type guided by the overall principle of program and client management. The key drivers in this overhaul were the economic and efficient allocation of resources; controlled development and maintenance of relationships; leverage into important or developing markets; and the best use of

a diverse range of people with complementary skills to offer them professional development opportunities.

The multicultural approach developed from recognition that several cultures may co-exist within a society or nation. With this approach, the focus of cultural teaching is on introducing learners to and making them familiar with the diversity of languages, cultures and social values so that a democratic and non-racist society can be achieved.

Finally, the trans-cultural approach to language education is built on the principles that culture is not fixed, but consists of dynamic and fluid entities, and that cultural understanding largely depends on interaction between individuals or groups. The main contributing factor to the emergence of this approach is globalisation, whereby ethnic, cultural and national borders become blurred, and the one way to identify individuals or groups is through understanding their context of interaction (Risager, 1998).

Summary

From the discussion above, it is clear that cross-cultural perspectives engage people in consciousness awakening that assists the acceptance of the interdependent nature of people and countries of the world, prepares all for citizenship in a globalised society, and exposes all to adjustments in the nature and depth of unique worlds and peoples beyond one's doorstep. In short, it helps to develop professionals well equipped for international career activity.

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RESEARCH REPORT

The Parks High School – a brief history

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[This report has been submitted by Barbara who is writing a book on the history of The Parks High School. It is an extract from her Chapter 6, 'Decline and closure'.]

The Parks High School was fully supported at all times by the community it served. The community fought long and hard to secure the school. In effect, the support of the community was undermined by a conservative Federal Government and, until recently, State, that closed a school that tried to solve its own problems, both economic and social, and devised a way of helping the students complete their studies and gain equity and equality, a sense of belonging, in a society which presents its own challenges.

When the South Australian State Government closed this school, there was indeed 'local struggle' in a creative and moving river of

democracy of people wanting and struggling both for a better life for themselves and their children and for a society that no longer denies the right to help determine the course of that river.

School closures seem to be of two kinds – those that are accepted (after some initial distress), and those that are vigorously contested by school communities. The Minister for Education, Rob Lucas, in 1996 argued that The Parks High School should close, regardless of The Parks Review, for the following reasons: a decline in the Year 8 enrolments, on-going costs, The Parks local persons not supporting the school in sending their children there, a reduction of curriculum choices, an increase in real terms of rent for the site, and overstaffing of the school. On 15 March 1996, in a press release, Mr Lucas reported that, regarding the Year 8 enrolment decline, ' ... local families were choosing to send their children somewhere else. It was their decision, not mine'.

This statement is misleading, as although the Year 8 enrolments were falling, at the other end of the spectrum, the Adult Re-Entry College was rapidly becoming more popular and used to its full capacity. Also, the English as a Second Language and Disabled students, mostly adults, were fully benefiting from this college.

The costs, on the other hand, were being largely borne by specialised programs and specialised teachers who were being funded by other departments, including funds for English as a Second Language, STAR (students at risk), Language and Literacy, and the Disadvantaged School Program. In fact, almost seven teaching positions were provided to The Parks by Federal funds, under six social justice schemes.

Regarding the lack of parental support, the other secondary schools in the surrounding suburbs could not boast a more incremental increase in the student population than The Parks High School for their own education. Many of the adult learners of The Parks High School went

on to University, TAFE or the (then) South Australian College of Advanced Education campuses.

Further, curriculum choices could be offered, such as 'Accelerated Vietnamese' and 'Bilingual Competencies' only at this school in the whole of South Australia. The curriculum had always been developed with the local students in mind, suiting their needs and abilities, and directly resulting in a rather impressive completion of Year 12 rate when compared with other schools.

The Sunday Mail, on 24 March 1996, reported, "Last week, Mr Lucas overturned a 1995 State Government appointed review committee recommendation that The Parks High School remain open. He cited an annual $800,000 bill and a 'significant' drop in enrolments leading to reductions in curriculum options. That decision broke students' hearts, but united the school community to fight for an institution for those who don't fit in elsewhere". *The Messenger* (the local newspaper) heightened fears of the eminent closure of The Parks Community Centre: "The refusal of Housing and Urban Development Minister, Scott Ashenden, to guarantee the Centre will not close is adding fuel to the rising fire. 'Clearly, the role of the community centre will change without the presence of the school', he said".

Nevertheless, the plan to redevelop The Parks was to forestall this decision. The developer, Pioneer Homes, fought for the school to remain open. However, South Australian Housing Trust general manager Peter Jackson said, "... with the urban renewal project expected to take about 15 years, the Trust could not guarantee the Government significant numbers of high school students in the short term".

The school council chairman, Gordon Phillis, said the school closure, set for the end of the year, coupled with the Urban Renewal Project planned for The Parks area, reeked of a crude attempt at social engineering. Members of the community wrote letters to the editor,

protesting with vigour against the closure of their school. A letter was sent to the parents and staff reporting that enrolments had dropped. Then at 8.30 a.m. on Friday 15 March 1996, the closure was formally announced. The staff were informed at 1.00 p.m. Many students were told at a special Assembly at 2.45 p.m. with an accompanying letter.

Unfortunately, the Minister, Dean Brown did not sign off the Urban Renewal Project until mid-2000, which possibly may have saved the school. The Parks High School was doomed – but not without a fight.

BOOK REVIEW

The bones reassemble: reconstituting liturgical speech

Catherine Madsen
Colorado: Davies Group, 2005
ISBN: 1-888570-84-9
207 + xi pages, paperback A$35.00

What on earth, you may ask, has a book on bones and liturgical speech to do with adult learning? At the very least it seems remote from the business of this journal. If the boundaries of learning have broadened to encompass the territory of informal, incidental and intimate learning, alongside the formal, and to exploring the synergies between them, a book on liturgy and bones appears to belong to another planet. I thought so too, at first, even though my interests increasingly lie in lifewide learning. Yet the more I engaged with this book, and the more it provoked, disturbed and inspired me, the more I felt this was a piece of writing to be taken seriously,

by educators and diverse others. Important issues are explored: around subjectivity and what it means to be human; about therapy and its links with spiritual practices; about the relationship between language, metaphor and our capacity to engage with the messier, painful, traumatic, uncertain aspects of human experience; and about what lies at the heart of learning, in profounder senses.

The book focuses on the spiritual, particularly the role of prayer, but explores this by reference to literature, and the power of the poetic and metaphorical to illuminate what is murky and troubling: the places that rationality alone, or narrower forms of scientific thinking, either rejects or simply cannot get near. The book, at core, is concerned with what can speak to our struggles in a world that often appears broken by the insolence of office and political corruption, by the abuse of the planet, by social and moral vacuity, as well as our own narcissistic shortcomings. Catherine Madsen draws eclectically on Blake, Milton, Shakespeare and Brecht, among others, to address her demanding topic; as she does Vygotsky and Piaget to explore the role and importance of private speech and the imagination in child development, adult life and in prayer. Her work represents, at times, an interdisciplinary *tour de force*, albeit, occasionally, a flawed one.

Madsen is a contributing editor to the inter-religious journal, *CrossCurrents*, and the author of a novel about abortion politics, *A portable Egypt*. She describes herself as a wildcat theologian. She writes elegantly and eclectically, with arresting argument. She is a singer, songwriter and author and has culled words and music from sources as disparate as Leonard Cohen, Emily Dickinson, Yiddish poets, *The sacred harp* songbook and traditional English ballads in her work. Her writing represents, in consequence, a rich tapestry. The book arose, we are told, not from a professional commitment to theology or pastoral work but from 'the pragmatic interest of a lay person in search of religion worth practising at a time when religious people seemed to have become exhausted with both their practice

and their prose'. There is an intense interest in the power of English, ancient and modern – and by extension language more widely – as a vehicle for spiritual force. The book moves through Tyndale and Cranmer, Jewish and Christian Orthodox prayer and writing. Madsen insists that the threat of martyrdom hangs over the writing of the Tyndales and Cranmers: if you could die for your theology, you meant what you said in a way, she insists, modern day liturgists do not dream of.

The author is profoundly concerned with what she sees to be the inadequacy of contemporary liturgies: modern liturgists have created, she maintains, an 'agonising split between the politically acceptable and the physically and emotionally satisfying'. She provides countless examples, in exhaustive detail. She documents changes to the *Te deum* in which 'We praise thee, oh God', becomes 'You are God: we praise you'. Here is an idea flattened by modern sensibility, she insists, with its simultaneous hunger for and recoil from God. She offers other examples: she celebrates, for instance, Thomas H. Troeger's hymn, *Holy and good is the gift of desire*, for addressing the issue of male violence against women. But in the last stanza, she says, a kind of Christian and feminist political correctness takes over: 'for Jesus revealed that women will trust, a man who in action is tender and just'. The last two sentences 'suddenly seem to consolidate Jesus as a feminist ally. Was that why they crucified him?' she asks. She calls this theological opportunism: abusing complexity and subtlety via a mixture of political correctness and the need for men and women to find immediate comfort. Modern liturgy, she concludes, offers politically contrived grammatical changes and carefully inoffensive metaphors to replace the language of broken heartedness, ardour, fear and uncertainty. She warns us that, in seeking to be correct and overly sensitive to current preoccupations, we risk domesticating the power of language and the poetic to confront, provoke, trouble, inspire and comfort, but also to extend us.

And yet, our longing for guidance and revelation remains intense. The book begins by reference to William James who was among the first researchers – in an age dominated by scienticism – to trust the subjective realm to illuminate what could be inexplicable physical symptoms and behaviours. His work built, of course, on the Romantics, who – in their disillusionment with the French Revolution and Napoleon – began searching their own lives for such revelation. The Imagination became the source of power previously ascribed to God. If modernity 'murdered to dissect', it also helped establish the idea that religion – or at least a profound spiritual sense – can and must be built once again from the ground up.

Madsen takes us on a journey, to this end, through contemporary Judaism, Catholic and Anglican Masses, cognitive science and the work of Vygotsky and Piaget! There was a debate between them around the role and status of 'private speech': young children's way of talking to themselves as they play, sometimes chanting their thoughts and actions aloud. Piaget argued that the habit gradually disappeared in early school years and that it was pre-social: something to be transcended rather than valorised. Speech without communication, he concluded, simply atrophies at around the age of six or seven.

Vygotsky detected a streak of disapproval in Piaget's picture of the oblivious three year old, just out of the 'autistic' stage of development, incapable of reason and who has no particular wish to be understood, and who must be inducted into the realities of responsible social discourse. Vygotsky thought all speech was essentially social and that the child does not resist, but desires linguistic development. Private speech is often an attempt to wrestle with an obstacle that more challenging forms of play, for instance, can create. Such speech, in short, has frequently to do with problem-solving and self-guidance rather than avoidance. But, paradoxically, private speech can increase in the presence of others – especially of other young children – and may drop almost to nothing if others are deaf or speak a different language. Moreover, he insisted, private speech does not disappear but is gradually internalised into the half-verbal shorthand of rarely voiced thought and difficult feeling.

This is a space, however, in which the affective and intellectual can potentially unite and work together – the 'feeling intellect' – in Wordsworth's terms, to create, via the poetic, moments of insight, meaning and movement. Madsen suggests prayer and liturgy may fulfil a similar function. Prayer and spiritual rituals are often meant for overhearing and serve as a form of self-guidance or problem-solving. Using collective, tried and tested frames, the process allows the projection of the deeply personal and perplexing into a containing and poetic frame – including the imagined presence of 'God' – where pain, trauma, loss and lostness can find space and witness. Madsen builds connections here with psychotherapeutic processes, in that the work of liturgy is, similarly, to find a way through and around barriers, a way from the world that can cause us to feel fragmented to a world that contains. Therapy's fundamental aim – as with the best ritual – is the replication of humaneness, of touching the depths, and finding life and hope, in the presence of otherness, in the darkness. Moreover, the role of metaphor and non-logical forms of association is much neglected in, and fundamental to, adult learning (or for that matter science). Yet, paradoxically, free association requires a container – whether prayer, the analytic session, creative writing, an attentive other or community – to provide a secure enough base from which we can let go and take imaginative, heartfelt risks.

Madsen's imaginative use of Shakespeare and Blake in building her case is compelling. There is an account of the power of the poetic imagination to capture the most awesome and awful aspects of human experience. Madsen describes work with psychotic criminal offenders in a prison. A patient convicted of multiple stabbings spoke of having shoplifted perfume. A therapist, Murray Cox, thought immediately of Lady Macbeth – 'There's the smell of the blood still' – and we are told

how he gently enquired, after the session, whether the smell of blood had ever concerned the patient. The patient talked, in extraordinary disclosure, how 'I couldn't get away from my own blood'. Lady Macbeth and the power of the poetic imagination becomes 'no mere figurehead of the literary imagination, but more or less an archetype of indelible guilt', one that can cut through the most impenetrable of places. The power of metaphor and story, of the poetic and prayer, to capture and energise archetypal concerns — in therapeutic, but also educational settings as well as religious ones — is well illustrated. We risk imaginative strangulation if we believe the struggle to know belongs, simply, to a kind of disembodied rationalism; or if we are too frightened to take risks in allowing language real, creative space, for fear of offending or transgressing current beliefs.

Literalism and scepticism towards the metaphorical, for instance, can easily close us down to the miraculous and potentially redemptive in everyday life. (Madsen quotes the example of Hermione's resurrection in *A winter's tale* — easily dismissed as absurd and against the laws of physics, and yet it represents, poetically, the power of deliverance and reparation at a deeply psychological level.)

Yet Madsen's argument that the ancients created a spiritual poetry working more profoundly than much contemporary writing — the prospect of martyrdom sharpening and deepening the poetic spirit, so to speak — can be overplayed. Gendered assumptions about Him, God, and the position of women, alongside the inaccessibility of some language, can bedevil communion with older forms of liturgy and prayer (as in the *Book of common prayer*). We have to recognise that the language of a 17th century religious sensibility, for instance, may frequently be beautiful and, even transcendental, but also contains deeply authoritarian impulses: telling us what to think and believe, in ways that can close down the heart and imagination. Women's struggles to create new forms of language, poetry and liturgy, more in tune with the lived experience of what has been culturally 'other',

have historically been too painful, but also creative and inspiring, to be dismissed, simply, as damaged goods. The stanza, quoted above, connecting Jesus with tenderness and justice, and the capacity to heal even the vilest of abuse, does address potentially profound, disturbing and still hidden issues in human relationship.

The bones reassemble will nonetheless speak to those many educators concerned with the failure of the imagination, heart and courage bedevilling and deadening conversations about adult learning. The questioning, seeking, meaning-making, open and generous spirit at the heart of really significant learning is easily squashed by an overbearing rationalism, narrow instrumentalism or the reduction of education to a commodity. There has been a marginalisation of diverse ways of knowing, from which we are only slowly recovering. The poetic, and spiritual, alongside a more embodied understanding of the rational, are finding greater space as we recover the idea of learning as holistic: an emotional, relational, imaginative as well as thinking process at one and the same time. Catherine Madsen's book speaks to us as adult educators and learners, and as whole human beings, in these terms: if, that is, we can be open to her eclecticism and allow ourselves to enter what may be strange territory, and let the spirit of her writing connect with us in new and unexpected ways.

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BOOK REVIEW

Bringing transformative learning to life

Kathleen P. King
Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 2005
ISBN: 1-57524-253-2
224 pages, US$27-50

King takes us on a journey into transformative education, offering a model of learning opportunities and suggesting an application of the model within several sites of adult education — English for speakers of other languages; adult and community education; workplace education; faculty development; and mature-aged learners in higher education.

Transformative education is an approach in which the transformation of individual learners as a result of educational experiences is acknowledged and acts as a conceptual framework to inform theory and practice. It values student-centredness and reflectivity. King

works from this approach to develop a model of 'transformative learning opportunities' and suggests ways in which transformative educators can address the common concerns of all educators — preparation, actual practice with learners through to assessment and reflectivity. King's work offers legitimacy and authenticity to the transformative educator, valuing and affirming our work while also challenging us to perform to a high standard and stay true to the approach while, for example, designing assessment and teaching within the classroom or learning setting.

This congruency — showing integrity at all phases of educators' work within the transformative approach — is the strength of her work in this book. However, I was left wishing she understood that she writes for an international audience, not just a North American one, and some of the work is americanised without reflection on how this in itself can limit understandings of the range of experiences to be had outside of North America, for instance, the use of acronyms, the academic references and the use of cases in which white American cultural norms dominate other cultural norms. The appendices are valuable for extending our understanding of the 'transformative learning opportunities' model and offer useful suggestions on how to develop transformative education within a variety of adult education settings.

She offers several examples of learners and their experiences, which are useful to illustrate her argument for transformative learning but come across as overly constructed to serve her argument and persuade the reader — they lack a degree of conflict, grittiness and tumult. For example, all the scenarios or profiles of learners persuade us that, while the transformative journey can be painful, the learners decide to continue learning despite the difficulties (apparently there is no attrition among learners in adult education); in every scenario they develop strong attachments to other supportive learners (which are quite wonderful experiences); and every learner is presented

as willing to be assimilated into dominant norms of whiteness. In every scenario, the lone, strong, independent, individual learner forges ahead into a bright and better future of prosperity and lifelong learning. The only scenario of cross-cultural conflict ends up with an assimilationalist resolution acted out in ways which undermine and undervalue the cultural norms of the learner, so that they can assimilate into the norms of white America and become a 'strong independent individual', defying (and not even suggesting the possibility of) the options available to her to resolve those conflicts in ways that affirm her culture (and its interdependent collectivist norms) while still meeting her learning and career aspirations. In the scenarios, every learner enters a respectful collegiality with other learners — there is no bullying, no racism, no class war and everyone has equal speaking space in a delightfully non-sexist environment. It's a wonderful vision, but it doesn't match the real world.

The scenarios illustrate the model well, and are useful, but are somewhat romanticised and overly positive. One of their strengths is that they do acknowledge some of the trauma, pain and frustration of learners' experiences, and it is essential that we consider and acknowledge this. To King's credit, she urges us to be ethical and mindful of the trauma that is experienced during the transformative process experienced by the adult learner — essential stuff for all educators, but especially for transformative educators.

Another strength of the book is the valuing of reflectivity and reflective practice, absolutely essential in transformative education, and King strongly encourages us to develop our reflectivity and, also, to consider contextual understandings. But again, I was left wishing the author could reflect on and draw our attention to the agonising turmoil of dealing with the ugliness of racism and sexism in the adult classroom, to its subtleties and nuances as well as the overt ways they manifest and demand the attention of the transformative educator. How shall we deal with mismanagement of disability, of

addictions, of ageism? What shall we do about the lack of resources for education, for our own poor working conditions and time poverty? How shall we deal as transformative educators with compassion fatigue, with under-achievement and under-motivation, with frozen silences in the classroom, with explosions of emotionality which overwhelm and disempower some learners and educators? How shall we prevent teacher burnout, cynicism and loss of hope? None of these are addressed within either the model or the scenarios that illustrate learners' experiences, and they aren't even named or articulated — a failing in a time when the imperative for all educators is to get to grips with diversity and resist injustice and oppression and somehow manage, despite under-resourcing, impossible workloads and deteriorating working conditions (for example, casual hourly-paid tutoring becoming the norm, forcing educators to perform excessive unpaid hours of work to ensure good outcomes for their learners).

As is typical of the transformative education approach, the educator does not enter into solidarity with the learner or their community, nor invites them to engage with social transformation and resistance to injustice, but maintains a safe distance in which the learner has responsibility alone for their (individual not social) transformation. King argues, somewhat simplistically but congruent with transformative education theory, that educators must leave the decisions about their actions to the learner while ensuring that some supports are available, for example, referral to counselling services. She argues that this is an ethical approach, offering as an alternative a forceful and dictating approach. I would argue that we need a more sophisticated understanding of solidarity and a complex range of positions available to educators to understand how we enter into compassionate solidarity with their transforming journey through education and social life. The author does point out that we are all learners, that educators themselves are on a lifelong journey — an invaluable insight that the same needs drive the educator. She argues that we, too, have complex and contradictory learning experiences.

Her call for appropriate ways to determine if authentic representation (of understandings of the learner's experience) has been identified is a strength of her openness to critique of her work, and shows the generosity of her approach to education and transformative education. She acknowledges that the model needs further development, another sign of her openness to the need for continuing rigorous but constructive dialogue among educators.

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BOOK REVIEW

The experience of language teaching

Rose M. Senior
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006
ISBN: 978-0-521-84760-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-521-61231-9 (pbk)
315 pages

Rose Senior presents the experiences of present-day English teachers in the communicative language classroom and concludes with a socio-pedagogic theory of classroom practice. She dedicates the book to 'language teachers everywhere', but it is also intended for TESOL students, teacher educators and researchers.

The author is a senior lecturer in the languages department at Curtin University of Technology, Perth. This book, her first major publication, presents her research after interviewing 101 teachers in five related studies over 12 years (1992–2004). Rose seeks to give

voice to the experiences, thoughts, concerns, beliefs and practices of language teachers in a readable way, full of narratives and anecdotes. Through interviews (based on the question, 'What is a good language class?') and observation, Rose collected data from the teachers and used grounded theory to arrive at her combined social and pedagogic theory of the teachers' underlying classroom practice. Rose was supported in her work by noted language educator and researcher, Michael Breen.

Most interviewed teachers worked in Perth, Australia, mainly with adult learners. Ten teachers worked in the UK. All teachers were trained in the communicative approach (with a focus on interactive speaking activities), predominantly through intensive short courses such as CELTA or DELTA. The book is therefore a portrayal of this particular group and their relationship with the communicative approach. Although all teachers said they subscribed to the communicative approach, it was found that in reality they were more pragmatic or eclectic.

The book contains twelve chapters. Each chapter is interspersed with boxes providing additional comment, references or further reading. Each chapter finishes with a conclusion, dot-point summary, usually a comment box, and the focus of the next chapter. The first chapter provides the background to the study. Chapters two to eleven present the teachers' experiences sequentially from deciding to become a language teacher, undergoing teacher training, starting out as a teacher ('bluffing' and 'blundering on'), planning lessons (and abandoning plans), building rapport with their classes, maturing as teachers, and dwelling on the rewards and frustrations of teaching (including leaving the profession due to burnout and lack of promotion). The final chapter proposes a teacher-generated theory of classroom practice.

Readers should note that the book is not presenting ideals for language teaching; rather, it is presenting the experiences of a

select group of teachers. It claims to present the current reality for Australian and British teachers, which is based on the communicative approach. The book does not give any 'meaty' argument about teaching or learning, but there are hints at alternative views in the comment boxes. Rose points out that these teachers often have no time to reflect, often act intuitively and therefore may not be too articulate in interviews; they say what they think the researcher requires, which is a limitation of the study.

The main aim of the book is to synthesise the research data provided by teachers to develop a theory essentially generated by teachers. The teachers emphasise a 'class-centred' approach to language teaching, with teachers and learners constantly 'adjusting' to one another according to a linkage of social and pedagogic processes. Using a functional leadership approach, whereby the teacher becomes a part of the 'inside' group and shares the leadership role, class cohesiveness is improved, fostering better interaction, which supposedly enhances language learning. For these teachers, cohesiveness relates to learners who are collectively friendly, lively and interactive, with a sense of camaraderie and fun. (Problems arise with students who want more professionalism, a more focused approach and faster learning.) Rose shows the teachers struggling with such issues as meaning versus form (grammar), creating fun lessons versus providing learning, following teaching trends and textbooks versus being true to oneself, and dealing with more individualistic adult learners.

Since Rose's studies, there has been more research questioning the effectiveness of the communicative approach, generating debate about the value of learner-learner interactive activities, the focus on negotiation of meaning, and the notion that learners will pick up structures subconsciously through speaking. Does the focus on interaction really contribute to language acquisition in the classroom, or are there other factors that contribute to acquisition in the classroom (if at all)? This book portrays teachers attempting to

conform to the methodologies and practices instilled in them in their ('gruelling') teacher training, but exerting their own beliefs as they learn to express their own teacher personalities and become more intimately acquainted with the real people in their classrooms.

Missing is a discussion of student testing, assessment and grading, but perhaps these were not features of these teachers' courses. There was little discussion of teacher evaluation, because of the general lack of mentoring and the implication that anyone attempting to observe such classrooms would provide an unfair report due to ignorance of the shared history of the class. Therefore, these teachers had to become reflective practitioners in order to develop themselves, which is perhaps somewhat contradictory to a previous claim that the teachers have little time to reflect. There was similarly little discussion on course evaluation, except to comment whether the teachers had a good feeling at the end of a course.

A poignant part of the book is the chapter on the frustrations and rewards of teaching in Australia. Rose was somewhat scathing in her portrayal of the market-driven situation which hires and fires teachers depending on 'bums on seats', thus jeopardising teachers' careers and futures. Such a system also favours the employment of less qualified and less experienced teachers (and therefore cheaper) over more experienced and more qualified teachers (and therefore more expensive). Slipped into this chapter is a criticism of the 'ocker' and 'insular' attitude of the Australian public, who generally don't travel overseas and scorn foreign language learning. The marginalisation of the LOTE (Languages Other Than English) program is raised.

The book meets the call for more narratives from teachers and learners themselves. It provides issues for consideration by TESOL students. It perhaps creates resonance with, and provides confirmation for, current language teachers in the Australian and British context. It gives food for thought for teacher-educators and administrators, and it provides researchers with teachers'

perspectives of classroom language teaching. The 'fickle' nature of the English teaching world is drawn out. Perhaps there is a plea to improve the situation for the body of genuine, dedicated language teachers who pay a high price in emotional currency for the benefit of organisations and a constantly changing clientele of learners.

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BOOK REVIEW

Understanding and promoting transformative learning

Patricia Cranton
San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006
Second edition
219 pages, price $61-56

In this updated version of her 1994 book, Cranton combines her two principal interests — transformative learning and authenticity in teaching. She examines transformation from the perspective of the learner and the educator, and uses many examples from her own experiences in training adults, from diverse backgrounds, as adult educators in the trades and other fields.

The style of writing is relaxed and conversational, which makes it very accessible for any adult educators interested in extending their teaching practice and promoting transformative learning for themselves and their learners. However, they need a comprehensive understanding of the field before initiating a transformative program,

as it is not without risks and the learner can be quite vulnerable during the process. The transformative journey to a more open and liberated life raises a number of ethical issues; in addition to being an exciting adventure, it can be an emotional and conflictual process with unexpected outcomes for both learners and educators. Various levels of support from other people, including an authentic, open and genuinely caring educator, are necessary to alleviate the dilemmas and assist the learner to adjust to their new perspectives and act on their revised habits of mind. As became apparent at a recent workshop on transformative learning in Adelaide, the transformative educator can be left unsure of how to proceed due to the unforeseen results of carefully planned activities.

Cranton believes that educators are both learners and models for students while nurturing their transformative earning. Therefore, she argues it is important that educators themselves engage in a transformative journey and experience the process to become more authentic and self-aware of their teaching practices. A metaphor Cranton recently used to describe her teaching comes from one of her photographs of clear water running over rocks of various sizes, colours and shapes. The water, which represents her teaching practice, is clear, transparent and fluid, and runs through, around, over and under the learning environment. The colours of the rocks (participants) are enhanced and the differences are accentuated by the water. The rocks, like our assumptions derived from our community, culture and our early experiences, are deeply embedded, making it difficult to change our perspectives and critically reflect on our experiences.

The book is divided into ten chapters with numerous subheadings which provide a comprehensive coverage of the key concepts of transformative learning. The earlier chapters, which outline the theory of transformative learning as a unique aspect of adult learning, are explicit with relatively few technical terms and jargon. Recent research advances are acknowledged and future trends are identified

as transformative theory continues to expand and evolve in new directions. Cranton provides many examples of transformative learning experiences from the literature and from her own classes; questions for educators to ask themselves in each of the psychological, sociolinguistic and epistemic frames of reference; and strategies to use to develop their authenticity and to increase their confidence to engage in transformative programs that empower the learner.

Transformative theory is founded on Habermas' (1971) three types of knowledge – instrumental, communicative and emancipatory – and Mezirow's critical reflection and perspective transformation. The field has expanded to include relational, connected knowing based on the work of Mary Belenky and others, and social change derived from the work of Freire and Habermas, with the aim of using critical reflection to promote social action and increase democratic participation. Further developments suggest that groups and organisations using action learning and collaborative inquiry can engage in transformative learning that expands the collective as well as the individual consciousness. The ecological view developed by O'Sullivan is much broader and a more personal process that includes individual, relational, group, institutional and global perspectives that require a deep structural shift in consciousness which permanently alters our understanding of our place in the world. The emphasis more recently includes aspects of spirituality, relational knowing, and authenticity that are increasing our understanding of how the various perspectives complement and elaborate on each other. Cranton believes that this extra-rational approach has the most potential for further expanding the theory of transformative learning. It is a more personal, emotional and imaginative way of knowing. It includes intuitive and spiritual aspects which use symbols, images, stories and myths to assist personal illumination, which Boyd and Dirkx describe as a process of discernment.

Another of Cranton's interests is Jung's theories of psychological types and individuation which, she believes, can provide a powerful and thorough understanding of individual differences. Individuation is a comprehensive transformative process that increases self-knowledge with the emergence of a deepened sense of personality. According to Jung, we are either introverted or extraverted, we perceive things through the reality of the senses or through intuition, and we make judgements using logic (thinking) or via values (feelings). Intuitive learners tend to prefer imaginative, holistic, extra-rational experiences, while those with a predilection for feeling are inclined towards relational or connected transformation. In a later chapter, she provides examples of activities and strategies to foster critical self-reflection and self-knowledge for the different psychological types, which she has successfully used in class.

The following chapter on empowering learners expands on this by using Brookfield's interpretation of Foucault's disciplinary power and self-surveillance to discuss various strategies for empowering learners as a critical pre requisite for self-reflection. The transformative learning process varies according to personal preferences and needs to be structured to empower learners and assist with their decision-making processes. She argues that Personal Empowerment through Type (PET) (Cranton & Knoop, 1995), an inventory of personal profile preferences based on Jung's theory of psychological type, can identify individual teaching and learning styles that increase the effectiveness of transformative programs and thus extend our knowledge of the process. PET appears similar to Kolb's learning quadrants, the 4MAT system, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences.

Cranton has written 12 books and numerous journal articles on transformative learning and authenticity in teaching. She is currently Professor of Adult Education at Penn State University, Pennsylvania and recently visited Adelaide to conduct workshops and seminars on this book at the University of South Australia.

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Tony Ryan has been involved with the ABC and community radio in relation to all aspects of adult education and especially lifelong learning. He has conducted the interviews and produced the CD. The interviews have been broadcast through PPA FM and other community radio stations during 2006. Further information is available from ALA, and PPA FM at PO Box 433, Salisbury, South Australia 5108.

This CD runs for 76 minutes and consists of seven sections. Each section has a theme and involves interviews and comments from a range of people, from managers/administrators to teachers/lecturers and many learners. One of the reasons for the claim made above is that there is such a variety of themes, locations and people, providing an array of options and styles with which listeners are likely to identify.

There follows discussion of the seven sections. To assist in understanding the CD, it is suggested that the listener has access to information on South Australia – Adelaide and rural areas – as all locations are in South Australia. Also, there is a custom in South Australia for government organisations to have long titles and for those working in them to have long titles as well. As a result names, titles and organisations are not mentioned in the following discussion.

The first section deals with a program concerned with the delivery of information technology skills to adults who are 'remote'. In the program, the adults use the same software as in the School of the Air. That is an example of the multiple use of software but also the use of the same software for children and possibly their parents (or grandparents). This may increase understanding between the generations and also allow them to share the 'language' of the technology. The discussion notes that the students were 'creative' with the technology, a pleasing outcome. The discussion also stressed the importance of class on line and support for the adult learners. Face-to-face contact was also identified as 'critical'.

CD REVIEW

Learning journeys: audio exploration of lifelong learning in action

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PBA FM, Salisbury, South Australia
Website: www.taketimeradio.com
2006

Learning is a fascinating concept for adults. For some it is a central part of their lives. Other adults view learning as something other people do. While the Tony Ryan exploration may be very acceptable to the former group, it may be more valuable to the latter group. Why? The CD is conversational in a relaxed style and covers an array of participants in different contexts. Thus, there is the possibility that the 'learning-is-what-other-people-do' adults may identify with parts of the content and, therefore, with lifelong learning. If that happens, they may experience lifelong learning for themselves.

The second section provides information on the *Virtual first aid* project offered through an Aboriginal college . Two factors emerged from the discussion of staff and students. One was the way in which the business services that are central to the college's offerings are made 'practical'. This practical feature is illustrated by making use of the college's on-going activities as a means of gaining 'real-life' experience and by participating in a 'trade fair' held in Brisbane. A second feature was the importance given to making learners feel part of the learning group. A student from Tasmania noted how his experience had been primarily in self-learning or one-to-one situations. But this 'outsider' Tasmanian was very aware of how he had been made to feel 'at home' in this college learning group.

In a change of context and content, the third section is devoted to the Avon Art and Craft Guild and its crochet classes. The geographical setting, a town of two halls and no shops, is important as the learning has an important local focus, for example, producing crafts from local produce, but also in re-cycling. Other important features of this case were the emphasis on a 'relaxed atmosphere' for learning and 'interaction', plus the special involvement of both men and women.

The importance of work for so many adults is illustrated in the fourth section. The example is also significant in that it involves the public servants who develop policy and programs in learning. Their project, to have workshops, developed out of informal discussions about how the policy they were developing and promoting should/could be implemented within their own situation (which is not necessarily a common phenomenon with bureaucrats). Like other adults, they just wanted to share knowledge. Both work and non-work topics were presented from software and a book club, to wine and cheese and using E-bay or yoga at work. In addition to this overlap of work and non-work learning, there was also the balance between individual and group learning.

The fifth section has an interesting title, *Streets of learning*, and is concerned with learning in what may be defined as non-educational settings. How can we help people recognise that they learn in many different places, like the streets of your country town or city? So cited in this section are a bus tour and a cultural dinner for people from five different nations. What is clearly illustrated in this section is how the sorts of activities that are able to be developed under this heading are very strongly influenced by the locality, for example, from an Adelaide suburb to a rural area that is undergoing a sea change with the arrival of former city dwellers. The point was also made how this type of learning emphasis may help to break down social isolation in both rural and urban areas.

Recently re-discovered is an important part of Australia's architecture, the men's shed. The shed that is discussed in this section has strong links to Vietnam veterans and has had a number of locations. The clientele for this shed has moved beyond its veterans' focus — though they remain significant — to other men and the support of women in terms of helping with meals. This shed and others spread all over Australia have been important in helping reduce the isolation noted in the previous section but also the potential for the learning of those who become involved.

Finally, the seventh section focuses on those who have come from other nations as refugees or through a freer choice. What is very evident in this section is the central role of learning, but learning very broadly defined. It is not only important for one of the 'students' to gain the technical knowledge, and credential, so that he can gain work with Telstra, but there is also important learning about the different sorts of workplaces in Australia from his native Rumania. 'Workplace learning' takes on a new dimension. This section provides an example of the international dimension of the learning process but also of that same global dimension domestically within the learning groups throughout Australia.

For those who are thinking about their own learning or who they are or what they want to be and for those who have to deal with any sort of adult learners, these stories in the CD provide a reminder of the context in which administrators, teachers and learners really work. And we all need is to be reminded that our particular location is an important location, but just one of many and varied locations that go to make up the vast panorama that is lifelong learning.

Our thanks to Tony Ryan for encapsulating this whole context in 76 minutes of interesting discussion.

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BOOK REVIEW

Teaching Defiance.
Stories and strategies for activist educators

Michael Newman
San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006
305 + xiii pages, RRP: A$53-95
ISBN: 0-7879-8556-2
Available from www.johnwiley.com.au

Red footprints track through adult education
Making their mark on the beachhead
Facing assault, creating disruption, resistant.
Frenzies of critical reflective action
Colourful outrageous and noisy
Three cheers for red footprint books
Defending democracy, spirited and true
Activist educators come armed with books
Books about rebelliousness, teaching defiance.

Well, I've never tried writing a book review in verse before, so I will stop there and turn to conventional format.

Teaching Defiance is the book I wish I was grown up enough to write. Allegiance to the oppressed, and defiance of oppression, is its hallmark, and the hallmark of this Australian author.

It is part of a grand tradition in adult education literature, following in the footsteps of giants such as Freire, Horton and Hooks, reminding me of the work of community activists such as Shields (*In the tiger's mouth*), Mindel (*Sitting in the fire*), Alinsky (*Rules for radicals*) and Maddison and Scalmer (*Activist wisdom*). It joins a progressive body of work in adult education which affirms and develops the emancipatory project in education, the concern for liberation and social justice as an organising and core principle of education theory and practice. Indeed, this body of literature in adult education is one which demands praxis, the integration of theory and practice in a living street-wise dynamic.

Newman has already established a name for himself as an activist scholar in Australia, and this internationally published book will hopefully give the rest of the world the opportunity to discover an Australian accent in the global dialogue of activist educators, educational activists and activist scholars. His previous books have included *Defining the enemy*, *Maeler's regard* and *Third contract*, all dealing with aspects of radical, progressive education.

An outstanding characteristic of all his work is its language – accessible and lively, stimulating and intelligent, thoughtful and provocative. Newman's language is street-wise, easy to read, but is not for the lazy. Engaging the heart with an open, lively, colourful story-telling skill, one finds one also needs to let the brain do some work when reading Newman – he manages to slip in a few brain-awakening concepts. His skill in writing readable, accessible and stimulating language is an outstanding and admirable quality of his

work. He uses the story-telling device throughout this and his other books, and his language writing skill is a role model for us all. This is a book with colour, noise and movement. It is a delight to read such a readable book which also assumes we are not dumb.

Another feature of the book is his courage and cheekiness in naming the rarely named. It courageously goes where few authors in education dare go, and names the emotion and rawness of real life. For this book has BIG, UNUSUAL words in it like love, anger, rage and hate. It vibrates with *passion*. He provocatively examines the emotional life of learner and educator, and offers comment on, for example, the difference between out-of-control rage and the anger that fires us up to face down oppression. He examines these emotions and experiences, broadening the emotional range that can be named and discussed in a dialogue.

He even goes where few recent educators have dared go, and deals with the role of violence as a strategy of social change. Now that takes courage, especially at a time in the new century when we are surrendering human rights in order to consolidate state power, masked as a rhetoric about fear of violence and terrorism. Speaking up against that is essential, and Newman takes us some way into a dialogue we need to continue. Terrible things need to be named and discussed – and can be – and Newman does this when he also asks us to consider suicide in a different light.

The book has some frustrations for the eager reader. Some points are under-developed and one is left wanting more: ***please sir, I want more!*** An illuminating and stimulating discussion of choice left me wanting more about access to choice and what constrains choice. A section on anger and rage creates a dichotomy between the two, and I wanted more discussion, more insight into, for example, either an alternative schema to the dichotomy, or how internalised rage and anger acts either as empowerment or disablement of community activism, such as in anti-racist activism. I wanted him to at least touch

on the gendering of emotion, and gendered perspectives of anger and rage: ***please sir! I want more!***

Transcultural work demands attention to such issues, and I was eager for more but the potential was left under-developed, as was the potential in the discussion about defiance and rebelliousness. I was eager for more insight and illumination of these very important issues, greedy for food for provocative thought, and left frustrated. The section on conflict, for example, does not acknowledge the vitriolic and spiteful inclination that can explode within conflicted groups, or between us and those we resist, or the role of pay-back and on-going grudges and dislikes in conflict situations. This section of his book is very good at naming and revealing how adversarial conflict situations can be, and how we must summon our integrity and courage to strategically manage them.

I also greedily wanted more ideas about which scholarly references to pursue in search of some concepts and nuances hinted at by Newman. Turning that frustration into positive action suggests that here are some areas for future writing in the public domain, by him and other authorial sorts and wordsmiths.

Among the unanswered questions I was left with after reading the book were: are there any circumstances in which an educator should induce trauma in learners, for example, Jane Elliot and other anti-racist educators' work on simulating racism and how some role-plays and simulations induce trauma in learners? And what about activist strategies that inadvertently reinforce the power of our opposition and of the state — is this what non-violent direct action does, or not? What about activist failures? And the anguished pain of some learning — how, for example, do we act ethically, as activist educators, when we ourselves and others are in pain or traumatised, for example, when working with refugees, victims of torture and trauma, war veterans and victims of rape and domestic violence?

How do we deal with our own lack of words, our own inability to find words, and be articulate; our own vicarious trauma — and that of the people we work with as we agitate, resist and defy? Vicarious trauma is now a well known phenomenon in Australian health activism, but Newman does not refer to it. What, oh what, shall we do with class anger and race rage?

He offers many wonderful strategies — for which I am very grateful — but they mostly assume we are all extroverts, energetically waiting to burst into action — but what about the introverted, the shy, the withdrawn? These aren't just personality types — they are also phases of life we all experience, and an activist needs to know how to work effectively with the raw material of human experience, with all its diversity and variety, all its joys and traumas, with both high energy and low, tired, depleted energy — such as the burnt out activist, the despairing, the bereaved and the traumatised.

Newman's work is richer for drawing from the union tradition, but that also inadvertently restricts him — he seems to assume the activist is an extroverted leader, ready to burst forth into overt action, amidst a well-organised, dynamic membership who will find themselves in meetings in public forums and workplaces. This is one 'site' in which activists find themselves — but there are others. Inadvertently he assumes, and looks at us through, the lens of the activist context of the white, male unionist. As Muir and also Pocock have argued, this union-centric and leader-centric model of activism is one which has often failed to grapple with its own sexism and racism and ways-of-making-meaning, and has retained Anglo and masculinist ways of knowing activism (Muir, 1999, p.173) and, I would add, has neglected to attend to cooperative and/or collegial frameworks for action, as well as adversarial ones. Unions themselves have been called into internal change towards being more inclusive, participative and reflective, more cooperative and collegial, less competitive. I have a profound respect for Newman, having gobbled up all of his books

with an eager appetite, and I offer this statement respectfully — as Pocock has argued in her work on the gendering of unions, 'Our understanding of the nature and dimensions of necessary change depends on effective self-critique and action' (Pocock, 1999, p.4). He needs to be more mindful of the other ways of dealing with social justice, where much less emphasis is given to leader-centric activism and the 'strong individual' and, without ignoring that, also attend more to the communal, collegial, cooperative and inclusive, for example, activism where leadership exists but is fluid, dispersed and decentered (as it often is within community and anti-racist movements). He has attended to this in some of his other work and it deserves the attention of his future work.

Yes, I am a greedy guts and I did not, and should not, expect Newman to do it all, but he is a bit of a teaser, opening invigorating vistas in education and then leaving us gasping and salivating for more. I want to know more about *metaxis*, which he introduces later in the book, but he does not explore adequately for this greedy gut. *Metaxis* is the dual consciousness of engaged action and reflexivity; and future writers might like to relate it to mindfulness, a concept in research practice discussed by Shapiro and Bentz, or to concepts of reflexivity, praxis, and critical, reflective consciousness. I would have liked him to explore *metaxis* in a lot more depth, through a gender-sensitive and culturally competent lens, or to have the idea examined from an anti-postmodernist, radical perspective, just to see what it looks like from that angle.

A great strength of all Newman's books is the respectful attention given to the emotional lives of educators, learners and activists. Likewise, a strength is the experiential spectrum he covers, the range of exemplars, anecdotes and stories that capture the complex ideas he presents to us. His scope and vista are international, enriching our grasp of the global and the local. And he writes about them with a sense of beauty and wonder that inspires and illuminates, using

language that is easily read, while also challenging us to think and feel deeply, as we explore his ideas and stories. I highly recommend this drinkable book to anyone with a thirst for social justice.

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