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FROM THE CO-EDITORS’ DESKS

Inclusion and Diversity

In the latest issue of the *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Appleby (2008: 135) states that social inclusion is ‘a highly contested notion … it allows discussion which is broader than simply poverty or material deprivation. Importantly, it can encompass discussion about social justice as well as social and community cohesion’. In South Australia, it has for some time been the name of a governmental unit, and recently it has also appeared at the federal level. It is therefore timely that this issue of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* explores this notion of social inclusion, particularly within the context of increasing cultural diversity in adult education. While admittedly not all contributions fit neatly into this theme, and they were not necessarily selected for their intensive interrogation of these notions *per se*, nevertheless one can recognise significant connections in their discussions and the papers collectively offer many valuable insights for adult educators and providers.

The first two papers embrace the subject of enabling courses, focusing on the under-representation of certain groups in higher education such as students with disadvantaged backgrounds or those under-prepared for tertiary study. The next two examine social

capital and the building of it among adult learners in, respectively, institutional settings and regional communities. The following two focus on specific groups of adult learners – mature-age women returning to study, and international students and their under-use of university counselling services. The seventh paper raises concerns about the ways in which leaders are trained in Australia and advocates a broader approach than is currently employed. The two practice papers concentrate on the rise of continuing education in China as a way of further educating technicians while in employment, and on the methods of literacy teaching and peace building among the peoples of Nigeria. The books reviewed in this issue highlight Indigenous Australians and the need for them to be re-engaged by governments, mentally disturbed people and the need for them to be perceived as people rather than problems, and the importance of social – not merely economic – outcomes being factored into policies and practices.

As was flagged in last year's November issue of this journal, two more papers that were presented at the Second National Conference for Enabling Educators, *Enabling Education: What Works?* held in July 2007, are included in this April issue. The conference, hosted by the University of Newcastle, attracted presenters from every state in Australia, as well as from New Zealand, the United Kingdom and South Africa. Such participant diversity gave it a significant national and international focus on the theoretical and practical issues that are uniquely related to the design and delivery of successful programs and learning outcomes in this educational field. The papers offered at the conference dealt with a wide variety of aspects in bridging and enabling education, its many influences, prospects and future challenges. Educators and other professionals involved in domestic, international and Indigenous foundation programs were given a great opportunity to meet, network and share their common interest in the methods, policies and pedagogies of adult and lifelong learning.

One of the more important outcomes of the conference was the possibility of the establishment of a national association of enabling

educators, to encourage further research and development of this particular academic endeavour, which has to date remained a sadly neglected 'fringe dweller' within the greater province of tertiary education. The two papers included in this issue explore complex questions regarding equity and equality in adult learning environments and different pathways to successful learning outcomes.

Jenny Silburn and **Geraldine Box** examine an equity program at Murdoch University in Western Australia in their paper, which sets out to show that increasing access does not necessarily mean an increase in benefit. Their argument reinforces the need to establish a framework to address the under-representation of certain groups in higher education that need special support and the provision of a variety of entry pathways to tertiary education. The paper explores a range of questions regarding social and economic circumstances of students with disadvantaged backgrounds and provides valuable data that will benefit other researchers in this particular field.

The paper by **Rae Trewartha** draws attention to the important task of providing students with the discipline knowledge and academic literacy they need in order to advance to the next level of study as independent, critical learners – as students who know 'how to learn'. The paper is based on a review of current bridging and foundation programs at Unitec, New Zealand, that grew out of the need to address issues related to the increasing number of under-prepared students entering tertiary education. The report, on which this paper is based, examined structures at only one tertiary institution, but its conclusions nevertheless make a substantial contribution to the wider field of enabling education.

The next two papers are grouped because they both focus, albeit with quite different emphases, on the building of social capital. **Pauline Harris** and **John Daley** investigate through their action research how play as an educational tool can enhance social capital for adult learners in institutional settings. Their different settings

are a university early childhood program and a technical and further education (TAFE) program offering communication modules to trade and general learners. Developing activities and materials that emphasised play, and gathering data through observation and dialogue, the authors explore links between play and social capital. *and illustrate these with specific scenarios*. They demonstrate how qualities of play have the potential to promote learning through enriching adult learners' engagement, cooperation and sense of connectedness. In doing so, the paper raises questions about the bridges that adult educators can build from play to other kinds of adult learning approaches, and the part reflective dialogue between adult educators and learners has in constructing these bridges.

In a very different setting, **Rob Townsend** researches how people from diverse cultural backgrounds can utilise adult community education as a space to explore their own social and cultural isolation. His setting is a regional community in northern Victoria. This paper examines the roles that adult providers can have in creating specific kinds of space for people to discover new social networks while interacting with informal and formal structures and processes of adult learning. The warning is that they can also manage their spaces and programs in such a way that excludes some people from social and economic activity crucial to the development of individual and community social capital. The author thus draws attention to what he calls the 'tentative and questionable' link between population diversity, adult education and social capital development – a link that is often 'assumed rather than tested' – and concludes with suggestions for addressing challenges facing adult and community education providers in accommodating individuals and groups experiencing cultural and social inequity.

Jeannie Daniels uses narrative inquiry to investigate in depth the learning experiences of mature women learners in vocational education and training (VET). Interviews with twelve women furnished rich stories of learning that shed light on how these women

were able to 'contextualise their everyday into their VET learning'. She argues that within VET research there is a need to pay more attention to the voices of mature women learners, who bring to their adult learning 'rich and diverse, yet often unacknowledged, life experiences'. Further, she advocates for the use of stories for re-conceptualising learning as an on-going and integrated process that must be understood within the everyday contexts of women's lives. This would not only enrich adult educators' understanding of their learners and thereby inform provision, but also help make VET more relevant to all learners.

Also focusing on the lived experiences of learners, **Pius Ang** and **Pranee Liamputtong** examine the adjustment experiences of international students from Mainland China in their first year of university study in Australia. Like Daniels, these authors contend that there is need for a richer understanding of the experiences of particular groups of adult learners which can allow, specifically in this case, university counselling services to develop policies and practices to better address learner needs. Through in-depth interviewing of eight participants in Melbourne, the paper isolated three main themes: difficulties with spoken English to express emotions and feelings, continued use of traditional networks to deal with problems and lack of knowledge of university counselling services. They claim that their results may be applicable to other international learners who study in Australia.

The last refereed paper addresses another group of learners – leaders and their development. **Patricia Richards** argues that competency-based frameworks, though widely adopted, may not be the most appropriate in developing leaders in work environments as the complexity of leadership demands both competencies and qualities. Drawing on interviews with senior leaders in twelve diverse companies in New South Wales and Victoria, the author found that adult educators can play a key role in showing how educational interventions can help an individual become a better leader; however, they are constrained by the characteristics of the individual and the

environment in which they are operating. Therefore, adult educators should not 'stay safe behind a matrix of competency standards' but rather question the outputs of their work and how best they can adapt a theoretical base to suit the needs of individuals and organisations. Sustainable leadership development requires a multi-tiered approach that can bear the scrutiny of robust research.

Finally, the practice papers focus on adult learning in two diverse international contexts – China and Nigeria. **Xiao Chen** and **Gareth Davey** explain the emergence and development of continuing education in China, its characteristics and its limitations. It is a relatively recent phenomenon in that country, becoming available in the 1980s for training specialist technicians, though now widening its ambit to include government officials, public service leaders, teachers and the general public. It is becoming very popular because of the rapidly developing economy and its need for a skilled workforce. But difficulties remain that need to be addressed, and the paper offers six recommendations to promote further development. **Omobola Adelore** and **Henry Majaro-Majesty** examine peace-building projects and programs in Nigeria where the diversity inherent in multi-ethnic communities leads too readily to conflict and violence. The high illiteracy level is identified as one major factor. Accordingly, the authors develop a functional literacy model for peace-building in which the role of the facilitator is critically important. They offer their model as a means of (a) promoting peace, (b) developing literacy skills and (c) building capacity 'to use socio-cultural and political structures to pursue human rights, fight inequality, prosecute injustice and demand development infrastructure'.

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Travelling against the current: an examination of upstream and downstream educational interventions across the life span

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Current social and economic circumstances are presenting universities with a more diverse general student intake whose support needs are increasingly similar to those of traditionally defined equity groups. This paper examines a Murdoch University equity program to demonstrate that simply increasing access does not always translate into increased benefit. It presents an argument for the restructuring of existing equity enabling programs and increasing transitional support for all students to achieve more substantive equality in student outcomes.

A fair chance for all: policy implications

Australia has not always had the rates of entry to tertiary education currently experienced. In 1939, the total number of students at

Australian higher education institutions was 14,000 (Commonwealth of Australia 1996: 9). By 2003, there were 719,555 domestic students enrolled in Australian universities (Commonwealth of Australia 2004: 11). This increase was most pronounced during the 1990s when a combination of population increase, community expectations and government policy review all contributed to increased student enrolments. The movement from elite to mass participation in tertiary study also brought about greater diversity in the student population. However, the under-representation of certain population groups suggested that more would have to be done to increase equality of opportunity.

The *Higher education report for the 2004 to 2006 triennium* 'made a commitment to the development of a long-term strategy that would make equity objectives a central concern of higher education management, planning and review' (Commonwealth of Australia 2004: 11).

Following this, The National Board of Employment, Education and Training and The Higher Education Council jointly prepared a discussion paper on the issues to:

- define the overall national equity objective for higher education
- set national objectives and targets for each of the groups identified as disadvantaged gaining access to higher education
- present a range of strategies for each disadvantaged group to assist institutions in planning
- set out the responsibilities of both Government and institutions in achieving national equity standards (Commonwealth of Australia 2004: 11).

This established a framework for the Higher Education Policy to address the under-representation of certain groups in higher education. In 1990 the policy and action plan set out to define particular groups which were under-represented. These were:

- women (later re-defined as women in non-traditional fields of study)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people from low socio-economic status backgrounds (SES)
- people with disabilities
- people from rural and isolated areas
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) who had been in Australia less than 10 years and spoke a language other than English at home.

From the time of the release of the 1990 policy, these groups have remained the focus of universities' equity access and support programs, although most institutions have identified and prioritised specific target groups from within the original list of six.

During the past 20 years, the principal approach taken to redressing under-representation of these particular equity groups has been through the introduction of special access and support programs. Some programs target a particular equity group, others have a more general equity focus. These special programs work to improve the rates of access and support for people from the identified equity groups. The rationale underpinning this approach is that 'by providing practical access and support schemes [this will lead to] a more balanced student profile and the benefits of higher education [will] flow to a more widely diverse group of individuals and to society' (Commonwealth of Australia 1996: 10).

Equality at the time of the introduction of this national approach in 1990 was seen as equal treatment of all people, regardless of circumstances. The expectation was that provision of equal opportunity through equity bridging/enabling programs would ensure similar outcomes for all students. 'Sameness' of treatment was equated with 'fairness' of treatment. However, equality in these terms 'does not take into account the accumulated disadvantage of generations of discrimination or the disadvantage faced by groups by

a system that fails to recognise different needs' (Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet n.d.: 6).

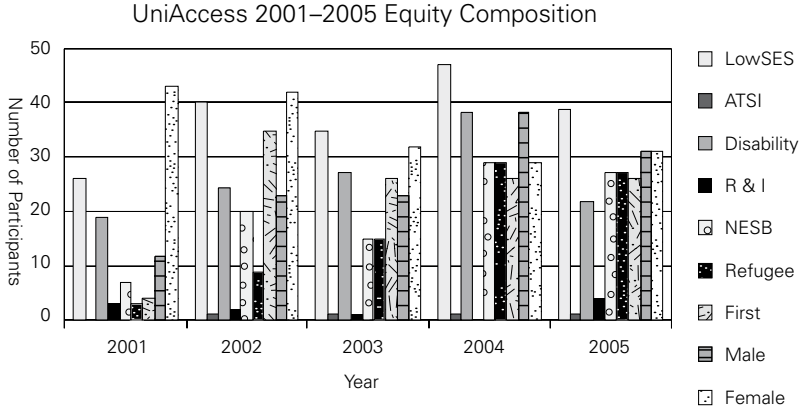
> Substantive Equality [by contrast] involves equitable outcomes as well as equal opportunity. It takes into account the effects of past discrimination. It recognises that rights, entitlements, opportunities and access are not equally distributed throughout society. Substantive equality recognises that equal or the same application of rules to unequal groups can have unequal results… hence it is necessary to treat people differently because people have different needs (Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet n.d.: 6).

Equity and social justice form one of four defining themes to which Murdoch University is committed. Thus the institution has from 1990 given high priority to developing key strategies to address access and support for people from the equity groups. One of those strategies is the provision for a variety of entry pathways to university study, particularly for those people from the defined equity groups. In 1990, the University established the first of its alternative entry programs, UniQuest, a one-week, full-time, on-campus 'taster' and assessment course for people from one or more of the above categories.

By 1997, the University decided that it required an additional and more extensive program to 'bridge' people from the equity groups into undergraduate study. This program, entitled UniAccess, was a four-week, full-time enabling course which provided English as Second Language classes and broader exposure to the campus learning environment. From inception, participants were predominantly females (70 per cent), sole parents or other low-income pension holders with incomplete high school education.

In the last two years, however, UniAccess has attracted a progressively more diverse group of equity students (see Figure 1 below). This is characterised by a larger representation of people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) predominately those on Refugee or Humanitarian Visas, requiring English as Second Language support.

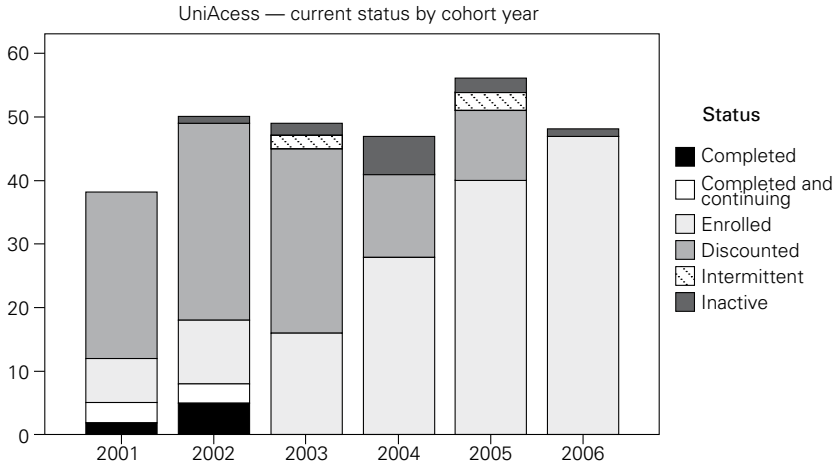
Figure 1: Composition of the UniAccess program (2001–2005)



Two other significant changes have also recently emerged in the makeup of the cohort accessing the UniAccess program. Firstly, an increasing number of participants (45 per cent in 2004) are likely to have completed a Year 12 or equivalent overseas level, though most have not studied tertiary entry subjects. This variation can be seen in both the Australian-born participants and those on Refugee or Humanitarian Visas.

The second recent demographic change occurring in the UniAccess program intake between 1997 and 2005 is the increased levelling of the male to female ratio. From its inception, there has been a 40:60 ratio in the UniAccess program. However, in the 2004 program, there were 57 per cent of males registered as participants and, in 2005, there was an equal gender distribution of 50 per cent. This move to a higher number of male participants in UniAccess is largely accounted for by the increasing intakes of Refugee and Humanitarian Visa holders, most of whom are male and from the Sudan. While there are strong humanitarian and equity considerations as to why these students should be granted opportunities for university study, their educational outcomes have been disappointingly poor (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: UniAccess entrants 2001–2006 (enrolment/completion status as of March 2006)



In the cohort of students entering their first year of university study in 2002, 10 per cent of the population completed their undergraduate degree by 2006. However, 62 per cent of this cohort discontinued by 2006. In the 2003 cohort, no students have graduated and the percentage of students who have discontinued is 59.2 per cent.

Figure 3: UniAccess 2001–2006 (current status by cohort year)

	Status						
	Completed	Completed and continuing	Enrolled	Discontinued	Intermittent	Inactive	Total
2001 Count	2	3	7	26	0	0	38
% within cohort	5.3%	7.9%	18.4%	68.4%			100%
2002 Count	5	3	10	31	0	1	50
% within cohort	10.0%	6.0%	20.0%	62.0%		2.0%	100%
2003 Count	0	0	16	29	2	2	49
% within cohort			32.7%	59.2%	4.1%	4.1%	100%
2004 Count	0	0	28	13	0	6	47
% within cohort			59.6%	27.7%		12.8%	100%
2005 Count	0	0	40	11	3	2	56
% within cohort			71.4%	19.6%	5.4%	3.6%	100%
2006 Count	0	0	47	0	0	1	48
% within cohort			97.9%			2.1%	100%

In the 2005 cohort, the percentage of students who has discontinued is 19.6 per cent. This is comparable to the national attrition rate of commencing undergraduate students estimated to be 22 per cent (DEST 2000). However, if we track these students over a three-year period of time, the completion and continuing rates of these undergraduate students is far less satisfactory than the mainstream cohort. The (former) Department of Education, Science and

Training (2001) calculated that the completion rate for the 1993 cohort of undergraduate students new to higher education was 62.2 per cent, which, compared with the UniAccess completion rate for students commencing their undergraduate studies in 2002, was 10 per cent.

The question then is why this should be the case, given the level of investment and support currently provided to these students from equity backgrounds.

Educational investment for substantive equality

James Heckman, the 2000 Nobel Laureate in Economics, has recently presented evidence which challenges current policy thinking in the USA, Australia and other developed nations regarding the cost-efficiency of the range of public sector investments now made to overcome educational disadvantage. This evidence is based on USA national longitudinal data and suggests that the resources available to young people in their years of university attendance play only a small role in explaining the socio-economic and ethnic differentials in observed rates of university enrolment and successful completion. The relevance of Heckman's arguments to the Australian context is in showing what economic efficiency analysis adds to the traditional arguments for investment in the educational opportunities and skill development of disadvantaged groups. Until very recently, these have mostly been made on the grounds of fairness and social justice.

For example, the tertiary educational reforms initiated in this country to provide '*A fair chance for all*' (DEST 1990) were based on the argument that providing access to tertiary education would enable students to enjoy equal opportunities. However, increasing access has not always translated into increasing opportunity to participate or benefit. The value of Heckman's thesis is in how it widens the frame of reference for considering current Australian trends in

higher education enrolments, and the participation and outcomes of students in mainstream and equity programs.

According to the 2006 report of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Australia now has a much lower proportion of adults in the workforce with a base qualification equivalent to Year 12 than most other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. This report cites recent Australian evidence showing increased educational attainment is the principal determinant of people's economic prospects and life chances in terms of their participation and productivity (Access Economics, cited in COAG 2005). Studies of earnings in economically advanced countries, including Australia, show the cumulative benefits of successive years of education. Typically, each extra year of education raises personal earnings by five to ten percent (Dorwick 2003).

Governments are now realising that workers with higher skills also contribute to productivity indirectly by facilitating the introduction of new products, services, processes and technologies. Higher skills contribute not only to productivity levels but also to productivity growth rates. Learning begets learning for nations, as well as individuals. The Access Economics report, cited by COAG, suggests that an additional year of average schooling increases annual productivity growth rates by between 0.3 per cent and 0.8 per cent (COAG 2006).

The problem thus facing modern developed economies such as the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia is that the supply of skilled workers is simply not keeping pace with demand. The dilemma for educational policy and practice is how to increase this supply in an economically efficient way. The rising costs of tertiary education have seen much of the recent policy discussion focusing on the gaps in schooling attainment by family income as a major causal factor in the poor participation and achievement of disadvantaged students.

Second chance remediation programs, such a publicly-funded TAFE job training or alternate access entry programs to university study, have been seen as another relatively low-cost and effective strategy to overcome early disadvantage. Social transfers (such as Austudy) which provide economic support to facilitate the educational participation of cash-constrained individuals are another. However, despite the apparent intrinsic worth of these programs, Heckman's analysis suggests that these measures are unlikely to have much effect in reducing disparities in educational outcomes at the population level unless more fundamental reforms are also made in incentives to education earlier in the life cycle.

The review by Carneiro and Heckman (2003) of the USA's longitudinal data suggests that favourable educational outcomes in children and adults are critically dependent on settings and resources that foster intellectual, social and emotional development long before students enter university. They conclude that the longer-term factors such as parental environments and family income available to children over their entire life-cycle are far more decisive in promoting university readiness and social attachment than family income in the adolescent years. 'Better family resources in a child's formative years are associated with higher quality of education and better environments that foster cognitive and non-cognitive skills' (Carneiro & Heckman, 2003: 11). This analysis concludes that there is a 'high return from early interventions and a low return to remedial or compensatory interventions later in the life cycle' (Carneiro & Heckman, 2003: 1). Furthermore, their evidence regarding the return on early public investment in disadvantaged children in terms of earning gains show that these may be as high as 15–17 per cent per dollar invested. The magnitude of these gains is such that they suggest that it is possible to avoid the *equity-efficiency* trade-off that plagues so many policies – for example, tax policy or welfare policy.

Heckman's evidence has clearly been understood by Australian governments if the emphasis in the 2006 COAG report on strategies

for investment in human capital formation is anything to go by. This new direction in Australian educational policy, as articulated in the 2006 COAG report, is underpinned by recent scientific evidence of the role of 'experience based' brain development in early life and the extent to which this is predictive of children's trajectories of development in health, education and socialisation. One of the world's leading researchers into this aspect of human development is Professor Fraser Mustard from the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research.

In a 2006 report commissioned by the World Bank, he states:

> To achieve equity in competence, coping skills and health will require applications of the new understanding of how the early years of child development, particularly brain development, set trajectories that affect health (physical and mental) learning and behaviour throughout the life cycle (Mustard 2006: 2).

If we extrapolate these insights to the tertiary education sector, what do they suggest for the way in which equity and alternative access programs currently operate? The convergent educational, neuro-developmental and economic findings cited by human development theorists such as Mustard and Heckman suggest that, in their present form, these enabling programs do not really offer equal opportunity, nor are they likely to ensure more equitable outcomes. Most, but not all, students who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait backgrounds, from non-English speaking backgrounds, from remote and rural areas or students with disabilities, have generally less capacity to succeed in the university environment because they are much more likely than other students to have had their learning competencies compromised by early childhood factors. Until such time that early childhood intervention programs are more widely implemented in this country, it is evident that universities must continue to address these issues by treating students differently because students have differing learning, social and economic needs.

In reviewing the outcome data for Murdoch University's equity programs over the past five years, it is clear that in a disappointing number of cases we have not been able to redress the cumulative disadvantage which these groups have experienced (see Figure 2 above). Given our understanding of the many factors which operate to enhance or weaken educational outcomes, what initiatives should we be undertaking in the university setting to promote more equitable results?

What can be learned from other countries?

An examination of practices and policies in other settings is instructive in seeking to answer this question. Post-apartheid South Africa provides some useful pointers as to how students from disadvantaged backgrounds can succeed in the university context. In the new South Africa, universities have been confronted with the challenge of providing access to large numbers of students from poor scholastic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Most universities in South Africa offer two types of bridging program:

> The first is where students are able to complete their first year in two years without incurring any funding penalty for the university [and] the second is a bridging program where students who do not qualify for university entrance on the grounds of their poor scholastic results, repeat Grade 12 (at a special institute called SCIMATHUS run by the university) in a program designated to close the gap between the level of competence of the student and the minimum requirements for university entrance (Page, Loots & Du Toit, 2005: 7).

Another intervention that has proved successful in the South African context has been the introduction of peer support programs to assist students who are educationally inadequately prepared for university studies. In the Medical Faculty of Stellenbosch University, top students in their second year of studies act as tutor mentors to first

year students, while third year students mentor second year students who are at risk of failing. The tutoring aspect of the mentoring scheme has been shown to be essential to the success of the program (Page, Loots & Du Toit 2005: 7).

A particularly promising approach, which has shown significant benefit to students in their first year of university study, is that developed in the USA by Tinto (2005). His work has demonstrated that students (particularly under-served students) benefit greatly from the availability of learning communities, which serve to build support across the curriculum and between academic staff and student support services. These learning communities feature a minimum of two units tied to each other by an overarching theme. For example, a theme might be 'The presentation of race in America'. The connected units would be a unit in Communications, a unit in Writing and one in US History. A team specialising in the different areas would teach students and, in this way, students' skills are developed and monitored by dedicated teaching staff. His work has shown that these communities provide the conditions for student success and a number of universities in the USA have re-organised programs so that learning communities are intrinsic to the first year experience.

Interventions such as this, while initially time-consuming and labour-intensive, have shown significant benefits to all students making the transition into university. Tinto has reported findings from a meta-analysis of several recent US studies comparing the transitional outcomes of students participating in first year college programs organised around learning communities with those of students in comparison programs. This showed the average first year pass-rate of students in learning communities was 76.6 per cent in contrast to 55.9 per cent in the comparison programs, and the average continuation rate was 57 per cent and 41 per cent respectively (Tinto 2005).

Given the greater diversity of need within the mainstream student population as well as the increased learning support needs of existing equity groups, universities must consider new ways in which enabling programs and transitional support for first year students can be more effectively delivered.

Initiatives at Murdoch University

In 2004 Murdoch University created a new senior academic position designed to facilitate the development and improvement of all enabling programs (including equity programs), determine their efficacy and recommend policy initiatives to benefit students entering university through alternative access programs.

Prior to the creation of this position, a comparative analysis of the outcomes of all the enabling programs had not been undertaken. The UniAccess data presented in this paper broadly represent the rates of retention and attrition seen in the other enabling programs. Overall, the success and completion rates of these students are poor in comparison to students who enter university through mainstream avenues (principally, the Tertiary Entrance Examination in Western Australia).

Combining an overview of the data with a clearer understanding of students' academic needs has presented us with the opportunity to consider alternatives to the programs we offer students. In the short term, the changed demographic of the student population with an increasingly diverse cohort of students in the UniAccess program has demanded the introduction of a range of supports to encourage successful transition. These include additional one-on-one tutoring, and various other accommodations to ensure that students can successfully access academic materials and the learning environment. These current interventions, particularly as they relate to students whose first language is not English, are neither cost effective nor sustainable in the long term.

It is anticipated that expanding the current four-week UniAccess program to a semester program would allow students to develop academic skills more fully and acquire an understanding of the university culture. It would also enable students to gain a broader insight into courses and the requirements of specific disciplines. A recent study conducted by the University of Melbourne's Centre for the Study of Higher Education on behalf of the Department of Education, Science and Training found one third of students surveyed in 2004 felt ill-prepared to choose a university course (*Campus Review* 2006: 3). This is particularly the case for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, first generation students and non-English speaking background students as they generally have a poor understanding of course expectations and the career possibilities potentially available.

An expanded equity enabling program would also allow for the development of information and computer technology skills. This is essential as students who are located under an 'equity' banner also have commonalities with all students whom Anderson (2006: 2) calls 'the new millennium student, who is typically enrolled full-time, working up to 20 hours per week and spending less than five hours per week on campus other than for course requirements'. Once students have embarked on their undergraduate degree, their capacity to undertake supplementary skills courses is limited and at Murdoch University we have seen that failure to acquire these skills greatly affects a student's capacity to achieve in the first year. This can contribute to their decision to discontinue their studies before the completion of a full two semesters.

In October 2007, having taken into account the above-mentioned considerations, Murdoch University piloted a twelve-week enabling program called *OnTrack*. The program has replaced the existing non-indigenous enabling programs across all three campuses. *OnTrack* is divided into three modules, each of which is four weeks in duration.

Students are required to attend classes on campus for three days per week. A fourth day has been set aside for those students who require English language support.

Module One: 'Footprints': engaging with university life, culture and discourses
This is the foundational module for the program, which introduces students to the university, its culture and expectations and encourages students to begin developing the skills they will require for tertiary studies.

Module Two: 'Sustainable Living': engaging with different knowledge communities and discourses
This module encourages students to develop a clearer understanding of the specific disciplines and courses they will undertake in their undergraduate program, while at the same time further developing their academic competencies.

Module Three: 'Sustainable Learning': engaging in specialist knowledges and further development of research skills
This module provides students with opportunities to rehearse learned skills and apply them in practical and useful ways. Students at this stage of the program are required to undertake some research projects which are relevant to their intended course of study.

What we hope to achieve through an extended enabling program

Students who come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds need time to integrate and apply the knowledge they gather at university. We anticipate that this slower and scaffolded approach to learning in the university will enable students to enjoy the scholarship of discovery (about themselves and academic disciplines), to take pleasure in academic activities and develop skills in integrating knowledge across a range of diverse learning opportunities. More particularly, the *OnTrack* program is designed to achieve:

- enhanced acculturation of students to the university environment
- better retention of students and improved academic outcomes in their undergraduate courses
- improved understanding by students of courses, their academic demands and career opportunities
- effective mentoring systems co-ordinated by the First Year Experience Co-ordinator
- good connections between students and academics from their discipline
- more informed approaches to balancing academic studies, work and other responsibilities
- a better level of engagement with the program by academics, administrative staff and senior executive across the university.

Our expectation is that, once students have enjoyed a playful yet rigorously academic introduction to the university and the demands of its various disciplines, they will be resourced to pursue their undergraduate studies with sufficient confidence and application. The pedagogical and pastoral strategies deployed in this program may also be transferable and have application for many commencing undergraduates, not only equity students.

Conclusion

In this paper we have demonstrated that the investment applied to increase access and skills development at tertiary level for people from educationally disadvantaged groups does not achieve equality of outcomes for these groups.

Governments need to take a longer-term view in redressing the needs of what appears to be a growing proportion of the population who are likely to be excluded from participation in tertiary education due to adverse circumstances of early child rearing and learning. While existing 'remediation' and access programs at the pre-tertiary and tertiary level can facilitate some limited individual successes, they

would appear to have little effect at the population level in creating substantive equality in outcomes.

Academic institutions must now find the means to cater for a much greater diversity in the support needs of individual students and those of distinct equity groups to ensure their social and academic engagement. Rather than expecting students to adapt to the culture's expectations, the institution should be looking at ways to best accommodate the diverse needs of students. A 'one size fits all' model is no longer appropriate or desirable. Substantive equality which promotes treating people differently to accommodate their differing needs must be integrated across the curriculum and built into pedagogical practices so that students at risk can perform better in higher education.

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Innovations in bridging and foundation education in a tertiary institution

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A 2006 survey of programs at Unitec, New Zealand concluded that, in the main, Unitec programs and courses were not meeting student needs in the area of foundation and bridging education. Invoking international research and practice, a report was compiled proposing a number of recommendations to remedy this situation. Academic Board, in accepting recommendations that were based on developing and re-developing foundation and bridging courses and programs to better staircase students into degree programs, and to support first-year students in undergraduate degree programs, has challenged the Unitec community to think in new ways about the needs of students entering the institution.

It was argued in the report that the key determinant in developing these strategies should be the need to provide students with bridging/foundation education that supports them to develop the contextualised discipline knowledge and academic literacies they need in order to transition to the next level of study as independent, critical learners – as students who know 'how to learn'. Over the last few months, many exciting and challenging developments have occurred in relation to this initiative. This paper begins by examining the research that informed the recommendations in the report. Initiatives that are proposed or underway arel then outlined, and discussed in conjunction with examples of the challenges associated with making this shift in institutional thinking and practice.

> [S]tudents are more likely to persist when they find themselves in settings that hold high expectations for their learning, provide needed academic and social support, and actively involve them with other students and faculty in learning. The key concept is that of educational community and the capacity of institutions to establish educational communities that involve all students as equal members. (Tinto 2002b)

Background

In May 2005, a working party to review foundation and bridging education was established by the Academic Board at Unitec with the following terms of reference:

- To review current philosophies of foundation/bridging education, both at Unitec and internationally
- To review current models of foundation/bridging education, both at Unitec and internationally
- To identify the features of successful foundation/bridging programs at Unitec
- To recommend to Academic Board core components and features for all foundation/bridging programs at Unitec
- To consider and provide advice on such other matters relating to foundation education at Unitec as the working party sees fit.

The working party comprised members of academic staff, student services, the learning centre and the library. The author of this paper chaired the working party and co-compiled the report, which was accepted following its presentation to Academic Board in September 2006 (Trewartha & Barrow 2006).

Internationally, and within New Zealand, the terms 'foundation' and 'bridging' are used to define a variety of educational offerings, depending on the institution and/or country providing them. It was agreed, however, that, at Unitec, 'foundation education' would be used to refer to certificate programs with courses at New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) levels 1, 2 or 3, which include courses based on developing literacy and numeracy, designed for students who need considerable preparation to pathway to either a diploma or degree program; and that 'bridging education' would refer to: (a) programs incorporating courses with literacy and numeracy learning outcomes, including level 4 certificates, that provide a one- or two-semester staircase to degree programs, and (b) academic study skills courses designed to provide contextualised holistic support to students in their first-year at Unitec to introduce them to the skills and concepts basic to successful tertiary study.

The initiative to review foundation and bridging education at Unitec grew out of discussion around issues arising from the first annual institute-wide report on success and retention (Barrow 2004) and other 2004 reports from working parties investigating English language entry requirements (Blickem 2004) and the academic literacy levels of students (Report of the Project Cherub 2004). The concerns identified by these reports pointed to a need for the institute to address issues related to the increasing number of under-prepared students entering tertiary education. At the same time, there was a growing awareness that international trends in the area of bridging and foundation education were towards a very different model from that currently employed at Unitec.

The aim of the review was to investigate and report on the state of current foundation /bridging education at Unitec and to identify and recommend new models for Unitec based on international trends and practices. Unitec has a number of certificate programs that bridge to diploma or degree programs. However, very few of these programs had been developed on the pedagogical principles that are now internationally recognised as prerequisite to student retention and persistence for non-traditional students. Furthermore, no first-year degree programs had academic study skills courses to support students in their first year of study.

The Unitec Charter states:

> At Unitec students learn to reason, adapt, innovate, communicate and grow so they can respond to rapid changes in the workforce and society and can return to study – if the desire or the need is there. (Unitec New Zealand 2003)

If the Charter is indeed a valid reflection of Unitec's institutional aspirations for its graduates, it is imperative, so the report argued, that the institution as a whole acknowledge that many students will never learn these skills and become lifelong learners unless they are inspired and supported to develop the necessary intellectual understandings.

The report examined the current situation and recommended a number of strategies to improve bridging and foundation education at Unitec. Since the recommendations were accepted by Academic Board, the School of Foundation Studies (SFS), which was charged with providing advice and coordinating the development and re-development of courses and programs, has become involved in projects involving 16 different programs (some within the same discipline).

This paper begins by examining the research that informed the recommendations. Initiatives that are proposed or underway are then outlined and discussed, in conjunction with examples of the

challenges associated with making this shift in institutional thinking and practice. While the report, on which this paper is based, examined structures at only one tertiary institution, its conclusions have implications for all those involved in teaching and developing programs for foundation/bridging/first-year students. Adopting these strategies would, it was suggested in the report, lead not only to enhanced student success and retention – and as a consequence, greater satisfaction for teaching staff. It would also stake for Unitec a unique position in the marketplace as an institution that both graduates students with competency in a particular discipline, and challenges and supports them from day one to develop the academic skills they need, as the Charter states, 'to engage in critical thinking, and to exercise independent judgement' (Unitec New Zealand 2003).

Features of successful foundation/bridging programs

Internationally, foundation programs have moved away from deficit models, which concentrated on skills development, to models based on the pedagogical belief that foundation students need to build 'strategic, institutional and disciplinary confidence' (Dison & Rule 1996), in courses that are linked to provide integrated and contextual learning 'emphasised by student-student and faculty-student interaction' (Tinto 1997). There is now a large body of research pointing to the effectiveness of this model, particularly within the structure of learning communities (Prebble *et al.* 2004).

Similarly, for bridging and first-year students, White (1994: 7) argues that the primary educational imperative for first-year students should be that they are not simply 'receptors of facts' but complete the first year knowing '*how to learn*' (emphasis added). In quoting Katz *et al.* (1988) on Perry's work on intellectual development (1968), White notes that:

> At the heart of Perry's work and that of other observers of student intellectual development is a powerful yet simple observation: students gain intellectual sophistication when they must confront and assess competing and equally well argued perspectives on an issue or solutions to a problem. (p.7)

While successful foundation/bridging education relies on identifying the attributes deemed desirable to develop students who know how to learn, and who can succeed as critical thinkers and independent learners at the next level of education, it also requires an understanding of the values and structures, at both the institutional and classroom level, needed to facilitate such learning.

A wide-ranging review of the literature identified the following internationally recognised factors as leading to successful foundation/bridging education:

1. Bridging/foundation programs are valued as integral to the institution by all members of staff and centralised structures and finances are in place to support these programs in a centralised manner (Boylan 2002, Boylan, Bliss & Bonham 1997, Kozeracki 2002, Kuh *et al.* 2005, Tinto 1997).
2. Bridging/foundation pedagogy is a feature of these programs. 'They focus on improving the quality of learning – the process – not just content or outcomes' (Tinto 1997).
3. Diagnostic assessment and academic advising take place for all new students, leading to placement in courses that value their existing knowledge and provide opportunities for students to build on that knowledge and attain their goals (Boylan 2002, Kozeracki 2002, Malnarich *et al.* 2003, Prebble *et al.* 2004).
4. The cultural capital students bring with them is 'valued and accommodated' and the institution is seen as willing to adapt its practices to affirm students' differing cultural needs (Zepke *et al.* 2005: 14).
5. Courses in programs are integrated – usually into learning communities – and, where necessary, staff collaborate across

disciplines to integrate teaching approaches, content and assessment (Dison & Rule 1996, Prebble *et al.* 2004, Tinto 1997).
6. The classroom environment is inclusive and affirming. Students and staff are engaged in working together to produce understandings of the complexities of knowledge. Staff teach in ways that match the needs of different learning styles, difference is validated and students are supported academically, socially and emotionally (Dison & Rule 1996, hooks 1994, Kuh *et al.* 2005, Prebble *et al.* 2004, Tinto 1997).
7. Course content is contextualised to mirror and build on the experience of the constituent student population (Malnarich *et al.* 2003).
8. Learning tasks are based around collaborative and problem-based learning and 'skills-based learning is [integrated] with more challenging discipline-specific course content' to introduce students to the academic language and theories of the disciplines they are intending to move on to (Malnarich *et al.* 2003).
9. Assessment is integrated across courses. Assessment criteria are specific, frequent feedback is provided and there are early opportunities for success (Boylan 2002) – well managed and comprehensive formative assessment is a feature of courses and treated as a learning tool; summative assessment is spread throughout the semester.
10. The best staff on the program teach the bridging/foundation courses; the institution actively recruits staff who are keen to teach in this area and invests in their development (Boylan 2002, Boylan, Bliss & Bonham 1997).
11. Student support such as learning support, financial aid and counselling are widely available, are actively promoted and staff are familiar with the services provided (Boylan 2002, Dison & Rule 1996, Kozeracki, 2002).

These have since been condensed into a list of six criteria, which all new and re-developed foundation/bridging courses and programs must meet.

Pedagogically, it would be difficult to deny that the strategies listed here are other than desirable features for all teaching programs, at all levels of study. It is therefore not envisaged that foundation/bridging education should be seen as 'fixing' all the 'problems' students present with in their first year, or that teachers on higher-level programs/courses can relax, believing students do not need this type of support once they move on. In fact, students who experience this mode of teaching, while becoming more capable learners, are also likely to have higher expectations for their future education. Working collaboratively to develop the programs/courses in foundation/bridging education, will, it is hoped, lead to teaching staff embracing this pedagogical philosophy at all levels.

Foundation/bridging education at Unitec

Foundation

In 2006, Unitec had approximately five certificates that could be defined as foundation programs. Made up of at least 40 credits, and usually more, these certificates normally consist of courses between levels 1 and 3 – some EAL (English as an Additional Language) programs are at levels 4 and 5. To be eligible for admission applicants must, generally, only meet the institution's English language requirements for programs at this level, together with either Unitec's general admission or special admission requirements. Apart from the level 3 Certificate in Foundation Studies: Whitinga (CFS:W), which is aimed at providing a pathway for students to diploma and degree programs at Unitec, certificates at levels 1 to 3 are sometimes needed for entry into trades, craft and service occupations, but may also provide entry to diploma and bachelor programs (e.g. Certificate in Animal Management, Certificate in Applied Technology).

As most of these programs did not meet the criteria noted above as a necessary feature of successful foundation programs, it was recommended that these programs be re-developed to meet the

criteria and then be re-approved prior to offering in 2008 (since extended to 2009).

Bridging/academic study skills

Developed as a response to the changing demographic of students, bridging and academic study skills programs and courses are now a feature of universities worldwide. While Unitec had no such courses or programs in 2006, the problems the institution faces in regard to first-year students are comparable with those noted in the international research literature.

The majority of research in the area of targeted courses for students in their first year in tertiary education comes from the United States, where such education initiatives are based on a varying range of programs and courses designed to assist first-year students in their transition to university. Some simply consist of a one-hour per week 'first-year' seminar aimed at introducing students to the complexities of university life and providing a 'home room'-type support class. Others, which may or may not be based around a theme, are organised as integrated learning communities, where a first-year seminar is usually just one of the three or four classes taken.

These programs and courses are concerned with preparing first-year students for the discipline they are intending to enter – firstly, by ensuring they have the appropriate level of necessary skills, and secondly, by supporting them to develop the academic literacy/concepts/theories pertaining to that discipline. Almost all are credit-bearing. In the United States, in Fall 2000, 76% of all degree-granting two- and four-year institutions offered at least one foundational reading, writing or mathematics course (Parsad & Lewis 2003, cited in National Science Board 2006).

Barrow noted in the 2004 *Success and Retention Report* for Unitec that:

> Issues with maths and English language manifest themselves in retention and success figures for lower level courses in programs. Together they illustrate under-preparedness for tertiary study in an English-speaking system in areas other than discipline knowledge and learning.

Across Unitec, academic staff have identified a problem with the low levels of foundational skills displayed by many students entering degree programs. The Project Cherub (Report of the Project Cherub 2004) data show that most program directors believe that a large proportion of the students who enter their programs are academically under-prepared. Table 1 categorises responses from a survey of program directors regarding the degree of English language and academic literacy difficulties faced by students on their programs.

Table 1: The nature of English language problems (from the Report of the Project Cherub 'Other Qualifications Group' 2004*)*

Language problems recognised by program directors

Language problem	Percentage of program directors who identified this as a problem
Reading	50
Listening	70
Accuracy/grammar	86
Vocabulary	63
Writing	86
Speaking	70

Extent of language problems

	A lot	Quite a lot	Some	A few	None
% EAL students	23	50	20	7	
% native speakers			56	34	10

Note: The questions that produced these results included mention of both English language and academic literacy problems, with the surveyed program directors noting that both the EAL and native speaker groups had language and/or academic literacy problems.

In many courses at Unitec, while a basic competency in mathematics is required for students to be able to achieve, mathematics is not often taught as a subject. In 2004, a consultant was employed to look at the development of a centre for mathematics and statistics at Unitec. The resulting report made a number of recommendations, including:

> 4.1 That consideration be given to broadening the pedagogical approaches used in all mathematics, statistics … courses. (Begg 2004)

The Report on Bridging and Foundation Education at Unitec recommended the introduction of two new developments in bridging education at Unitec. The first of these involved each undergraduate degree program in designing and implementing an elective academic study skills course aimed at developing the knowledge and academic abilities recognised as necessary for first-year students to succeed in tertiary study. These courses were to be credit-bearing and integrated to provide contextualised, holistic support, specific to the first-year program in which they were situated.

The second recommended that schools develop integrated, cross-disciplinary, bridging programs aimed at establishing disciplinary confidence together with academic study and numeracy skills. Such programs, based on the learning community model (Tinto 1997, Prebble *et al*. 2004), would normally include one or two courses (depending on whether they were one- or two-semester programs) from the degree program into which the student was progressing. Students would obtain credits for these courses on progressing to degree study. The programs would be aimed at older students who may, for instance, already be in the workforce but are looking for a change of direction and lack the confidence to go directly into a degree program. Younger students, who have achieved reasonably well at school but do not have the necessary National Certificate of Educational Achievement credits to enter a particular discipline, may also be candidates for these programs. It is also possible that such programs could cater for EAL students by providing integrated language support courses. In other words, these programs, while designed to develop discipline knowledge and academic and numeracy literacies, would also focus on meeting the needs of particular student groups.

Implementing the recommendations

As the instigator of the report, the School of Foundation Studies was recognised as the body with the knowledge and expertise to coordinate this development and re-development of courses and programs. Work began in what, on reflection, was a somewhat *ad hoc* fashion, based on working with any discipline that came to the school declaring interest in developing a course or program. It was soon evident that this mode of operation was quickly going to deplete the somewhat slim resources available – two people were working on this on top of their other work. A small committee was then set up to provide the first contact for interested parties and also to prioritise initiatives. As the workload grew – there are now 16 courses or programs taking part in the project – it became obvious that Unitec needed to fund another position. While there was no disagreement that the position was a priority, it was difficult to find the funding within the current budgetary climate. However, in April another staff member was appointed, which means the workload is, comparatively anyway, manageable.

Course and program development

Foundation programs

The CFS:W (level 3) is the main program in the School. A 60-credit program, it provides pathways to diplomas and degrees at Unitec, although in a few disciplines the pathway is to a level 4 certificate. Students undertake courses aimed at developing academic literacy and numeracy and, in some cases, introductory discipline knowledge.

The most popular pathway, which has been running in its present form for seven years, is into the Bachelor of Nursing degree. The four courses, with classes of approximately 22 students in each, comprise an integrated learning community. Two of these courses, Academic Study Skills and Sociology for Nursing, are developed and taught by the School of Foundation Studies and the other two, Introduction to Health Knowledge and Introduction to Health Science, are developed and taught by the School of Health Sciences. However, there is a theme running through the program and assignments are integrated throughout, so there is a great deal of inter-disciplinary communication taking place.

Community Skills and Early Childhood Education have similar pathways to their degree programs, although there is a lower level of course integration. Other programs rely on the levels of academic literacy, and/or mathematics and sciences, students have gained to gauge their readiness for study at degree or diploma level. However, there are no programs that provide guaranteed entry to students who gain the CFS:W.

Taking the Bachelor of Nursing model, the School has worked with four other programs this year to develop similar pathways. The School of Design, for instance, has developed a course that incorporates 36 credits for design with the CFS:W level 3, a 24-credit Academic Study Skills course. The Introduction to Design course has been developed by staff from the School of Design in consultation with staff from the School of Foundation Studies, including mathematics lecturers, so that it integrates a wide range of disciplinary and academic literacy content. As the School of Design has recently re-worked its degree structure, and eliminated its diploma program, the level 3 CFS:W will provide a pathway to the new level 4 certificate. There is provision, however, for a few high achieving students to bridge directly to the degree.

There are a variety of different initiatives also being developed to meet the needs of other programs. While the emphasis is on best meeting the needs of students, there also has to be an acknowledgement of the expertise each program has developed to meet the particular requirements of their discipline. It is hoped that, by working with each program to develop a pathway, they feel comfortable with the on-going reflective practice and development and it will continue as a two-way, inter-disciplinary process.

Bridging courses

Based on a very generic course outline, and adapted to meet the particular needs of their discipline and their students, a number of level 4 certificates are developing integrated academic study skills courses to add to their programs. These credit-bearing courses are being developed by the School of Foundation Studies and the program involved, with the aim of being taught by either a lecturer from the School or a combination of lecturers from the two schools.

A one-year program is in the development stages to bridge students to the Bachelor of Nursing. This program would incorporate the existing level 3 CFS:W certificate, which students would undertake in the first semester, with two courses from the Bachelor of Nursing (these will be credit-bearing and able to be transferred to the that degree) and additional pre-science and mathematics courses in the second semester. While the present course works well for some students, it is obvious that it does not provide sufficient grounding for others, who then struggle and drop out in the first year. It is hoped that the extra semester will provide a better range of foundational knowledge.

One school took up the challenge to provide a credit-bearing academic study skills course for its first-year students this semester. This was not an easy course to develop as the lecturers in the school did not want to be involved in delivering an integrated course, appearing to believe that the purpose of the course was to ‘fix’ student problems

without any input on their part. While it was originally going to be compulsory for all first-year students in the program, in the end only 15, mainly EAL students, were enrolled. To meet the particular needs of this program, the course was taught and developed by both a lecturer from the School of Language Studies and one from the School of Foundation Studies.

The students who took the course were highly enthusiastic in their evaluations and said they thought the course had made a real difference to their first-semester experience. They commented that they could not understand why it was not compulsory, as 70–80% of students in their other classes were also EAL students and they felt it would have benefited their study in those classes if more of these students were also undertaking the Academic Study Skills class.

However, work has begun with a several other degree programs and one of these, in a re-design of their degree program, is working with the School of Foundation Studies to integrate academic study skills into two of their first-semester courses. The agreement is that a School of Foundation Studies lecturer will work with the other lecturers on these courses, both on development and teaching. This is an interesting development and both schools have embraced the opportunity.

Staff development

While the School of Foundation Studies has the resources to work with other schools on developing and re-developing these courses and programs, it does not have the staff to undertake all of the teaching required and neither does it believe that all the teaching should be carried out by School lecturers. Planning for staff development has been linked to a Ministry of Education initiative ('Learning for living') to increase expertise in the teaching of literacy and numeracy and the integration of this knowledge into the teaching of content (Ministry of Education 2007). Workshops have been run at Unitec

involving both lecturers on the CFS:W program and those teaching on other foundation and bridging programs, particularly those whose programs are moving to include a bridging course such as Academic Study Skills.

Coordination with government strategy

The approval of the recommendations for development and re-development of foundation and bridging education strategies at Unitec has coincided with a push by the Tertiary Education Commission to prioritise foundation learning. The *Tertiary Education Strategy 2007–12* notes that foundation learning has begun to move 'from a relatively marginal position within the tertiary education system to being a core activity, underpinned by informed professional practice and improved diagnostic and teaching tools' (Ministry of Education 2006, cited in Ministry of Education 2007: 22). Indeed, two of the four priority outcomes for tertiary education for 2007–12 are tied to foundation learning:

> … raising literacy, numeracy and language skills for the workforce … is a priority … increasing the number of New Zealanders achieving a qualification at level four and above before the age of 25 is a priority. (Ministry of Education, 2007: 22)

At the same time, starting in 2008, the Tertiary Education Commission is introducing a new funding model based on changed key performance indicators, some of which are related to each tertiary institution's commitment to and provision of foundation education, and the New Zealand Qualification Authority is rolling out a new quality assurance process for foundation programs. Work thus needs to take place in each institution to integrate these requirements, so that funding and quality assurance issues are demonstrably tied to staff development and measurable student gains. At Unitec, a committee has been formed to advise senior management and to

work with them to develop the best possible outcomes. If it is to meet its aim to raise literacy and numeracy levels to enable more people to enter tertiary study, the government has realised that foundation and bridging education is a basic necessity. The focus has thus moved from skills-based programs aimed at 'helping' people, to the provision of training and incentives to encourage institutions to develop 'staircasing' programs, where literacy, numeracy and academic study skills are integrated with discipline content.

Conclusion

While the reasoning behind a new strategy can find acceptance with a majority of those involved, the actual implementation of that strategy can be extremely complex – the implementation of the recommendations from the *Report on bridging and foundation education* at Unitec has been no exception. It became clear early on, for instance, that the timelines needed to be extended, as they were unrealistic if the development and re-development of new courses and programs was to be undertaken with sufficient consultation. On the other hand, it was always envisaged that this would not be a 'one hat fits all' strategy, but that each new initiative would be developed within the context of a particular course or program to meet the learning needs of the students involved, and this is happening – and in ways never envisaged. Indeed, it is gratifying to have program directors engaging in debate around these issues after years of resistance. While there is still a lack of understanding from many of those teaching at degree level in regard to the multiplicity of problems the new wave of students entering tertiary institutions bring with them, there are also those who now accept that their teaching needs to change to reflect this diversity. Changes to government funding for tertiary programs, involving the prioritisation of foundation learning initiatives, are also driving a push for new strategies at the institutional level.

In leading the challenge to incorporate foundation/bridging courses and programs into Unitec's existing academic structures, the School of Foundation Studies has been charged with a project that involves a fundamental change in the way Unitec supports students with foundation and bridging needs. While such a project has inherent frustrations, there is also a feeling of excitement as each new initiative begins development. The research shows that students are more likely to persist and succeed in institutions that provide opportunities for students and staff to connect in the learning process. The goal of this project is for the implementation of successful initiatives to lead to greater staff 'buy-in', and increased acknowledgment of the flow-on benefits that result from addressing the academic equity needs of students at the foundation/bridging level.

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Exploring the contribution of play to social capital in institutional adult learning settings

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This paper explores how play as an educational tool can enhance social capital for adult learners in institutional settings. Framed by conceptualisations of social capital (Putnam 1993, 2000) and play (Melamed 1987, Meares 2005, Vygotsky 1978) and supported by research literature on play in adult learning, our action research in our adult education classes focuses on cooperative forms of play in which pretend, role-play, improvisation, playful activities and a playful mindset were key components. We investigate these play experiences in terms of their implications for nurturing adult learners' social capital. Our preliminary findings to date reveal that play contributes to social capital by enriching adult learners' engagement, cooperation and sense of connectedness with one another as well as with people, resources and information beyond their group.

Social capital

This paper chronicles early stages in a journey to understand how play can foster adult learners' social capital in institutionalised settings. Following Putnam (1993, 2000), we view social capital in terms of social connections and networks that are embedded in interactions among people and fostered by trust and shared understandings, values and behaviours that enable cooperative action (Cohen & Prusak 2001). Cooperative action may be further understood in terms of people building communities, committing to one another and weaving 'the social fabric of their collective being' (Smith 2001, URL).

In terms of adult learners in institutional settings, we view cooperative action as:

- building adult learning communities that support and promote learners' access to information and resources relevant to learning goals and aspirations
- nurturing adult learners' commitment to their fellow learners and to their roles in an adult learning community
- sharing and weaving adult learners' collective experiences and understandings through their interactions with one another, engagement in shared experiences, knowledge and resources, and pooling their respective experiences and resources.

The relationship between social capital and lifelong learning has been brought under scrutiny, with conclusions drawn that such a relationship is mutually beneficial (Field 2005). However, it cannot be taken for granted that when individuals come together as a

group, a sense of community will evolve. In institutional settings, adult learners can feel hostile towards learning institutions, based on their previous experiences such as school. In such settings, too, adult learners can feel concern about working in groups – a concern that can grow out of the competitive nature of institutional learning and the linking of learning to assessment. There needs to be a clear sense of the relationship between the individual and the group. Relationships and networks can be strengthened by trust and knowledge, which facilitate reciprocity and cooperation for mutual benefit of the network group (World Bank 1998, Putnam 1993, 2000, McClenaghan 2000, Hibbitt, Jones & Meegan 2001).

Interconnectivity (Falk, Balatti & Golding 2000) in the group is important in enabling adult learners in a group setting to make connections among people, information and experiences. It is then that a sense of a learning community (as distinct from being merely in a group) can evolve. The learning that occurs in such a community is tied to qualities of the interactions such as enthusiasm, reflection, action, engagement and respect – 'our conversations can be catalysts or impediments to learning' (Baker 2006: 1).

The extent to which learning communities are flexible, diverse and inclusive also has an impact on learning (Flora 1998, in Kilpatrick, Field & Falk 2001). These qualities of a learning community, as well as willingness on the part of its members to entertain new ideas and accept change, can greatly enhance and enrich learning (Flora, Flora & Wade 1996, in Baker 2006).

Play and adult learning

Key aspects of social capital identified here are also associated with play – and so it stands to reason that we explore relationships between play and social capital. While most commonly associated with children, play is also significant to adult learners. Viewing play as a life-span activity, Göncü & Perone (2005) have found that pretend

play and improvisation amongst adult learners fosters community building that requires dialogue, trust, and reciprocity, sharing and negotiation – all characteristics that are associated with social capital. As Göncü and Perone (2005: 19) state, dialogue in play 'contributes to the construction of an ensemble, an environment of support and acceptance in which the group works through and discovers creative ways of making sense of experiences'. Necessary to play, dialogue also is enriched by play and fosters a sense of community and fellow feeling among adult learners (Meares 2005).

Play is also about a state of mind – it is a creative and non-literal approach to action (Bruner 1972) and creates a zone in which individuals can exceed their usual day-to-day performance (Vygotsky 1978). Playful learning is active, enjoyable and 'concerned with the creation of meaning through dialogue with others and through the process of self-reflection and personal transformation (Mezirow 1985)' (Melamed 1987: 18).

In play, there is a doubleness of mind that simultaneously deals with both real and unreal (or pretend) experiences (Baldwin 1906) – requiring flexibility and openness to new ideas as they come and go in play. Complicity, engagement, enthusiasm and shared vision are needed for participants to sustain this doubleness of mind and can help them bond with one another.

From her work with adult learners, Melamed (1987) has identified five defining characteristics of play that are described in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Five distinctive qualities of play (summarised from Melamed 1987)

Qualities	Description
Relational qualities of play	Play nurtures relationships and engenders a sense of community among players as they engage and interact with high levels of synergy, enjoyment, enthusiasm and fellow feeling, and low levels of inhibition; and converse through pretend and real dialogue in which they explore and reflect on their experiences and understandings.
Experiential qualities of play	In play, participants engage in shared experiences that are enjoyable and engrossing; pool their own experiences and perspectives; and validate and learn from one another's perspectives.
Metaphoric qualities of play	In play, participants' intuition and creativity come to the fore as they follow their hunches and impulses. Through imagination and non-literal thinking, players transform their immediate realities and create new kinds of social spaces in which to engage and interact.
Integrative qualities of play	In play, participants engage in holistic experiences in which there is a strong sense of connectedness to and among people and things; and participants make connections to people, ideas, events, resources and experiences beyond their situation.
Empowering qualities of play	In play, participants are able to rise above their perceived constraints and limitations, as play releases them from internal restrictions and conformity in intellectual and social settings.

These qualities resonate with our own understanding of social capital, insofar as they take account of relational environments in which play occurs, shared experiences and sharing of experiences, flexible and creative ways of thinking, integration of people, experiences and resources, and empowerment to overcome limitations and obstacles. These qualities therefore provide us with tools for examining how play enhances social capital for adult learners in institutional settings, as explained below.

Approach to our inquiry

Our adult education contexts in this inquiry

This paper is based on two different adult education contexts. First, author Pauline's context is a university early childhood preservice teacher education program. The subject under focus is about play in early childhood settings. Weekly classes ran for three hours. In the scenarios used in this paper, the class size was 20: 16 were school-leavers, three were mature-age students and one was an overseas exchange student from the USA.

Second, author John's context is in vocational education and training in a Technical and Further Education environment, delivering communication modules to groups of trade (building) students and general (Communication Skills) students. Weekly classes ran for two hours. Classes are taught in the daytime with generally younger students, not long out of school or just commencing work at entry level in the building industry or related trades; and in the evening with generally older students who are more established in the industry. Students are mostly from non-English speaking backgrounds, seeking to hone their English.

Using action research and self-study

Action research has been described as a problem-solving approach undertaken by practitioners in their workplace settings in order to improve the quality of their practices (McTaggart & Kemmis 1991). Using this approach, we moved through cyclical stages of planning, implementing and reflecting on our play experiences before planning our next step.

Our inquiry is also framed by self-study. According to Loughran and Northfield (1998: 15):

> Self-study is best regarded as a sequence of reflective instances about your teaching. Reflection is a personal process of thinking, refining, reframing and developing actions. Self-study

takes these processes and makes them public, thus leading to another series of processes that need to reside outside the individual.

Action research and self-study were particularly relevant for both of us. Pauline has been a teacher for 25 years. Starting out as a teacher in the early school years, she moved on to teacher education in the tertiary sector. She sought to develop, apply and refine principles of learner-centred pedagogy to her adult education context – specifically, developing an integrated play-based pedagogy with adult learners.

John has been an adult educator for two years, following recent study at university. This period of adult learning was preceded by a 22-year career in another industry involving communicating with clients at a range of levels (from school children to Members of Parliament) to meet their information needs. He daily meets new teaching-learning situations that require him to seek, implement and reflect on teaching approaches that optimise adult learners' engagement.

Data collection and analysis

In our initial deliberations, we discussed how we might use play to foster social capital in our classes. We chose cooperative forms of play in which pretend, role-play, improvisation, playful activities and a playful mind-set were key components. We planned activities and materials that accommodated and encouraged adult learners' perspectives, choice, initiative, direction, dialogue, collaboration and involvement.

We gathered data through in-class observations of our adult learners' behaviours and interactions over the course of a teaching term. Pauline observed one three-hour class once a week over 13 weeks; and John similarly. We documented our observations as running records and anecdotal records. We verified these observations by talking about them with our adult learners. Dialogue was a key aspect as we

discussed our experiences and reflections with each other and made ongoing recourse to broader frames of theoretical reference about play and social capital and as we continued to hone our practices and interpret our observations.

We analysed our data in terms of seeking evidence of each play quality described in Figure 1:

- Relational qualities of play – we looked for evidence of learners' connectedness and synergy among one another, and conversations that were enthusiastic and responsive in both real and pretend interactions.
- Experiential qualities of play – we looked for evidence of learners engaging in shared activities, sharing their experiences with one another, being absorbed in their play activity, finding common ground, and pooling and comparing one another's perspectives.
- Metaphoric qualities of play – we looked for evidence of learners' creative thinking, imagination, readiness to suspend reality, flexibility, engaging with both real and pretend layers of meaning, and creating make-believe situations, roles and dialogue.
- Integrative qualities of play – we looked for evidence of learners making connections among people, events, people, ideas and resources, and connecting past, present and future times.
- Empowering qualities of play – we looked for evidence of learners talking about and rising above physical realities and perceived limitations, breaking away from conformity, and innovating, experimenting and exploring.

In our analysis, we also examined how each play quality contributed to social capital in our adult learning communities. Specifically we looked for evidence of community building that supports access, commitment to one another and their roles in their adult learning community, and bringing together collective experiences and understandings.

Findings

As we explore links between play and social capital, we focus on one play quality at a time to make some general observations on what we found. We relate these observations to the literature, as we did as our inquiry unfolded. We then illustrate these observations with specific scenarios from our classes.

Exploring relational qualities in play and their contribution to social capital

Synergy and a sense of fellow feeling are associated with relational qualities of play (Meares 2005, Melamed 1987). Conversations between our adult learners during play resonated with the kinds of conversations that catalyse adult learning (Baker, Jensen & Kolb 2002, in Baker 2006) – they showed enthusiasm, reflection, responsiveness, intent engagement and understanding. These conversations were both real and imaginary, especially in their pretend play and role-play. A sense of community building thus emerged (Göncü & Perone 2005).

To illustrate these findings, we draw on a scenario from John's communication class with building diploma students. The purpose was to illustrate the importance of builders listening to different messages from their advertisers, suppliers and general media messages.

Play occurs in an atmosphere created by another (Meares 2005) – in this case, the 'other' was the pretend persona of a maverick builder called Happy Joe Happy, adopted by John. As soon as John brought this persona into play, how John and the adult learners related to one another changed. At first, learners responded to ideas that John presented in role – such as some doubtful ideas about delivering value for money. Gradually more students joined in with comments directed to Happy Joe and one another – such as what constituted appropriate levels of customer service. Finding their place in the discussion, these learners cooperatively created a conversational space in which they raised, shared and challenged workplace practices, experiences and perceptions.

In a follow-up class, John conducted a Geoffrey Robertson-style *Hypotheticals* discussion. He assigned pretend roles to members of the group as the discussion progressed – a WorkCover inspector, a young worker desperately seeking work to support a wife and young family, and a builder who 'does the right thing' and gets his insurance paperwork in, resulting in higher insurance premiums for honestly disclosing risk, and then being undercut by the dubious builder with lower overheads. Learners were asked to improvise by entering the discussion in these roles. Gradually the direction of the discussion changed – from one where initially the majority of the discussion participants supported the builder because of his apparent independent streak, to one where learners realised there were many other points of view and stakeholders in this discussion.

As these adult learners shifted perspectives in role and took ownership of the discussion, they became increasingly engrossed in relating to one another from different standpoints. As builders, these adult learners will find themselves dealing with people in different roles and relationships such as those they took on here – for example, foremen, clients, suppliers, contractors, regulation authorities, work-mates and so on. This observation highlights role-play as a way of promoting individuals' understanding of different roles, relationships and perspectives (Mead 1934), which assist effective interactions and networking experiences.

Exploring experiential qualities in play and their contribution to social capital

When our adult learners played in our classes, they were involved in collective experiences that they patently found enjoyable and engrossing – highlighting the experiential qualities of play as described by Melamed (1987). With everyone absorbed in the same activity, play seemed to help individuals overcome potential barriers

among them and appreciate diversity and flexibility – key attributes associated with effective learning communities and social capital (Flora 1998, in Kilpatrick, Field & Falk 2001, Flora, Flora & Wade 1996, in Baker 2006).

In their play, individuals contributed to common tasks, from which they collectively built understanding. We illustrate these findings in a scenario from John's Communication Skills Certificate III class. This class consisted entirely of non-English speaking background (NESB) learners, seeking to retrain as part of their re-settlement experience or hone their communication skills as part of having their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia.

John divided the class into three small groups. Each group was given an activity designed to encourage learners to use discussion and problem-solving skills studied in class to achieve the goals specific to each task. These activities involved children's picture books:

- *The Waterhole* (Base 2001) – this activity involved identifying camouflaged animals on a particular page and matching them to their miniature silhouettes in the borders of the same page. The purpose was to pool and corroborate sightings and resolve any differences in interpretations.
- *Mausis farben* (*Maisy's colours*) (Cousins 1997) – this picture book was presented in a German translation which no-one in the class could understand. The purpose was to reach agreement on the storyline in the book, making, testing and reviewing hypotheses against the backdrop of the group's experiences and insights.
- *Rosie's walk* (Hutchins 1968) – the words of this picture book tell of a hen's uneventful walk while the illustrations show a fox stalking her. The purpose was to share and contrast different points of view and resolve differences in order to reach consensus as to whether or not Rosie was aware of the fox.

All groups were observably and deeply engrossed in these activities and one another. Students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds provided for rich and enthusiastic sharing of ideas and experiences to solve the task at hand – bolstered by the playful nature and visual orientation of each activity. For example, groups solved the problem of decoding the words in *Mausis farben* by drawing on their collective knowledge about how picture books work, interpreting pictures and relating them to the words, and seeking analogies between English and German words such as 'braun' and 'brown'.

The experiential nature of this activity also alleviated pressures that these adult learners usually felt in relation to using English as their non-native language. They put their dictionaries to one side and were relatively uninhibited in using English in explaining their points of view to one another. This absence of an English language screen was supported by the playful nature of the activities and contrasted with John's observations of NESB speakers across other class situations.

Exploring metaphoric qualities in play and their contribution to social capital

In play, we found that adult learners' creativity came to the fore. They freely followed hunches and impulses and engaged with real and imagined situations, roles and ideas. They showed flexibility and willingness in taking on other people's points of view and accepting change, qualities which help foster social capital and effective learning communities (Flora, Flora & Wade 1996, in Baker 2006).

To illustrate these findings, we draw on an example from Pauline's class where preservice teachers began to change their lecture theatre into a movie and live drama theatre. Owing to a last-minute room change, Pauline found that the class had been re-scheduled in a tiered lecture room with fixed seating, minimal floor space, a video booth at the back, and a large screen and whiteboard at the front. This room limited her plans for a play-based pedagogy. Working with the teaching space and not against it, Pauline decided to use the

idea of a theatre to transform the lecture theatre into a movie and entertainment theatre.

To launch the movie theatre with the students, Pauline used a mind-map game and three theatre props – a torch, popcorn and a children's movie storybook – to stimulate whole class brainstorming of associations. Students willingly entertained and built on new ideas from one another and accepted uncertainty and change as their lines of thinking unfolded. Once the movie storybook was presented as the final prop, associations narrowed to movies and theatres and so the room's makeover was begun.

In small group follow-up, students continued to collude on ways to use the movie theatre to frame their team presentations. Initially, Pauline asked students to design movie posters – a popular culture genre with which they were all familiar and which was modelled and brainstormed before going into small groups. Pauline asked students to think of movie titles and taglines for their presentations, and come up with a visual design that would best capture the essence of their subject material about play in the curriculum.

Students exceeded expectations as they stretched themselves. Their ideas flowed freely as they created titles, tag lines and visual designs. They explored other aspects of their presentations – such as play-based techniques and props they could use and role-plays they could set up. Their heightened engagement was evident in their enthusiastic planning of their presentations, overheard in comments like 'I'm so inspired', and the fact that some students actually went home that day and had sleepovers so they could continue planning their presentations.

As the weeks ensued and students developed and gave their presentations, Pauline and students alike maintained ongoing complicity in the imaginary re-creation of their shared adult learning space. Such complicity was critical in nurturing a sense of community and support amongst them all.

Exploring integrative qualities of play and their contribution to social capital

In the kinds of play provided in our classes, there was an emphasis on holistic experiences. Our adult learners made connections among experiences, people and resources, past, present and future, in their real and imagined worlds. Making these connections was akin to what Meares (2005, p. 165) described in play as individuals weaving the 'skeins' of their ideas and imaginings. We found a deep resonance between this integrative aspect of play and social capital in adult education. Social capital also is embedded in connections among people, resources and events that assist learners in moving forward. In this we saw the principle of interconnectivity at work (Falk *et al.* 2000) in helping to engender a sense of learning community.

To illustrate these aspects of play and social capital, we have chosen a scenario from Pauline's preservice teacher education class, which followed on from developing the theatre metaphor previously described. A group of students gave their presentation on the use of play in the creative arts curriculum. They chose to explore this topic from three theoretical perspectives and devised a role-play script that they enacted. The role-play took the form of a panel discussion among three theoretical experts, and an early childhood teacher seeking professional advice on how experts engage her pupils more effectively in creative arts lessons.

These adult learners enthusiastically embraced role-play and adopted a play mindset in which they integrated different points of view across time and place. They made connections to and among people, ideas, experiences and resources beyond their group. In so doing, these students reached out to technologies, resources and people in the field to inform and assist their presentation:

- They incorporated DVD and Powerpoint technologies to support their presentation, calling on information technology expertise and material resources outside their group to support their own collaborative creation of a DVD and a Powerpoint display.

- They researched the perspectives of three theoreticians and compared and contrasted what each had to say about play. They transformed this research into a scripted role-play that they acted out and which brought to life complex and often subtle similarities and differences among the three perspectives.
- They connected theory to practice by connecting 'experts' with a 'teacher' with whom they engaged in dialogue, reflection and demonstration of practically and theoretically informed ideas for the classroom.
- They connected with their audience, as they co-opted their peers to join in the demonstrations of activities and related to them as fellow teachers.
- They connected the past, present and future. The 'Star Wars' device made a clear popular culture reference to their past experiences of this film. They also reached into the historical past of theoreticians who still have a presence in the field of early childhood education; and they connected these past experiences and ideas to the present context of their role-plays and their future careers as teachers.

Exploring empowering qualities of play and their contribution to social capital

It has been written that play releases individuals from internal restrictions and conformity and allows them to reach beyond perceived constraints and limitations (Melamed 1987). We found evidence of such empowerment in our classes, where play provided a zone in which individuals were heads taller than themselves (Vygotsky 1978). The relevance here to social capital in adult learning is having the confidence and know-how to reach within oneself to realise latent capabilities, as well as to reach beyond one's immediate situation and access other people and resources, to the benefit of the individual and the group.

Reflecting on this connection, we explore below a scenario in which play was used to mediate an assessment task in John's class with

Communication Skills students. The activity's focus was to use and reflect on group processes for resolving workplace conflict and meeting deadlines. John cast the assessment task as a role-play that required cooperation and individual accountability. In so doing, he reduced the adult learners' sense of risk that they often feel when performing an assessment task. These adult learners were encouraged to stretch themselves by the playfulness of their activity and support of their fellow learners.

The role-play was given on the students' arrival. They took on roles of team members who were to complete a report on their undertaking for a third party, with a set deadline. The report would determine the future fate of the team's own company, seeing the company close if the deadline was not met. The team appreciated its importance but one team member, enacted by John, thwarted their efforts. This recalcitrant team member habitually came late to team meetings, had not done what he said or was asked to do, continued to make excuses for his failure to honour his team responsibilities and workplace commitments, and showed difficulty in meeting deadlines and contributing to the overall goal of the team.

Two very different ways of resolving this issue emerged in the role-play, with significant consequences for the team and the errant team member. In light of these consequences and the lively discussion that followed, these adult learners were provoked into carefully reviewing their respective positions – safe in the knowledge that play provides flexibility and empowered by the freedom that play affords. The eventual consensus was to both assist the individual and honour the corporate deadline.

In play, one thing leads to another – and this scenario was no exception. With this consensus reached, John introduced the students to the role of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) in the workplace. The relevance of EAP in this context was clear to all in both the immediate pretend situation and ultimately, these adult learners'

workplace futures. They asked John for an adjournment to investigate the roles of EAPs. In so doing, they reached beyond their group to access new knowledge and helpful resources that would assist them in their learning and chosen careers. They did so with an inquiring mind and a critical eye. Empowerment afforded by play provoked these adult learners to step up to the mark, interrogate the situation at hand, and consider and review key perspectives and stakeholders, even while completing an assessment task.

Conclusions

Acknowledging the early stages of our inquiry, any conclusions we make must be tentative. However, we do see indications that play in adult learning can contribute to nurturing social capital by fostering adult learning communities that support and promote access to information and resources relevant to learning goals and aspirations. In Figure 2, we state our conclusions about each play quality in terms of principles associated with social capital (italicised in this figure).

Figure 2: Conclusions about how qualities of play contribute to social capital

Play qualities	**Conclusions**
Relational qualities	Relational qualities of play contributed to social capital by: • creating *conversational spaces* that saw enthusiasm, understanding, reflection, action and genuine engagement among adult learners • inviting and nurturing *dialogue* among adult learners • involving *cooperation* of adult learners with one another • engaging adult learners in *sharing, corroborating* and *reviewing* ideas and experiences with one another • enhancing *reciprocity and trust* among adult learners
Experiential qualities	Experiential qualities of play contributed to social capital by: • engaging adult learners in *shared* hands-on engagement, enjoyment, absorption and active participation • inviting adult learners to bring their own experiences to bear and *share* with one another • providing experiences where *flexibility, diversity and inclusivity* of ideas and people were valued • breaking down potential barriers among adult learners and enticing them into finding *common ground and shared understandings*
Metaphoric qualities	Metaphoric qualities of play contributed to social capital by: • providing adult learners with an *approach to cooperative action* • helping adult learners bond with one another through *collusion* on ideas they *cooperatively constructed* • opening up avenues of *collective thought and intellectual corroboration* by valuing intuitive thinking, and following hunches and streams of consciousness • encouraging *flexibility and creativity* with a willingness to entertain and build on new ideas from one another and accept change
Integrative qualities	Integrative qualities of play contributed to social capital by: • providing holistic experiences where adult learners made *connections* to and among people, ideas, experiences and resources beyond their group • engendering a sense of *interconnectivity* amongst adult learners and their past, present and future experiences and aspirations • providing opportunity for adult learners to *weave together* the skeins of their ideas, experiences and imaginings
Empowering qualities	Empowering qualities of play contributed to social capital by: • providing a means for the group to *collectively transform and transcend* immediate shared realities and look beyond their immediate communal situation • creating a zone where adult learners *reached beyond* their actual capacities and worked towards their potential • encouraging adult learners to reach beyond their group to *access other people and resources*

These qualities of play were seen to foster learning by enriching adult learners' engagement, cooperation and sense of connectedness with one another as well as with people, resources and information beyond their group. These conclusions are supported by the literature on which we have drawn and warrant further investigation. Further inquiry needs to continue to document the specific details of play's contribution to social capital, along with adult learners' perspectives of this relationship, and any carry-over effects and benefits to other adult learning situations. Also of interest in this line of inquiry are the bridges adult educators may build from play to other kinds of adult learning approaches, and the role that reflective dialogue between adult educators and learners may have in building such bridges.

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Adult education, social inclusion and cultural diversity in regional communities

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This article presents the outcomes of recent research into adult education programs and experiences in the Shire of Campaspe, a region in northern Victoria. Research data of people from diverse cultural backgrounds reveal how individuals can utilise adult education as a space to explore their own social and cultural isolation in a regional context. The research reveals patterns of migration, internal population mobility, social isolation and cultural identity within the context of this one regional shire. The article discerns the roles that adult education providers play in creating specific kinds of space for people to discover new social networks while interacting with informal and formal structures and processes of adult learning. Adult education programs and practices can play an important role in providing space for the exploration of social, cultural and economic experiences. However, individual adult education organisations manage their spaces and programs in such

a way that excludes some people from social and economic activity crucial to the development of individual and community social capital. Adult learning policies, programs and practices in regional communities need to address the holistic nature of adult learning for people from culturally diverse backgrounds in order to contribute to the development of sustaining social capital for individuals, families and communities in Australian society.

Context

The aim of this article is to explore the themes that have emerged from doctoral research concerning adult and community education (ACE) in regional communities in Australia. The mixed methods research activities (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003, Creswell 2002) included the surveying and interviewing of fifteen adult learners from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds which resulted in the development of vignettes as snapshots of habitual narratives (Redman 2005, Linde 2001, Arvay 1998, Norum 1998). These research instruments were devised utilising current literature on indicators of social capital development (Cox 2004, Balatti & Falk 2002, ABS 2000, Winter 2000).

There were also focus group meetings with individuals participating in a local cultural diversity support group in the Shire of Campaspe and a focus group with learners in an English as a second language (ESL) program. These focus group meetings evaluated the impact of government funded ACE policies and programs on the individual lives of participants (Feldman, Skoldberg, Brown & Horner 2003). There were interviews with ACE staff working with a range of Campaspe-based adult education providers, allowing for the compilation of a comprehensive profile of adult education activities in this region. Quantitative data of ACE participation in urban and regional areas in

Victoria were also analysed to explore the assumption that targeted ACE delivery could impact on ACE participation (ACFE 2006).

The themes that emerged from the research represent a multiplicity of individual experiences of life in a regional community and the research reveals the connectivity of diversity, adult learning and social inclusion in this one rural shire in Australia. The research took shape in the context of a regional geographic community, the Shire of Campaspe, situated in northern Victoria. The Shire of Campaspe has a population of over 37,000 people that is growing in number and diversity (ABS 2007, Shire of Campaspe 2006). Agricultural production based on intensive irrigation is the largest industry in terms of net worth and revenue, and dairy farming and dry land farming involving cattle, sheep and grain are the main agricultural industries. Employment occurs mostly in the service sectors of retail, finance, hospitality and tourism. In recent times, the Shire has been significantly affected by drought, impacting on collective economic, social and personal circumstances.

The place that is Campaspe is representative of many regions in Australia where the population is diversifying as more people move from large urban areas and as migrants and refugees are 'diverted' into regional areas by Federal and State government policies. Within regional Victoria there are specific patterns of age-specific migration, with different age groups moving out of and into these areas. Older adolescents, for example, show a pattern of movement toward urban centres, mostly for education. These patterns tend to reverse for 25–29 year olds in regional areas such as Campaspe, reflecting the attraction of regional areas for young families and the return mobility of some who have completed their tertiary education (DVC 2006).

Communities in regional Victoria with 16% of the population born overseas are significantly less diverse than Melbourne, with 36% of the population born overseas (DVC 2006). Issues of cultural and social marginalisation motivate many people and especially

newly arrived migrants to choose to reside in the diversity of urban areas. However, in recent years a number of regional municipalities in Victoria, and around Australia, are actively welcoming more diverse groups into their communities for a range of economic and social reasons. Currently there are immigration programs targeting humanitarian entrants to resettle in regional and rural Australia, skilled migrants can fill skill shortages and there are opportunities for guest workers to come to Australia to fulfil specific employment contracts in regional and/or rural communities (Broadbent, Cacciattolo & Carpenter 2006, DoTaRS 2006). To what extent can these new internal and international migrants expect support in their resettlement and in adjusting to life in their new communities, and what support do they need? The context of this paper is research about adult education and training and its role in regional life for internal and international migrants.

Regional population diversity via migration and internal mobility

Individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds interviewed for the research have come to Campaspe via two main means – internal mobility and/or international migration. The mature-age individuals who had resided in Australia for a decade or more, mostly in large urban communities, relocated to Campaspe for personal reasons, the lifestyle, mental health and, for some, financial benefit. This mobility reflects individual life transitions facilitated by a number of factors including relationship breakdowns, the 'empty nest' syndrome or physical/mental health issues. These individuals are searching for a sense of 'place' and 'community', a sense of belonging to somewhere outside of their prior familial and cultural experiences. This appears to be a function of age-related life transitions as much as CALD background or migration experiences. No longer satisfied or dependent on the same social connections that have sustained them in the past, this group are seeking some meaning to their individual lives rather than solely financial gain or familial stability.

This raises the question whether the CALD or migration experience weakens certain ties, making for a 'rootlessness' that allows for quite radical relocation from urban to regional community (Giorgas 2000). Does there come a point where and when people do not expect much cultural or familial connectedness, the upheaval of international migration in the past having created new but shallow-rooted and circumscribed connections in a new country?

Different motivations and objectives characterised the younger individuals from CALD backgrounds, all women, who had migrated within the past five years or so. These individuals have come to reside in Campaspe because of a personal relationship. Their stories reflect the economic issues of the countries of origin and the search of individuals (and their families) for a 'better' life for themselves in a new country. They are not as a rule prepared for the experience(s) of living in Australian regional or rural communities and have often had little choice in their location. Some believe that 'fate' brought them to Campaspe.

The most common theme emerging from the experiences of all these individuals in Campaspe was the belief that their backgrounds made them social outsiders within this regional community. They had all experienced social exclusion and difficulty in developing localised, supportive social networks. Australian regional and rural communities have distinct localised cultures in themselves, often White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant (WASP) and rooted in the colonial history of a specific region. New residents to these communities are required, as newcomers, to adjust to the mores and codes of local life:

> I do mix with people from different cultures… It's important in a place like Echuca where there are lots of Aussie rednecks. (Connie)

> [Echuca] looked like a modern and quite trendy town, but it was all looks; the attitudes and behaviour of 'locals' about people from different cultures and other differences were rooted in an Anglo, rural, redneck culture. (George)

However, the closer an individual is to the WASP colonial tradition of regional/rural Australia, the quicker and easier one will develop new social networks, often resulting from participation in existing local networks around activities such as sport, business and church (Babacan 2007, Hero 2007). Employment was the one issue that emerged from the research as one way for individuals to connect with localised networks. Indeed, it was assumed by some ACE providers that for most new arrivals, employment would actually exclude them from participation or involvement in adult education. Most of the individuals interviewed for the research, drawn from current ACE programs, were not employed, either because they were full-time carers for partners and/or children, or because they were unemployed. This raises a number of questions regarding involvement in adult education on the part of people from CALD backgrounds. Their unemployment relates to the life transitions mentioned previously and the connectedness they might expect from ACE is limited due to perceptions of the 'working' migrant.

The complexity of this dynamic is underscored by the fact that unemployment across Australia is higher among groups such as newly arrived migrant women, middle-aged men and women returning to work (ABS 6202.0 2007), and these are some of the main target groups of ACE programs in Victoria and in Campaspe. These patterns of social and economic inclusion and/or exclusion are not a specific function of the communities in the Shire of Campaspe but of the whole of Australian society, as this diversity is duplicated throughout many regional and rural areas of Australia and probably many urban communities as well (DoTaRS 2006, Giorgas 2000). An individual can experience being an 'outsider' within a community because of their CALD background, or because they are an assertive young woman, or a gay man or someone with a mental illness.

Many individuals and sub-groups will be perceived as being outside of established local experiences and often 'pegged' by locals as people

who 'won't fit'. All of the individual learners interviewed for the research experienced social exclusion and isolation in the first years of their life in Campaspe because they were outsiders. While their experiences were all different due to individual factors, there were experiences they all had in common; some had developed social capital via mainly employment-based networks and experiences, while others still felt themselves to be 'outsiders' in the Shire of Campaspe. All of the individuals who participated in this research were searching for social connections either as a primary or secondary issue when accessing ACE. Some had been able to use ACE in the development of new social networks, but others found ACE programs and practices excluding, disappointing and unhelpful in this endeavour.

The role of adult and community education in regional communities

The individuals from CALD backgrounds interviewed for this research had all accessed education and/or training programs at ACE providers in Campaspe in recent years. It is clear that for this group ACE has been accessible in the sense that they can access an ACE centre, enquire about programs, enrol in and then attend a group educational activity. These individuals accessed a diversity of education and training programs, from accredited vocational training to personal development courses.

The individuals in this study accessed ACE programs for personal, social and economic reasons, with emphasis on the personal and social. ACE staff for their part understood that ACE is about access to education and that people participate in programs for personal and social reasons. Interviews with providers revealed, however, the extent to which ACE is now increasingly about vocational training for specific groups who traditionally access ACE for social reasons, for example, women returning to work. Recent changes to Australian income security policy via welfare-to-work initiatives have meant

that targeting this group for vocational training is a lucrative funding mechanism via work skills vouchers. ACE now appears to have the unenviable task of having to be many things to many people within geographic communities like Campaspe.

This has led ACE providers in Campaspe into specialising and targeting specific groups instead of diversifying their profiles to suit a broader community. For example, Murray Human Services only targets people with disabilities; Mirrimbeena Aboriginal Education Group targets Indigenous young men; and Campaspe College of Adult Education mostly targets women interested in community services training like child care, aged care, and home and community care. These are recent examples in Campaspe of ACE providers and programs being developed to service specific groups. None of the providers, however, are purposefully targeting people from CALD backgrounds, probably because of a lack of a homogenous and visible population profile and recognised need. Not only is the CALD population significantly smaller (though growing) in Campaspe compared with many urban communities, but there is a broad range of CALD sub-groups reflecting the entire history of migration in Australia: Irish, southern Europeans, Chinese and more recently Asian migration – Vietnamese, Malaysian, Filipino, Indian, Sri Lankan and now Middle-Eastern families.

ACE providers in Campaspe are not connecting to this broad, diverse community but to the individuals, sub-groups and industries that match the targeting of specific State and Federal funding arrangements. Campaspe has eight ACE providers with the most established, smaller ACE centres servicing specific communities. For instance, the two most recently established providers have developed to service specific sub-groups in the Shire, that is, Indigenous people and people with disabilities. These new ACE services have developed and apparently flourished in terms of growth in funding and programs, which reveals that prior to their establishment, these

'equity' groups within the Shire were not having their ACE needs met. Exclusion from 'traditional' ACE providers for some sub-groups reflects a history of ACE in Campaspe where the main providers have been targeting and servicing mainstream (WASP) groups in the community such as; women returning to work, those seeking leisure programs and/or youth who have 'dropped out' or not completed secondary school.

It appears, then, that with this research identifying under-servicing of CALD groups, ACE in Campaspe is exclusionary for a range of 'equity' groups. Although ACE is based on an educational pedagogy of inclusion, the WASP culture of Campaspe has inculcated ACE programming and practices with providers and practitioners not being able to recognise the needs of a range of sub-groups in this regional community. Such 'cultural blindness' by ACE programming in this regional community appears to result from a range of complex historical, population, social and economic factors.

This regional community is deeply rooted in the colonial history of Australia. The Murray River in this region was the earliest 'highway' and all the communities along the river were taken from Indigenous clans and settled to assist in the expansion of Anglo-Saxon communities aiming to claim land and water for their own economic development. Cultural diversity of any kind in these times was limited to the goldfields where Chinese and European immigrants had also settled. The mono-cultural history of regions like Campaspe still lingers to this day with towns like Echuca and Swan Hill celebrating their Anglo-colonial history to the detriment of recognising the emerging diversity within their local communities.

Diversity in population and culture is only a very recent phenomenon for Campaspe with the local population growing and diversifying mostly in the past 15 years (ABS 2007). This situation is unlike adjoining regions such as Moira Shire where towns like Shepparton and Cobram have a 50-year history of encouraging migrants to settle

in that region (City of Greater Shepparton 2005). Campaspe has not been part of recent programs aimed at encouraging migrants to settle in regional communities. It is, then, not surprising that local service providers, including adult education organisations and the local people that work in these services, are not attuned to recognising and managing population diversity. There has been little leadership within local Campaspe communities to acknowledge the growing diversity of local populations.

The establishment of a cultural diversity 'support group', *Echuca Enriched*, in 2006 is one indication that people from different cultural backgrounds in this area have felt the need to support each other because they are (still) not being included in local social networks and processes. This group originated from professionals of various cultural backgrounds who were meeting in nearby Shepparton which has a larger and more diverse cultural and linguistic population profile. Residents from Echuca who were attending this group were offered some funding from the Goulburn Valley Migration Project to establish a group in Echuca, hoping to develop new social contacts for people feeling culturally and socially isolated. The group offered a number of social events in 2006/07 as an attempt to bring people together to share their experiences and resources of living in Campaspe.

ACE funding structures have indirectly influenced patterns of provision of adult education to specific groups. The funding is allocated to providers based on targeted funding for specific sub-groups, such as the long-term unemployed, women returning to work, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from CALD backgrounds and so on (ACFE 2006). This has encouraged significant levels of niche provision. Providers reported in this research that, over time, Campaspe has seen the development of new ACE providers targeting specific groups such as Indigenous groups or people with disabilities, who have been able to attract

a specific 'client group' clearly being excluded by established ACE providers.

It may well be argued that this development in ACE services in the region reflects a diversification of social capital in that population sub-groups are developing their 'own' services and networking opportunities (DoTaRS 2006, Giorgas 2000). It is also clear, however, that these alternative networks are being developed outside or parallel to those of the broader community, and arise because the broader community fails to meet the needs of this target group. CALD groups carving out alternative social and economic networks highlights and reflects a community that is practised in protecting established networks rather than extending and nourishing them by embracing the real growth in diversity of the main communities in this Shire. The result of this for people from a range of cultural backgrounds is the need to lobby specific education providers to take note of their needs and to target CALD individuals exclusively.

What this research has suggested, however, is that targeting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is not a simplistic exercise and that individuals cannot be grouped effectively into a CALD category which fails to take account of their life circumstances (Bowman 2004). Targeting still requires acknowledgement that this group is not homogenous and that diverse offerings, including English language programs, general education, vocational training and recreation programs are needed to attract this group (Kearns 2006). Often, individuals from CALD backgrounds are searching for cultural and social elements to adult education that are less obvious to providers, activities that are overtly cultural and social such as programs that promote languages, food, religions and other cultural practices. Again, these issues and themes are not unique to the Shire of Campaspe nor to the ACE sector, as they are integral in the historical development of Australian society and can be seen in the recent history of Federal xenophobic politics (Szego 2006, Withers 2006).

The diverse experiences of adult learning at ACE in a regional community

The specific individual experiences of ACE in the Shire of Campaspe revealed some critical factors. Individuals from CALD backgrounds who were interviewed saw their forays into education and training in terms of searching. They 'looked at' ACE as being a way forward for their transitional social and educational needs. They went 'looking for' transitional programs, activities and a 'place' to help sort out 'where to next'. More often than not, they found that what they were looking for was available but did not really suit their individual personal circumstances – taking what was offered but aware that it might not meet their needs, 'filling up' up on the education that was available:

> … my experiences at the College and Uni were both good and bad. As I did each year of these courses, I knew I was improving, my writing and study skills were getting better. I started using people who were good with writing to help me; I used the people around me as a resource. (Connie)

> … the Liberal Arts course was like a garden, with Chinese seeds and English seed and others. They all need different soils and stuff to grow; it was like everyone might not grow, but the course considered the source and the subject of each person. (George)

Reba is a member of the Neighbourhood House, for the committee, for the meetings. She also attends from time to time the community lunch on Mondays. She comes back to the Neighbourhood House 'to see what to do next and to practise on the computers. I am lonely at home, but stay because it is all I have'.

For Liz*:*

> … it is the need for people to belong… I can get very sick if I sit at home all the time… There are a lot of people, needy people, just like me. And with their help, love and understanding, life need not be so hard.

Individuals valued the connectedness that ACE fostered but their use of ACE was sporadic in terms of the types and content of the ACE programs they were accessing. These individuals were mostly not wanting educational 'pathways', but the spectrum of education programs to be available: general education, vocational education, public education etc. Most of the surveyed 'older' individuals from CALD backgrounds experienced the social connectivity and the development of new social networks that they were looking for; however, there was also recognition that it was only some of the programs that achieved these outcomes:

Marie summed this up in saying: 'in the main, I have found adult education informative; some, however, is so simplified that you don't need a brain to pass the course'. Hanna said 'we need more options of where you can go; you end up doing what's the next best course, rather than what you want to do. Education/courses need to be where we're at, life stage…'.

Apart from being 'older', these individuals were also more established within Australian society and so were more assertive about their needs and more knowledgeable about how to go about locating resources to match their needs. They reported that some ACE programs had successfully blended social and educational activities mostly because of a specific tutor who fostered social activities as part of their educational program, irrespective of that program's content and intended outcome. It was individuals working within ACE, rather than specific ACE providers, programs or practices, who were able to facilitate adult education programs that acknowledged the personal, social and cultural aspects of participants. The integration of experiential learning frameworks appeared very limited within ACE providers in Campaspe, which revealed a disconnection from the pedagogical frameworks that are particularly effective with diverse groups of learners.

There was also a disturbing recognition by some of the individuals that ACE 'didn't set the standards too high' for some of their programs. Here it was argued that individual potential was not being reached because learners were seen as being 'disadvantaged', meaning that they were undemanding and unchallenging. This reflects an 'input focused' approach to the philosophy and practice of adult education, where enrolments and student contact hours weigh strongly in decisions about funding and program provision. Under this model, education provision is about achieving numerical outcomes to suit targets and funding, rather than any practices that suit the local community. Unfortunately, this may also reflect a patronising educational framework that does not expect too much from these groups of learners because 'we shouldn't expect too much' of people accessing adult education via ACE providers and programs.

Most of the younger, migrant women interviewed for the research experienced ACE as an extension of their total social isolation in a new community. Their experiences of ACE programs reflected a range of issues where Australian society 'expects' newly arrived migrants to attend English language classes until they can 'function 'properly', that is, assimilate linguistically. Here, the onus is on each individual to access and participate in these programs rather than on ACE or Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) providers to outreach to this particular group of learners.

The experiences of these women, who have more recently migrated, also reinforced an understanding of Australia as a patriarchal society much like the countries from which they had migrated. For these women, men were the people who had power over them, whether in their personal lives or in their ACE programs. Their experiences as women at ACE reinforced their isolation by mirroring the lack of social intercourse with other ACE participants from CALD backgrounds, meaning they couldn't locate others with similar experiences with whom they could bond and develop networks.

Some saw themselves as being ridiculed by others and/or objectified because they were young(er), migrant (Asian) women. This was a reflection of their experiences as women within the wider community. For them, ACE providers were not really any different in terms of attitudes about race, culture and gender; these were the mores of the Campaspe regional community of which ACE is a part:

> There are not many mums in Echuca working regularly part-time or full-time. There is a small town attitude that women who are mothers do certain things, stay at home, playgroup, shopping, not studying or working and juggling different things to do. This attitude is not helping. There is not a problem with my cultural background, but I think it's the attitude to me as a mother. (Arosha)

> We go out and see people when husband at home, he say, sit and listen, learn how women do things here. So I sit. I work in supermarket a while… Older men, they smiled at me. One man tried to touch me, I screamed and run. No go back, husband told them, no go back. (Ollie)

This group found it difficult to build their social capital as part of their ACE experience because of the lack of social support in their personal lives that could act as a catalyst to support their venturing into new social network development (Hero 2007). Social isolation acts as a barrier that can feed on itself. Unless individuals find a place that facilitates social inclusion, it can become self-fulfilling where every individual experience leads to social isolation (Baron, Field & Schuller 2000). The marginalisation of these women again reflects a history of race, culture and gender in Australian society that, despite the multicultural agenda of the past three decades, emphasises a view of migrants as an economic resource. The totality of the migrant experience and the resources these women bring with them are not valued highly, and yet they could be a valuable resource to the local community, if only they could be acknowledged for who they were and what they had to offer.

Adult and community education can be more active in developing social capital amongst CALD groups in regional communities only when it starts to recognise the specific groups, families and individuals residing in those communities. This also means actively mingling with people from diverse backgrounds, by engaging in all manner of social and economic networks within communities to locate and involve these groups who are often hidden from the mainstream (Nadarajah 2004). This research found that, much like any other segment of the population, people from CALD backgrounds want and need a range of adult education and training activities: English language programs, professional development programs, vocational training, general education and recreation programs. However, for ACE programs to be genuinely inclusive, they need to incorporate experiential learning philosophies and practices that engage with all learners, their backgrounds and their current knowledge and skills, all as a base for planning and facilitating new adult education programs (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant & Yates 2003, Fenwick 2000).

Conclusion

The link between population diversity, adult education and social capital development is still a tentative and questionable one. Often the link is assumed rather than tested. ACE does have a mandated role in providing access to education and training but this does not necessarily translate into the building of social capital (Volkoff & Walstab 2007). The research outlined in this article suggests that ACE providers, programs and practices can actually contribute to social exclusion, particularly for people more recently arrived in this country and in regional communities. Race and culture as experiences and indicators have been absent from the social capital 'thesis' (Hero 2007) and there is evidence in this research that social capital development via ACE can be a form of social control and social reproduction in regional communities. ACE does nevertheless have

the potential to act as an agent of social networking and therefore social cohesion (Balatti, Black & Falk 2006).

Further research and evidence about social capital development is required from diverse community structures and processes throughout Australian society in both urban and regional settings. Social capital measurement to date has been mainly from WASP, middle class communities and using traditional indicators such as church-going, volunteering and networking via clubs and associations. People from lower socio-economic backgrounds or marginal groups, on the other hand, tend to utilise public services, community services and sport as their main social networking environments, and these connections are not being researched as completely as they could and should be (Hero 2007).

Gender, life-stage and length of time of residence in Australia all influenced the ACE experiences of these individuals from CALD backgrounds interviewed in this research. People from different cultural backgrounds were expected to 'fit in' to regional and rural communities. Based on its stated philosophical and pedagogical background, ACE has a role to play in more actively fostering social interaction for diverse groups, because there is evidence that this is where people from diverse backgrounds do 'search for' access to personal, social and economic network development (Volkoff & Walstab 2007, Kearns 2006).

As a society, there is a need in Australia to examine the ACE sector in all its capacities and locate what it is about ACE that fosters social cohesion, social production or social control. However, it is difficult to imagine an ACE sector that can act as a unifying force when, as a sector of adult education, it is itself fractured with different philosophies and practices in each State and Territory, between regions within States/Territories and between providers within specific regions. While one of the strengths of ACE is its ability to service and resource local communities, its weakness as a sector is

the lack of a unifying philosophy about its role in Australian society (Kearns 2005). Does not the ACE sector have an obligation to act as an educational and social service that meets the diverse needs of communities? If so, which governments and agencies are going to act as the catalyst and facilitator to make this happen?

The data collected and documented in this research on ACE in one Australian regional community outlined very individual experiences based on many factors. So it is difficult to 'lump' these individuals into targeted equity sub-groups such as CALD, women, youth and unemployed because there are always exceptions to the norm. This challenges ACE to move beyond 'target groups' and 'group-based adult learning practice' to develop an experiential and ecological (humanist and interactionist) approach to planning and facilitating ACE programs of diverse types for diverse individuals and communities (Osborne, Sankey & Wilson 2007, Kearns 2006, Fenwick 2000). The challenge is also for ACE providers to develop individual, flexible, responsive, experiential learning programs and processes which recognise the needs of all individuals and the commonalities of these needs within communities via a mix of educational programs, including classroom instruction, social and cultural activities, mentoring, community networking and workplace training (Kearns 2005).

This can only be achieved with ACE not only networking with other ACE providers but with other education and training providers, community service agencies and local governments to ascertain who needs what and how within a social and community development framework rather than a human capital one. A national ACE philosophy could create a shared meaning and purpose to ACE that makes it distinct from other post-compulsory education and with funding frameworks that link funds to individual needs rather than target groups.

This would re-orientate ACE providers and practitioners to listen to and 'see' those individual and groups experiencing cultural and social inequity, those who are still currently missing out on basic access to a range of personal, social and vocational education programs. ACE practitioners also need professional development around managing diversity in a range of community contexts and how to design, develop and facilitate experiential learning programs that honour curriculum frameworks and yet also acknowledge individual adult education motivations and needs.

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Negotiating learning through stories: mature women, VET and narrative inquiry

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This paper explains my choice of narrative inquiry as a methodological approach in my recently completed PhD study. My research investigated learning experiences of mature women learners in VET. Notions of learning as negotiated lived experience called for a methodological approach that privileged the learner's perspective and opened space in which alternative notions of learning might emerge. From interviews with twelve mature women, I explain how I use stories of learning to understand how these women, as learners with distinct yet diverse life experiences, contextualise their everyday into their VET learning. Some ethical considerations in using other people's stories in narrative research are also identified. I argue for the use of stories to research women's understandings of their VET learning and to reconceptualise learning as an ongoing and integrated process that must be understood within the everyday contexts of women's lives.

Introduction

In Australia, many mature women are participating in vocational education and training (VET), and in some age categories women's participation surpasses men's (NCVER 2007). Yet critics of the Australian VET system (Butler & Ferrier 2006) claim that the representation of women in general has lessened, and women have become less visible in research publications and policy documents. While women's issues remain, they are no longer talked about: *women* as a distinct yet complex category are now drawn into the generic mix of VET learners.

If mature women are subsumed into such generic representations along with other groups, how do researchers then understand diverse experiences of learning in VET? When the discourse assumes a similarity of experience with men how do mature women make their experiences known? What happens to women's everyday contexts of life when these are not recognised and so cannot be expressed in VET discourse?

In my recently completed PhD research I investigated these experiences. I wanted to know how mature women understood their learning, what values they placed on their experience, and specifically how they negotiated that learning within the contexts of their everyday lives. In this paper I discuss my methodological approach and how this shaped the perspective from which I gathered and analysed my data. I explain how, through the use of narrative and stories, the diversity of mature women's experiences in VET can be made visible, and understood.

The research context

Educational researchers have long understood the usefulness of narrative as a tool in qualitative research (Carter 1993, Clandinin & Connelly 1998, Newman 1999, Phillion 2002). Narrative inquiry

is used in many adult education settings, yet there is a notable exception: current research in VET in Australia has taken an instrumental turn, focusing on statistical and gender-neutral representations of its learners. A recent document explains:

> [T]he main client group of VET … comprises individuals across all post-compulsory schooling ages, and ranges from early school leavers to older persons re-engaging with the workforce. (NCVER 2006: 5)

While *clients, individuals* and *persons* are considered according to age, ability, ethnicity, previous qualifications, areas of study and destinations, these categories elide the significant differences that gendered living presents for – and amongst – women and men. In fact, Butler and Ferrier (2000) claim that, within much Australian VET research literature, women have become increasingly silent and unseen. VET's 'master script' (Bloom 1998: 67) tells stories *about* women and co-opts them into a framework that simultaneously renders them invisible, making it difficult to find a location from which to begin exploring women's learning.

A 'relational ontology' (Mauthner & Doucet 1998) that has informed a great deal of feminist educational research has been used to argue the need for an alternative approach to educational provision (Hart 1992, Thompson 1997). My study advances this concept of women as relational learners, and learning as a contextualised process. It is through connections and relationships that women build a sense of achievement, self-esteem and success. In addition, learning is more than exposure to facts and ideas and the generation of knowledge that occurs – equally relevant are the processes that are engaged in doing so, and the value that women attach to those processes and to the meanings they make from the experience.

Describing learning experiences

Learning occurs throughout life, and *in relation to* other life events and activities (Luke 1996, OECD 2007). Whilst formal learning – such

as in VET – requires some degree of separation from other activities while the learner attends class and studies for assignments, I believe that these activities are best understood as part of a contextualised 'everyday'. For many women, commitments such as caring for children or aged parents may still need to be considered; previous negative experiences of education impact on how a woman anticipates her engagement with formal learning; she may be recovering from ill-health or abuse, or lack confidence in herself as a knowing woman. These considerations will impact on a woman's engagement with learning, but are unlikely to be taken into account as she makes her way into the VET system; and they are not factored into current VET research on learners.

Learning does not take place in isolation, but is a negotiated experience. Borrowing (badly) from John Lennon, I suggest that *learning is what happens while you're busy doing other things*. Learning is experienced as part of a complex interplay of other events, memories, feelings and actions. As such, it can best be understood when it is communicated by those who experience the experience. Based on this premise, I considered three factors to be important in this investigation into learning: the main sources of information were to be the learners; stories would be used as data; and learning was understood within the context of everyday life.

Focusing on the learner

The work of researching learning and learners is, naturally enough, usually undertaken by academics, who, as educational researchers, take an educator's perspective into their research. But does this perspective offer accurate information on how learning is experienced *by the learner*? The process of learning engages both educator and student, but the meanings that they attribute to that learning – its purpose, values and their understandings of it – may be very different indeed.

Contributions from feminist educators who have shaped educational provision for women (hooks 1994, Tisdell 1998) have tended to focus on the development of suitable curricula, the learning environment or on their own role as facilitator rather than on what the learners' perspectives might be. Flannery and Hayes (2000: 7), lamenting the absence of studies of women learners in adult education literature, describe the aims for their own study about women and learning:

> We each wanted to look for our own learning stories and those of our relatives and friends, sisters and mothers, grandmothers and nieces. Where were they? Could we find them reflected in the literature we might be able to identify?

What Flannery and Hayes identify is a lack of knowledge pertaining to women's learning as a broad spectrum of experiences in diverse settings, and from the perspectives of the learners. Women's learning, they claim, is not fully addressed under the rubric of adult learning, since the influence and effects of gender relations in society is significant in shaping 'women's and men's experiences in different ways, giving them the opportunity to acquire different sorts of knowledge and abilities' (Flannery & Hayes 2000: 4).

Within feminist scholarship, there have in fact been some notable attempts to understand women's perspectives on learning (in addition to Flannery & Hayes 2000, see also Edwards 1993, Parr 1998, Jackson 2004 – women in higher education; Fenwick 2002, Bierema 2001 – women and work; and Knights 2000 – women in adult education). What these studies reveal is that how women learners think about learning does not always concur with commonly held notions of expectations and aims of learning.

To understand mature women learners' perspectives on the process and experience of learning, I chose to begin from 'ordinary lived experience' (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007: 42), taking as my starting point women's stories. What did they say about learning? What were the contexts in which they related their learning stories, and what

were the values and meanings they gave to them? How did they weave their VET learning into the multiplicity of stories within which experiences are made, felt and performed? I wanted to understand their stories, set within the contexts in which they lived them. To do this, I chose narrative inquiry, which 'begins and ends … in the storied lives of the people involved' (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007: 42). While people 'lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives' (Connelly & Clandinin 1990: 2), I use both *narrative* and *story* to define specific facets of my research: *narrative* describes the inquiry and *stories* refer to the related experiences of participants.

Stories told

Narrative inquiry is useful to study experiences of the less visible members of any group in society. For this reason, feminist researchers (Bloom 1998, Barr 1999, Mohanty 2003) encourage the use of stories as a means of providing opportunities for women to relate experiences imbued with their own meanings and values. According to Mohanty (2003), women's own words in 'testimonials, life stories and oral histories are a significant mode of remembering and recording experience' (p.77) and of bringing that experience back into the realm of accepted knowledge of everyday life. Stories give women a space to talk, and to present the everyday from their own perspectives. This, according to Clandinin and Rosiek (2007: 50), makes narrative inquiry an appropriate choice:

> For the narrative inquirer, a person's experience must be listened to on its own terms first, without the presumption of deficit or flaw, and critique needs to be motivated by the problematic elements within that experience.

As is the case across the social sciences, education (and VET perhaps particularly so) is still largely informed by 'the androcentric assumptions … that men's lives and activities are more important than those of women and/or constitute the norm from which women's lives and activities deviate' (Chase 2005: 654). My intention therefore

was to identify how each woman made sense of and contextualised her own experiences in VET, but neither as a response or reaction to, nor as a deviation from, that 'norm'.

Stories are also the starting point in narrative research (Connelly & Clandinin 1990, Chase 2005). By placing women's stories as the point from which to begin the analysis, I hoped to open up possibilities for considering, differently, experiences of VET learning. Because stories offer a way of presenting the experience in context, and from the speaker's perspective, I was able to explore aspects of the experience of learning that moved beyond the assumptions of learning as an action with a beginning (participation), a completion and an outcome, as VET research tends to be categorised.

Contexts negotiated

Stories of learning have also been shown to offer valuable insights into the complexity of layers that construct each individual's learning experience. As Clandinin and Connelly (1998) explain, 'individual stories are shaped by living in a narrative landscape with its own network of stories'. What such stories represent, therefore, is experience as a transactional process (Clandinin & Connelly 1998, Clandinin & Rosiek 2007). Experience is not 'the truth', but the representation of a relationship between an individual and her environment. Mature women already have years of life experience behind them when they contemplate enrolling in VET. Experience is built upon experience through partnerships, marriage, family, death, previous education, employment, voluntary work and many other activities. These richly complex contexts of daily life need to be considered when attempting to research women's experiences:

> Describing the way people go about making sense of their experience within these contexts, and contributing to that ongoing sensemaking, is the purpose of narrative inquiry. (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007: 45)

Having found a method of inquiry that addressed my three considerations of learner-centredness, stories and context, I collected stories of learning from unstructured interviews with my twelve participants.

What are stories of learning? Cassie's story

My next step was to identify *stories* from the transcripts. Riessman (2003: 334–335) asks: 'how does an investigator discern … segments for analysis?', adding that selection is in itself an interpretive action. I identified passages that were to my mind responses to my questions and prompts. The final selection was made according to the context in which the woman placed her reply, not on the chronological correctness and adherence to my presumed focus of the question. In the following example, Cassie[1] responds to my question: 'what were your expectations when you enrolled in VET?':

> I felt as though I was just learning so much about, um, yeah, not everything of course, but about lots of things. You know, our history… you know, which really um, ah, our assignment was great because the questions that we needed to ask, I, I asked my mum, so that was a really lovely thing, then I got to find out more about my mother, and her history, and her family's history, and um, yeah, I just became hooked. So I don't, I honestly don't think that I had expectations, except for to fulfil myself, and then I think it was probably leading up to, must have been the second year that I'd been doing just one subject at a time each time, very gently taking it. And then that was when I decided: OK, I'd like to do the Certificate, and do the core subjects. I think except for *Returning to Study*, all the subjects I did were electives. So I did masses of electives that you don't have to do, but that was wonderful. And, and I think that the cost was a huge factor for me, because I wasn't working, and, uh, to be able to do something for, I think it was, you know, might have been $15 a term or something like that, these, this was really fantastic, yeah. (Cassie. Interview 1, p. 5)

1 Not her real name

In this piece of text, Cassie relates a number of stories woven into each other: finding out about her mother, the financial considerations of studying, and her own decision-making around her learning. She emphasises how these experiences *felt*, too. She recalls that being able to study by choice was 'wonderful', and interviewing her mother was 'a really lovely thing'. There is a suggestion of learning as fulfilment and even addiction, although very little about her expectations. What she expected from her learning was evidently less important – or less memorable perhaps – than how she felt about it, and how she connected it to other aspects of her life.

If Cassie's text is understood as layers of stories, all important to the concept of her learning, then it can be understood how an experience such as learning is not a separate action but is dependent on and informed by many other events, memories and experiences. Learning is a contextualised experience, developed in negotiation with other parts of people's lives.

Discussion

This research, and the lens through which it investigates learning, may offer a way of understanding why women have not been well served by VET in the past, and why their lack of voice assumes an absence of ongoing concerns. Researching women's learning experiences through narrative inquiry lets women speak, and speak in their own words, rather than through a master script (Bloom 1998) that limits their expression to already defined meanings. Such a perspective allows for the differently contextualised experiences of mature women learners to become part of the negotiations of entering a learning environment. Expectations, aims and outcomes can then be seen as contextualised in their meanings.

Researching through stories also offers possibilities for a broader approach to understanding the purpose of learning, that is, not as a textbook procedure, but as an evolving, changing process. Narrative

inquiry is eminently suited to exploring learning in this way, since that changeability is part of the inquiry process. I am drawn to narrative inquiry *because* it addresses the indefinite – it is a different way of conceptualising inquiry, and, in the case of my study, of understanding learning:

> [T]he fact that the inquiry is altering the phenomena under study is not regarded as a methodological problem to be overcome. It is the purpose of the research. (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007: 45)

The narrative researcher faces some necessary considerations when using stories as data. Decisions are made – by the researcher – about which stories matter, and which contexts should be favoured over others. As with any research, the researcher makes subjective choices (Wolf 1996), and mine were undoubtedly influenced to some extent by my own experience as a mature age learner and my own 'take' on the women's stories.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain the complexity of the process of collecting and analysing stories, in which the story is interpreted and re-interpreted simply by being heard, considered, documented, read and re-read. It is 'a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds' (p. 4). Indeed, stories are a shared experience, involving the narrative inquirer in recalling their own memories, which are then re-interpreted as well as informing the interpretation of other people's stories. During my research, I remembered many experiences of my VET learning: some were prompted by similar stories told by the participants, and others were very different, and were very much my own learning experiences.

The stories of the women in my study are therefore presented through the lens of my own understanding of the issues and concerns of which they talk, and my perception of the values they attribute to these. Chase (2005: 657) describes the process thus:

> As narrators, then, researchers develop meaning out of, and some sense of order in, the material they studied; they develop their own voice(s) as they construct other's voices and realities; they narrate results in ways that are both enabled and constrained by the social resources and circumstances embedded in their disciplines, cultures and historical moments.

Narrative researchers must, however, be careful not to commit 'academic violence' (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007: 60) resulting from good intentions, such as the desire to contribute to a generalised knowledge base. Clandinin and Rosiek explain how this can result in people's stories being 'ripped' from their context and used to create 'common themes and universal narrative structures' (p. 61). The data become fixed, but dislocated from their context.

Narrative inquiry cannot be context-free – its aim and purpose is not to generalise and universalise but to illustrate the uncertainty and changeability of experience. The stories are bound up in the tellers' (changing) lives, and if severed from their source they lose their meaning (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007). Since stories create meaning in the telling (Clandinin & Connelly 2000), a study using narrative inquiry must be understood as representative rather than truth. Narrative inquiry recognises the nature of experience – any experience – as an event constantly undergoing change. Learning is just such an experience.

Conclusion

Within the context of VET research in Australia, there is a need to attend more to the voices of mature women learners, who bring into their VET learning rich and diverse, yet often unacknowledged, life experiences. If VET learning is researched as an instrumental process, and findings presented as numbers or generic categories, findings cannot represent equitably the range of what learners think about learning. In addition, much of the richness of the learning experience

remains hidden. Using stories of experience to investigate learning, researchers can gain insights that are not possible using methods that preclude individual experience as a starting point.

Learning is a contextualised and relational experience, and as such requires a research methodology that takes as its purpose the unsettled and complex nature of the phenomena being studied (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007). I have addressed these considerations in my doctoral research, using narrative inquiry and focusing on the learners, their stories and the contexts in which they are experienced.

Within such a research framework, possibilities exist for dialogue between mature women and the VET system. The voices of mature women learners can provide insights into a broader notion of what learning means, and how their everyday lives are integral to the process. As well as enriching practitioners' understanding of their students and informing education and training provision, such storied approaches to research can make VET more relevant to all learners – not only the increasing number of mature women who participate in Australian VET.

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"Out of the Circle": international students and the use of university counselling services

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In this paper, we attempt to gain a greater understanding of the adjustment experiences of international students from Mainland China in their first year at university. Three themes emerge from our data: lack of confidence in speaking English; the preference for using family, partners and close friends as their support networks to deal with problems; and the lack of knowledge of university counselling services. The participants did not view the university counselling services as a support service they would use to assist them with their personal difficulties.

Introduction

University counselling services, like most university support services, constantly review how they can deliver a more efficient service to their clients. In the last ten years, increased numbers of international students have been a significant feature of tertiary education institutions. Understanding the adjustment experiences of international students in a tertiary environment will allow university counselling services to develop policies and practices that better meet the needs of this cohort. The focus of this paper is to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of international students during their first year at university and their views regarding the use of the university counselling service as a support service during that time.

Increased challenges for international students

International students as a cohort experience greater changes during the initial transitional period than domestic students (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen & Van Horn 2002, Leong & Chou 1996, Suen 1998, Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001). They are required to deal with the differences between their own cultural values, norms and customs and those of their hosts. They experience problems with verbal and non-verbal communication, dealing with interpersonal relationships, as well as learning to deal with the issue of becoming an adult away from their families and communities (Hechanova-Alampay *et al.* 2002). Cultural differences related to the educational environment, as well as language issues, will be discussed in more depth later in this introduction. However, Hechanova-Alampay *et al.* (2002) and Bailey and Dua (1999) argue that collectively, these challenges, together with generally having a more limited social resource structure and network, lead to a higher level of stress for these students. Brein and David (1971, cited in Bailey & Dua 1999) found that the period of greatest stress relating to the adjustment of

dealing with a new cultural environment occurred within the first six months of the student's stay in a new country.

The first year of university, for most students, has a number of difficulties and challenges. International students, as a sub-group of the first year student population, are universally required to deal with additional challenges during their transition phase. Universities in Australia are becoming more reliant on the income from international students to remain viable, which makes it imperative that these students' experiences are better understood, and that every opportunity is made to assist them to have a positive experience during their time at university. The experiences in the first few months for a new international student, dealing with a new educational environment and settling in a new country, could be characterised by interactions that are filled with misunderstandings due to the complexities of the differences between cultures. These experiences are likely to have resulted in some distress and frustration being experienced and possibly self-doubt about having made the correct decision to study in another country.

Methodology

We utilised in-depth interviews to collect information from participants. In-depth interviewing is one method that is frequently used by qualitative researchers to gather data about the experiences of a research participant from his or her perspective (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005). It allows a fuller, contextual picture to be gathered of an individual's experience (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005) than can be gained by using quantitative methods such as questionnaires. It opens up the possibility of gaining insight into the feelings and thoughts of the participants (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander 1995).

The use of qualitative methodology has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary research as it provides rich, informative and complex data that give insights into the experiences of others

(Babour 2007, Denzin & Lincoln 2005, Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005). Qualitative research is interested in the uniqueness of the interpretive process that occurs for an individual around a particular experience. It is our interest in the experiences of a specific cohort of students that make a qualitative methodology suitable for this study.

Eight participants were interviewed for this study. From this group, only seven interviews could be used, as one interview could not be transcribed due to poor sound quality. The following information refers to these seven participants. All participants are students of one of the major universities in Melbourne, Australia. Three males and four females participated. They ranged in age from 20 to 28 years old. One female did not disclose her year of birth, even after two attempts to elicit this information, although she provided a birth date and month.

Three participants had completed their undergraduate degrees in China, one had completed a diploma in Singapore and one had completed secondary schooling in New Zealand. The remaining two had completed their secondary schooling in China. Of the three participants who had already completed a degree, one was enrolled in another undergraduate degree, in a different field to his first degree, one was enrolled in a postgraduate course related to his degree and the third was enrolled in a master's program. Only two of the participants were completing their first year of tertiary study when interviewed. Of the remaining two participants, one had just completed her second year and the other was in her last year of study. Four of the participants had been living in Australia under eighteen months, two had been living in Australia between two and four years, and the other participant had been in the country for over four years.

All the interviews were conducted within the grounds of the students' home university. Participants were assured that their identity would remain confidential and that anonymity would be maintained by the use of pseudonyms and by the collated form of the data.

In the analysis, the initial data were broken down into open codes. The main aim of coding was to generate alternative meanings to the data. This process is identified as the pivotal link between the data and the theory (Charmaz 2006). In the coding processes, initial categories and sub categories were identified and noted. Whilst this was occurring, comparisons were made with new data, between categories and with existing theories. From this process, the identification of a major direction of the study emerged which allowed a more focused analytical processing of the data to occur. Re-coding occurred and the data were re-examined with a more focused viewpoint.

Verbatim examples are used to illustrate the main aspects of the themes and participants are identified by their pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.

Results

Three major themes emerged from the narratives of the research participants.

Difficulties in speaking English

For international students interviewed from Mainland China, English was not their first language and one of the main reasons for a number of the participants to choose to study in Australia was to develop their English language skill. Even though the participants had previous lessons in English, their experiences of Australian spoken English were different from what they had expected. Their experience of communicating in English in a new educational environment was difficult:

> English is most hard point for me … sometimes my tutors, my lecturer, I can't understand what they said (Bo).

Bo spoke about the difficulty he had listening to English being spoken and then elaborated on his difficulty with individual words:

> When I got some new words, I don't understand what they mean, I don't know the Chinese meaning. I can't find this word even using the dictionary. I don't know the precisely the words and what the meaning is.

Difficulties with the language also affected participants' interactions with local students. Not having a common background or culture made it difficult for participants to place interactions in the correct context. This was reflected by a number of participants. Bo said:

> I think the main problem is language because I can't speak fluently so they [local students] don't wait. They are not wanting to make friends to me, I think.

Cheng, who had already completed a biomedical degree in China, was confident to engage with local students about topics related to his subjects but found it difficult when the conversation changed to a social focus:

> I seldom talk with the local students so my experience just a little bit I discuss with them about the contents of (my) course. I can handle it, but after the class maybe we have casual chats, so I always keep silence.

Mei expressed anger at being seen to be inferior to local students due to her lack of spoken English skills. Her negative experiences led her to be hesitant about trying to make friends with local students:

> I don't want to make friends with them because I feel my country is modern than here, Fashion is modern than here. Don't look down me right, but you're just English better than me.

Language difficulties with local students appeared to be common, but participants' experiences with local people in the community in general tended to be different and more positive. Mei elaborated her belief about why local people may be friendlier:

> They are more understanding (of) international students.

Cheng, recalling his interactions with people on the street, supported Mei's view about how helpful they were:

> … and the people here are quite polite and they're quite pleasant to help other people. That's what I often see in the streets or somewhere.

Unfortunately, not all interactions were positive. Mei also spoke about an incident where she felt the response by a real estate agent was rude.

An outcome of negative interactions with local students is that international students are more likely to seek interactions with others who have similar values, language and cultural history (Ward *et al.*, 2001). Relationships are formed with other international students who have shared experiences and similar cultural backgrounds. Gaining friends who have similar experiences and backgrounds made interactions more comfortable and participants felt they were able to articulate what they wanted to say more easily:

> I choose Malaysia, Indonesia, Chinese or Japanese international students, not local people. They face same situation. They will more understand what you think (Mei).

Apart from the benefit of having their social needs met, interactions with other international students also increased the participants' academic resources, which participants did not find in their interaction with local students. Mei spoke about the willingness of other international students to share information on assessment tasks:

> They [other international students] will help you to find some information or maybe help you studying, lecture notes, textbook, everything. It's more comfortable I feel, more than local people.

This academic network was important for participants, as they tended not to use academic lecturers as a resource.

The lack of confidence in their English was a major problem in their studies. Bo spoke about the extra amount of time he spent to compensate for his language weakness:

> I have to spend more time in home to read the lecture notes and to tell the answers.

Daiyu spoke about the number of times she had to read to gain an understanding of what was required for her assignments:

> You know, I couldn't understand or when I read once and I need to read a second time, third time and then I can understand.

Mei told how her lack of English required her to spend more time with her studies:

> I need to use dictionary many, many times because I don't know … I told you my English is not very good so I need to translate using dictionary. More time consuming, yeah.

To assist her with her grammar in her essays, she used the language centre. This required her to submit a draft to them in time for it to be corrected prior to the due date. This process required further time. Mei was required to submit her draft sometimes prior to the lecturer completing lectures related to the assessment task. For Mei, this was frustrating:

> In fact, we haven't enough time to do our essay, but, you know, I need to do our essay earlier and then submit to the English department and then submit to our subject lecturer.

When participants did seek assistance from their teaching staff, they were more likely to seek support from tutors. They thought that lecturers would be too busy. When participants interacted with academic staff, the preferred way was through the use of the electronic medium. By using this method, participants gave themselves more time to formulate their questions and answers in English. Cheng said that this was partly due to his higher confidence in his written skills than his speaking skills. By using the written word, he was more confident in the correctness of what he was trying

to communicate. Cheng believed that this was an outcome of his prior education:

> [Chinese students have a] lack of opportunity to speak and listen … so the written skills and the reading is better than their speaking skills and listening.

Daiyu highlighted a key feature of developing confidence in speaking a new language. She said it was important to develop a positive attitude towards change as speaking in a new language will change who you are.

> Not only something about practice, want to embrace something (language) if you want to really know something.

The essential element of this theme was that confidence in the participants' spoken English language was critical for their persistence in communicating in English. Increasing interactions allowed a greater understanding of the culture and norms of the new environment, but more importantly, for developing opportunities where they believed they were being understood. As counselling is primarily a talk therapy, having difficulty speaking English may have been a major factor that inhibited them from using the university counselling service.

Using family and close friends for support

In the more traditional Chinese family, the family is generally the main support for the child (Lee 1996, Soo-Hoo 1999). Prior studies showed that family and friends are the main support for international students (Mori 2000, Robbins & Tanck 1995, Rosenthal, Russell & Thomson 2006, Suen 1998). In a number of one-child families in China, the parents' sole focus has been on the child:

> When I was in China, my mother and father did a lot of things for me, so I did not have to worry about a lot of things (Bo).

The parents usually became the primary source of support for the student. With the use of low cost telephone cards, ease of connections to emails and with Internet web-cams, participants negated the

problem of distance when they wished to communicate with their parents:

> [I] communicate with the family in the telephone so I make a call every week. I talk for several hours of something with my parents so I overcome it [feeling homesick] in a few weeks (Cheng).

Parents provided financial as well as emotional and practical support for their child. But not all the participants felt that their parents understood their situation here in Australia, or provided the emotional support that they required. Mei felt that her parents did not understand the difficulties she faced studying in Australia:

> Maybe I tell them I'm very unhappy, I'm very boring and they said oh you prepared, you expect it like that. You don't say unhappy you say you come to here. Oh, I hurt. I don't know what to say.

Bo articulated the financial pressure he feels with respect to the amount of money his parents spend on his study:

> If I was to fail, I have to pay another, like a thousand Australian dollars, I think it is very expensive to me and my parents because I am an overseas student.

Later in the interview, Bo spoke about the sense of obligation he felt towards them due to the financial debt:

> I feel shame when I use my parents' money and I cannot be like other Australian students… My parents pay a lot of money to send me to Australia and to give me a good opportunity to study in Australia, so I have to reward them, I think. Pay back money or helping with them when they get old. To stay with them in effect.

At times, parents made decisions involving the child without the child's input into the decision. Wei was in this situation. She was sent to New Zealand for the final year of her secondary schooling and she found it very difficult to adjust to her new educational and cultural environment. Another participant, who was in her mid-twenties,

spoke about the strong influence her family has on her here in Australia:

> In China, you do everything according to your parents, … always have to talk to parents (Jia).

Interestingly, even though most participants contacted their parents to speak with them about their difficulties, for two of the male participants there was a strong belief in having to be self-reliant. Both Cheng and Bo articulated this view differently:

> For Chinese students, they always solve their problems or something themselves (Cheng).

> I'm diligent … though if others can do it, I can do it also (Bo).

It appears that the key element of this theme was the strong level of connectedness that participants had with their families. There was a sense of the strong commitment parents made towards the development of their children's educational future. There was a strong acceptance that parents would be involved in the participant's life in Australia and they usually became the main source of support in the everyday life of the participant. For these students, the ease of access to their families may have lessened their need to speak to others, such as counsellors, who are outside of their primary support network.

Views towards using the university counselling services to assist during difficult periods

None of the participants indicated that had used the University's counselling service during their first or subsequent years of their study. One of the participants did not know of the existence of the university counselling service, even though she was completing the second year of her degree:

> Until now, I don't know [about the university having a counselling service] (Mei).

Wei was aware that the university offered a counselling service but did not know the location or how to access appointments:

> I didn't know exactly [where the counselling service is located on campus], but I know every institution has one.

Daiyu articulated the common view held by the participants who were aware that the university had a counselling service:

> I don't think a lot of Chinese people use it [counselling service].

Huan spoke about his confusion and uncertainty with counselling:

> Before I go to counsellor, I decide to go to counsellor, what is counsellor? What will happen if I go use a – what will happen?

Participants held a belief that university counsellors would not understand their cultural background and would not be able to help them. Bo spoke about his belief that a lack of the cultural history by counsellors would limit their ability to assist him:

> I think they can't help me. I think they cannot solve it… They [counselling service staff] don't know me.

Cheng identified counsellors as people who were outside the circle of support people in his network:

> Because these people [parents, friends, teachers] are a family with them [Chinese students], for ourselves a psychological counsellor is a stranger.

Huan further defined Cheng's view about the importance of a participant's group. He made a clear distinction between being a friend of his, but not being part of his group:

> … think Chinese divide their relationship into very simple way, my friend! not my friend; my group! not my group; very strong bond (Huan).

> You're a friend, but not my group (Huan)

Huan tried to articulate the importance of being in the group, and made an important distinction between someone who was a friend and someone who was considered in the group:

> This group is special meaning… group first and I find there will be source from the group, from the group.

Daiyu articulated the crux of the importance of being part of the group:

> In China, students belong to circle, belong to people's relationship.

The essential element of this theme is that university counsellors are not within the primary group or circle of people that participants view as part of their support. Unless counsellors are able to be part of the circle of individuals who have a relationship with the participants, international students are unlikely to seek counselling support during periods of difficulties.

Discussion

Literature has suggested that the first year of university for the majority of students is a time when they face a number of challenges and deal with change. For many international students, they face additional challenges as a result of having to deal with the complexities of living in a different country. The three key themes identified in this study relate to the participants' difficulties in their spoken English language, continued utilisation of traditional support networks and a lack of knowledge of the university counselling service, leading to the conclusion that participants did not view it as a support service they would use for personal difficulties.

Confidence in speaking English

The participants' level of spoken English was an important theme that influenced every major academic and social interaction. The participants' perception of their ability to communicate effectively with local students was very dependent on their ability to speak English. This is supported by Henderson and others (1993, cited in Ward *et al.* 2001) in their research study on Asian students in the USA. They found that the absence of adequate language skills, which was apparent in 97% of their sample, was the most serious and frequently identified difficulty. Kono (1999), Li and Kaye (1998) and Mori (2000), through their studies, also support the finding that language competency is a significant issue for international students.

The perceived greater opportunity to develop English language skills was an influencing factor for participants to choose Australia as the country to further their studies. All of them, in the initial stage of study, had a strong desire to make friends with local students, but this appeared to be an expectation that did not eventuate. Unfortunately, this unmet expectation is also found in studies conducted in North America which showed international students are keen to experience more interaction with local students (Arthur 2004). Ward *et al.* (2001) argue that the occurrence of interactions is largely dependent on the cultural distance between the host culture and the culture of the international student, with the greater the distance the lower the frequency of interaction. Pedersen and colleagues (1996) argue that the greater the cultural distance, the greater the adjustment demands placed on the international student. Using Hofstede's dimensions (1980) to gauge cultural distance, Mainland Chinese students and Australian students are almost at opposite ends of the dimensions. Therefore, the participants in this study are faced with the double hurdle of having a low frequency of interactions and higher adjustment demands in their quest to develop positive relationships with host students.

For students from Mainland China who are developing their English language proficiency, one likely outcome of these experiences would be a changed view of themselves. They may initially have a self-view that they are competent students, reinforced by strong academic grades. If their grades in Australia are lower than expected, Arthur (2004) and Ward and colleagues (2001) argue that a student's view of self may change negatively. If this changed view was unexpected or resulted in confusion in the individual, the individual may find it very difficult to try to explain their situation and emotions using English.

From a language point of view, one of the possible reasons for the low number of these students presenting to a counselling service is that they may have difficulty trying to articulate adequately the emotional state they are experiencing when they do not have the English words to describe their internal world. Sue and Sue (1990) argue that university support services are limited for students who do not possess the language skills or confidence in the host language. This difficulty of developing competency in English is also found in other groups in the Australian community. In her recent study, Liamputtong (2006a) found that developing adequate English language skills was a major difficulty for the study's participants. For them, English language was essential, as it gave them access to information and resources in the community (Liamputtong 2006a). Similarly, for this study's participants, confidence in their spoken English is required to allow them to be comfortable to access and use the counselling service.

For students who can overcome this language problem, increased positive interaction with local students results in an increased identification with the host culture (Tseng & Newton 2002) but, as one of the participants noted, lack of practice in speaking English eroded her confidence in maintaining contact with her local friends. Ward *et al.* (2001) cite a number of studies that show the increase in interaction has a positive flow-on effect on academic studies, social interactions, language competency and general adaptation of international students. For international students, obtaining competency in English was essential to understand what was happening around them, but more importantly, gave participants the sense that others understood them.

Support networks

Participants in this study predominantly spoke with their family as their main source of support. Cost, time difference or geographical location did not appear to be an issue for the students. Oliver, Reed,

Katz and Haugh (1999) also found in their study that living in a separate country from their immediate family did not preclude them as a source of support.

One of the main advantages of speaking with family for the participants was that language no longer became an issue. For the participants, this allowed a greater amount of discussion to occur and a number of strategies could be developed to deal with the difficulties. Another advantage of speaking with their families was that they helped to reinforce the high value of education for the student. In Asian cultures, education is seen to bring an increase in opportunities in economic, social and moral areas (Stevenson & Lee 1996). For international students raised in a collective society, speaking with their families and having families involved in decision making may be more comfortable to them than seeking out a counsellor (Snider 2003, Sue & Sue 1990).

Consistent with the study of Oliver *et al.* (1999) was one of the participant's views of the importance of a romantic partner with whom to talk. The single participant in this study who advocated having a boyfriend or girlfriend as a support person felt that her parents were not able to understand her difficulties in studying in Australia. This participant felt her boyfriend, who was an international student, was able to provide better support, as he had similar experiences to her. A similar belief was held by a number of the other participants in that other international students who had similar experiences would be more understanding of the difficulties faced by them.

Use of university counselling services

General information about the university counselling service is available through a number of different media, such as pamphlets, websites, orientation talks and handbooks, yet participants in this study still appeared to lack basic general knowledge about the service.

In the recently published study by Rosenthal *et al.* (2006), they found that 65.5% of their sample population of international students did not know where to go for counselling assistance.

Prior studies have shown that international students from Asia are generally infrequent users of a university counselling service (Hechanova-Alampay *et al.* 2002, Pedersen *et al.* 2002) and, in this study, none of the participants reported having used the university counselling service. The view of this study's participants was that counsellors would not understand the cultural context of the individual and so would not be able to help with the problem. This view is supported by the results of Rosenthal *et al.*, where 46.9% of that study's sample indicated that counsellors would not understand them and 47.6% thought that counsellors would not be able to help them.

Liamputtong (2006b) argues that concepts do not always exist between cultures and languages, and if the counsellor has a different contextual understanding of the words used by the international student, then misunderstandings are likely to occur. This may be one of the main factors for the participants' belief that counsellors would not understand the cultural context of their issue (Suen 1998).

The participants' negative view that counselling services are for individuals with a mental illness, with the associated social stigma that holds, is consistent with a number of others studies conducted by Kinoshita and Bowman (1998), Mori (2000), Sue and Sundberg (1996) and Suen (1998). It is not inconceivable that students do not see the counselling service as a resource centre for developing personal coping skills. In Mori's (2000) study, he found that the social stigma of being seen to use a counselling service was especially prevalent for Chinese students.

Individuals of Asian cultures who have used counselling services tend to be more comfortable with a solution-focused and task-

orientated counselling service (Hart 2002, Lee 1996, Soo-Hoo 1999). Asian students who require the support of university counselling services tend to require academic procedure support, such as special consideration. For these students, counsellors hold specific expertise that family or friends are unable to provide. Rosenthal, Russell and Thomson (2006) found that international students who had positive prior experience of the counselling service are the main source of encouragement for other students to seek assistance from the counselling service.

In their study, Oliver and colleagues (1999) explored the variable of language, differentiating between English as a first or second language for the participant. They found that language was not a significant factor for their participants to seek assistance from any potential help source. In this study, however, the lack of Mandarin-speaking counsellors is seen as a deterrent for Mainland Chinese students to attend the university counselling services. It is unclear from the study by Oliver *et al.* (1999) whether the potential help sources included people who spoke the international students' first language or only those who spoke the host language.

The participants' use of family as their primary source of support during difficult periods is consistent with other findings that showed international students prefer more informal sources of support (Robbins & Tanck 1995) and have help-seeking behaviour different from native-born students (Oliver *et al.* 1999).

Implications for counselling services

The development of a group-based program, where the university counselling service is presented to international students as a resource or skill development centre to assist them with their academic progress, could be used to start to change the way the counselling service is seen by international students from Asia. The group program could consist of a number of sessions held in

consecutive weeks. For the first few sessions, facilitation of the group would be co-run with staff from another service such as finance, housing, language support and careers. The remaining sessions would be used to further develop the group and to include any aspect of adjustment that the group would find valuable. Eventually, the aim would be to have international students and counsellors facilitate the groups.

We know from the study of Rosenthal, Russell and Thomson (2006) that international students who have had positive experiences of counselling influence other international students to seek counselling support. To strengthen this informal network, one counsellor's role could be developed to become community-development focused, working more with international associations and groups. This may provide a human face and name for the university counselling service that would be recognised by international students.

Conclusion

In this study, we have shown how international students from Mainland China expressed their views and experiences of their life in Australia. For these students, counsellors are seen to be outside the circle of people that they would use for support to assist with personal difficulties during their time at university. We identify some of the factors that may influence international Asian students' reluctance to use university counselling services. One of the factors was participants' misconception that clients of the counselling service have a mental illness. Another factor was the participants' lack of knowledge of the university counselling service.

Participants' willingness to interact with university counsellors may be stifled by their lack of English vocabulary to express their emotions and thoughts. Having to converse in a second language continues to play a major role in participants' interactions with others. Participants did not see geographic distance as a problem, and

the family continues to provide the main support for participants. Friends were also used to provide both social and academic support and it appears that counsellors are primarily used for their expertise in academic procedures and not to assist with personal difficulties.

It is anticipated that the outcome of this study will be used to further develop programs and policies that will assist international students to more easily access university counselling services during period of personal difficulties. Although this study was carried out with international students from mainland China, we contend that our results may be applicable also to other international students who study in Australia. As such, our findings can be used as a basic understanding for further investigation on the experiences of international students in Australia and elsewhere.

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A competency approach to developing leaders – is this approach effective?

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This paper examines the underlying assumptions that competency-based frameworks are based upon in relation to leadership development. It examines the impetus for this framework becoming the prevailing theoretical base for developing leaders and tracks the historical path to this phenomenon. Research suggests that a competency-based framework may not be the most appropriate tool in leadership development across many organisations, despite the existence of these tools in those organisations, and reasons for this are offered. Varying approaches to developing effective leaders are considered and it is suggested that leading is complex as it requires both competencies and qualities in order for a person to be an effective leader. It is argued that behaviourally-based competencies only cater to a specific part of the equation when they relate to leadership development.

Introduction

A great deal of attention has been given to leadership development, and it has emerged as a profitable industry in its own right over the last decade. Universities and corporations in Australia have played an enthusiastic part in the onslaught of leadership training and development initiatives in which a competency-based approach to leadership development has become the dominant approach. This paper questions the effectiveness of a competency framework for developing leaders in a work-related environment and considers the reasons why it may not be appropriate as the prevailing theoretical base for developing leaders.

The paper draws on data collected from interviews conducted with senior leaders from a number of corporations. I will outline what they regarded as the essential elements of effective leadership and compare these with the offerings of a competency-based approach and consider the compatibility between them. It is suggested that competencies as a framework and system were developed as more a political and social response to a perceived need that Australians required upskilling. Further, although competencies may be suitable for some types of skill development, the competency framework system from whence it derived is not easily migrated to cater to the complexities of leadership and its development. Developing leaders is a complex issue and a competency-based matrix may be fundamentally too narrow to prepare someone in such complexities.

For the purposes of this paper, 'leadership' is defined as being distinctly different from 'management'. Day (2001) suggests that a management role refers to processes and activities that need a person to manage them, whereas a leadership role is more about a person leading in scenarios whereby there are no prescribed situations or outcomes. He suggests that the leader must work in unforeseen circumstances and, in order to do this effectively, the person must have considerable skills, attributes and knowledge. The role of the

leader is about engaging others to work within a context that has no predetermined outcome, and therefore both Hollenbeck, McCall and Silzer (2006) and Day (2001) caution that due to the complexity of leadership and the outcomes that are sought, we must not confuse a leader with a person who 'manages' a set and given task.

A competency-based framework reviewed

Hodge (2007) reminds us that competencies incorporate 'skills, knowledge and behaviours'. However, literature on management and leadership has extolled for some time that leadership competencies and qualities are two distinct but critical elements of effective leadership and that, in a development sense, both these aspects need to be taken into consideration (Donovan & Jackson 1991).

There are numerous sources regarding competency systems and frameworks that address the political and economic drivers underpinning the introduction of such systems (e.g. Hawke 2000, Hodge 2007). It has been suggested that competency-based systems have led to a shift in the way training is conducted and that they have led to a more corporate based training focus; however, it is argued that the critical paths that led us to the competencies of today has had both a political and social impetus that stems from the USA over two decades ago. Gonczi (2000) questions the effectiveness of such a framework, and examines what has occurred in other countries in his attempt to evaluate it. He examines the complexities of adult education and suggests that there are many factors that determine if a worker is competent which are outside the somewhat prescriptive nature of a competency system.

In 1995 the Karpin Report was tabled in Parliament, claiming there was a shortage of leadership skills and effective leaders emerging in Australia. The Report detailed a number of recommendations regarding the need for managers and leaders to be developed in Australia and many of the recommendations left the responsibility

of addressing them to corporations. This set a political agenda in motion in the push towards the development of leaders. The Karpin Report on the pending leadership crisis sent reverberations through the corporations, and interventions started to be undertaken to address this critical issue. Training was placed on a national agenda and corporations were forced to rise to development initiatives, with training organisations being established which were corporate, union and government sponsored. Today we see, both in the USA and Australia, that the majority of companies have adopted a competency-based framework for the development of leaders, and research undertaken has confirmed that this is the prevailing platform (Effron, Greenslade & Salob 2005, Corporate Leadership Council 2003, Richards 2008).

The limitation of developing leaders via a competency-based approach

Competency-based leadership development has clearly emerged as a dominant framework, with research in the USA showing that over 85% of companies in that country utilised a competency framework for leadership development (Effron, Grenslade & Salob 2005). However, it has also been suggested in other studies in the USA that having a competency-based framework for leadership development has had limited impact on growing effective leaders (Corporate Leadership Council 2003). In this research, it was discovered that other approaches to leadership development may be shown to be more effective, and the research outlined what they considered were the critical aspects to leadership development ahead of leadership competencies.

It could be argued that leadership is greater than the mix of skills, knowledge and behaviours which competencies were first defined as, and that the essential missing ingredient is 'qualities' (Bernthal & Wellins 2006) for which, I would argue, a competency-based

approach is not entirely able to cater. Writers on management development often separate these two aspects of leadership, and I believe this is due to the fact that leadership is a far more complex set of abilities that extend beyond the technical competence to 'manage' something.

Necessary leadership traits such as integrity and intellectual capability are very difficult to develop and locate within a competency matrix. Research undertaken by the author in Australia also suggests this. Sixty two managers from a large financial institution were interviewed about their own progression to leadership appointment and the way they make appointments themselves. All the leaders interviewed spoke about qualities rather than competencies as the decision points for these leaders when making senior leadership appointment (Richards 2008).

A further study of twelve leaders, drawn from companies listed on the Australian stock exchange, smaller private companies and large public-sector corporations, was also undertaken by the author. The chief executive officers had management responsibility for corporations ranging in size from a workforce of over 4,000 employees to a workforce of about 120 employees. All of them were extremely well remunerated, and a majority of them were male, university-educated and in the 45 to 60 year age bracket. A convenience sampling approach was utilised for this study, and interviews were conducted in 2006 and 2007 across Victoria and New South Wales as part of a pilot study on leadership succession. All twelve spoke at length about what they looked for when appointing a senior leader.

Each interviewee was given a copy of the questions in advance and was offered full anonymity. Questions included:

- What factors did they look for in a person when appointing them to a leadership role?
- How did they assess such factors?

- How did they utilise and value the services of Human Resources in these processes?

One managing director talked about Maslow's Hierarchy of Need as the basis he uses when talking about good leaders and also when recruiting and evaluating if a person would make a suitable leader for his organisation. He spoke at length about how he would evaluate if a person was nearing a state of 'self-actualization' or if they were less secure as a personality and were more focused on survival or self-gratification. The questions that this managing director would ask people in an interview were structured so that he felt he could gain insight into a person's positioning in regard to his interpretation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Need. Another interviewee talked about trust and intelligence being the key characteristics he used when he evaluated leadership potential. These characteristics for effective leadership from the perspective of the interviewees do not appear readily compatible with a competency-based approach to leadership.

It is also notable that in this pilot study, although all senior leaders felt that Human Resources systems had a role to play in an organisation, they did not feel that the leadership development and assessment processes commonly adopted by their Human Resources departments provided valid tools or methods when it related to leadership. One reason for this may be that there are perceived inadequacies which constrain the opportunity to engage with the less tangible, non-technical components of leadership; the result being that ostensibly these leaders made up their own system and criteria. This research is not exhaustive, however, and needs to be further developed to understand more fully the requisite role of Human Resources in leadership preparation.

From this study, for senior leaders outside of Human Resources, competencies are not taken seriously when considering leadership effectiveness, particularly in the context of identification of leadership potential and as criteria for leadership development. In this context,

it is interesting to note that a recent study in the USA found that, although 85% of companies had a competency-based framework for leadership development, less than half of these companies actually used this framework for senior leadership appointment (Effron, Greenslade & Salob 2005).

Other factors to consider when developing leaders

The need for skills to be gained on the job, Lombardo (2000) claims, is critical. It is about mastering a job, not just being competent at it. A number of writers (Cornford 1997, Gonzci 2000) are concerned that there exists too narrow a definition of 'competent', provided by a competency system which emphasises minimal standards of skill acquisition rather than the mastery required by the truly effective leader. Learning to engage people, design a strategy, share that strategy with others and motivate people, are not such straightforward skills for a leader to master easily; there is timing and wisdom gained, which enables this to be achieved and developed (Kellerman 2004).

The Corporate Leadership Council (2003) suggests two major factors for successful leadership development, based on leaders in the business acting as role models, and senior executive commitment to leadership development as a distinguishing factor. The Council (2003) suggests that, if these two factors are not present in a corporation, there is far less probability that effective leaders will emerge in that business, despite the presence of competency systems. Although one could conclude that having leadership competencies in place can assist leadership development, effective role modeling and rewarding desired management behaviours that matter are more beneficial. This leads to the question of what other elements may be needed in order to assess and design leadership education.

McCall (1998) suggests that self-awareness and feedback are important elements in leadership development and that, during the

evaluation and development of leaders, it is critical to gain data from numerous people about how the particular leader is able to lead. This reduces the likelihood of the assessor or educator being manipulated into believing a person is more advanced in leadership skills than they actually are (Hare 2003).

It has been suggested that learning new behaviours is harder for people than learning a new job or technical knowledge (Goleman 2002). Goleman suggests that a person may be high on ability to learn a new job but very low on ability to learn new or more effective behaviours. This clearly differentiates between a competency-based approach to leadership development which sees behaviour as related in a simple linear fashion to skill and knowledge, and other approaches to leadership development which conceive of behaviour as mediated by personality in addition to the other components characteristic of the competency-based approach.

Lombardo (1998) suggests that some leaders are able to perform in a superior way and that these abilities are superior in first time conditions. We know that this success is also indicative of a person's cognitive ability, which, it has been suggested, is an ability a person is born with (Kelner 1991).

This consideration of competencies and qualities prompts the often asked question: 'Are leaders born or made?' According to Goleman (2002), leadership is learnable; Lombardo (1998) would agree with this, as would McClelland (1985) to a degree. Donovan and Jackson (1991) argue that certain aspects of leadership can be taught, but that it is not from a blank starting point. There must be a propensity for leading, and qualities in which to embed enhanced skill, for example, more effective ways of communicating and planning. The view that there needs to be an aptitude for learning and a personality make-up that is conducive to effective and ethical leadership is also supported by research conducted by Hare (2003) and Morse (2004) which suggests that over 25% of chief executives and leaders in the

USA have qualities that lack integrity. Hare's view is that leaders who are charismatic may also be insincere and manipulative, and that often the people with whom they are dealing are not aware of being manipulated. He states that other qualities such as insensitivity, blaming, impatience, unfocused and parasitic behaviours are all important deficiencies to identify when looking for and assessing a potential leader. These attributes may go unnoticed in a narrow competency assessment and a person may be deemed as competent when in fact they would be a poor leader due to the lack of certain desirable qualities. Hare is referring to traits and qualities that are more complex than basic skills, knowledge and behaviour. When examining a company's 'development offering', the Corporate Leadership Council (2003) suggested that educational frameworks rather than psychological diagnostics are the fundamental key to developing leaders. The Council suggested that there does appear to be merit in a competency framework but, if used to the exclusion of all other approaches, such a system may leave a company short on effective leaders. That is, competencies may be a part of the equation for leadership development although certainly not the whole picture.

A key educational challenge – are leaders born or made?

If a key factor in leadership effectiveness is the culmination of more than just skills, then the other 'qualities' that make effective leaders need to be identified in order to understand if these qualities can be developed or not. One interesting perspective comes from an examination of leadership motives. McClelland (1985) has argued that the motives for leaders are not linked to values, and that these cannot be changed. His research suggests that people are either born with their motive (a doubtful proposition) or that it is developed and cemented at a very early age. He suggests that these motives are critical to leadership capability and success, however because they are established at an early age, they are generally thought to be highly resistant to change.

The three prime motivators outlined in his research are the achievement motive, the influence motive and the affiliate motive (McClelland 1985), and each is manifested in a different type of leader. McClelland's research showed that two-thirds of all effective leaders have the influence or high achievement 'driver', however his research does show that an individual's motive must be consistent with the motive of the organisation in order for that person to be a successful leader.

As pointed out earlier in this paper, a person is born with, or develops early, certain key characteristics, such as cognitive ability, motivators and traits. If these are critical in effective leaders, then as adult educators we must ask: can we develop such characteristics if they do not exist or, alternatively, assist in their enhancement once identified as being present in the person we are wishing to develop. If so, where does a competency framework fit in?

Other research in Australia from Richards (2008) also suggests that competencies were not used in leadership appointments in a large Australian institution, despite there being in place a sophisticated competency based framework for leadership development. The phenomenon that this research uncovered for the organisation was the importance of mentors, at the time of a leadership position becoming available,these being more essential to leadership success and sustainability for a leadership post than formal development. Crucially, personality characteristics or qualities, and the fact that these were congruent with the existing leadership's perceived qualities, were valued more highly by mentors than more narrowly assessed competencies. Research in other parts of the world also support such findings (Cranshaw 2006, Corporate Leadership Council 2003, Effron, Greenslade, Salob 2005).

Conclusion – a multi-tiered approach to leadership development?

Leadership development cannot simply be concerned with meeting a standard as prescribed by a competency-based system. Adult educators need to focus on developing leaders' skills and abilities to work within a particular organisation effectively, with that person having the qualities appropriate to that organisation and strategy (Bernthal & Wellins 2005, Effron, Greenslade, Salob 2005). The 'influencing leader' who is able to engage people may come in many guises and the opportunity exists for human resource practitioners and education professionals alike to consider each individual on merit. Adult educators play a key role in showing how educational interventions can help an individual become a better leader, however they are limited by the characteristics of the individual with whom they are dealing and the environment within which that individual operates.

We do not know what the leader of the future looks like nor what the organisation of the future looks like (Florida 2002). The workplace is changing rapidly and so is our society – politically, socially and economically. These factors all mean that leadership is becoming more important than ever. However, they also suggest that the elusiveness of the effective leader appears to be more prevalent, although we would suggest that increasingly, people are looking for 'ethical' leadership by people with the requisite qualities to provide this type of leadership rather than a set of narrowly prescriptive skills and practices coming off a poor character / personality / qualities base. Adult educators need not to stay safe behind a matrix of competency standards and frameworks in the pursuit of a systemised approach to their profession; rather, they should question at each turn the outputs of their work, and how best they can adapt a theoretical base to suit the needs of individuals and organisations.

In this paper I have looked at the general concept of competencies and the framework within which they operate. I have briefly reviewed

research which concludes that a set of competencies across all disciplines is still under review for its effectiveness. I have argued that competency-based systems have migrated over time to include leadership development and I have questioned the validity of this migration.

If organisations want to develop people to be more effective leaders, they not only need a competency-based framework which includes a rigorous educational framework, but also must consider the type of person with whom they are dealing, and design specific interventions that are relevant for that individual in the context of their field of leadership practice.

Developing an individual's traits and abilities may not be entirely possible, and it appears it will not come as a by-product of leadership competencies. I believe we need, with the consent of the individual, an understanding of whole personalities and must design programs appropriate from that knowledge base.

We need to understand what motivates an individual and with this knowledge, combined with their skill set, design a robust educational curriculum for that individual. The goal should be to ensure that individuals coming out of an education process actually meet the outcomes that are required for a particular role, which is what every adult educator seeks.

Leadership development is complex, as is the role of being a leader. In this paper, only certain approaches have been addressed, rather than a comprehensive examination of all methods of leadership development. More research is needed on leadership development on a more empirical basis so that we can understand the suite of tools that may be used in order to address this most critical issue of leadership development.

This new approach may well include a number of theoretical bases coming together –psychological, educational, sociological and anthropological – as a suite of interventions that, when put together, will provide a higher quality of development initiatives for leaders. This may include competencies, but only as a component of a more comprehensive approach. Only with a multi-tiered approach, which is methodologically consistent, will there be any really sustainable leadership development that can bear the scrutiny of robust research in this field.

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The emergence of continuing education in China

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This article reports on continuing education in China. It discusses the emergence of the field in the 1980s, the Chinese characteristics of continuing education, recent developments, and limitations. Continuing education became available in China in the 1980s following a change in government policy and economic reform. It caters mainly for training specialist technicians, although the field has recently diversified to include programs for government officials, leaders of public services, teachers and the general public. Continuing education is increasing in popularity due to the developing economy that demands a skilled workforce. However, several problems and challenges limit the field's development, including inaccessibility (particularly for the general public), out-dated curricula and teaching methods, and limited legislation.

These issues need to be addressed if continuing education in China is to develop further, be of high quality and meet the needs of society.

Introduction

Continuing education as a field emerged relatively recently in China. However, the country has had a long tradition of adult education, grounded in the teachings of ancient Chinese philosophers. Confucianism (traditional Chinese philosophy) emphasises education beyond other values, and the early Chinese state established a feudal imperial exam system to teach and select government officials (Zhang 1995). Education has been highly valued in China since classical times and it continues to play a prominent role in society – a high standard of education is associated with high social status and better opportunities in life.

Nowadays in China, education begins in kindergarten (ages 3–6), and continues through primary school (6–12), middle school (12–18) and then, for the privileged few, higher education. Some adults can also go on with their studies via continuing education, which became first available in China in the early 1980s. There is an important societal role to be played by continuing education in China. The majority of the population is currently not educated beyond middle school, and a large proportion leave education after primary school. Therefore, continuing education has a significant role to play in increasing people's knowledge and skills. It is also important to understand continuing education because of the large number of students (72.8 million in 2005). Since China is the fourth largest country in the world (home to 1.3 billion people), the demand for continuing education could be very high. The importance of continuing education is increasing as China undergoes development and modernisation; in order to meet the needs of the country's growing economy, there has been an increase in the number of students entering colleges and universities, and a concomitant increase in education provision (Table 1). More and more people are returning to education to update their knowledge and skills because the job market is very competitive; candidates with educational qualifications are favoured.

Despite the increasing importance of continuing education in China, limited information about it is available in the Western literature. To bridge this gap, this article reports on continuing education in China. It begins by summarising the Chinese characteristics of continuing education and its development, and discusses the problems and challenges that face the field. The information is then drawn together to discuss recommendations to develop continuing education in China further.

Continuing education with Chinese characteristics

Continuing education was introduced to China from the West in the 1980s. China's participation in the first World Conference on Continuing Engineering Education in Mexico in 1979 stimulated interest for establishing continuing education (Wu 2006). At that time, the country (and its economy) was opening up after decades of isolation from the rest of the world. A decade later, in 1988, the Ministry of Personnel in the Chinese government was assigned the task of developing a continuing education field. At that time, continuing education was defined as:

> education for specialist staff such as technical managers, engineering technicians, those in hospitals, and also some social science specialists. The content of continuing education is to supplement and renew people's knowledge, especially to introduce new technology, new theory and new methods. It also includes other kinds of basic education and specialist education (cited in Wu 2006).

The above Chinese interpretation of continuing education is similar to the Western concept because it focuses on the education of adults who have finished formal education and who are in employment. However, continuing education in China has some distinct characteristics as a result of the country's different social, historical and cultural background.

First, continuing education is almost exclusively for specialist technical staff who work in fields such as the scientific industry. Two major continuing education policies in China[1] define continuing education as education received by specialist technicians or managers who have received a college or university degree. It helps them to improve their knowledge and new skills in order to carry out their jobs, such as learning how to use new technology (Zhang 1998, Wu 2006). Continuing education in China, therefore, refers generally to vocational education available to graduates of universities or colleges; it is generally a type of postgraduate education that enables learners to up-date their knowledge to meet the requirements of their employment (Gu 1998).

The field recently diversified, however, to include training to non-technical staff – continuing education is now gaining popularity among governmental officials, leaders of public services and the Party, senior administrative personnel of enterprises, and teachers (Li 2005). In recent years, courses have become available to the general public. Even so, technical staff continue to be the main recipients of continuing education in China.

Another distinct feature of continuing education in China is its emphasis, as explicitly stated in government policy, on contributing to the country's development as well as the individual. The government, particularly state-owned enterprises, encourages employees to pursue

1 The policies are 'Decision of innovation and development of adult education' (1987) and 'Further comment on the innovation and development of adult education' (1992).

continuing education in order to meet the needs of the developing economy and society, as well as strengthening their individual capabilities and improving their creativity (Li 2005).

The development of continuing education in China

Continuing education emerged relatively recently in China, and its development can be divided into four stages: Stage I: from the beginning of the twentieth century to the late 1970s; Stage II: from the 1980s to the 1990s; Stage III: the 1990s; and Stage IV: the present situation. The main milestones, policies and regulations concerning the development of continuing education in China are discussed below and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Main milestones and policies in the development of continuing education in China

Date	Main milestones and policies
1979.4	China took part in the 1st World Conference on Continuing Engineering Education in Mexico. The concept of 'continuing education' was first introduced to China.
1980.8	The Chinese Association for Science and Technology passed the policy, *Comment on the specialized training for scientific technicians*, which regulated the objectives, content, resources, and organisation and leadership of continuing education courses.
1984.11	The Continuing Education Association of China was established.
1985	The continuing education college of Tsinghua University was established, the first in the country.
1986	The government's 7th Five-Year Plan emphasised that it is necessary to provide continuing education for scientific technicians.
1987	The policy, *About the decision of innovation and development of adult education*, pointed out that it is necessary to provide continuing education for university graduates.

1987.10	The policy, *The temporal regulation for the continuing education of company scientific technicians*, was published. It was the first administrative regulation for continuing education.
1987.12	The policy, *About the temporal regulation for the development of continuing education after university graduation*, pointed out more continuing education is needed after university graduation for specialist technicians and managers. Continuing education programs were extended to include all technicians and managers rather than only engineering technicians.
1988	The responsibility of continuing education for specialist technicians was assigned to the Department of Personnel.
1989	Local governments established regulations for continuing education (*The temporal regulation for national specialist technicians' continuing education*).
1991.12	The Ministry of Personnel published *The outline of 8th Five-Year Plan for national specialist technicians' continuing education*.
1993	The Party and State Department published *The outline of the innovation and development of Chinese education*. It was the first policy document that used the term 'continuing education', and considered continuing education as one of the four main constructs of the Chinese educational system.
1995	Lifelong education was legalised in China for the first time via *The educational law of the People's Republic of China*.
1995	The Ministry of Personnel published *The temporal regulation for national specialist technicians' continuing education*.
1999	The Ministry of Education published *The regulation for the continuing education for the elementary and middle school teacher*.
2000	The Party's 15th meeting passed *Suggestion to making the 15th Plan on the development of civil economy and society*, which emphasised completing the educational system and constructing the lifelong educational system gradually.
2002.5	The Party General Office and the State Department published *The outline of the Plan for constructing the National Talent People Troop from 2002–2005*. The document pointed out that it is necessary to develop adult education, and promote the socialisation of educational training.

2002	The Party's 16th meeting pointed out that it is necessary to form the national-learning and lifelong learning society and promote continuing education.
2004	Chairman Hu Jintao pointed out in the human resources meeting that there needs to be improvement in the continuing education system.

Information source: Li, X.L. (2005)

Stage I: from the beginning of the twentieth century to the late 1970s

In this period, there was no modern continuing education field in China, but there were some notable examples of adult education. For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, during the revolution against the feudalism and fight against the aggression of Western imperialism, educationalists such as Sun Yat-sen and Cai Yuanpei realised the importance of education for the common people, and provided schools to teach them how to read and write (Zhou 2005). Another famous example took place before and shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949[2], when political education was provided to the participants in the Civil War, and included teachings of the theories of Marxism, philosophy of Mao Zedong and the guidelines of the Communist Party.

Another important event was in 1950, when Remin University in Beijing held an evening school for Maxism (Zhou 2005). There were also some campaigns in the 1950s to reduce illiteracy. However, after 1949 adult education was scant, and consisted of elementary education because of the low education level of the people at that time. Further, all education in China was suspended between 1966–1977 due to the 10-year Cultural Revolution (a political movement when education was disrupted and universities were closed; Unger 1980).

2 The People's Republic of China was established in 1949 following victory by the Chinese Communist Party in the Chinese Civil War

Stage II: from the 1980s to the 1990s

Continuing education as a field emerged in the 1980s after economic and social reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping, the new leader of the country at that time. In April 1979, a Chinese representative joined the first World Conference on Continuing Engineering Education in Mexico, and the term 'continuing education' was introduced to China. The next important milestone was in 1980, when the Chinese Association for Science and Technology passed a policy entitled 'Comment on the specialised training for scientific technicians' which emphasised the need for continuing education of technicians. Next, in November 1984, the Continuing Education Association of China was founded and, in the following year, the country's first Continuing Education College (at Tsinghua University in Beijing) was created and approved by the then State Education Commission (now the Ministry of Education). Another important turning point was in 1988 when the responsibility of continuing education was assigned to a government department (Ministry of Personnel).

During the 1980s, continuing education was generally limited to engineering technicians, although it later became available for other types of technicians and technical managers. Continuing education policies were gradually set up in other cities, as local governments encouraged their universities and colleges to provide continuing education.

Stage III: the 1990s

The development of the continuing education field in the 1990s was characterised by further recognition by the government. In 1993, the Chinese government incorporated continuing education into the country's official education framework, and labelled it as one of the four main constructs of the education system (along with basic education, career education and higher education). In 1995,

in "The law of education of the People's Republic of China", lifelong education was legalised for the first time; it emphasised that specialist technicians should have the right and responsibility to receive continuing education during their careers (Wu 2006). The law also emphasised the need for continuing education in order to meet the needs of the developing economy and society (Li 2005). To aid this, the Ministry of Personnel issued regulations that prescribed the tasks, content, method, duration and organisation of the management and administration of continuing education. The subjects available via continuing education also diversified during the 1990s, and included education in the fields of engineering, technology, agriculture, literature, law, management and so on.

Stage IV: the present situation

Currently, the continuing education field is undergoing rapid development and growth. The main driving forces are recent education reform, which permits universities and colleges to set up continuing education programs, and the developing economy that is creating a demand for trained staff.

There have been changes in the government's attitude. The government now views continuing education as part the economy's development strategy, which has resulted in further support. In 2000, 2002 and 2003, continuing education was an important issue discussed in several of the country's top government meetings. In 2000, the government issued regulations that highlighted the need to create a lifelong learning education system, and to provide more resources to improve training and continuing education for different groups of people (Li 2005, Wu 2006). In September 2004, the Chairman of China, Hu Jintao, pointed out that the country needs to improve its continuing education system (Wu 2006). Since then, the government has viewed continuing education strategically, which has encouraged further development of the continuing education field.

Categories of continuing education

There are two main types of continuing education in China: 'diploma education' and 'non-diploma education' – also known as academic credential education or non-credential education (Shang & Zhang 2005, Li 2005, Yu 2005, Chen & Li 2005, Lin 2003). Diploma education usually refers to adult higher education for graduates, and emphasises the learning of new knowledge and theoretical issues, rather than vocational training, and learners often receive a diploma after completion of their courses (Shang & Zhang 2005). In contrast, non-diploma education pays less attention to theory, and is more practical in nature; it concerns learning skills that can be put into practice directly and immediately. It includes training about computers, business English, modern management and training for farmers (Shang & Zhang 2005, Zhou 2005, Chen & Li 2005). It is usually provided by vocational training organisations or colleges, and the content, duration and place of study are more flexible in accordance with the needs of students, the market and society (Wang & Sun 2005, Dong 2006, Yu 2005). Accredited diplomas are usually not awarded after course completion, although students may receive certificates of attendance.

Diploma and non-diploma continuing education also differ in their popularity. According to recent government statistics[3], most continuing education students are enrolled in non-diploma courses, and there are also more organisations and faculties in non-diploma education (Table 2). This is because, as previously mentioned, continuing education in China has traditionally focused on the training of highly skilled staff such as technicians. Another interesting difference shown in these official statistics is that a higher proportion of non-diploma students successfully complete their courses, although reasons for the difference have not yet been researched.

3 *The Public Report of the Statistics of the Development of National Education of China 1990–2005* (Table 2 and Table 3)

Table 2: Statistics for continuing education in China from 1990 to 2005 (unit: ten thousand)

	Diploma courses			Non-diploma courses			
Year	No. of graduates	No. of schools	No. of faculty	No. of graduates in Ordinary Higher Schools	No. of graduates in Adult Technology Training Organisations[b]	No. of Adult Technology Training Organisations	No. of Faculty in Adult Technology Training Organisations
1990	——	——	——	——	1545	——	——
1991	——	——	——	——	——	——	——
1992	51.77	1198	20.6	177.21	4958.51	28.41	——
1993	——	1183	——	156.72	5706.8	29.83	——
1994	45.53	1172	21	133.7	6625.38	34.48	37.94
1995	63.61	1156	21.34	157.64	7698.19	39.88	45.43
1996	——	1138	21.42	157.16	7698.19	44.28	42.57
1997	——	1107	21.46	239.99	8579.26	45.20	46.29
1998	——	962	20.39	279.5	8682.41	46.48	51.02
1999	88.82	871	20.01	255.28	10156.88	53.42	53.71
2000	88.04	772	18.7	252.12	9396.22	48.56	49.40
2001	93.06	686	17.38	257.69	9270.44	50.79	48.50
2002	117.50	607	16.81	427.39	8118.81	38.95	39.74
2003[a]	159.34	558	15.35	353.25	7242.08	23.06	45.72
2004	189.62	505	15.50	318.84	6957.34	27.71	51.45
2005	166.79	481	14.89	373.39	6743.87	19.86	52.62

[a] No students were recruited in 2004 due to the SARS, and therefore 2002's figure is listed

[b] Adult Technology Training Organisations provide training for workers and farmers

Note: Data for non-diploma education only include students from schools, and the workers and farmers who receive technology training. It does not take into consideration other kinds of adult education, such as adult self-learning qualifications and adult junior school and high school. Data source: Public Report of the Statistics of the Development of National Education of China, 1990–2006.

The problems and challenges that face continuing education in China

There are several problems and challenges that face the continuing education field in China. First, the percentage of people who receive continuing education is very low. There are more than 300 million technicians and managers in China but only about 10 million currently receive continuing education (Li 2005, Zhao 2003). This means that many technicians do not have the opportunity to update their skills. Further, the general public is largely excluded from continuing education, although some colleges offer courses.

Another problem is that continuing education, particularly non-diploma courses, is still looked down upon in China (Wen 2005, Xue 2004). Although school and higher education is highly valued, continuing education is considered amateurish and of less value (Wu 2006, Zhang & Zhang 2002). This is because it is considered less developed and lacks rigour (Zheng 2005, Yu 2005). Also, some colleges consider continuing education to be a way to make extra profit or to use redundant resources, and focus more on collecting the tuition fee than teaching quality (Lin 2003, He & Wang 2004). This view may discourage people from pursuing continuing education. There have also been complaints that the continuing education field does not respond to the market and competition, and that the quality of the students does not meet the requirements of the market (Wu 2006, Zhou 2005).

The quality of continuing education is not as developed as other education sectors (Wen 2005, Zhou 2005, Wu 2006). Teaching methods, curricula and equipment are outdated and not established adequately (Zhou 2005, Zhang & Zhang 2002, He & Wang 2004). Most of the continuing education curriculum is replicated from higher education – it is the same in content and teaching method (He 2002, Hao 2006, Wu 2006, Zhou 2005, Qiu 2006). This means that students in continuing education learn the same courses as higher education students, even though their needs and background

differ. Most continuing education still relies on traditional education methods, and lacks innovative teaching methods (Li 2005, Qiu 2006). An effective assessment system for ensuring teaching quality of continuing education teaching is still unresolved (He 2002, Zhou, 2005). Moreover, the salary of continuing education teachers is low (He 2002, Zhou 2005), which does not attract talented staff.

There is also a lack of legalisation and national coordination of continuing education (Li 2006, Ma & Zhao 2004, Dong 2006, Wen 2005, Lei 2004). There is no special national and local government organisation taking charge of continuing education (Fang & Yi 2006, Qiu 2006). There is also no long-term plan for developing the field (Li 2005). Although the government has officially recognised and emphasised the importance of continuing education, few formal laws or regulations have yet been proposed to support its development (Ma & Zhao 2004, Wu 2006). Furthermore, there is limited regulation of existing guidelines issued by the government. For example, although in 1995 the government issued regulations[4] that required all technicians in certain fields to complete a certain number of lessons of continuing education every year, their attendance is not checked because of the lack of management (Qiu 2006). All of these issues mean that there is legal ambiguity surrounding continuing education in China.

Finally, research about continuing education in China is limited (Ma & Zhao 2004). Most studies are discussions of the problem/challenges that face the field, yet little research is being done to solve them, such as increasing access, optimising the teaching process or enhancing teaching quality. Most studies lack a theoretical background, and there has been no empirical research published.

4 The Temporal Regulation for National Specialist Technicians' Continuing Education (1995)

Recommendations

Continuing education is developing quickly in China. The situation reviewed in this paper leads to the following recommendations to promote its development.

- Access to continuing education should be increased, especially for the general public. The majority of the Chinese population is currently excluded from continuing education.
- The level and quality of continuing education should be improved. Modern teaching methods should be introduced and used (Wen 2006, Zheng & Xu 2006, Pan & Wang 2006, Li 2005).
- An effective assessment system should be established to monitor the quality of continuing education (including the quality of teachers, materials and so on) (Pan & Wang 2006, Sun 2004).
- An official assessment system should be introduced for students, such as that used in high schools (Davey *et al*. in press).
- Continuing education colleges should investigate the needs and requirements of society to ensure that the curriculum is driven by society and market (Yang *et al*. 2005, He & Wang 2004, Zhang 1998, Wang 2003). This is particularly important because the economy and country are modernising at a fast pace, and the types of skills required in the job market are changing constantly.
- The government should provide clarity about the legalisation and management of continuing education, and issue a long-term development plan for the field (Sun 2004, Li 2006, Lu 2006, Wen 2006).

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Literacy teaching method and peace building in multi-ethnic communities of Nigeria

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The challenge of peace building in Nigeria is increasing as communities continue to show adversary tendencies. This is happening even after many third party conflict transformation efforts have been expended to resolve and set a conducive climate for stakeholders to sustain peace. Some peace building assessment projects have indicated that the peace building process is not fully realised, which justifies exploring the place of literacy education in peace building. Since illiteracy has been identified as one major factor which promotes conflict and violence in Nigeria's multi-ethnic communities, the importance of functional literacy is further stressed. In this paper, a review of some adult education teaching theories is undertaken, and a model for literacy functionality – a transformative teaching paradigm for peace building called 'cemento-conscio education' – is developed.

Introduction

The challenges of building peace in multi-ethnic countries have been given a prominent focus in academic writings, theorising and development practice. The more theories we have, the closer we seem to be moving to a formidable peace building strategy, but the more the world misses it in practice. The search for a formidable strategy and practice for building peace has provoked a multi-disciplinary input which incorporates education in the search for sustainable peace (peace education) as asserted by the United Nations, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In spite of this recognition that education could play a vital role in peace building, the role of adult education in the search for sustainable peace has been less emphasised by UNESCO, UNICEF and other planners of education, even though definitions of peace education recognise adults as one of the target groups for peace education. Formulated curriculum and plans for implementation of peace education always counted adults out, while focusing more on children and youths in formal school systems. Missing also are theories and concepts of adult education that will properly locate peace education in peace building efforts.

Adult education and development agents must begin to reason ways for the discipline to fortify peace building processes, and how it can serve as a catalyst to transform the minds, attitudes and behaviours of groups and other communities through informal and non-formal education. The focus on literacy education for peace building is important for third world nations, especially Africa, where a high illiteracy rate is prevalent. As part of our contribution, we review the meaning of literacy, models of literacy, theories for literacy and the relationship between literacy and peace building. In addition, we hope, through a careful presentation of premises, to develop a literacy-teaching paradigm for peace building, using the Nigerian

context where multi-ethnic violence and communal conflicts threaten its existence.

Nigeria's need for literacy and peace building

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation that accounts for 389 ethnic groups (Otite 2000) out of 5000 ethnic groups in 184 independent countries of the world (Kymlicka 1995). Like other nations, it has not been spared the peculiar problem of ethnicity. With at least over 50 different violent conflicts recorded between 1990 and 2000, Nigeria became a nation faced with possible disintegration. This situation justifies a need for vigorous peace building efforts by government and non-government organisations (NGOs) (IPCR 2003). The conflict transformation efforts adopted in Nigeria, according to research by Majaro-Majesty (2006), were carried out on three communal violent conflicts in three regions – the Ijaw/Ilaje, Itsekiri/Urhobo and the Tiv/Jukun armed conflicts. This research showed that the singular conflict transformation strategies adopted in these areas were not significant in instituting a peace building process, and that integration of all the strategies was only able to realise the demobilisation of militia and not to reintegrate and disarm militias. Demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of militias provide a short-term yardstick to measuring the peace building process.

The research indicated a need for intensified efforts to build the nation by first restoring peace in all warring communities and the stoppage of spill-over effects that violence has on other national matters as well as communities within the nation. Examples of these types of activities are the violence and extra-judicial killing of Igbo and Christians in Kano by Hausa-Fulani Muslims, resulted in the killing of Hausas in the eastern part of the nation. Nigeria not only has cohesion problems, it also has the problems of poverty, a high illiteracy rate and inequity in the distribution of educational infrastructure amongst its constituent ethnic groups. For example, the Situation and Policy Analysis (1993) document reports a lack

of access to adult education programs for many adults in as many as 46% of the communities sampled, while the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (FME 1999) data showed that there was no reduction of illiteracy level but a deterioration instead from the initial 57% to 49% and a disparity in the literacy rate between the southern and northern regions of Nigeria (55% and 60% for south-west and south-east respectively, while the north-east and north-west record 21–22% for female and 40–42% for male) (Federal Ministry of Education 2003). In the same vein, the Federal Government of Nigeria/UNICEF (Federal Government of Nigeria 2001) reports that for women the literacy rate declined from 44% to 41%.

The high prevalence of illiteracy has definite implications for the peace building efforts of any nation, and the high prevalence of illiteracy is linked to the ethnic violence among Nigeria's multi-ethnic communities. Just as education is needed for economic development, a civic response and political awareness, education is also not possible without the basic foundation provided by literacy education. The need for adult literacy is tied to the fact that most illiterates (85%) in Nigeria are within the ages of 15 and 35 years (Federal Ministry of Education 2003), and therefore outside the school population.

Even though education has been found not to be singularly a sufficient approach to realise either development or peace (Bush & Saltarelli 2000), it however depends on the type of education provided. Adult education as a problem-solving field could, through its various skill development programs, develop human capital and capacity for peace building. In this way, positive social attitudes can be developed that will produce the required communal solidarity and spirit for mutual development in communities, members and their ethnic community neighbours. This role by non-formal education is called 'functional literacy education', which entails the acquisition of literacy with a skill for a purpose. Its achievement depends on how the adult learners are engineered or organised to achieve these set goals.

Re-defining education for peace building

In general, peace and education have been identified as essential factors for the development of communities and for the building of the nation. Peace and education also affect each other. This is because for education to achieve its fullest potential in any society, peace is required; in the same way for national cohesion to be achieved, education is required. If education is properly engineered to solve social problems**,** its emphasis should be on realising peace. Educational activities aimed at peace building are commonly referred to as 'peace education'. UNICEF (1996) conceived it as:

> The process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an interpersonal, inter-group, national or international level (p.13).

UNICEF, however, argued that peace friendly attitudes and behaviours occur over time in all ages – the process is long-term, not short-term. In practice, however, UNICEF and UNESCO usually plan peace education for children and in schools while the media attends to the rest of society. These others include adults and out-of-school children and youths. Peace education needs to involve these groups.

In our view, peace education practice in formal school is not sufficient for community peace building for three reasons. First, peace education is conceived as knowledge to be handed down to a people within a universal context, forgetting that peculiarities exist amongst societies and communities. The contents and values of peace education are generalized, hoping to be suitable for all societies, and not taking account of the nature, root causes and dimensions of the ethnic conflict as well as the traditional values of the people.

Secondly, peace building's scope and practice in schools and in media campaigns have short-term value. For example, children hardly have experiential connection between the real-world and knowledge from the school- world. The substance of peace education is short-lived in them on leaving school, as they face real-life situations that supply the experiential basis to be able to judge what has been learnt and then to either accept or reject the peace education approach. The issues raised by peace campaign education from the media also in most cases are quickly forgotten or become monotonous and boring to listeners. They diminish in significance, becoming objects of mere creative entertainment rather than a practical message. In these cases, peace education is ultimately inconsequential for building and sustaining peace, because the structures and factors that produce ethnic conflicts are ever present and unresolved.

In Nigeria, for instance, where media campaigns have been used for transforming conflict, government has lacked the political and social will to mobilise against ethnic sentiments, indigenous and migrant rules, and the politics of seclusion often practised in all states of the federation. How could a child reconcile the contents of unity and peace in peace education with his/her father paying school fees for him/her in a state where school is declared free for the indigenous, or in cases where governments are reluctant to prosecute perpetrators of religious riots because victims are of other religious groups and non-indigenous? These disjunctures definitely will cause a shock and a rethink by such a child to accept to pursue an ethnic cause above communal or national peace and unity.

Thirdly, peace education in most of its conceptions does not recognise the political, economic and social needs of individuals, groups and nations; it assumes too much of its ability to derive non-violent behaviour. Meanwhile, education can only play one part in the peace building process while physical, political, economic and social initiatives play the rest. Again, the impact of peace education on

society is identified or evaluated without a clear functional role in providing economic life-lines (vocation) and political or democratic participation, while social inter-relationship is also hardly ever illustrated. Bush and Saltarelli (2000) opposed peace education by identifying the need to expand the scope of educational approaches in ways that allow for responses to both the manifestation of violence and its root causes. They called this new initiative 'peace building education'. They conceived that:

> Peace building education – like peace building itself – would be a bottom-up rather than top-down process driven by war-torn communities themselves, founded on their experiences and capacities. It would be firmly rooted in immediate realities, not in abstracted ideas or theories. It would be applied, immediate and relevant, which means that it cannot be restricted to the classroom (p.23).

Bush and Saltarelli insisted that, in the broadest sense of education – formal, informal and non-formal – content and teaching methods, art and sciences, child-centred and adult centred, must all be explored. As we adopt this premise, for an evolution of a more result-oriented strategy or model of education for peace building and its localisation, we add that any evolution of peace building education must not only bring knowledge about how to articulate, accommodate and accept differences between and within groups, but it must also draw groups closer and make real in practice to the adversaries involved in violence the benefit of mutuality in coexistence.

The theoretical relationship between education for behaviour change, political and economic participation, and psychological and emotional bonding that promotes coexistence between groups, must also be considered. We hold a strong view that any strategy for peace building education should be able to specify clearly the objective and destination of the peace building. In principle, we adopt the strategy that Majaro-Majesty (2006) called 'cementisation'. Cementisation is a process that caters for a sustainable peaceful coexistence, especially

in situations of communal conflict where either party cannot vacate land areas (Albert 2001) which both occupied either as early or late arrivals in the same land. Cementisation of two communities living in the same geographical location – for instance, Ife/Modakeke, Jukun/Tivs, Itsekiri/Urhobo/Ijaws and the Ilaje/Ijaws in Nigeria (to mention a few) – will entail introducing 'communalised' (that is, mutually or collectively shared) interests and the raising of a common enemy. This is achieved by involving parties to raise ideologies that will result in a co-building of the erstwhile divergent community.

Cementisation, to us, becomes the peace building process that maintains peace and generates a new society where violence becomes alien through the building of new attitudes and better understanding by developing capacities to communicate and channels of communication. Cementisation seeks to redefine the way that community and development are conceived, and conceptualised, by redefining it to recognise peace in all its socio-political re-constructions and policies (including norms and value systems). The need for peace is pivotal in any development plan by eliminating political, economic and social barriers that prevent people from having equal rights and accessing justice, as well as their human rights.

Redefining development therefore, in our view, is adopting the Majaro-Majesty (2001) definition as:

> A rehabilitative change, which emanates from community (ies) self-effort based on its needs, bringing a desirable standard of improvement for the benefit of themselves, immediate neighbours, children unborn and the world in general. Community, therefore, is redefined as a group or groups of people identifying a need to come together to satisfy divergent interests, creating a conducive, physical and psychological atmosphere to affect one another mutually under a common solidarity.

Community here is seen as a situation not already formed but forming and achievable through a conscious and deliberate effort. Development could then emerge as a result of a consciously formed community.

The next question is how then education can bring about this cementisation and peace. First, we hold that when the need for peace is identified and development factors such as politics and economy, equality and social justice are upheld, peace will emerge. Second, if two ethnic groups are helped to (a) identify the common enemy of their co-existence and development, (b) recognise the strength existing in diversity and in mutuality, and (c) acquire, through education, the skills and knowledge to tackle the human and inhuman problems that pose as development problems (the common enemy), which will in turn promote the need and desire for peace, then beneficiaries will emerge and culminate in peace.

For this to occur, education that is dynamic to supply political, economic, social, civic, vocational and health learning, both on a short-term and a long-term basis, is required to realise peace building. This kind of education must also meet the changing need**s** of the society; it must be capable of upgrading knowledge as new needs emerge. Adult education in our view is the kind of education that has such capability, capacity and credibility. Adapting adult education for peace building, therefore, will require the harnessing of educational resources (formal, non-formal and informal) and all stakeholders (government and non-government organizations) and the target people (groups and all ages). Again, in order to accommodate the presence and participation of the community in the success of this cementisation process, we propose an adult and community education model called the 'cemento-conscio education' model.

The premise for this model will be fully discussed after we have reviewed adult learning models below. However, cemento-conscio education is a model designed to associate adult education with

the cementisation goal of drawing divergent communities together and making them inseparable in ideology and mutual dependence. This literally means the education that cements people through consciousness raising and capacity provision. Here, literacy education is explored as one of the ways that could raise such consciousness and the provision of capacity needed to derive personal and communal needs.

Adult literacy teaching model

A person is literate when one utilises the acquired skills in reading, writing and numeracy in one's day-to-day living. This is substantiated by the consensus reached at a meeting of experts on literacy, convened by UNESCO in June 1962, that:

> A person is literate when he [*sic*] has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enables him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading and writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community development and for active participation in the life of his country. (UNESCO 1993)

The skill may vary from almost nothing to the equivalent of high school or university education, depending on the level to which reading, writing and computation generally play a part in community life. As mentioned above, functional literacy deals with selective and intensive education that is tailored towards a particular need. There are two aspects of functional literacy education (Bown & Okedara 1981). The first aspect is known as 'oriented functional literacy', which deals with the teaching of literacy with the content of the vocational knowledge and the acquired skills to the extent that the generative literacy knowledge and acquired skills enable learners to improve their working efficiency and increase their productivity. Here the technical language to be used and the vocational knowledge to be

included are turned to the selected occupation. The second aspect is known as 'socio-cultural functional literacy', which deals with the teaching of literacy in the context of socio-cultural matters such as family life, sanitation, nutrition, religion and civics.

Socio-cultural functional literacy provides social needs – addressing social matters. The two aspects of functional literacy education have to be integrated (literacy, vocational and social skills) in order to sustain fully the interest of the participants. Any form of literacy education has to be fitted into the larger plan. Following from adult basic education is the program of literacy education. Adult literacy education may be part of a wide system of remedial education designed to enable learners to make up for schooling previously missed, either those who never entered school at all or those who started and dropped out for some reason. Planning the learning program is one thing, while teaching adults is another challenge in itself (Nafukho, Amutabi & Otungu 2005).

Teaching adults requires utilisation of the process model rather than the content model (Delahaye 2002). While the content model is basically interested in what must be learnt, consideration of learners' interests and needs are often not an issue. The process model considers many factors, ranging from the identification of needs, determination of the objective and the means for implementation of the learning task and evaluation of the learning program, that is, to know if it has achieved the set objective. It must be accepted that adult literacy education requires a problem-solving approach. This is also indicated in its teaching methods and models. 'Andragogy' is the art and science of helping adults to learn; the emphasis here is on the word 'help'. Consequently, adult education programs are developed to provide methods for an adult to help himself or herself learn on their own rather than being taught.

Different models of adult learning have been developed to show how adults could be taught and how they learn. Regarding the first

category of models – how adults can be taught – Blakely (1981) claims that three approaches are generally used in adult learning programs. They are:

- The problem-solving, instructional games approach is a well known and popularly used method. Learners are confronted with a set of problems real or imagined which relate to the learner situation. The instructional device is to involve the learners in an analysis of the problem and the exploration of alternative solutions. This technique is particularly effective when the learners provide a real problem in which they all have some knowledge and ability to solve. The transactions among the learners are far more important in this situation than interaction between the learners and the instructor.
- The mutual inquiry method is utilised when the learner must acquire information or skills not in their possession. Here, the instructor develops a scheme with the learners to acquire certain information. The degree of structure in this process depends on the learning group. The group will develop greater skills in discovering data as well as confidence in sharing information with other participants as the process evolves.
- The information-sharing and dialogue process emphasises techniques for imparting data to adult learners in ways that allow learners to both reflect and react. This method is intended to provide a systematic form of direct information, given without violating the major premises of adult education theories. The instructor, an expert or authority, may provide avenues such as panel discussions, reaction panels, questionnaires and audience participation for the learners to interact with the data and the presenter.

The second category of models concerns how adults learn. These models are developed from Paulo Freire's conscientisation model (1970). They can be termed purposive learning strategies, which in

most cases are transformative as they deal with transformation of the mind and behaviours. Freire's model asserted that the only type of adult literacy education worth its name is the one that liberates individuals from all types of bondage – political, economic, social and cultural. Adult literacy thus becomes, in his words, 'a cultural action for freedom' (Freire 1972). In this action, individuals are aided to liberate themselves, discover themselves and to become themselves. In this model, the teacher acts as a mere catalyst, or facilitator of knowledge.

The method of teaching is not by instruction but by engagement in authentic dialogue in which the learner is the chief participant (Freire 1970). Its target is any group of people who are 'in any way oppressed in mind, body or estate' (Freire 1970). It is opposed to any method of teaching that seeks to 'feed' or 'fill' people with morsels of knowledge or that lulls them into what Freire called 'the culture of silence' (Akinpelu 1981). This is no doubt a philosophy of adult education that needs greater elaboration and systematisation because it may well prove to be what we really need against the inequality and injustices that pervade our political society. But it is not enough to use education as a weapon against these vices without thinking of peace. This is because any information could stir up conflict and violence in people who are made to understand the true reason for their disadvantaged situation (Majaro-Majesty 2006).

Freire's teaching methods are perhaps best summarised as below (Freire 1973):

- Participant observation of educators turning into the vocabulary universe of the people (participants)
- An arduous search for generative words at two levels, syllabic richness and a high chance of experimental involvement
- Codification of these words into visual images which stimulate people 'submerged' in the culture of silence to 'emerge' as conscious makers of their own 'culture'

- The de-codification by culture circle under the self-effecting stimulus of a coordinator who is no 'teacher' in the conventional sense, but who has become an educator and an educatee in dialogue with educatees as educator. This is unlike the formal system where the teacher assumes the role of a boss or a know-it-all; learners here take responsibility for their learning or, in other word, they are given the power to find solutions to their problems while the animator only facilitates the learning process.
- A creative new codification; this one is explicitly critical and aimed at action, wherein those who were formerly illiterate now begin to reject their role as mere objects in nature and social history and undertake to become 'subjects' of their own destiny.

Freire's central message is that one can know only to the extent that one 'problematises' the natural, cultural and historical reality in which an individual is immersed. The educator's role is to propose problems about codified existential situations in order to help the learners arrive at an increasingly critical view of their reality. Freire (1972) illustrated that the teaching and learning transaction is a dialogue, and the traditional teacher-learner relationship is transformed into a relationship of students-teacher. His learning model is emancipatory.

Emancipatory learning transforms learners' negative frames of reference or learning structures (Mezirow 1996). Also, Argyris' (1992) master program involves a double loop concept which allows learners to question underlying the value system. These determine the meaning or value learners attach to a particular object that requires them to react or put up a favourable or non-favourable response to it. These frames of reference are deep-seated, and underlie the values and beliefs guiding and dictating our behaviours and attitudes each day. Emancipatory learning therefore seeks to redress or transform our frame of reference. Its benefits will be that the individual is influenced not to act in a particular unfavourable way.

Endemic in transformative learning is emancipatory learning, which is to provide an avenue for individuals' critical reflection where they actively examine those assumptions or frames of reference to see if they still have a place in the individuals' current lives. Delahaye (2000: 87) suggests that:

> Hegemonic assumptions – those assumptions that seem to make our life easier but in fact work against our long-term best interest – are usually recognised as worthy of change … Debilitating inconsistencies between the assumptions of the individual and the obligation(s) … may demand the alteration of the individual's assumptions.

This means that individuals' wrongful thinking would be transformed to include their role. Thoughts and roles expected of the individuals should coincide to make a transformation process complete.

Violent conflict ideas and behaviours and their acceptance are examples that result from social frames of reference, which may arise from facts or experience that violence is the only way to resolving a problem, or perceived oppression or deprivation by an identified party or adversary. During learning sessions, learners are made to face values and facts that must negate this frame of reference. Especially in a typical adult education setting, adult learners may face perceived negative impressions about certain cultures and tribes, embedded through a paradynamic assumption, with both prescriptive assumptions and causal assumptions. These assumptions of good and bad are fundamental to our classification of our world by providing criteria for judging right and wrong, true and false, and appropriate and inappropriate (Delahaye 2000).

Any community with frequent violent conflicts is likely to survive if the people concerned begin to associate these assumptions with the needs of their new environmental development. Adult non-formal learning provides a lifelong opportunity for evaluating, validating and revalidating assumptions, and easy access to environmental education

needs to comply with the new environmental (socio-cultural and economic) challenges. In most conflict-torn communities, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural settings, transformative learning will be purposeful and require a continuing need for the up-dating of knowledge, through formal, non-formal and informal settings.

Selecting and adhering to any of these literacy teaching models is difficult because all are relevant in the complete teaching and learning process of an adult. Therefore, it can be said that no one theory on adult learning can adequately address the diverse needs, experiences and cultures that adults bring to the learning environment (Stroot *et al.* 1998). A combination of all these models and theories may provide a solution.

Cemento-conscio education as a model

In countries where literacy education has been integrated with conflict resolution and peace building, efforts are centred on the provision of knowledge, facilitation of basic needs and capacity to secure food resources, and life building and training exercises. In Sierra Leone (Church World Service 2006) where 87% of women and 69% of men are illiterates, integrating literacy, conflict resolution and peace building was central to the training. Both participants and the trainers generated four objectives for the training workshop: (1) knowledge and basic skills in facilitating coping mechanisms for traumatised persons, (2) the skills to facilitate the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills required by people in their personal, occupational and communal life, (3) working knowledge on the nature, types, structure and dynamics of conflict as well as skills for conflict transformation, and (4) definitions and strategies to map issues of peace building in communities (Bombande & Doe 2001). Church World Service, participating in partnership with provided literacy education and vocational skills for conflict-affected populations all around Africa, raised their capacity to secure food resources in order to rebuild their lives (CWS 2006).

This approach calls for a far-reaching strategy, aside from providing literacy to empower learners to acquire economic capacities for better living, social skills and psychological healing of trauma. It extends to making the case for benefits that are inherent in mutual living – mutual benefit in coexistence. This cemento–conscio education includes the content and process for achieving the cementisation objective – that is, cementing the diverse communities so that they become inseparable in ideology overtime, upon which their physical cohesion is dependent.

As adult education or non-formal education adopts the process model, cemento-conscio education makes efforts to incorporate learners in the identification of their needs, statement of the objectives, implementation of the learning program and evaluation of the learning process. The model includes the facilitator's role in the process of teaching – how the teacher must introduce the subject (as facilitator, not teacher, and at the same time, a learner and not a facilitator). The teacher's role fluctuates between being a facilitator and a learner. Also, unlike in the formal school system where the content of education is more important than the real needs of the community or nation, cemento-conscio education provides the content that is best suited to solve the economic, political and social problems that the society will face in peace building and, by extension, the cementisation process.

The cementisation process integrates conflict transformation strategies (resettlement, reconstruction and rehabilitation) and peace building strategies (demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration). It sees peace building as a task that must be planned from inception of conflict settlement or conflict resolution through to conflict transformation stages. It is a long-term strategy, but it takes short-term achievement of pacific efforts also as important. This is because any mistake in the short-term will jeopardise long-term achievements. The first phase resettlement of soldier/ethnic militia

must also lead to demobilisation of refugees/displaced people. In the second phase, what must be achieved is reconstruction of the society, which should also enhance the disarmament processes. Rehabilitation of soldiers and refugees should also lead to the reintegration of minds and the rebuilding of the social, political and economic structures of the community or nation in the third stage, which in itself must harbour evaluation of all other strategies to assess achievements.

The third phase of cementisation comprises the vision stage, where literacy education and other forms of adult education are identified as strategies to bring about a new structure and existence. Basically, two principles that cemento-conscio education follows are the 'recall stage' (first stage) and the 'vision stage' (Majaro-Majesty 2006). Although we do not intend here to discuss in detail the process, it is important to clarify the essence of these stages, as they are pivotal to the literacy paradigm for peace building that is being put forward. The recall stage suggests that for any conflict to be resolved, the history of the people should be undertaken and a careful identification of where a wrong decision was made that led to development of ethnic conflict between two coexisting communities. The recall stage is essential to the process of cemento-conscio education in that most root causes of conflicts are not known either by the adversaries themselves or by the peace workers (the third party mediators). Actions for settling and sustaining peace are often taken based on perceived causes. The vision stage is the forward directional movement, where the direction of the learning task must help the learners or participants in the conflict problem-solving workshop or the literacy program to see the future of coexistence – learners need to be helped personally to paint a picture of living with former adversaries.

Two other assumptions are made here in addition to the assumption that the root causes of the development of conflicts are often not known. First, adversaries do not know how to go about resolving their conflict problems to the standard that will benefit both parties

equally and mutually. Second, those who co-exist do not recognise the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats that impact on them. Therefore, the task is to help them realise these elements as they envision the future or dream about their future co-existing together. This would help them accept themselves not so much as threats/rivals/adversaries but more as co-dependants. It is at this stage that cementisation is useful, as every interest will be seen as mutual interest. How this conception is applied in literacy teaching becomes critical.

Literacy teaching method for cemento-conscio education

Developing adult literacy education to become the bedrock for achieving peace building among ethnic rival neighbours with high/low literacy rates is cogent, but how to realise this is often a problem. As highlighted above, enabling the literacy learner to learn from their existential situation, like Freire (1972) initiates, is ideal but must be achieved by helping them to rethink and interact with their past (recall), and helping them to identify root causes of their conflict – mistakes (for example, bad policies, segregation movements, ethnic goals and the like) that were made in the past and have led to violence and adversity. While this trace lasts, through dialogue, words are identified from the vocabularies of the learners that relate to peace, conflict and coexistence. These vocabularies are used to generate literacy tasks and consequent appreciation of literacy skills. In the same manner, the transformation of traumatised minds, attitudes and habits is taught and learnt.

As in the vision stage of the cemento-conscio education model, the learners are to be taken through activities that help them visualise living with their former adversaries. Learning activities involve dialogue to find out from participants what are the barriers they envisage in coexisting with their ethnic neighbours/former adversaries/ethnic enemies. The following activities are part of the

teacher's role in exploring how these barriers could be solved and also alternative non-violent means of achieving development, either personal or group. Figure 1 below shows the activities for this model.

The role of the facilitator in this model is very important. The facilitator should not assume the role of a 'teacher know it all' – as in the formal school system – as s/he has the liberty to add to the knowledge of learners by sharing with them information which they do not have but s/he has. These activities are to be done skilfully and with care so as not to reduce the learning process to a mere instructive situation, where the learners' real world can become trivialised within the myopic views and impressions of the teacher. The facilitator, even though s/he participates actively, must in this active period pose questions that will help the learners to further problematise, and ponder to derive an answer. If the facilitator succeeds in helping learners problematise, s/he would have helped the learners to remember those points, which they have either never taken cognisance of or have forgotten as being important. The facilitator's role therefore fluctuates between passive to active and from active to passive. These active periods are those times when s/he either informs or instructs the learners, and the passive periods are when s/he listen**s** to, takes notes and learns from the learners.

We do not think it is wise to stifle the facilitator's initiative, however our concept of passive and active periods are guidelines that the facilitator may uphold as s/he provides information/instruction and listens. S/he must provide the information and instruction not in a way that learners' interests and views are forgotten or neglected. In the same vein, the facilitator must not reduce herself/himself to a person who is inconsequential to the participants' learning endeavours. We believe that, if the facilitator's role is too passive, the learner will become de-motivated, as they lose confidence in the facilitator as one having inadequate knowledge. On the other hand, if the facilitator is too active, learners will become intimidated by the

Figure 1: Cemento–conscio education (Literacy model)

	Steps	Learning method	Content/task	Facilitator's role	Learner's role	Objective of steps
REVIEW STAGE						
	Step I	Dialogue	Identification of root causes of conflict (mistakes)	Passive-active	Active-passive	Allow learners to associate with their society / existential situation
	Step II	Assimilation / interaction with words (Instructive Learning Method)	Deeper understanding of words / manipulation of words; replacement of negative words	Active-passive	Passive-active	Demystifying words, motivating learners and inculcating literacy skills (reading and writing)
	Step III	Dialogue	Visualising peaceful coexistence / future painting / identification of barriers in co-existence	Passive-active	Active-passive	Generating new words, identification of para-dynamic assumptions / frames of reference of learners
	Step IV	Assimilation / interaction with new words (Instructive Learning)	Deeper understanding of words / manipulation of words; replacement of negative words	Active-passive	Passive-active	Demystifying words, motivating learners and inculcating literacy skills (reading and writing); associating learners with their personal weakness in peaceful living
	Step V	Dialogue	Identification; common mutual enemy in development and survivals	Passive-active	Active-passive	Transformation of para-dynamic and frame of reference for a positive co-existent attitude
VISION STAGE	Step VI	Dialogue / instructive / informative	Identification of alternative non-violent actions	Active-passive	Passive-active	Replacing knowledge of violence; gaining frame of reference
	Step VII	Dialogue / instructive / informative	Identification / introduction of political / social / judicial structures available for alternative non-violence	Active-passive	Passive-active	Capacity building in non-violent process and Literacy Application; application of human rights structures / gaining new vocabularies and their meaning

facilitator's depth of knowledge. Our guideline also is justified by the fact that not all facilitators are trained in adult learning processes.

The learners' role also fluctuates from active to passive as the facilitator shares the same experience. Learners are helpful in generating information that the facilitator will manipulate for the participants' learning. They are active when they are asked to debate, tell stories and paint pictures of their society, answer questions and so on. The techniques of helping learners to elicit information, ponder over issues and expose their personal biases are at the discretion of the facilitator – they may choose from drama, case study stories and similar material. Learners also must listen to the facilitator when they are guided, instructed and informed of new ideas and knowledge. The learning activities in Figure 1 indicate that the recall stage is shorter with two steps, while the vision stage consists of the remaining five steps. The reason is as expected, that it takes more time to build than to destroy. Activities to unlearn the negative violent knowledge take time and patience.

Conclusion

Developing a literacy model for peace building is a very important requirement for adult, community and non-formal educational practitioners, especially in Africa where the illiteracy level is high. The benefits of this model will be felt in the peace and cohesion building, if literacy is made functional to produce these climates. The functionality of literacy must address the transformation of minds, trauma, poverty and capacity building, all in the hope of generating and promoting an enjoyable, peaceful co-existence and mutuality of living (through mutual dependence). Cemento-conscio education will help learners not only to understand the cause of their problems but also to derive solutions to these problems. As the case of conflict transformation, learners should be guided to re-settle emotionally by treating their trauma and hatred. They should also

be given information about alternative means to achieving their course through peaceful means. Capacity building on how to operate political, cultural, social and state judicial structures and apparatus to uphold their rights is also taught. Cemento-conscio education strikes a balance between developmental needs and social needs.

The cemento-conscio education model for literacy education is offered to play the triple role of building peace, developing literacy skills and building capacity to use socio-cultural and political structures to pursue human rights, fight inequality, prosecute injustice and demand development infrastructure. The role of the facilitator is vital, as s/he determines the successes and the failures of the transformation process. The vocabularies of the learners during dialogues provide the tool**s** or frames of reference to work with, which must span from the past to the present and to the future. This is a tracer approach that must be divided into two – the recall stage and the vision stage – so that learners come to realise not just the root cause of their problems but the mistakes they made in the past that were insensitive to the feelings and peaceful coexistence between one community and the other, or between two persons or even intra-person.

The model seeks to improve on the impression that a good literacy approach is that which helps learners understand the factors that hold them down or are responsible for their suffering, pains, and losses, and guides learners to achieve the desired position or freedom without losing it in conflict. The model is also predicated on the basis that development must take a repair approach – 'rehabilitative development'. Any nation, therefore, with a sincere desire to pursue peace and nation building will find this model adaptable for re-engineering its society. We warn that this model does not claim the impossibility of its misuse by operators who may utilise it for negative training goals, but we strongly believe that it will be very effective in achieving learning goals which are directed towards peace and its sustainability.

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BOOK REVIEW

Beyond humbug: transforming government engagement with Indigenous Australians

Michael Dillon and Neil Westbury
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The key theme of this book is structural government disengagement in Aboriginal affairs in remote (and to some extent urban) Australia. This has many guises, not the least of which is the policy of Aboriginal self-determination which has allowed both Federal and State governments to keep a hands-off approach, to out-source essential services such as health to underfunded community controlled services, to operate demonstration one-off programs, and generally to fail to provide Aboriginal citizens with the same level of government services (education, health, law, economic and political) enjoyed by other Australians. This analysis differs from those who see the plight of Aboriginal Australians as the result of welfare colonialism, or the impediments to economic development brought about by cultural factors governing ownership of land, or for that matter, Pearson's thesis of the failure of individual and community responsibility for the rule of law. While Dillon and Westbury do not dismiss these explanations, they argue that the fundamental problem has been disengagement by government from remote Indigenous Australia. The solution is a policy of re-engagement with Indigenous Australia.

The seven chapters in this book are divided between a description of the Indigenous population and the current programs on offer, an examination of impediments to the way forward, an exploration of what might be done, and three case studies (housing, landrights over Parks, and landrights and home ownership in remote community towns) that demonstrate operational and strategic solutions.

In the first chapter Dillon and Westbury provide the facts. While the majority of Aboriginal people live in large urban cities (80%), in remote Australia they make up the majority of the population (20% constitute 45% of the remote population). This Aboriginal population is considerably younger than the non-Indigenous but with higher rates or mortality and fertility making for the classic pyramid population profile. Migration between remote communities and rural towns is high, so much so that many major rural towns are becoming Indigenised. Examples include Pt Augusta, Broken Hill, Kalgoorlie, Tamworth and Dubbo. Conversely, in the capital cities, increases in Indigenous populations are not due to migration, but are the result of higher rates of fertility and to Indigenous/non-Indigenous family partnerships where the offspring are more likely to identify as Indigenous than non-Indigenous. Unemployment in these suburbs is high, but it is twice as high for Indigenous populations. Suggestions that a policy solution for remote communities is the assimilation of young Aboriginal people into the outer suburbs of capital cities will have to deal with significant and intensified unemployment in these urban ghettos.

In chapter two Dillon and Westbury raise an issue close to the bone – the dilemma of national security for remote and 'isolated' Australia. In presenting their argument, they provide two points in support of their hypothesis of the need for increased government engagement in remote Aboriginal Australia. Firstly, they remind the reader that remote Australia is inhabited (there are some 1,200 remote Aboriginal settlements and 2 million Australians in rural towns and communities) and then list several projects performed by Indigenous Australians that contribute to national security that could be further developed. These include Aboriginal services in conservation on their own lands and National Parks, as well as programs in coastal and border control to prevent illegal fishing, or breaches of customs regulations. These services are bolstered by the network of isolated Aboriginal communities with linked roads, air fields, schools and hospitals. In short, it makes national security sense to maintain and increase this infrastructure presence in remote Aboriginal Australia. The authors then turn this security argument on its head and suggest that the past lack of serious government engagement in these remote regions has resulted in a drift of young people to remote towns. While current violence in these settlements and towns tends towards intra-group violence, making settlements unsafe places for women and children (and some non-Indigenous service staff such as nurses), it is not unrealistic for this violence to spread. The solution is social and can be found in government re-engagement in rural and remote towns particularly through the provision of infrastructure to increase employment opportunities.

At this point the authors ask if the situation in remote and north Australia is analogous to the failed states of the Pacific Rim where it is argued that governments have failed to provide adequate income, security and education for citizens or to operate within the bounds of legitimacy. Here they are reflecting on Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomons. While they see a range of parallels, they argue that the situation in remote Aboriginal Australia is not the same.

While Aboriginal people do have low incomes, low levels of literacy and formal education and lack basic security measures similar to peoples in other Pacific Rim nations, Dillon and Westbury dismiss the argument that the failure of Aboriginal affairs is primarily due to internal cultural and governance factors such as the small-scale, kin-based structures of Aboriginal society. In the Pacific Rim the impact of these cultural factors on national governance stretches from the family home through to the seats of parliament. This is not the case in Aboriginal Australia. Remote Aboriginal communities are not sovereign states legally independent of the wider Australian state; they are communities within Australia where the responsibility for law and order rests with the state.

Chapter three continues the analysis of the problem with accompanying strategies, this time focusing squarely on government. The authors suggest the problem is three-fold. These are the (i) social and institutional environment, (ii) the architecture of government and (iii) the framework established by governments to delivery programs (p.53). In delineating the social and institutional environment, Dillon and Westbury point to the resilience of Aboriginal culture and the need to tailor program delivery to meet this cultural difference, the need to take into account the youthfulness of Aboriginal populations, and the interpenetration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. They point to the lack of infrastructure in remote Australia, not just of government services, but also of organisations and institutions linked to civil society and the private sector. Pointedly, they note that when governments outsource service provision to civil society such as churches and clubs, these organisations may not be in place in remote communities or towns, or may not have the services of banks, shops or small businesses to support their operations. Their analysis of the failure of the architecture of government highlights the multiplicity of programs provided by the three levels of government, sometimes in concert, but most often not or with little adherence to the principle of a whole-

of-government approach. As a consequence, programs operate in competition with each other for funding from the Commonwealth, and both levels of government conduct duplicate programs. This point is closely aligned to their third factor which deals with the program framework for Aboriginal service delivery.

The authors give the example of housing policy which they say is characterised by a multiplicity of State/Territory and Federal programs, niche programs that provide too little funding over too short a timeframe, inadequate resources to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff employed in remote regions, program duplication, and outsourcing to under-funded and under-resourced Aboriginal organisations that must constantly account for short-term funds. These organisations operate with fewer resources than comparable government departments delivering similar services to non-Aboriginal populations. The authors provide numerous examples – one will suffice here. In the inquiry into red tape in Aboriginal communities, the report noted that the community of Wadeye had entered into over 90 separate funding agreements in order to provide a minimum number of services. Staff were required to deal with and meet accountability audits for all 90 agreements in many instances on an annual basis. The energy required to obtain sufficient funding to provide adequate services taxes the scarce reserves of most communities and is inconsistent with what is provided by governments to other Australians through commonwealth, state or local government.

In summary, Dillon and Westbury challenge the dual system of service provision to remote Aboriginal Australia suggesting that, while it might have been appropriate in the 1970s when the States and Territories were less inclined to meet their financial responsibilities to Aboriginal people, this is no longer the case. Coupled with this, the policy of self-determination has allowed all three sectors of government to disengage from genuine policy provision in

Aboriginal Australia. It has also meant these services have been under-funded and that in many instances Aboriginal people receive lower standards of service. The occasional lack of performance of Aboriginal organisations has enabled governments to lay the blame at the feet of Aboriginal people and their apparent cultural practices of mismanagement. As Fred Chaney notes in the opening pages, ‘Failures block not your record, but that of the blackfellas who can, in the end, always be blamed’.

The book takes several swipes at the Northern Territory Intervention along the way, but it is not until the last chapter that Dillon and Westbury provide a direct critique. They note that the intervention may have positive outcomes, but challenge the Coalition government’s analysis that the cause of the problem lies in Aboriginal culture or is internal to the communities. While not directly articulated, their overall thesis suggests the cause of the dysfunction lies in the systematic disengagement by government from remote Aboriginal Australia since the 1970s under the guise of self-determination. They suggest the intervention offers the opportunity for a more thorough-going re-engagement in Aboriginal communities where law and order are not imposed on people but arise out of genuine community-government dialogue. The intervention should not be a policy of ‘stablising, normalising and exiting’, but the beginning of re-engagement in Aboriginal development. They write the ‘challenge in our view is to transform the intervention into substantive engagement across the Northern Territory’ (p.210), rather than what they now see as a return to the paternalistic practices of pre-1970’s regimes. Certainly the current media reports on increased fresh food consumption on many Aboriginal communities where welfare payments have been quarantined can make no more claims to success than the missionaries of the past who supervised the daily feeding of the population.

How can this re-engagement of government be done? Dillon and Westbury provide a range of first steps. These include, but are not limited to, separating Aboriginal affairs out from the vagaries of party politics through the creation of bi-partisan processes for on-going reform. They suggest the creation of an Indigenous Reform Commission that would operate outside and independently of election cycles, the allocation of funds to the States and Territories specifically for development of remote communities and remote Australia provided independently of other Commonwealth funds that tend to be applied to the States on a population basis, incentives to engage the private sector and civil society in Aboriginal affairs and the placing of government personnel on communities. The role of these officers would be to mediate government policy and community aspirations in a two-way process of dialogue.

Only one issue remains problematic for me in reading this well argued, clear and persuasive text. While Dillon and Westbury are not totally dismissive of Aboriginal Controlled organisations and presumably in remote Australia these are limited in the most part to community councils (which they think ought to come under local government), it remains unclear how they intend to reconcile the mainstreaming of health, law, education and some social services with the fact that in many remote towns and some communities these services are provided by community controlled organisations. Dillon and Westbury do point to the strengthening of community organisations, but I took this to be community councils, not legal and health services. There are, of course, clear ways in which these services could become part of government re-engagement with Aboriginal peoples with concomitant on-going regular and adequate funding, but it presumably also means a change in their current governance arrangements. I think many Indigenous people will be mistrustful of this policy and its implications, and their non-Indigenous supporters will be unsure; caught as we are in a crisis of distrust and inertia.

The book is unfortunately poorly produced with a number of word-processing errors and missed references and binding that came apart. This may be the result of getting it out in haste. I am inclined to think it was worth the rush since the ideas are of high quality and it is high time Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, began thinking about a new way forward. In my view, this book provides the other bookend to Noel Pearson's thesis in creating a blue-print for a way forward.

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BOOK REVIEW

Intimacy, transcendence, and psychology: closeness and openness in everyday life

Halling, Steen
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, December 2007
ISBN-13: 978-0-230-60045-4 (hbk), 248 pages
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Born in Denmark but educated since he was twelve in Canada, and in Pittsburg USA at post-graduate level, Steen Halling has taught psychology at Seattle University for more than thirty years and has held the position of Professor of Psychology at that university since 1989.

In this, his most recent work, Halling sets out to illuminate two interrelated phenomena, namely, intimacy and transcendence in everyday life, as well as address academic questions about coming to understand how one can explore such intangible topics through phenomenology. Although it is a slim book of 248 pages including bibliographical notes and a name index, it gave me the feeling of getting and reading two books for the price of one. But there is nothing skimpy about this book's contents or its treatment. Perhaps because this easily carried volume is a wonderful distillation of thirty years of scholarship and clinical experience which has been publicly recorded in twenty four journal articles, thirteen book chapters and two books as well as in fifty six scholarly presentations.

Halling acknowledges that readers can, if they wish, take either of two routes through the book. They can either go on a 'straight through' journey or alternatively begin at chapter five and then double back to the beginning. Chapters one through four deal with both the positive and negative aspects of intimacy and show how both can contribute to the transformation and growth of the person, while chapter five gives an overview of his research methodology. 'Those readers', he says, 'who would first prefer to know something of the basic approach taken … are encouraged to read Chapter 5 before starting Chapter 1' (p.13).

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first two deal with his theme of 'seeing a significant other as if for the first time'. Chapter one views this as a positive experience when we see that the other is in fact, a greater, kinder, wiser or perhaps more loved person than we at first judged. This is the other as a 'more than' experience. The opposite experience is the subject of chapter two. Here, the other is already idealised and there is some experience which shows them to be 'less than'. It is the experience of disillusionment and its possible destructiveness which he also shows is a possible invitation to growth. The third chapter on forgiveness is a natural successor. In it he discusses how it is often a long and difficult process to accept the fallible humanity of both ourselves and the other person, describing it in terms of 'recovering one's future'. While the first three chapters

deal with everyday relations of everyday people, chapter four moves into the relational aspects of dealing with those who are mentally ill. Halling acknowledges that readers may find it strange but goes on to show that '…coming to understand someone who is mentally ill happens in fundamentally the same way as with anyone else who initially puzzles or confounds us' (p.107). Chapter five, 'On the study of human experience' is an exposition of his particular brand of phenomenology and how it fits with others who have used this methodology. In the last two chapters six and seven, he addresses the phenomenon of transcendence in everyday life and relations and lastly where it fits with psychology. In this review, I would like to speak of chapters five and six in a little more detail.

The thirty-two pages of chapter five break open for us Halling's particular brand of existential phenomenology. Here he shows, rather than tells, how at the heart of this kind of research is a relationship with one's fellow researchers as well as with the topic and the importance of the place of intimacy in the research process. In doing so, he critiques the stranglehold of the prevailing position in both his own area of psychology as well as the related areas of medicine and science that 'a mature or more objective awareness of another person involves "scientific detachment"' (p.20).

Halling admits that he has made a lifetime study of topics that are more often ignored because their intangible nature proves too problematic to adhere to the conventional understanding of scientific empiricism as observation through measurement and quantification. Methods used, he asserts, must be appropriate to the subject-matter. And when the subject of research is as complex, nuanced and paradoxical as human beings, then laboratories and controlled correlational studies and experiments are not, he shows, sufficiently empirical, resulting in generalised findings that are in fact mainly speculative as far as application in everyday practice is concerned. He uses Constance Fischer's distinction 'between primary data, that

is, what we experience and observe directly, and secondary data, the conclusions we draw on the basis of this data' (p.56). He gives the example of IQ tests. He argues that phenomenology conforms much more to the criteria of empirical data since it focuses on the observations of the actual everyday experiences themselves. This is a most welcome exposition of the phenomenological method for those of us who must justify it to our colleagues who speak disparagingly of any ways of research which appear to be dealing in 'mere anecdote'. Speaking of method first, I seem to be taking the second route through this book, so now I will return to the beginning.

Being involved with teaching aspects of care of the spirit to palliative care workers, I am particularly interested in the last two chapters – Halling's treatment of the experience of intimacy and transcendence in everyday life. Clarifying through portrayal how disillusionment, forgiveness and deeper appreciation are all aspects of ways our experience of intimacy takes us beyond ourselves and into larger horizons of possibility, Halling's stories, along with his dialogues with the past and current literature, expertly chart a course through the complex and often fragile web of relationships personal and professional. His chapter on the disturbed person's need to be a person before a problem highlights the need for respect in all of our encounters. But it is the sixth chapter on 'Interpersonal relations and transcendence' that is the jewel in the crown for me.

This word is central to the work I am engaged in with my students. It is, however, more often seen as esoteric, other-worldly or too religiously entrapped to be of much use in their practice. But Halling, while acknowledging these problems can exist, identifies its appropriateness in his accounts to show that paradoxically it also appears to be fundamental to human living – 'for the moment then', he invites us, 'let me suggest that transcendence is akin to openness, a movement toward the new, and is thus a key feature in our humanity' (p178). He does this through his stories of three

different experiences (of love, of disillusionment and healing, and of forgiveness), and highlights how transcendence in everyday life is visible in them. He then introduces us to other important writers, philosophers, psychologists and theologians as he reflects on both the meanings and misunderstandings of transcendence over a wide range of scholarship. This is exciting stuff, as Halling shows how to move between scholarship theory and everyday experience, respecting both, critiquing both and clarifying both. In this way, he demonstrates the use of all-round vision of a topic that can ground it and provide us with much needed balance.

Having gone through this chapter again, I am now off to go once more through the early chapters and record where the contents resonate with my own personal and professional experience while I consider how to apply my findings to my everyday life and practice. I would recommend anyone who is involved in the helping and teaching professions to do the same. This is one book I know will not just gather dust on people's shelves. It is far too practical and readable to do that.

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BOOK REVIEW

Rebalancing the social and economic: learning, partnership and place

Chris Duke, Mike Osborne and Bruce Wilson (eds.)
Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), 2005
ISBN: 1 86201 270 9, 202 pages

This book brings together condensed 'hot topic' papers by contributors to the Pascal Observatory. The Pascal Observatory was established jointly by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and Stirling Universities, in partnership with regional governments in Victoria, Australia and the United Kingdom, following an OECD Conference on Learning Regions conducted in Melbourne in 2002. Chris Duke is Director (Higher Education), NIACE, UK and Professor of Regional Learning and Partnerships, School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University. Mike Osborne is Professor of Lifelong Education and Head of the Division of Academic Innovation

and Continuing Education, University of Stirling, Scotland. Bruce Wilson is Professor of Organisation and Work Design and Head of the School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University.

The Pascal Observatory is an international, strategic information tracking and sharing service on the three related issues of place management, social capital and learning regions. It aspires to support sustainable national, regional and community development based on experience and evidence of what works. It aims to inform the architects of social policies and, as the title suggests, redress the current imbalance between the economic and the social drivers of government policy and practice.

This aspiration has arisen from the experiences of those countries that adhere to Traditional Economics (Beinhocker 2006) that there are many unintended consequences when social outcomes are not factored into their policies and practices.

The 'hot topic' papers describe projects from several places that demonstrate that it is possible for leaders to instal social outcomes as their prime aim and manage economic outcomes as a means to achieving favourable and sustainable social outcomes. Contributions from Canada, Australia, Scotland, Ireland, Finland, United Kingdom and South Africa all draw the connection between lifelong learning and social and economic policies and practices in a range of places each presenting a different social, historical and natural environment. Very effectively, this collection shows that the drivers of community management can be positive social outcomes, lifelong learning and the formation of social capital, and that economic outcomes can be the means to ends, not the ends in themselves. But it is the very diversity of the places that clouds that message. No unifying theory emerges that could answer opponents of change who could say that the case studies show no more than that people who are well connected and experienced can perform wonders in a supportive

environment. There is no indication in the papers that the experiences of the case studies are being generalised.

That is the challenge that the Pascal Observatory needs to address. Perhaps they have since the publication of this set. These papers represent a progress report up till 2004/2005. However the most obvious sign of adoption of a new paradigm will be when the makers, implementers and targets of policy use language that incorporates theories describing sustainable social outcomes as an emergent property of economic practice; theories that do not commit the mistake of 'one size fits all' but accommodate the diversity that is the very cornerstone of sustainability and survivability.

The Editors invite readers to visit the Pascal Observatory website. This reviewer did and found not only the unabridged 'hot topic' papers but also recent papers and notices of conferences which show the progress since the publication of this book. Broadening the review then to the work of the Pascal Observatory, I found that Pascal is growing, taking in members from Asia and the former USSR and has built further its record of case studies. However, for a community that has its roots in lifelong learning, I am surprised to find no mention of the importance of language in the learning process. The challenge, as noted above, remains the development of a unified model of a balanced sustainable community – a model that incorporates a language that can be used as the vehicle for learning and applying a new economics paradigm by all parties with an interest in social and economic policy. The Pascal Observatory could consider extending their multi-disciplinary approach to include the rapidly developing field of network science that may offer such a model. Here is a body of knowledge which provides the means to describe and to some extent manage the behaviour of Complex Adaptive Systems (Watts 2004).

Would I recommend buying the book? Probably not, even though the papers are well written, interesting and informative; the more recent material on the website is more interesting and informative,

and I would recommend that anyone involved with social policy and practice, economics, lifelong learning and the diversity of place accept the editors' invitation and visit the Pascal Observatory website (www.obs-pascal.com).

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