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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The end of the year is upon us ... and so are, rather suddenly, very uncertain economic times. We also have dynamic educational times. We have had or are about to have released a number of national reports that hold implications for Australian education. Among these are the *Review of the national innovation system* (Chair: Terry Cutler) and the *Review of Australian higher education* (Chair: Denise Bradley). The first is published, the second is about to report.

The Cutler Report (pp.45–46) in its chapter on ‘Strengthening people and skills’ speaks in the language of human capital: claiming that human capital is ‘central to innovation’ and that through the review, ‘there has been substantial support for the notion that investing in our people will be an important component of building our strength in innovation’. It sees the educational system as playing a key role in equipping people with the skills for innovation ‘at all levels of learning, from early childhood right through to *adult education*’ (my italics). A promising reference! However, it becomes clear that ‘all levels of education’ means ‘from early childhood education and schooling, through vocational education and training, and higher education, and into the workplace’. One is left wondering what role the

ACE sector has in this task? Where does it fit? What is its status? Is it embraced within the above definition of 'all levels of learning', or has it been forgotten? Perhaps the Bradley Review will be more expansive on these issues, given that it is examining whether the education system is capable of contributing to innovation and productivity gains, and how Australia can ensure that there is a broad-based tertiary education system producing professionals for both national and local labour market needs. We wait and see.

In this issue of the journal, the articles pick up several of these themes relating to adult learning in different contexts. **Gerald Murphy** and **Bruce Calway** query the role of professional associations in developing a culture of learning beyond a sufficiency or competency level. They argue the need for professional associations to develop learning environments which enable effective continuing career development of professionals, and they suggest essential elements for such a learning environment – work-integrated learning, contextualised constructivism and self-directed learning. If it is expected that professionals should develop a deeper level of learning in order to deal with the globally complex environments in which they work, then professionals and professional associations have a role to play in ensuring that learning frameworks and cultures are established to enable transfer of this learning.

Patricia Richards raises the issue of succession planning. Her research highlights the tendency for chief executive officers not to take much notice of well-known succession planning techniques when making appointments to senior leadership teams. She concludes that what is evident is the existence of parallel cultures, one of which (appointments on the basis of systematic and transparent assessments of readiness to succeed a more senior manager) is vulnerable to the other (appointments on the basis of individual judgement based on unspecified or obscure criteria). She suggests it is time for organisations to review what really happens in the name of succession planning.

The next two articles focus on transformative learning experiences of adult students in what their authors label innovative programs.

David Giles and **Sharon Alderson** illustrate the use of appreciative inquiry as a research approach in investigating the transformative learning experiences of adult students entering a tertiary bridging program in New Zealand. They characterise this approach as one that pays attention to evidence of successful practice – that seeks to facilitate change based on participants' actual experiences of best practice. The authors sought to appraise social interactions that were occurring between teacher and students that had a positive impact on the students in a family literacy program. They show how this approach has enabled 'the imaginative capturing, and speculation, of educational experiences that results from the rich and grounded stories'.

While the previous paper focused on a tertiary bridging program, **Peter Howard and colleagues** concentrate on the transformational learning opportunities and re-engagement of disadvantaged people within the community. They discuss the Catalyst-Clemente program, an innovative educational program based on collaboration between the Australian Catholic University, Mission Australia and the St Vincent de Paul Society. Their analysis of six emergent themes suggests a range of benefits were gained by the students' participation, and that their stories have provided evidence of empowerment and hope which can inform opportunities and pathways offered to other marginalised people in the future. The authors conclude that the program is a practical educational solution that has resulted in enhancing the life opportunities and choices for disadvantaged Australians.

The last two refereed papers refer to very different types of learning in very different places – informal learning in the community and formal learning across tertiary education institutions.

Phoenix de Carteret discusses social dances and local markets as

examples of resilient practices of place-making and community that involve active participation. She illustrates how both activities involve considerable informal and incidental learning. The author explores the notion of ‘place’ – conceived here as the inter-relationship of environment, social and economic landscapes. Her purpose is to establish a framework with which to research informal learning in community through the lens of social dances and markets.

Roger Harris analyses the learning experiences of learners who have studied in both the VET and higher education sectors and how they make sense of the learning and teaching in these sectors. The data reflect important differences in the learners’ experiences within these sectors. He suggests that the findings can provide policy-makers and institutional leaders with insights into how best to position these two sectors to the advantage of learners with changing needs, expectations and desired pathways. Furthermore, the findings suggest that greater recognition could be afforded to the different but increasingly complementary roles that HE and VET play.

The final practice paper by **Lydia Hebestreit** focuses on yet another context – the University of the Third Age (U3A), where older adults pursue their learning long past the age dictated by social norms. The author shows how the U3A is one of several models for lifelong education after retirement. Her study reports on a survey which explored the experiences of U3A members of two selected U3As in Victoria. The findings indicate that respondents were satisfied with their U3A experiences which had contributed in various areas of their lives leading to personal, mental, social and physical enhancement. The U3A concept appealed to the respondents with its emphasis on peer-teaching philosophy, community orientation, accessibility, affordability, and the wide variety of courses offered throughout the year giving enjoyment and structure to members’ lives.

This issue of the journal is rounded out with six book reviews. They cover a diversity of themes, which may of interest to various readers at various times through their Christmas breaks – from Jacques Lacan and education, to green frontiers and environmental educators, and to visual methodologies for social change; and then from biographical and life history approaches, to learning in colonial Victorian museums, and to decision-making through intuition.

Happy reading! See you next year!

Roger Harris
Editor

Professional development for professionals: beyond sufficiency learning

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We question the current role of professional associations in developing a culture of learning beyond a sufficiency or competency level. This brings into question the underlying philosophy of Professional Standards legislation. This legislation mandates continuing professional development for professionals without stating what should be achieved and how to achieve it.

Professional development for professionals is influenced by the twin economic requirements of work-readiness and risk minimisation. These requirements, while important, do not necessarily account for career development of individual professionals needing to deal with complex and ill-structured paradigms. Therefore the paper argues the need for professional associations to develop learning environments which enable the effective continuing career development of professionals and sets out the essential elements for this learning environment – for example, work-integrated learning, contextualised constructivism and self-directed learning. The paper also discusses the potential within professional associations to develop cultures and communities for learning.

Background and context

Professional associations are the guardians of professional standards. As such, they require members to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) in order to retain membership and any associated credentials. Professional development is necessary for professionals to keep themselves up-to-date within their profession in areas of: technical, legal, conceptual and/or social change. CPD programs should foster development of a learning culture which encourages continual growth of knowledge and professionals' ability to apply that knowledge.

Professional Standards legislation, enacted in state legislation in Australia broadly from 2003, has reinforced a focus of professional development on competency and standards. The legislation emphasises a need to ensure that professionals comply with the requirements of an 'approved scheme' as a means of protecting the public through risk minimisation policies (PSC 2006, Standards Australia 2001). The emphasis upon standards focuses less on the development of new or deeper career knowledge or on the acquisition of specialisation or integration knowledge (Smith 2005, Standards Australia 2007).

The qualities expected in graduates has been set out in the United Kingdom by Dearing (1997) and in Australia by West (1997). In the Department of Education, Science and Training report, *Striving for quality: learning, teaching and scholarship*, there is a recognition that technical competencies should not be the sole determinant of education policy in Australia. However, the report noted a confusion of terminology in the use of terms such as outcomes, attributes and skills and that the development of graduate attributes has shadowed the adoption of the concept of key competencies within the vocational education sector. The report identified 'emerging skills and knowledge that have not been previously a focus of higher education curricula' (DEST 2002:1).

The Dearing and West reports, together with the Bologna protocol (Kohler 2004), have a common message that professionals require not only technical skills and knowledge but also soft or generic skills, together with an ability to process acquired knowledge. As Lambe (2002:n.p.) states, ‘...very little of real working life is run on agreed common definitions ...’, professionals often have to work on approximations and most of practice is ‘...highly interpreted, time and place contingent, and constantly shifting’.

All this challenges a competency focus for learning. Competency is defined as a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task (Jones, Voorhees & Paulson 2002:8). However, Smith (2005:n.p.) argues that ‘in much current usage, the notion of competence has been whittled down to the ability to undertake specific tasks; it has been largely stripped of its social, moral and intellectual qualities’. The current emphasis of professional development, specified by professional associations, appears to concentrate on developing and assessing competency (or a sufficiency standard of knowledge for professionals). To develop professionals, beyond a sufficiency level, requires an appropriate learning paradigm. Therefore the research focus is to develop an appropriate learning paradigm so that professional development enables professionals to advance beyond a sufficiency level.

Messages being sent to educational authorities, regarding the knowledge, skill and understanding expected of professionals, are itemised in a grounded study (Calway & Murphy 2007) of published mission statements, public policies and institutional governance expressions, for example, Australian Government policies (1975–2005), OECD reports (2002, 2003) and the International symposium on career development and public policy held in Australia (CICA 2006). The study identified six educational imperatives: workforce readiness, a professional development culture (both individual and workforce related), international relevance, lifelong

learning, knowledge transference, human and social potential. Of these imperatives a common thread was skilling for the workforce. The Bologna process also emphasised the link between employability and education (Kohler 2004). The Dearing (1997) and West (1997) reports and the Bologna process (2004) specify a broader level of knowledge, skill and understanding for professionals than mere skilling for the workforce by way of discipline-specific, technical training.

Australia has developed unique legislation concerning Professional Standards. While Professional Standards legislation specifies a requirement for professional development to improve standards, it does not suggest what this involves or how it may be achieved. Rather, it delegates professional development to individual professional associations under schemes of self-regulation. Applications by professional associations, applying for 'registration of a scheme' under the legislation, have concentrated on limiting the civil liability of professionals rather than improving standards (PSC 2007).

Expectations concerning relevant professional bodies of knowledge

Our study has examined the entry-level requirements for a collective of professional associations and the process by which members may achieve specialist status. Shulman's Table of Learning (Shulman 2002), a significant development of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom 1956), is used as a means of assessing the objectives shown in the policy statements of professional associations in areas of knowledge (that is, competency focused, deeper learning, integrative knowledge and specialist knowledge).

Discipline-specific skills have been and will always be an important component of the knowledge, skill and understanding required by professionals. Table 1 sets out the additional (generic or non-technical) skills and knowledge defined by Dearing, West and the Bologna Process.

Table 1: Generic skills and knowledge required by graduates

DEST (2002) (Australia), based on West (1997)	Dearing (1997) (United Kingdom)	Bologna Process (Europe) (Kohler 2004)
Skills including:	Concept of 'Graduateness'	Cognitive, emotive and value-oriented Soft Skill competences including:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiative and enterprise • Information literacy and management • Capacity for lifelong learning • Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be adaptable - 'learn-to-learn' in jobs and roles yet to be envisaged - work effectively in multi-disciplinary contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Understanding • Dispositions • Attitudes • Values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge-related: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - languages - basics of law - economics - ICT • Methodological: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - problem-solving - integrative thinking - decision-making - time management • Personal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual values - social interaction - reliability - initiative - willingness to work • Social: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - empathy - ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperate - lead - bear conflict

With this in mind, therefore, there is an expectation that professionals possess both discipline-specific and generic skills. To be admitted into a profession, professionals may have only been tested on one of these and even that may have been only at a superficial or sufficiency

level. The bodies of knowledge specified by professional associations for entry into professions mostly concentrate on discipline-specific issues. Our wider research project examines this in more detail, but the preliminary examination of a sample of professional associations' websites supports this contention (for example, ACS 2007).

Table 2 shows the entry and other credentialing requirements for a range of professional associations in Australia, specifically examining the need for practice-based learning or work-integrated learning (WIL). The table also examines the types of specialisations available within these professions. All specialisations require further study and assessment and sometimes include a WIL component. Broadly speaking, WIL is seen as:

... educational activities that integrate theoretical learning with its application in the workplace. These educational activities should provide a meaningful experience of the workplace application that is intentional, organised and recognised by the institution, in order to secure learning outcomes for the student that are both transferable and applied (Griffith University 2006).

While technical competence is not the sole component of a body of knowledge, the discipline-specific competence prescribed by professional bodies for graduates represents only a small portion of the expertise and proficiency expected by the public and specified in government reports. An emphasis on mere technical competency would therefore seem to meet neither the expectations of government nor professional associations.

All national professional associations have developed bodies of knowledge. Some professions – for example, financial management, marketing, architecture and project management – have developed international bodies of knowledge which are used within Australia. National diversities are unlikely to be taken into account. The international bodies of knowledge are most commonly assessed with a focus on competency, and with multiple choice assessment (for example, PMI 2007).

Table 2: Professional qualification requirements

Discipline	Professional membership			Specialist membership		
	Entry to occupational association	WIL required, or experience requirement	Registration/licensing/ accreditation	Specialisation (examples)	WIL required, or experience requirement	Registration/licensing/ accreditation
Medical	Degree (doctor)	Internship	Yes	Ophthalmology, Anaesthetist, Cardio/Thoracis <i>et al.</i>	Internship	Yes
Nursing	Degree	Internship	Yes	Midwifery, Intensive Care <i>et al.</i>	Internship	Yes
Law	Degree	Internship	Yes			
Engineering-Civil/Construction	Degree	No WIL. 3 years' experience for full membership	Yes	Project Management	No	Certification available ¹
Engineering - Manufact g/ Production/ Chemical etc.	Degree	No WIL. 3 years' experience for full membership	No			
Accounting	Degree	No WIL. 1 year's experience for full membership	No	Tax, Financial Planning Auditing, Company Secretary Corporate, Management, Finance	No No No	Yes Limited Limited
IT	Degree (various types)	No WIL. 4 years' experience for full membership	No	Project Management, Network Administration, e-Business, Knowledge Management, Security	No No No No	Certification available ¹ No No Under discussion
Teaching	Degree	Practicum	Yes			
Insurance Broker	Certificate	No WIL	Yes			

(Source professional association websites)

¹There is project management certification available from a number of bodies. Certification is not a requirement to practise as a project manager.

Universities design programs to satisfy the body of knowledge requirements of professional associations in order to increase the employability of their graduates (for example, University of South Australia 2006). Assessment in discipline-specific areas is easier for academia than the assessment of either personal attributes or integrative knowledge (Thalheimer 2007).

We question whether the learning achieved, both undergraduate and particularly post-credentialing, is at the depth required by professionals and whether the 'one size fits all' approach seen in assessment strategies is appropriate for professionals' career development.

Professional development designed for professionals

Professionals face problems which can be conceptually intricate, often varying from case to case, and requiring more than the retrieval from memory of intact prescriptive knowledge. The problems faced by professionals are often complex and ill-structured where successful solutions are often non-repeatable in whole or in part. Professionals need to build knowledge by constructing meaning in different situations using knowledge developed through effective learning rather than through committing information to rote memory (Spiro, Feltovich & Jacobson 1996). This constructed knowledge requires both domain knowledge and experience to solve each new situation (Brown & Duguid 1991). The design of learning for advanced level professional development for professionals needs to build knowledge, skill and understanding rather than being exclusively competency-based training, where the design focuses on problems which have objective, repetitive solutions.

Melotte (1996) argues that knowledge should be seen as being explanatory, predictive and interpretive. Therefore, professional development programs designed for professionals should take into account that transfer of learning needs to be the key element of these

programs. Professionals will not reach this level of understanding and adaptability unless their understanding of theory constructs is sound and they are encouraged to transfer learning content to the workplace context. Professionals should also be capable of transferring their learning to other professionals and, by extension, to their clients.

Professionals in practice need professional development at an appropriate tertiary level and arguably this is made relevant through drawing on the contextual experience and/or the work environment of the professional. Brown and Duguid (1991) in developing the theories of Lave and Wenger (1991) claim that separation of knowledge and practice is unsound and further argue for the composite concept of 'learning-in-working' to enable a fluid evolution of learning through practice. This is an emphasis we argue, when considering work-integrated learning practice as a learning environment for professional development.

Ramsden (1992) sees deep level learning as occurring when experiences are integrated into the learner's present body of knowledge and understanding and connections are made to previous lessons (a constructivist learning paradigm). Rote learning and the acquisition of de-contextualised pieces of information characterise surface learning. Contextualised or deep learning involves reflection and is developmental, integrative, self-directive and lifelong (Barrett & Wilkerson 2004). Learning which encourages interpretation and enables understanding of reality in a different way should involve comprehending the world by reinterpreting knowledge (Ramsden 1992).

Transfer of knowledge

Entry into traditional professions such as medicine, dentistry and law require demonstration of proficiency through practice-oriented learning for membership and credentialing. Significantly, nursing has modelled its learning systems on medicine. Many professions, while

sometimes requiring some elements of WIL, are less prescriptive overall. The more business-oriented disciplines, while having specific credentialing requirements governing entry to membership, are less able to restrict practice within the profession. They are also less likely to require practice-oriented learning, although some form of work experience – generally with unspecified content – may be required to achieve full professional association membership (for example, ACS, CPA etc).

Work-integrated learning is an appropriate educational philosophy to enhance the careers of professionals. WIL recombines learning with the real world in a single education paradigm. It incorporates hands-on work experience and instructional learning in a real-world setting that assumes a level of explicit knowledge/skill on the part of the learner and the exchange of tacit knowledge/skill from the real-world to the learner. Doyle (2002) highlighted the value of linking learning to real workplace problems and situations. In Doyle's study, students were able to apply theory to real-life situations, with the result that they were engaged in deeper learning as they grew in confidence and were able not only to obtain clarity about the actual learning topics but to identify the future applications of that learning. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC 2005:2) supports this view when referring to Mosel (1957) who identified three conditions for transfer: content must be applicable to the job, the trainee must learn the content, and the trainee must be motivated to change job behaviour by applying what was learned.

Professional associations should encourage self-actualisation professional development where professionals grow beyond a sufficiency and competence level and become 'learning leaders' of their profession and organisations. Real growth in knowledge combined with the ability to apply that knowledge is vital to the future of professional standards.

Equally effective 'transfer of learning' is the key to ensuring that education has a positive impact. Educators assume that transfer of

learning always occurs as a result of education and training. They expect that whatever is learned will be retained or remembered over time and used in appropriate situations (Doyle 2002). Unfortunately, conventional educational practices often fail to stimulate students by either using conditions similar to those in the learning context, including using well-practised routines, or searching for connections using deliberate abstraction (Perkins & Salomon 1992). Transfer of learning is said to occur when learning in one context enhances a related performance in another context.

Beach (1999:103), in elaborating the theory of transfer of learning, argued that 'learning, development, and education are inherently cultural as well as personal enterprises, and, by extension, so is the phenomenon of transfer'. Beach argues that development is achieved through transitions. It is the context-grounded, consequential transitions in the lives of professionals which provide opportunities for professional growth.

Specialisation requires developing deeper learning within a profession. Professionals who wish to develop their careers beyond the sufficiency level need to take responsibility for their career development in order either to become a specialist or to be able to integrate their domain knowledge with other domains. It is noteworthy that, for example, medical and nursing professions have well-defined specialisations with defined learning programs which extend the capabilities of these professionals through a combination of technical content and work related practice. Integration of knowledge involves developing knowledge over a broader context and ideally within a WIL context. Professionals aiming at management roles are most in need of integrated knowledge (Brown & Duguid 1991, Carson 2003, Shulman 2002).

Learning in its broadest sense has taken place when a learner can demonstrate or display that learning later. While passing an exam can demonstrate that ordinary learning has occurred, transfer learning is always at least implicitly contrastive: it assumes learning within

a certain context and asks about the impact beyond that context. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada refers to the so-what or now-what phase of the learning process. However, HRSDC (2005:1) also states that ‘abundant evidence shows that the very “often hoped for” transfer from learning experiences does not occur’. It defines transfer of learning in the context of the workplace ‘as the effective application by trainees to their jobs of the knowledge and skills gained as a result of attending an educational program’.

Transfer of learning is positive when learning in one context impacts on performance in another context. HRSDC (2005:2) cites Baldwin and Ford’s (1988) claim that not more than ten percent of expenditures on training and development in North America actually result in transfer to the job. There are no comparable figures for other economically developed countries but it is reasonable to assume that these economies are likely to present similar figures to those of North America. It is therefore reasonable to argue that, with the emphasis on assessment of competency, the potential and impact of positive and far transfer of learning has been ignored.

Learning environment design

The level of learning achieved both from practice-based learning or WIL and from the experience specified as required for professional level membership is seldom assessed, with the exception of the traditional professions of medicine and law and also in nursing. In these professions:

- cultures of learning have been established, and
- experienced (qualified) specialists take on a training role in the development of new professionals and specialists.

In the educational taxonomies developed by Bloom and others, there is an emphasis on a ‘near transfer’ of knowledge rather than developing knowledge, skills and understanding which will enable professionals to impact on contexts quite different from the context

of learning. However, Shulman’s (2002) table of learning presents a mature view of learning which is different from Bloom’s taxonomy and its derivatives. Shulman’s table of learning is appropriate for professionals as it incorporates recognition that:

- professional development is a continuing process – CPD – not learning which has a definable start and a finite conclusion, and
- culture is an essential component of learning.

Shulman’s approach is consistent with Beach’s (1999) view of learning as a metaphor of transitions, consequential and context-driven, rather than static transfers.

In upholding the responsibility of professional associations to guard and develop the body of knowledge of the discipline, professional associations can use the differences inherent in Shulman’s table of learning to develop cultures and learning environments designed for effective professional development.

Table 3: Comparison of educational taxonomies

Bloom & Krathwohl (1956) (in Forehand 2005 n.p.)	Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001:67–68) (in Forehand 2005 n.p.)	Shulman (2002:2)
Tier 1	Tier 1	
Knowledge	Remembering	Engagement and motivation
Comprehension	Understanding	Knowledge and understanding
Application	Applying	Performance and action
Tier 2	Tier 2	
Analysis	Analysing	Reflection and critique
Synthesis	Evaluating	Judgment and design
Evaluation	Creating	Commitment and identity

Shulman states that the learning necessary to be a professional is more than just intellectual endeavour: 'Professionals must learn not only to think in certain ways but also to perform particular skills, and to practice or act in ways consistent with the norms, values, and conventions of the profession' (Shulman 2002:2). This cannot all be learned within universities. Learning through context provides a framework to equip students for professional practice. Professionals solve real-world problems through constructing meaning in a given situation using both domain knowledge and experience (Brown & Duguid 1991). The concept of standard solutions to standard problems does not fit the needs of professionals in practice (Lambe 2002). Shulman (2002:6) argues that 'we need to go beyond teaching and assessing for understanding in order to foster judgment and design'. We argue that if education focuses on competency it is doubtful that:

- learning will be achieved beyond the first tier of Bloom's taxonomy (see Table 3), and
- deeper learning will be achieved.

Consequently, the level of knowledge and understanding achieved (Beach 1999, HRSDC 2005, Perkins & Salomon 1992, Shulman 2002) is likely to be at a surface level.

Table 4: Relation of work-integrated learning and Shulman's table of learning

Shulman's stage	Relevance of work-integrated learning
<i>Engagement and motivation</i>	WIL is enhanced as students are involved in their chosen careers prior to completing their studies.
<i>Knowledge and understanding</i>	Students see practical application of the theory they have studied, plus they will see, possibly for the first time, the critical issues of knowledge, power and prestige.
<i>Performance and action</i>	A key element of WIL is that students do real work and solve real business problems. The more challenging the problems, the deeper the level of learning the student is likely to achieve (even if the student is not always successful). The student is exposed to the culture of work.
<i>Reflection and critique</i>	WIL should always require the student to engage in critical reflection. This is an important element of both action and active learning. It is essential to achieve deep learning.
<i>Judgment and design</i>	Whether students achieve this level may depend on individual employers and possibly the way the university structures learning objectives for WIL. Significantly, WIL provides a vehicle by which students can become involved in projects which do not have pre-set solutions and which contain the complexities of business operations.
<i>Commitment and identity</i>	Students start to be treated as peers or colleagues. This is different from normal teacher/student relationships. Students start to identify with their profession and see what it means to practise within that profession (c.f. Jancauskas, Atchison, Murphy & Rose 1997, Shaw 1992, WACE 2006, Young 1997).

Shulman does not see his table of learning as necessarily following a strict sequential pattern or having a beginning and an end. He feels that commitment and identity is most likely to be followed by new engagement and motivation as professionals engage in lifelong learning and continually need to re-commit to learning in order to maintain levels of practical knowledge or to extend their knowledge base for further career development (Shulman 2002). We state that

unless learning is put into context, professionals will not obtain the knowledge, skills and understanding specified as required in the UK by Dearing (1997), in Australia by West (1997) and DEST (2002), and in the Bologna Process (Kohler 2004).

Conclusion

It should be expected that professionals develop a deeper level of learning in order to deal with the globally complex environments in which they work. Therefore, professionals and professional associations have a role to play in ensuring that learning frameworks and cultures are established to enable transfer of this learning. Work-integrated learning can provide a context for learning which will enhance professionals' engagement and motivation, knowledge and understanding, performance and action, reflection and critique, judgment and design, commitment and identity.

The research reported in this paper outlines a professional's learning environment development and supports the need for further study which examines:

- the educational imperatives for professional development at an advanced level for professionals
- the pressure of labour force imperatives and risk minimisation on professional practice
- the use and meanings of professional development terms
- the educational objectives of a collective of professional associations and analyses these for shared aims and differences based on Shulman's table of learning, and the learning theories used or supported by these professional associations
- an appropriate level of learning needed by professionals to develop and maintain a body of knowledge, and
- the role professional associations may play in the career development of their members.

Additionally our research prompts a further question: To what extent are the objectives of professional development for professionals driven by labour force imperatives and to what extent does this compromise individual career development? Australian Professional Standards legislation sets the scene for professional development policy but does not develop the basis for delivering professional development. There is an inherent assumption that proficiency is demonstrated in the credentialing process and provides a adequate basis for professional recognition; however, there is little expectation of learning beyond a sufficiency level.

Consideration needs to be given to the expectations of employers, consumers and society (represented by government) in relation to the knowledge, skills and understanding held by professionals and determining whether the compliance requirements of professional associations are consistent with these expectations. Equally, attention needs to be given to individual professionals in relation to their career development which is represented by their knowledge, skills and understanding together with their ability to practise as professionals.

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Succession planning: does it matter in the context of corporate leadership?

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Corporations invest heavily in human resource management infrastructures intended amongst other things to provide for the future leadership needs of the corporation. Adopting well-known succession planning techniques, human resource managers routinely engage in corporate leadership identification and development processes, often directly involving the chief executive officer. This paper reports on a tendency for chief executive officers not to take all that much notice of these processes when making appointments to their own senior leadership teams. Drawing on three institutional case studies and in-depth interview data with the 12 chief executive officers, the paper shows that what appears to matter most in these appointments is likely impact of a leadership appointment on corporate profitability, though other leadership criteria may also be applied. The paper discusses the implications of this situation for human resource managers.

Introduction

Effective leadership is fundamental to corporate success. Corporations around the globe recognise this fact by investing heavily in the identification and development of leadership talent within their organisations. Human resource managers are thus routinely expected to address leadership succession planning, whether from the perspective of organisational renewal (Virany, Tushman & Romanelli 1992) or as part of an integrated human resource management (HRM) function (Ulrich, Zenger & Smallwood 1999, Corporate Leadership Council 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1998). Most of the relevant literature is, however, concerned simply with how succession planning works (see, for example, Corporate Leadership Council 2003). Where its effectiveness has been investigated (see, for example, Corporate Leadership Council 1997a, 2003, Bernthal & Wellins 2006, Cranshaw 2006), the results are mixed. Cranshaw (2006), for example, found that only seven per cent of employees of a large financial retailer in the United Kingdom had, over the two-year period prior to the survey, experienced any long-term succession planning considered by them to have been influential in their career management. The Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) in the United States, a leading advocate of succession planning, has reported in similar vein that: 'The majority of H.R. executives ... are highly uncertain that succession management is providing any positive returns to the organisation' (CLC 2003: 6a). The Council, in fact, concluded that there was no consistent relationship between succession planning strategies and strong leadership quality (2003: 7b).

Important questions arise, therefore. Does succession planning remain relevant to the needs and conditions of the contemporary workplace? Florida (2002), who portrays contemporary corporate capitalism as being dependent upon innovation and an ability to be responsive to ever-changing market conditions and opportunities,

reports a new set of employment conditions for corporate managers whereby linear career advancement within the same organisation is no longer a realistic expectation.

Are human resource managers being directly engaged in decision-making about the appointment of senior line managers? A survey by the CLC (2003) of hundreds of corporations in the United States found that, in 86 per cent of cases, HRM specialists were not directly involved in leadership appointment processes, even though in-house succession planning processes were in place.

Do chief executive officers take any account of succession planning when making decisions about their leadership teams? What is surprising is that, to date, nobody seems to have asked them about this matter. This is the question that is directly addressed in this paper. The paper reports data from two sources: an in-depth review of succession planning practices in three large Australian corporations, and interviews with 12 CEOs from a range of Australian public and private corporations.

The ideas developed are influenced by a perspective on the nature of leadership as the outcome of individual and environmental interactions. Prospective corporate leaders will vary in terms of their individual abilities and strength of motivation regarding the exercise of leadership. Their circumstances will also vary, with some environments affording a richer array of incentives and opportunities for the exercise of leadership than others. A great many variables impact, therefore, on the probability of obtaining appointment as a corporate leader. Against this background, the question is whether processes for corporate succession planning contribute materially to an increased likelihood of appointment to corporate leadership positions.

Literature

It is a distinctive feature of the literature on corporate leadership appointments that so little of it is empirically based. Australian journals such as *Human Resources Capital* and *Human Resource*, for example, present a considerable body of information about the processes related to corporate leadership appointments, but the articles all tend to be journalistic in style and based on individual cases or particular sets of circumstance. This trend is even more evident in the specialised literature on succession planning in corporate settings. While there are numerous handbooks on how to implement corporate succession-planning frameworks, there is very little empirical investigation concerning whether these frameworks work, or what other likely processes are at play. Case studies exist (see, for example, Taylor & Hardy 2006), but the material reported in them is often heavily anecdotal.

Interestingly, it was the CLC, one of the strongest advocates of succession-planning frameworks for corporate leadership appointments, that began to question the empirical basis for their value. In a report published in 2003, it questioned the extent to which succession planning was being properly implemented across the corporate sector in the United States. It also raised the question of whether or not succession planning was achieving its intended outcomes. Since then, others have begun also to address the question (Bernthal & Wellins 2006, Cranshaw 2006). As reported above, Cranshaw reported that that only a very small percentage of the employees of a large financial retailer in the United Kingdom had experienced any long-term succession planning that they considered to be influential in terms of their career management. Other recent studies (Giambatista, Rowe & Riaz 2005, Effron, Greenslade & Salob 2005) provide evidence that is consistent with Cranshaw's conclusion. In Australia, a recent empirical investigation by the author (Richards 2008) has shown that, at least in one significant financial corporation

in Australia, managers were generally not persuaded that succession planning played much of a role in terms of attaining senior corporate leadership appointments.

Methodology

The investigative approach adopted was that of *naturalistic enquiry*, as advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Key features of this approach are that enquiry should take place in the natural setting of the phenomenon being investigated; it should involve the investigator as the instrument for data collection; it should focus on tapping into 'tacit knowledge', that is, implicit meanings that tend to be taken for granted by those providing relevant information; it should employ methods such as interviews and case studies for the collection of data; it should involve purposive sampling, as opposed to representative sampling, because what matters most is building a rich understanding of the phenomenon under investigation; and it should seek to 'make sense' of the data through the development of conjectures or emergent themes (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 202).

Two methods of data collection were employed. The first involved case studies of succession-planning processes at three Australian corporations. The first (A), a public listed company, has an annual turnover in excess of \$5bn and an employee base of over 20,000 people. The second (B) has an annual turnover in excess of \$1bn and an employee base of over 4,000 people. The third (C) has an annual turnover in excess of \$600m and an employee base of over 1,500 people. Company A has approximately 100 senior management positions considered critical to the success of the company, Company B has approximately 40 and Company C has approximately 28.

These corporations were selected for the investigation because of the author's existing depth of knowledge of their succession-planning processes for senior managers. As a former employee of each of them, the author knew their leadership identification and development

processes very well, having been responsible within the HRM area for contributing to the development of these processes. It was possible, therefore, for the author to develop quite detailed descriptions of these processes for each of the corporations. These descriptions were progressively refined by means of discussions with colleagues working at one or other of the companies.

A framework for drafting the case study reports was provided by Hakim's (1987) guidelines for the analysis of administrative records as a research tool (see Figure 1). Detailed notes on each of the cases were discussed at length with an external auditor, a senior colleague familiar with the HRM function at all three companies. This colleague, prior to her retirement, held executive-level HRM appointments across the corporate sector in Sydney. She is highly qualified academically. Her questions were probing and intended to ensure that themes emerging from the case study accounts were well supported with evidence.

Figure 1: Framework for analysis of HRM records

1. Does the organisation have an explicit policy on leadership appointment?
2. What is the documented recruitment process for senior leadership roles?
3. What processes does the organisation use for assessment of leaders and leadership potential (that is, assessment centres, psychometric testing, targeting selection interviewing?)
4. What is the documented role of HRM in the process of leadership appointment?
5. What training and development structure does the organisation have for leadership development?
6. What percentage of leadership appointments are made from internal versus external candidates?
7. Who signs off the appointment of leaders?

The second method of data collection involved in-depth interviews with 12 CEOs of significant Australian corporations. Eight of these corporations are listed on the Australian stock exchange. The CEOs interviewed had management responsibilities for corporations ranging in size from a workforce of over 4,000 employees to a workforce of about 120 employees. All were extremely well remunerated, university-educated and in the 45-to-60-year age bracket. Nearly all of them reported to a Board of Directors. Only one of them was female.

Three of these CEOs were acquaintances of the author. The initial interviews were conducted with these three acquaintances. They then recommended other CEOs to approach, and so the number of interviewees increased. This 'snowball' approach to sampling is common in qualitative research. A decision was made not to proceed beyond the twelfth interview because emergent themes were well established by then and there was no point in conducting further interviews.

In interviewing the CEOs, special attention was given to documenting issues, claims and concerns, following methods suggested by Patton (1990) and Spradley (1979). The interviews were scheduled to require no more than 60 minutes each, but most CEOs could afford no more than about 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted either at the corporate offices of the CEOs or in a neutral setting selected by them. All CEOs who were approached for an interview agreed to participate.

The interviews followed a set schedule of questions. The topics addressed included: how the interviewee obtained his/her position, how the interviewee assessed people for appointment to the executive team, and how much use the interviewee made of the HRM function, particularly when making senior management appointments. The interview notes were read back to the interviewees at the end of each interview, and verbal approval of their accuracy was thereby obtained.

The author was often able to spend additional time on-site for the purposes of documenting thoroughly various contextual considerations impacting on the CEOs. In most cases, the author's understanding of these contextual considerations was supplemented by personal experience as a consequence of having worked as a member of the HRM team in similar kinds of corporations.

Emergent themes were identified from the interview notes, using the constant comparative method described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). An external auditor (the same person who assisted in auditing the case study notes) checked that interpretations of the interview data were fair and reasonable.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the extent to which an enquiry's findings are 'worth paying attention to' (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 290). Patton (2002) suggests a number of strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative data. These include: *triangulation* – checking data from different viewpoints; *prolonged engagement* – extended contact with informants; *persistent observation* – persevering with aspects of the research; *peer debriefing* – working with a non-involved peer to gain perspective; and *member checking* – obtaining feedback from participants regarding the researcher's interpretation of what has been said.

For the case studies, trustworthiness was addressed primarily by means of *prolonged engagement* and *triangulation*. As noted above, the author had an extensive understanding of the HRM processes employed at each of the case study sites. Recalling and documenting the processes for the purposes of reviewing them analytically was a manageable, though time-consuming, task. Colleagues with more recent experience at the three corporations concerned then checked the case study reports for accuracy. The transferability of the data collected was reinforced by the fact that the case study reports were documented in such a way as to provide rich descriptive data that could be reported in sufficient contextual depth to enable others to

identify as appropriate with the experiences reported. *Peer debriefing* was achieved though the assistance provided by a competent and disinterested external auditor, details of whom have already been reported. This person reviewed all interpretations of the case study notes to ensure that details were being interpreted in a way that was contextually accurate.

For the interviews, trustworthiness was addressed primarily by means of *member-checking*, *prolonged engagement* and, to an extent, *triangulation*. As reported above, the author read back a summary of the interview to each of the CEOs interviewed. This process resulted in minor corrections, but, in most cases, the interviewees confirmed that the summaries were entirely accurate. *Prolonged engagement* with each of the corporations was possible because, against a background of the author's depth of familiarity with corporate processes, staying around after interviews to chat with others enabled additional insights to be obtained about corporate leadership appointment processes. *Triangulation* was more difficult to achieve because of issues related to confidentiality and professional etiquette. It was not appropriate, for example, to seek to interview relevant HRM managers in order to validate the views expressed in interviews by the CEOs. Where an opportunity presented itself, however, the author was often able to chat informally with other senior executive members, thereby obtaining a more nuanced understanding of key points made in interviews with the CEOs.

Five interviews were conducted in the company of a senior academic colleague who is widely experienced with interviewing. Having this person present contributed significantly to *peer debriefing*.

Results

In all three case studies, leadership identification processes were implemented systematically. The usual procedure in each of the cases documented was for HRM staff members to send out leadership

assessment forms to be completed by senior managers about all of the managers reporting to them. These forms recorded details of the individuals being assessed, together with ratings on a wide range of management-related competencies. Senior managers often needed to be shown how to complete the forms. The completed forms were then collated and a profile developed by HRM professionals of each person who held an important management position. Details about the person's career background, educational background and assumed future potential were all captured on a 'talent profile' sheet, which gave a snapshot of the individual being assessed. It also outlined the person's leadership capabilities and perceived development needs.

An annual meeting of the senior management team (at executive level) was the occasion for a review of all of the data. This event, usually of a whole day's duration, was variously referred to as a 'succession planning day' or a 'talent day'. It provided an opportunity for the executive team to review each manager's profile and develop a shared sense of agreement about which managers were of high potential leadership talent. Developmental plans for these individuals were then discussed and confirmed. The senior HRM officer would then keep the profiles of all managers secure, and these were consulted again whenever the need arose to fill another management position in the company.

While this approach applied more or less consistently across all three of the companies concerned, there were some particular points of deviation. In the largest company, the annual 'talent day' involved all members of the Board of Directors. At this meeting, the performance of over 100 managers was reviewed, with most attention devoted to those considered to be of high potential talent. Identifying these high-performing managers involved the use of a talent matrix based largely on a competency-based assessment of their leadership capability, but involving also a one-page profile of the company's expectations of their career profile and a 'pipeline chart' showing broadly the

succession plan for management within the company. In this company, a considerable investment of effort was made to ensure that managers in all parts of the organisation took the talent-identification process seriously.

Managers were given considerable support in completing the relevant documentation. There was also a designated HRM specialist appointed to ensure that the process worked effectively. The HRM specialist contributed substantially when conversations were being held about high-talent managers in the organisation, and about their career development, but the Board and the executive management team took decisions collectively about succession and the rapid advancement of particular managers. The CEO of this company provided strong personal leadership for the process and retained the right to make all final decisions.

In the medium-sized company, an annual talent day was also institutionalised. On this day, the senior executive team met to review the performance of all managers, using a competency-based framework and a leadership potential assessment tool. Prior to this day, HRM staff members worked with senior managers to identify existing and emerging talent. The results were then reported to the senior executive team at the talent day. The senior executive team used the talent day to decide on career moves, development plans and promotions for managers. In this company, less emphasis was placed on the development of a 'pipeline chart', but more time was spent discussing the career paths of individual managers. This discussion also enabled the senior executive team members to consider future company strategies and the best ways of developing key individuals to enable them to be ready for new company challenges. Interestingly, in this company, the power of veto in relation to decisions made rested with the functional directors, and not with the Managing Director.

In the smallest company, only three people participated in the talent management program – the Managing Director, the Finance

Director and the Director of HRM. The Director of HRM initiated the process by meeting with all functional heads to discuss individuals in key leadership roles and to identify emerging talent. Leadership competencies were used as the basis for an assessment of existing managers. The results of this process were then collated and discussed by the senior management. The Managing Director and Finance Director reviewed the information and made final decisions on where each individual should be placed on a talent matrix. This information was then left with the Managing Director, who made decisions about senior appointments in light of it. The Managing Director had the final say on senior appointments.

The practices identified in the case studies are broadly reflective of what happens in Australian corporations. The standard tools employed include: executive assessment, where an agent, who may be from outside the corporation, assesses the leadership skill level of a particular individual, benchmarking that individual's skill levels against the skill levels of peers in other like roles; psychometric testing, where predispositions to the exercise of leadership in its various forms are measured in a way that allows them to be compared with national norms; and 360-degree feedback processes, where a cluster of techniques is employed to enable those seeking leadership appointments to develop self-awareness of their leadership strengths and styles. The standard methods for developing leadership capacity include: the use of a mentor or an executive coach, to assist individuals to develop in specific ways that cater to their specific needs and development criteria; the secondment of key staff to different roles in an organisation for the purposes of giving them a breadth of experience outside of their area of immediate technical capability; and sponsorship to attend business schools and leadership development courses, though this practice is declining in support over recent years.

Turning now to interview data from meetings with the 12 CEOs, what was immediately striking was that, while recognising the existence and importance of the kinds of HRM processes described above, when it came to choosing senior executive managers, the CEOs took little or no account of information being supplied to them by the HRM team. The CEOs stated unanimously that decisions about appointments to their own management teams were critical and were made according to their own criteria. Though they understood these criteria, it was evident that the criteria had never been properly documented.

Many of the CEOs had some highly idiosyncratic approaches to assessing leadership ability. Their strength of belief in their own pet approach was clearly evident. One CEO, for example, used a self-developed matrix of leadership attributes, concerning commerciality, relationship management, integrity and achievement orientation, to assist him in appointing members to the senior executive team. He insisted that this was the only approach he would rely upon. Another used a favourite psychometric checklist to assist him to determine if a person was 'ready' for a senior leadership role. He referred to this checklist as a way of providing him with a language that allowed him to express his 'gut reactions' to candidates for senior management appointments. He acknowledged the unscientific nature of his approach, and the fact that it had sometimes failed him, but he remained nonetheless strongly committed to it. Another reported that he looked mainly at how confident and trustworthy a person was. This CEO spoke at some length about how these characteristics could be assessed when interviewing prospective senior managers. He was quite clear that this approach worked well for him, though he acknowledged that at times it had failed him. Yet another used a person's prior role success as the litmus test in determining suitability for senior appointment:

I had seen the results that the person got when we sent them to head up Asia. They turned that business around from making no

money to [millions of dollars], so I knew they could do the job of turnaround here also.

Though these approaches varied greatly, there was a common theme underlying them. Each of the approaches was viewed as a mechanism for tapping into whether or not a person being considered for appointment to the senior executive team would be able to make a significant contribution to the commercial viability of the corporation concerned. CEOs referred constantly to a person's achievements in profit and loss terms: 'bringing in a major client worth x', and 'saving a huge amount [worth x] of money for the company'. The achievement of outstanding commercial success was ultimately what mattered most as the stepping-stone to senior corporate leadership. Interestingly, most CEOs attributed their own achievements to having been successful in contributing to the profitability of a company. One CEO cited 'a major deal' as having been pivotal to his personal career success, while another proudly reported that: 'after I secured the largest deal the firm ever had, I was assured of the top job'. For another, the successful launch of a new product that turned the company's financial situation around paved the road to a CEO appointment. Yet another reported that the path to being given the most senior position had come about as a consequence of extraordinary commercial success while managing a smaller subsidiary company:

The recruitment for the senior role was given to a head hunting firm and I was the internal candidate. I was benchmarked against external candidates and I was the successful person because I had a proven track record in the company already of growing the company.

When pressed to indicate whom they relied on most to advise them about senior executive appointments, none of the CEOs referred to the HRM Director as being a primary confidante. One said that what mattered was the opinion of the leadership team. Another commented on the value of using an executive recruiter. A little more than one-

half of the CEOs acknowledged that the HRM function was suitable as a source of advice on junior management appointments, but few made much reference to it in the context of senior management appointments. A few mentioned that they would speak to their senior HR person as part of the process, but this discussion was clearly never pivotal. All of the CEOs reported that they made the final decision regarding senior management appointments. In no case was it evident that information provided by the HRM function ever played an important role, a representative viewpoint being that: 'I think the HR processes are fine for junior leadership roles, but I need to be responsible for those on my leadership team'.

There was an opportunity in most of the interviews to discuss the corporation's HR policies. In general, the CEOs expressed respect for these policies, but they did not feel that they were all that relevant to processes for senior management appointments. Employees were required to work within the framework of these policies, but CEOs felt that they needed the flexibility afforded by being able to ignore the policies.

The CEOs interviewed generally required time to reflect on the reasons for their own career success. It was evident from their responses that they had not given the matter a great deal of consideration. A surprising feature of their responses was the incidence of reference to having been lucky. They also acknowledged, though, the importance of their track record in contributing to corporate profitability. Hardly any of them made reference to the role played by succession planning.

Discussion and conclusion

Two mind-sets appear to impact on the making of corporate leaders. On the one hand, succession planning seeks to have an impact by providing systematic and transparent processes for identifying and developing leadership potential within the corporation. As

indicated in the case studies, succession planning in corporations is generally a collaborative process involving HRM staff members and line managers. Competency-based frameworks are used to rank individuals in terms of their leadership potential. The approach typically results in the development of personal profiles for all managers, and these profiles become a basis for future advancement decisions. Because of its transparency, this approach is important to the attainment of organisational justice (Cranshaw 2006). The approach is hardly ever binding, though, and so senior managers who persist in seeking to appoint a 'favourite' to a more senior level are rarely prevented from doing so. There are also concerns about how robust and objective the instruments are, with those able to give a 'good impression' continuing to obtain an advantage (see, for example, Hare 2007). Additionally, the approach is heavily focused on recent assessments of performance, which can impact adversely and unfairly on managers who for one reason or another are not performing at peak levels in the short term.

On the other hand, CEOs, as indicated from the interviews, insist upon being able to make their own senior management appointments, using processes that are mostly not transparent, and that show negligible regard for succession planning. All of the CEOs interviewed, for example, held quite definite views about how to assess readiness to join the senior leadership team, and some of these were quite idiosyncratic. All of the CEOs insisted, however, on making the final decisions. The one consideration that united them was the importance they attached to a prospective senior manager's ability to make a valuable commercial contribution to the company concerned.

The results echo a distinction made by Argyris and Schön (1974) between espoused theory, that is, what people say in order to convey a sense of what they would like others to think they do, and theories-in-use, that is, what people in fact do. While the CEOs interviewed were generally well disposed to succession planning in their companies,

and while they perceived it to be a valuable and transparent process from the point of view of the selection of middle-level and lower-level managers, when it came to the selection of a senior management team, they saw little benefit in relying on succession planning, preferring instead to rely on their own 'gut reactions', and taking into account especially the potential commercial benefits from making particular appointments. In making these decisions, they were rarely conscious of taking advice from the HRM manager.

Curiously, these two sources of influence on management appointments appear to sit together peacefully in most corporate settings. In some settings, the distinction between them is less apparent because CEOs, through their involvement in succession-planning activities such as 'talent days', become literate in the language and approach of succession planning, and they use this language when approaching the task of making the most senior management appointments. In other settings, however, the distinction is more marked, and there may be tension. Richards (2008) has reported, for example, on management development in one financial sector corporation in which the informal networks of patronage for appointment to more senior management levels were so well developed that HRM strategies related to succession planning were widely ignored by most managers, even though they went through the motions of subscribing to them. Given the power imbalance between the CEO and the HRM function, it is inevitable that the example set by the CEO in approaching management appointments will pervade the culture of the organisation. Where the CEO shows no sign of commitment to succession planning when making appointments to the senior executive team, then succession planning within the organisation will tend to be undermined and displaced.

Leadership appointment is complex, as is the role of being a leader. Attempting from a HRM perspective to build processes to assist with

the identification and development of corporate leaders in a way that is fair and transparent is a worthwhile professional task. There is a wealth of guidance in the literature concerning the ways in which this task can be successfully accomplished. Succession planning nearly always provides a suitable framework. At the same time, there is a need to have a better understanding of the reasons why succession planning does not always work. While there may be technical difficulties associated with its effective implementation, and while it may be impossible to remove entirely the role of personal preferences in the management appointments process, the thrust of this paper has been to show how vulnerable succession planning is to the culture of management appointments at the very top of a corporation.

In summary, then, this paper has sought to provide an insight into the processes for succession planning in corporate settings, drawing on case studies of three corporations that have attempted to take these processes seriously. The paper has also documented the experiences of 12 CEOs with appointment processes to senior corporate leadership positions. What is evident is the existence of parallel cultures, one of which (that is, involving appointments on the basis of systematic and transparent assessments of readiness to succeed a more senior manager) is vulnerable to the other (that is, involving appointments on the basis of individual judgement based on unspecified or obscure criteria). Maybe it is time, then, for corporations to review what really happens in the name of succession planning, having regard to the value of the financial investment made and the extent to which the whole process impacts on the appointments that matter, that is, appointments to the most senior management positions. There is much more research to be done on this topic.

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An appreciative inquiry into the transformative learning experiences of students in a family literacy project

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Educational discourse has often struggled to genuinely move beyond deficit-based language. Even action research, a predominant model for teacher development, starts with the identification of a problem (Cardno 2003). It would appear that the vocabulary for a hope-filled discourse which captures the imagination and influences our future educational activity seems to have escaped us. Moreover, we seem bereft of educational contexts where the experience for students is holistic and transformative.

Appreciative inquiry is a research approach that seeks to facilitate change based on participants' actual experiences of best practice

(Cady & Caster 2000, Cooperrider & Srivastva 1987, English, Fenwick & Parsons 2003, Hammond 1998, Hammond & Royal 1998). Based on assumptions that 'in every organisation something works' and 'if we are to carry anything of our past forward in our lives, it should be the good things', appreciative inquiry energises participants to reach for higher ideals (Hammond 1998, Hammond & Royal 1998). Rather than giving priority to the problems in our current practice, appreciative inquiry gives attention to evidence of successful practice. In this way, proponents describe it as 'dream forming' and 'destiny creating'. This paper will outline an appreciative inquiry with adult students in the context of a tertiary bridging program. The inquiry was able to capture the students' stories of transformative learning experiences.

What are we aiming for in education?

From earliest times, the central thrust of education has been the fullest development of students' characters and understandings. The development was seen as a holistic formation (Bennett 1997). The interactions between the teacher and students provide the context for this transformative experience wherein the purpose and process of education was understood to be intentionally interactive and transformative. Holistic and transformative educational processes, then, attend to the fullest development of learners including their characters, understandings and skills – described in current literature as focusing on the head, heart and hands (Kuk 1993, Loup & Koller 2005). Indeed, an educated person was said to exhibit virtues such as thoughtfulness and hospitality as well as appropriately demonstrate their civic responsibilities (Bennett 1997). Formal learning contexts were supported by informal social contexts where teachers and students, and indeed the wider community, interacted together. In this way, teachers became known to their students and their families and vice versa (Palmer 1993, 1997, 1998).

In becoming known, teachers must then grow in their appreciation of the extent to which they purposely engage with their students as opposed to unnecessary role playing (Palmer 1998, 1999). The critical point here is that, whether consciously aware of it or not, the teaching and learning exchange is holistic and influential (Taylor 1998).

Education involves an awareness and sensitivity to the many dynamic relationships between teacher and students and the facilitation of the exchanges between students (Palmer 1998).

Proponents of transformative education identify the discourse within the teaching-learning process as another critical factor which significantly influences students. Mezirow (1991) considers the dialogue of the teaching-learning process to be the medium for deeper and reflective learning, supporting students who critically reflect on their assumptions and beliefs as part of the learning process. Dialogue, then, is much more than a transmission of information. Dialogue implies an energetic exchange between a teacher and student that is open-ended. Schugurensky (2002) suggests that when teachers and students 'have the opportunity to actively participate in deliberation and decision making in the institutions that have most impact on their everyday lives, they engage in substantive learning and can experience both incremental and sudden transformations' (p.67). Rather than advocating greater dialogue in traditionalist ways, the concept of dialogue calls for a type of conversation that engages values and beliefs. Freire (1993) suggests that educational praxis that allows for deep engagement is best facilitated through a comprehensive reconsideration of the process of education. Reconsidering the breadth of relationships within the learning environment opens the thought of education being about a community of relationships (Giles 2003, hooks 2003, Palmer 1998). In this way, teacher and student are seen as essential parts of the educative project.

Avoiding the derailment of education

In contrast to the ideals expressed above, many education systems around the world are still being heavily influenced by an economic rationalist, or New Right, ideology (Billot 2003). Shifting from the ideal of holistic formation, this ideology prizes efficiency in the educational process, the assessment of prescribed learning outcomes, and an educational infrastructure that adopts the language of business. Education is viewed as a business, with educational providers competing for the services of its student-clients, invoiced for this opportunity in the name of user-pays (Butterworth & Tarling 1994, Grace 1991, Snook 1991).

Of significance is the shift in the purpose and process of education towards an individualistic, independent and academic focus alone – a stark contrast to former ideals. Perpetuated by vocationally-based qualification frameworks that have difficulty embracing broader educational goals, it is not surprising that our students are experiencing an educational system that appears to be primarily concerned with its own efficiency, and advocating a fragmented and bitsy curriculum with associated evidence-based assessment systems. Moreover, the priority given to quality assurance and compliance requirements institutionally ensures that management of these organisations is preoccupied with sustaining the *status quo*. Educators, and indeed our future pioneers in education, must now language our present educational scenario in a way that is dialogue-enabling. Hope-filled dialogue is required with a view to restoring holistic and transformative educational practice as the norm for our students.

Methodology: the use of appreciative inquiry

It is to this end that the appreciative inquiry approach is being championed in this paper as an approach that enables dialogue that is restorative, generative and hope-filled (Bushe & Coetzer 1995, Cady & Caster 2000, Cooperrider & Whitney 1999, Elliot 1999, English,

Fenwick & Parsons 2003, Hammond 1998, Hammond & Royal 1998, Reed, Pearson, Douglas, Swinburne & Wilding 2002, Watkins & Mohr 2001). A key assumption within this approach is that, 'if we bring the past forward, we should bring the best' (Hammond 1998, p.21). The appreciative inquiry approach can enable a renewed sense of purpose and the development of shared understandings as to the nature and purpose of education in the future. Critically important here is that the appreciative inquiry approach sustains a concern for the relational and contextual nature of education, a concern that appears to be lost under the prevailing economic rationalist ideology.

An appreciative inquiry is initiated in the participants' stories of best practice, those moments when the educational practice is in accord with the values that underpin the practice. Additional information is then gathered through the consideration of ideal educational experiences. This part of the process involves the answering of a 'miracle question' (Hammond 1998, Hammond & Royal 1998). After these stories are caught, the group processes of constructing provocative propositions and an associated action plan commences. In this way, the power of appreciative inquiry is seen in its ability to draw participants into the process of describing and speculating upon actual stories. Importantly, the participants' stories provide a grounded-ness to the dialogue about future educational experiences.

This paper describes the findings of an appreciative inquiry within the context of a bridging program for adults entering a tertiary institution for the first time. The research approach enabled the capture of students' accounts of transformative learning experiences (Mezirow 1991, Mezirow & Associates 2000).

Background to the inquiry

The students in this research are part of an innovative family literacy program that involves practical experiences with their own children in a nearby school and a monthly group outing which involves the adult students and their families. Up to ninety percent of the

students in this study have had limited or unsuccessful experiences in mainstream public schooling and, for some, this program was their first experience of studying for many years. As a consequence, one of the main aims of the program is to make the learning experience enjoyable and worthwhile, while giving the students the opportunities to grow and develop in their role as parents.

The purpose and nature of the research

There is considerable literature regarding the retention rates of students in tertiary bridging programs. Walker (2008) notes the need for tertiary institutions to understand and address the learning needs of a growing and diverse student population as a priority for the retention of students. Rather than fit into the existing culture of the institution, the institutional culture needs to better fit the needs of these diverse students (Zepke & Leach 2005). Indeed, Anderson (2001) suggests that bridging education should never be at the expense of an individual's culture, class or gender. The first year in tertiary study is also recognised as important to the retention of students (Anderson 2007, Mabbett, Schmidt & Houston 2005, Walker 2008, Waters 2003, Watson, Johnson & Austin 2004). The retention of students is influenced by the nature of the transition and adjustment to tertiary study. Indeed, positive initial experiences can lead to purposeful engagement and retention (Anderson 2007).

The observation of the researchers was that students in this program appeared to sustain their commitment. The purpose of this research was to appreciatively appraise those social interactions that were occurring between teacher and students that had a positive impact on the students. The research considered feedback from past and present students in the program. The students recalled the nature of the learning environment they had experienced and the extent to which this had influenced them as learners. The study sought information on what the students perceived to be working well, as Appreciative

Inquiry works on the assumption that whatever you want more of already exists (Hammond 1998, Hammond & Royal 1998).

The research sought to identify common themes within the students' stories. The appreciative inquiry sought to answer the following research question: What are the positive aspects of the social dimension of the learning environment that most impacted the students in this bridging program?

Actioning appreciative inquiry

A range of research techniques was utilised which included focus groups, observational journals, individual interviews and written documentation.

Focus groups

Initially, informal group interviews were conducted with all the students from a particular year-group. While participation in these group meetings was voluntary, with students having the right to withdraw from the study at any time, all eleven members of a particular year-group agreed to participate in this inquiry. The discussions were transcribed for analysis. The questions asked within the focus group were:

1. Can you provide two significant memories you have about your learning within the program?
2. If your learning in the program could be perfect for you everyday, what would the learning environment be like?
3. What social aspects of the learning community have most contributed to your success?

Observational journal

In the course of the research, the researcher's personal observations were recorded across a period of four months. The researcher was present during the whole program as a participant observer (Crotty 1998).

Individual interviews

In addition to the focus group, each student was individually interviewed with a view to ascertaining other stories.

Written documentation

A range of written documentation was available for inclusion in this research project. This documentation included students' ongoing feedback and informal writing on the positive and influential aspects of their program. Unexpectedly, one student had kept a personal journal of her experiences from the start of the course. This was voluntarily and confidentially offered to the researchers for use in the research.

Findings

There were numerous recurrent themes within the students' stories. These themes are summarised as follows:

- the role taken by the adult educator is critical for the students
- the atmosphere for learning must be socially enabling
- the educational outcomes must recognise the wider family
- bridging education must be inclusive of all the students.

The role taken by the adult educator is critical for the students

While the educator is required to wear many hats in the course of their work, it is important that he/she develops warm, reciprocal relationships with the students such as friend, confidant, companion and teacher. A sample of the students' comments illustrates this:

- You have been 'a tutor who can be a friend as well'.
- As 'a tutor [you have been] so flexible, just to meet my needs'.
- '[The] teacher has [been a] major influence [that] has inspired me.'
- 'As [the] tutor is easy to talk to, [we] can come to her with anything, even when she is not cool with it; it is okay.'

- You have been ‘a tutor that cared about me and my family. [You] made me feel special, made [this place] where I wanted to be, apart from home.’

Taylor (1998) contends that the role of the adult educator in building trust and facilitating the development of sensitive relationships amongst students is fundamental to the fostering of transformative learning. As a member of the learning community, the teacher sets the stage for transformative learning by serving as a role model, demonstrating a willingness to learn and in turn be influenced.

The atmosphere for learning must be socially enabling

The students clearly identified the importance of having fun while learning as well as the value of being able to share their experiences with other students. The students recognised the importance of a warm, supportive, non-threatening and enjoyable environment. Some of the students commented:

- Normal ‘class activities involved working with each other’.
- We were able to ‘mix and mingle with others in a comfortable zone’.
- We were ‘getting to know and accept other people through talking, games and group activities’.

Sefa Dei (2002) suggests that people are continually forming their connections with others; adult educators need to provide a learning environment where students can support each other and develop warm and equitable relationships. By promoting interactions where experiences and ideas are shared, and by developing the concept of a caring environment, students are more likely to foster support and trust with each other.

The educational outcomes must recognise the wider family

Stories from the students readily identified the importance of involving their wider family on their learning journey. In this

way, opportunity is provided for students to celebrate and share their learning experiences with others from within the learning environment and with those from outside of it. The family was seen as essential in providing support and encouragement. The program's commitment to upskill the students' parenting skills through the involvement and inclusion of the wider family enabled this commitment to be seen. The students recalled times when their wider family was involved:

- The '[family] night concert [had] mixed cultures, fun, [and an] acceptance of other cultures'.
- You got 'to know my kids, spending time with my child'.
- We were able to meet 'everyone's family and partners'.
- Family '[night] in the hall, what a fantastic night'.

Bridging education must be inclusive of all the students

Creating an inclusive, caring and respectful learning environment is important for students. A sense of community is what binds the students together and in turn generates its own value system. Tisdell (1995:79) suggests that what happens in any learning environment in terms of inclusiveness will depend on 'who the adult educator is, ... the educational context ... and on who the participants in the learning activity are'. The research suggested that inclusiveness can be achieved in creative ways, as shown by the students:

- We 'help and get help from others'.
- We were 'not being judgemental'.
- We 'are getting to know the other students [and are] more inclusive of their cultures now'.
- We 'learnt to ask for support [and knew that] people are there to help'.

Appraising the process

The use of appreciative inquiry in this research has allowed previously unsuccessful students to identify personal experiences that show

their success in their tertiary studies. Moreover, the inquiry allowed students to hear each other's stories in a way that strengthened the relationships within the learning environment. Appreciative Inquiry is well suited to reflective dialogue that establishes a view of the future that is drawn from grounded and past experiences.

Concluding comments

This research suggests that amidst an education system with priorities and values that appear incongruent with the central concerns of education, there are educators pioneering educational contexts where students' learning is holistic and transformative. Indeed, the positive aspects of the social dimension of the learning environment can be both experienced and articulated by the students within the process. The adult educators in this tertiary program have been intentional in providing educational experiences that influence students within the context of their family. The findings of this research show that the influence of the program extends to the interdependent and interconnected aspects of the learning community. The process of conducting an appreciative inquiry has enabled a new discourse to emerge that is hope-filled amongst students whose previous experience of education has been unsuccessful. The use of the appreciative inquiry approach has enabled the imaginative capturing, and speculation, of educational experiences that results from the rich and grounded stories.

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Promoting social inclusion: emerging evidence from the Catalyst-Clemente program

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Catalyst-Clemente is an innovative educational program based upon a collaboration involving Australian Catholic University, Mission Australia and the St Vincent de Paul Society. The program enhances the transformational learning opportunities and re-engagement of disadvantaged people within the community. This paper reports on the origins and rationale of the program and initial research undertaken with the students. Six key themes of self, social interaction, relationships with others, learning, community participation and the future have been identified that represent the ways in which the program impacts upon the participants. The initial study suggests that Catalyst-Clemente is a practical educational solution that has resulted in enhancing the life opportunities and choices for disadvantaged Australians.

Introduction

The numbers of people in Australia who are homeless and marginalised are increasing (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, St Vincent de Paul Society 2007). Furthermore, the situation of homelessness and marginalisation is exacerbated by poor physical and mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, financial difficulties, inferior housing, family breakdown and unemployment (Vinson 2007). The resultant complexity of factors in people's lives often leads to disengagement and exclusion from one's family, friends and the wider community. The challenges of poverty, deprivation and social exclusion need to be addressed jointly by government, community, business and education sectors so as to assist disengaged people in their pathways to social inclusion.

Poverty stops people 'from having an acceptable standard of living', deprivation is 'an enforced lack of socially perceived essentials' and social exclusion means people do not fully participate in the community (Saunders, Naidoo & Griffiths 2007:viii). These three overarching elements, though distinct, do interact to bring about social disadvantage and the exclusion of people from their rightful choices in attaining their personal aspirations. Many Australians experience exclusion from the essential services they require, an exclusion from the social activities within family and community as well as an educational exclusion from learning and study structured appropriately to meet their personal needs.

Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a short-hand term for what can happen when people or areas have a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing (Social Exclusion Task Force 2006).

This lack of access and inclusion inhibits people's ability to contribute to and benefit from the society in which they live. Thus,

disadvantaged people are in a sense ‘disengaged’ from society, with their capacity to function socially and economically being restricted. Improving the educational access of marginalised people through alternative pathways and innovative co-operation amongst community agencies, business and education providers can assist the marginalised in embracing new life opportunities. Through cross-sector community networks and a focus on authentic learning opportunities, disadvantaged people can achieve higher levels of self-esteem, build their self-confidence and re-engage with community.

The Catalyst-Clemente program is an educationally focussed initiative based upon the value of transformational learning for the re-engagement of disadvantaged people with the community. The program is a collaborative process between community agencies, Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society and Australian Catholic University, to provide a purposeful university education that supports the re-engagement of marginalised people with society. Catalyst-Clemente emphasises the need to enable disadvantaged Australians to access a wider range of choices and opportunities enjoyed by most members of society.

This paper reports on the origins and rationale of the Catalyst-Clemente program, as well as some initial research undertaken on it in two Australian capital cities, Sydney and Brisbane. The insights offered by the program’s students into the benefits they have experienced in their lives are examined as a basis for conceptualising further research into the re-engagement of disadvantaged people through collaborative, community-based humanities education programs.

Catalyst-Clemente

The original Clemente Course was offered in 1997 at a community centre in New York City (Shorris 2000). This was a free, tertiary-level,

humanities education program provided to disadvantaged adults. Since then, the model of the Clemente program has been the basis for establishing similar educational programs in a number of cities in the United States of America, and other countries including Canada, Mexico, Korea, South Africa and Australia.

In 2003, Australian Catholic University (ACU National), in collaboration with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and with financial assistance from the Sisters of Charity and Sydney City Council, offered the first Australian Clemente program at the community centre of Vincentian Village in East Sydney. In 2005, ACU National and Mission Australia, a leading, national community services organisation, initiated a collaborative process to establish a second Sydney-based program titled 'Catalyst' to be offered at the Mission Australia Centre in Surry Hills, East Sydney.

In 2006, ACU National and Mission Australia established the Catalyst program in another Australian capital city, Brisbane. A Canberra-based program commenced in early 2007, with plans for further Clemente derived programs to be established in Melbourne, Ballarat, Perth, and additional Sydney-based sites. Collectively, the Catalyst and Clemente programs in Australia are known as 'Catalyst-Clemente.' Each of these programs is provided within community settings, rather than at universities, to cater for the particular needs of disadvantaged people through combining education with social support. Some students rely upon a range of services provided at certain community centres, and so it was ideal that the Catalyst-Clemente classes were held at or near these centres. Each unit of the Catalyst-Clemente programs has an explicit focus upon the students engaging with the learning content of the humanities in examining their lives, and the lives of those about them. This is done through the lenses of areas such as literature, drama, art, philosophy and history.

The rationale for Catalyst-Clemente

Catalyst-Clemente stands as an alternative to the forms of education traditionally provided, in Australia, to marginalised people (Egan, Butcher, Howard, Hampshire, Henson & Homel 2006). Usually vocational or 'life skills' courses are offered to disadvantaged people, with the aim of fostering employability, independent living, and self-management skills. However, education can provide more than vocational skills: education can enlighten, empower and fulfil (Hammond 2004). Education is a key factor that ensures 'individuals are endowed with capabilities that allow them **freedom** to choose to live their lives in ways that have real meaning and real value' (Henry 2007:8). Whilst vocational courses are important, it is equally important that the full potential of education to transform the lives of people be realised (Stevenson, Yashin-Shaw & Howard 2007). Catalyst-Clemente is a community-based program which gives expression to the value of empowering people through re-engaging them with the community through tertiary study in the humanities. It is a program that has a clear focus on the social inclusion of people who have been excluded from their community. The Catalyst-Clemente program is founded on the values that underlie the humanities, designed to empower students to become more reflective and intellectually engaged by offering rigorous learning in an authentic, respectful and transformative way.

The role of education

There is substantial empirical evidence indicating that education can lead to the positive outcomes predicted to result from participation in Catalyst-Clemente. Hammond (2004) investigated the impact of education upon health and resilience throughout the lifespan. This research built upon previous investigations, suggesting that education may have a positive effect on mental and physical health (Grossman & Kaestner 1997, Hammond 2002, Hartog & Oosterbeek 1998, Ross & Mirowsky 1999). As Hammond (2004:552) pointed out:

Educational research into the immediate ‘soft’ outcomes of learning suggests that learning can develop a number of psychosocial qualities ... These psychosocial outcomes of learning may promote attitudes, practices and life circumstances that are conducive to positive health outcomes.

The distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ outcomes is likely a result of the emphasis placed upon variables whose effects are more readily measurable and whose importance is more readily demonstrable. In the context of Catalyst-Clemente, the employment rates of those who complete the course would be an example of a hard outcome, while the participants’ levels of self-esteem would be a soft outcome. Whilst acknowledging the merit of hard outcomes, the importance of soft outcomes must also be recognised, as many soft outcomes facilitate or are foundational to the achievement of ‘hard’ outcomes (Hammond 2004). One such example is that a person is more likely to seek stable employment when they enjoy high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy and resilience (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia 2002).

A number of studies have indicated that relevant education can lead to improvements in:

- self-confidence (Carlton & Soulsby 1999, Dench & Regan 1999)
- self-efficacy (Wertheimer 1997)
- self-understanding (Cox & Pascall 1994)
- competencies, communication skills and civic engagement (Emler & Fraser 1999, Parry, Moyser & Day 1992)
- a sense of belonging to a social group (Emler & Fraser 1999, Jarvis & Walker 1997)
- substantive freedoms and capabilities (Sen 1999).

Hammond (2004:553) linked these benefits to long-term health outcomes, concluding that education ‘can lead to improved well-being, increased efficacy, protection and recovery from mental health difficulties, and more effective coping, including coping

with physical ill health'. Furthermore, education can enable people to obtain qualifications, find employment, increase their level of social engagement and civic participation, develop their careers, and form healthy interpersonal relationships. Based upon this reviewed literature, these important benefits were mediated by the positive impact of education on the following identified psychosocial dimensions:

- self-esteem and self-efficacy
- sense of identity
- sense of purpose and hope
- competencies and communication skills
- social integration

Thus, there is evidence that the 'soft' outcomes of education can contribute to the achievement of 'hard' outcomes, with appropriate education leading to improvements within the social, economic and personal domains of a person's life.

Catalyst-Clemente: identifying impact

Beginning in 2003, the Australian iterations of the Clemente program have been the subject of an ongoing program of evaluation assessing the impact and the extent of engaging with the program on the lives of the participants. This paper reports upon the impact of the Catalyst-Clemente courses upon students as investigated at two Sydney sites and a Brisbane site during the second semester of 2006, and the gathered data analysed to identify key categories of influence upon their lives. The researchers have sought to acquire both a deeper appreciation and an understanding of the complex and intricate processes, relationships and transitions that occur during the programs.

Program overview

The Catalyst-Clemente courses were constructed to be sensitive to the particular needs, requirements and capacities of disadvantaged people while maintaining academic standards. Thus, the class size of each course was restricted to a maximum of 15 people to ensure that there was sufficient opportunity for each student's individual learning needs to be met. Admission to each course was determined by informal interview processes, whereby potential students were informed as to the nature of the course, and their willingness and ability to participate in the necessary studies were gauged. This interview process was implemented as a duty of care precaution to ensure that as much as reasonably possible students were not being 'set up to fail'. Thus, there were people who entered the program as enrolled students, some who attended the lectures to decide on whether the program was appropriate for them, while others were advised of alternate adult educational programs that would best meet their current learning needs.

Each course offered a different humanities subject. The Clemente students studied 'Spirituality in Australian literature', the Sydney-based Catalyst students studied 'Art history and theory', and the Brisbane-based Catalyst students studied '2D art practice'. The courses were taught over 12 weeks, and each week the students attended a two-hour lecture and a two-hour 'shared learning' tutorial-style session. The 'shared learning' sessions were staffed by volunteers from the business and corporate sectors. These volunteers were known as 'learning partners' to reflect the fact that both the students and the volunteers learn from their experiences of interacting with one another. The learning partners were provided with a professional briefing prior to the commencement of the courses. Their role was to assist the students in undertaking and completing their tasks, assignments and other coursework, especially with regard to computing and written language skills. To further coordinate the ongoing implementation of the program, each site

had a community-based coordinator who responded to the social support needs of students, liaised with the university academic coordinator in managing the everyday issues related to the program and oversaw the weekly lecturing and learning partner sessions. The selection of the lecturers was critical in that they had to have expertise in the subject content but more importantly, the teaching skills to recognise, acknowledge and adapt to the learning needs of the students maintaining a standard of scholarship as well as concern and compassion for individuals.

At the commencement of Semester 2, 2006, thirty students began their studies across the Sydney and Brisbane sites. The Clemente program in Sydney was completed by six students, eight students completed the Sydney-based Catalyst program, and three students completed the Catalyst program in Brisbane. Thus, by semester's end, 17 students had successfully completed the course(s) they commenced. This is an extraordinary result given that many of the students had not undertaken significant tertiary study for an extended period of time and had experienced a variety of life challenges including mental health illnesses, transitional housing issues, substance abuse, alcoholism, anxiety disorders and gambling addiction. Thus, many of these thirty students have had to overcome significant internal and external barriers just to enter into and begin the Catalyst-Clemente program. Coming to the first class can be a daunting experience in itself and the ongoing attendance and completion can be precarious and fragile depending upon the individual's circumstance from week to week. Each student has shown a level of personal courage in beginning a journey of learning when they may continue to encounter drug and alcohol misuse and feelings of anxiety and self-doubt.

Methodology and data collection

The data for the present study were gathered employing a 'methodology of engagement'. Foundational to this methodology

was having the students as authentic collaborators in the study. The students, usually with fragile and vulnerable backgrounds, give of themselves in undertaking the Catalyst-Clemente program of study, to be involved 'with' this study and to reflect upon their learning journey. Purposeful relationships were established amongst the students and the researchers that were based upon a sincere and honest trust and engagement with one another. The research was built upon a collaborative research paradigm based upon mutual trust, respect, integrity, dignity and rapport (Liamputtong 2007, Delamont 1992). Questions asked of the students during the data gathering process were tailored to be respectful, engaging and open-ended, allowing the respondents to share their perspectives and experiences in a dignified way.

Data were gathered in three phases at the beginning, during and conclusion of the semester. In each phase, the participants were asked questions exploring their experiences and perspectives. At the beginning of the 12-week course (Phase 1, during the first or second week), the participants completed a short open-ended questionnaire consisting of the following five questions:

1. What do you hope you will get from this course?
2. What do you hope to get from the lecturer?
3. What are your hopes for yourself?
4. What are the reasons why you decided to participate in the course?
5. What do you think you'll need to help you with this course?

Mid-way through the course (Phase 2), the participants participated in either one-on-one structured interviews or focus group sessions, during which they were asked the following questions:

1. How is it going?
2. What have you found most satisfying about the course so far, and why?

3. What have you found most challenging about the course so far, and why?
4. What have been the benefits of your participation in the course?
5. Are there any obstacles that have been an issue for you during the course?
6. What feedback or advice can you give us about the course, and how it's being run?
7. Anything else you'd like to say?

The participants' responses to these questions were recorded and transcribed.

At the completion of the course (Phase 3, during the eleventh or twelfth week), the participants completed another short open-ended questionnaire consisting of the following questions:

1. How have your expectations of the course been met?
2. How have your expectations of the course not been met?
3. Looking back over the whole course, what did you get out of it?
4. What has been the most significant change that has resulted from the course?
5. Are there any other significant changes you'd like to mention?
6. How has your experience on the course had an impact on your life?
7. What's next for you now you have finished this subject?
8. What else would you like us to know?

During Phase 3, in-depth, semi-structured, biographical interviews were conducted with three of the participant groups. These interviews offered students the opportunity to explore the above questions in more detail while providing more in-depth descriptions of their personal backgrounds and life circumstances. The interviews focused on the place of the Catalyst-Clemente program within the interviewees' broader life journeys, and how the program

contributed to their re-engagement with society. Upon completion, the participants' responses were analysed to identify emerging themes that would assist in shaping key findings from the study.

Emerging evidence of student outcomes

Six core themes emerged from the analysis of the gathered data. These themes of self, social interaction, relationships with others, learning, community participation and the future were representative of the student views of the impact of the program on them.

Self

Students expressed an enhanced view of self and well-being. They commented on self-esteem, increased levels of confidence and personal development. These are essential factors in enhancing economic and social participation.

The course gives you self-esteem ... I have learnt so much through the course. Not just the subject-matter, but my own capabilities.

Events took away my confidence and self-esteem ... the course helped me get back on track ...

I need something meaningful in my life because up till now it has just been surviving ... but now I am able to start this ... I feel encouraged to just have a go and I have found by having a go, that is, from having awareness, all kinds of things are opening up.

Social interaction

Social exclusion and isolation has a negative impact upon the lives, well-being and mental health of disadvantaged Australians. The Catalyst-Clemente students expressed a desire for enhanced and increased social participation with all others involved in the program. This was articulated at the beginning of the program as a hope and developed further as a reality as the program progressed.

It is a great joy being here with my peers ... you find yourself talking not just about art, you are talking about life, which is what it is all about anyway.

I've enjoyed the social side of it. I've enjoyed meeting new people, loved going to the Opera House and seeing Shakespeare and all that.

Relationships with others

This was an unexpected theme to emerge and provided evidence that, for some students, their relationships with others changed in positive ways. The change went beyond simply enhancing students' social interactions to include changes in their relationships and how they engaged with others, including their family and friends.

People see that I have a brain because I have done a university unit. I am back in society.

It is important because everyone always asks you first thing what you do ... now we're doing something.

It might be too soon to say but I think it has enhanced my self-esteem. I think my teenage son is proud of me.

Learning

Many disadvantaged Australians have not only interrupted learning experiences but have also been excluded from education. The students expressed a belief that the process of learning and the course content was important to them as was the opportunity to engage with others in the learning process.

I'm learning a lot, some things go over my head but I'm able to go back home and go over things...and by the time the next class comes around, I've got some sort of understanding of it.

The whole experience of education is rather alien ... I never went to school. I've had an interest in the content of what we've been studying but I haven't had the discipline to actually sit down and read and write an assignment ... So it's been challenging and

rewarding and I've received quite good marks ... It comes as a bit of a shock to me ... It's been really good for my confidence that I'm at this university level. I would never have guessed that.

I'm aware of the people that I'm with, how much more they've done and that is interesting, so you are picking up ideas.

Community participation

Many disadvantaged Australians do not participate in cultural or community arts activities. They are often excluded from attending what other Australians take for granted. The students commented on the value of such participation through the program.

Just the experience of going to the theatre, never done that before, and that was an eye-opener, something that I didn't really think I was going to enjoy, and I ended up enjoying it ... I thought it was going to be one of those nights where it was just gonna drag on ... but I wasn't tired ... I really enjoyed it.

He [the lecturer] makes us more aware of what is going on around us, and the environment as far as art is concerned and architecture and sculpture...[we've] more awareness.

The future

Long-term disadvantaged Australians often find it difficult to see the potential and possibilities of a different future for themselves and their families. They often feel they lack a sense of being able to control their future and are instead subject to circumstances outside of their control. As the Catalyst-Clemente program progressed, the students spoke increasingly about their future.

It is helping [me] for the present, for now, to think a bit more positively about the future and taking those steps into the future.

I am thinking about my future, and thinking perhaps I can direct it.

We'd like to think that quite possibly through learning we can make a difference for our children and our future.

The evidence that has emerged from the student comments as categorised in these six themes indicates there are relevant outcomes resulting from their participation in the Catalyst-Clemente program which are important for promoting social inclusion. As part of the courses, some students journeyed to Canberra and visited Parliament House, others have visited art galleries, the Opera House and been involved in collaborative courses with Bell Shakespeare Company. Overall, there is an enhanced sense of self and their abilities and potential, their relationships with others have been strengthened and there are changes in personal perceptions about the future. To date, there are seven students who have completed four Catalyst-Clemente units and enrolled in an on-site university course. Two have undertaken study at the National Art School. The findings and engagement demonstrate that significant change has occurred in the lives of the students who have experienced long-term levels of disadvantage. Participating in the Catalyst-Clemente program at the right time in a person's life, with appropriate supports and structures, can affect real transitions and enhance social inclusion.

Considering the success of Catalyst-Clemente

There are several structural issues involved in the implementation of the Catalyst-Clemente program that have contributed its success. Integral to the success of the program was the selection of course participants. People made a choice to begin the program after attending an information session where the content, structure and the study expectations of the program were explained and discussed. The potential students needed to show their commitment, appropriate skills and a willingness to undertake the required study in the individual units. The basis for these decisions lay in their personal and educational characteristics at the time of selection: a level of stability in their lives and a desire and capacity to learn.

Catalyst-Clemente was staffed by people who shared the values, vision and philosophy that lie at the heart of the program. Indeed, the promotion of re-engagement is best performed by those who are willing, and have the personal and professional competencies necessary to engage with marginalised people, with mutual benefit and reciprocity as key features of the relationship. Thus the personal qualities and commitment of the agency staff, lecturers and learning partners who delivered Catalyst-Clemente were essential elements for the success of the program in 2006.

The structure and setting of the program were also important factors. The relatively small size of the classes enabled the students to receive greater levels of attention from the lecturers, and the two-hour duration of the classes allowed the students to explore their subject-matter in sufficient depth. The importance of the learning partners cannot be over-emphasised. With students being able to access weekly one-on-one sessions with their learning partner, many of the personal barriers that constrained their learning (for example, levels of computing skills, reading and writing skills) were addressed and reduced.

Many students encountered medical, financial or material adversities while participating in Catalyst-Clemente. Thus, delivery of the program within a community setting was significant as students were able to access the support services attached to the community-based venues (for example, medical and dental services, meals, counsellors). Not every service was available at every site, but each site offered or was in proximity to a number of services and facilities that could be accessed by the students. At two of the sites, a dedicated welfare/support worker was available to arrange various services and provisions for the students. These workers were critical lynch-pins in helping to weave together the multiple components of the program. Furthermore, it is likely that the students felt more comfortable

studying within the supportive atmosphere of the community settings, than within university campuses.

One of the defining features of Catalyst-Clemente is that it is a *humanities* program. There was evidence that this focus on the humanities was important, because it enabled accessible content matter for the participants, allowing them to draw upon their life experiences in reflecting upon the literature, artworks and philosophies being studied.

The students' engagement was reinforced by the way in which the course content was delivered by the lecturers who engaged the students in group discussions, excursions, drama presentations and other alternate learning strategies whilst encouraging all to participate. Each student was called upon to offer their own personal reflections, insights and contributions, and a high level of interaction was fostered. By creating an engaging learning environment, the Catalyst-Clemente program promoted a broader re-engagement with community.

The creation and implementation of the Catalyst-Clemente program was possible only through cross-sectoral collaboration between a tertiary institution ACU National and community partners, Mission Australia and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Catalyst-Clemente has been provided to disadvantaged Australians within community settings, and with the attendant supports and services offered at or in the vicinity of the program venues. Collectively, these are some of the crucial elements of the success of the program in 2006.

The future of Catalyst-Clemente in Australia

The emerging evidence suggests that Catalyst-Clemente has a positive impact on re-engaging and supporting students in successfully undertaking purposefully structured and supported tertiary learning.

It is now timely to develop this initial research into a deeper understanding of the impact that Catalyst-Clemente has upon the students over the longer term. A detailed profile of the students participating in the Catalyst-Clemente needs to be created as a baseline. Thereafter, consideration should be given to the way in which educational processes combine with social supports to provide pathways out of disadvantage. Overall, the precise impacts in terms of health and well-being as well as social and economic participation need to be articulated over the short, medium and long term. Further, it is important that the costs and benefits of participation are appropriately articulated to inform public policy design in relation to social inclusion.

As the evidence of the impact of the Catalyst-Clemente program grows, so too will its expansion into new areas. As the program is rolled out across Australia, the number of participants will increase, allowing more robust and comprehensive conclusions to be drawn. During 2008, the Catalyst-Clemente program began in Perth, Melbourne, and Ballarat and involved additional tertiary institutions namely Edith Cowan University and the University of Ballarat. Each Australian site will be attended by up to 15 students. Together with sites in Sydney, Campbelltown, Canberra and Brisbane, the eight Australian programs will involve up to 120 disadvantaged people each semester. Those students who continue their studies across four semesters will graduate from ACU National with a Certificate in Liberal Studies, enabling them more readily to access further tertiary studies.

Conclusion

The insights already gleaned from the participants in Catalyst-Clemente clearly suggest a range of benefits are gained by their participation in a community-based, socially supported humanities education program. Further investigations of the

participants' journeys will add to the indicative and anecdotal understandings of the various pathways with which people enter and proceed through the program. Disadvantaged people will benefit from this program if appropriate pathways are developed that result in them gaining the educational and personal capabilities they need to be successful in Catalyst-Clemente and beyond. Longitudinal research with Catalyst-Clemente students, including both those who complete the program and those who withdraw, will provide an empirical basis for understanding what pre-requisite pathway programs may be appropriate for community agencies and educational institutions in supporting 'near-potential' students to be ready to enter Catalyst-Clemente. Further, such longitudinal research will inform the articulation of the Catalyst-Clemente program with university, vocational and community-sector courses.

Disadvantaged people have reported how they have re-engaged educationally, socially and personally through Catalyst-Clemente. Their stories provide evidence of empowerment and hope, which can inform opportunities and pathways offered to other marginalised people in the future. Catalyst-Clemente is a practical solution resulting from a collaborative process amongst the community, business, government and educational sectors that has resulted in enhancing the life opportunities and choices of disadvantaged Australians.

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Diverse pleasures: informal learning in community

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In this paper I suggest that social dances and local markets are examples of resilient practices of place-making and community that involve active participation. These two activities create mobile and pliant communities of participants that involve considerable informal and incidental learning. With dances and markets in mind, I look at the two concepts, social capital and community, that are used to link adult education and development and explore the notion of place. Place is conceived here as necessarily involving the inter-relationship of environment, social and economic landscapes. Somerville's place pedagogy framework is introduced as a methodological approach to research informal learning in the two activities and explore the pedagogies that sustain social attributes broadly conceived under the umbrella of social capital. The paper establishes dances and markets as a nexus of people, place and purpose, a ground from which to research the informal learning that occurs in these diverse pleasures.

Introduction

Adult education is assuming an increasingly central place in community development as a means to strengthen and sustain communities by building the store of social, human and economic capital (Allison *et al.* 2006:11). With local regions impacted by change driven by globalisation, the recognition that adult learning ‘eases the burden of change’ (Falk 2001:3) and has transformative potential, is focusing attention on the significance of community-based education (McIntyre 2005:1). With this, there is a developing awareness that useful learning often takes place incidental to educational purposes in adult and community education, for example the development of social capital in adult literacy and numeracy courses (Balatti, Black & Falk 2007). However, even with recognition of the importance of informal learning to the development of social capital and community sustainability, attention has remained largely on settings where education and learning are overtly part of the agenda.

Meanwhile, research into non-formal education has typically looked at workplaces, libraries and neighbourhood learning centres, and research focused on less formal learning through voluntary participation in groups has been primarily interested in sporting and incorporated associations (see for example, Atherley 2006, Stolle 1998, Teather 1997). Whereas non-formal learning involves an intended pedagogical function and takes place in time formally set aside for work and learning, informal learning is conceived as taking place in leisure time (Silberman-Keller 2003:14). Now, when popular culture is acknowledged as a significant source of information for adults (Guy 2007:16), and when contemporary social and environmental issues confront individuals with uncertainty, then understanding how, what, where and when adults learn informally is increasingly of interest. This is particularly important when, as the editors of a special edition of *New directions in adult and continuing education* pointed out, contemporary issues are complex and people

can easily feel overwhelmed (Hill & Clover 2003:1). Complexity can be a barrier to people envisioning how they can 'make a difference, thereby engendering feelings of hopelessness, fear, confusion and apathy' (Hill & Clover 2003:1).

It is timely to explore informal learning in community settings other than those understood as having an educational dimension. Mulligan *et al.* (2006:9) argue that 'we need a much more sophisticated understanding of the changing nature of contemporary community life' and the activities that play a part in this require 'careful investigation' to understand how they work (2006:9). They explain that greater attention is needed on the experience of participants (Mulligan, 2006:9). This paper takes heed of this point and Gruenewald's question 'how can the experience of citizens be used to inform/renew a critical approach to the social and ecological wellbeing of places that people inhabit' (2003:3). It draws particularly, but not exclusively, on social dances and community markets in the New England Region of northern NSW and Gippsland in Victoria, building the rationale for the place-conscious framework adopted in the research, 'Diverse pleasures: informal learning in community', a project in its early stages.

This paper looks to social dances and markets as sites of community where participation in pleasurable activities involves significant informal and incidental learning. These diverse pleasures provide avenues to explore the formation of community in two different activities that each involves place-making and informal learning through the nexus of people, place and purpose. Whereas creative and aesthetic projects that involve *reacquainting* people with their local places are often designed specifically for community engagement, social dances and community markets are well-established activities often derived from close acquaintance with the local.

Background

It is not within the scope of this discussion to elaborate dances and markets to the extent of case studies, rather to provide an introduction. My interest here is in community dances widely referred to as ‘old time and/or new vogue dances’, and in local markets often described as community craft and produce markets. Community dances and markets both involve voluntary participation, they are minimally regulated, and they are peripheral to, though not disconnected from, the mainstream economy. The participants are not necessarily governed by formalised rules and organisational structures; however, they are subject to regulations such as insurance requirements.

Social dancing has a rich place in the history of community in regional Australia. Davey and Seal explain that dance traditions have been passed down directly through communities (1993:98). While dances became much less central to life in the bush in 1960s (Davey & Seal 1993:98), a quick Google search reveals that old time and new vogue dances continue on a regular basis throughout Australia in 2008. While followers of dances frequently share their own personally compiled lists of dances, some tourist information centres provide lists of local dances and markets (e.g. Swan Hill, Latrobe, Bass Coast and South Gippsland in Victoria, and Broken Hill in NSW).

Markets are often central to community events’ calendars. They may be a focus of celebration, an enduring community event, or an enticement for tourists. At Inverloch, Victoria, a market draws crowds to the retail centre of town several times a year and is a source of fundraising for local service clubs. Nearby at Kongwak, the weekly Sunday market regularly draws locals and visitors to the tiny hamlet for an array of food, entertainment and stalls. Community markets have links with the sundries markets that were once held in conjunction with regional stock and produce markets. At Traralgon in the Latrobe Valley, the fate of the sundries market has recently been

hotly discussed in local media. A long time participant revealed the complex interplay of economic and social issues: ‘We like to make some extra cash but we all love chatting away with mates we’d never see otherwise; we chat, swap experiences and advice on all sorts of things’ (de Carteret 2008c:28). In their discussion of alternative consumption spaces, Williams and Paddock argue that researchers need to consider that fun and sociality are co-existent with economic issues in people’s participation (2003:147). Holloway and Kneafsey, researching the growth of farmers markets in the UK, similarly point out that social issues and geographic context are interconnected with the economies of farmers’ markets, which they also acknowledge as fun, social events (2000:287).

Social dance is also recognised as a meaningful activity connected with community. It is understood as both corporeal pleasure and a vehicle for transmission of, and reflection on, socio-cultural meanings (Fensham 1997:14). Nevertheless, it has not been taken seriously in academic scholarship according to Pini (1996:414) and has received scant attention (Andrews 1974, Ward 1993). In 1997 noted dance historian, Shirley Andrews, speculated the reason for this was because dance is part of local culture and associated with folk culture. This view is supported by Pini’s view that social dance is trivialised on account of the association with everyday lived experiences (1996:412). A review of dance research in Australia around the same period indicated that most was not funded and was reported independently of universities (Bond & Morrish 1995:81). While Polhemus (1993:3) provides a useful discussion of dance as involving embodied knowledge of culture and in particular gender, there is little apparent academic interest in old time/new vogue dances to date.

Sensuous or embodied experience is overlooked as an attribute of learning in community events such as dances and markets. Ward argued that the marginalisation of dance in academic culture is partly a consequence of the difficulty encountered by rationalist disciplines

in accounting for the irrationality that emotions and the pleasure of dance introduce (1993:20). Similarly, Ollis (2008:331) has recently explained that the mind-body split of rationalist discourse elides important adult learning and sites of learning. Academics, community educators and planners are confronted by a challenge to account for the interrelationship of environmental, economic and social aspects of community life in individual experience. Mulligan *et al.* (2006) explain that the connection between personhood and community is mutually constitutive and yet it is more often rhetoric than 'concretely recognised within social and economic policy' (p.17).

Rethinking learning

Culture and the competence to act within cultural expectations involve learning social practices at a deep level of embodiment (Polhemus (1993:7). People learn through sensuous connections and relatedness with the physical environment and the social world, as Abrams (1997) explains: 'human beings are tuned for relationship. The eyes, the skin, the tongue, the ears, and nostrils – are all gates where our body receives the nourishment of otherness' (p.ix). Learning is therefore incidental and embedded in the experience of activities (Foley 1999:2). Context is relevant to informal learning. It involves the interrelationship of people and place.

Recent interest in the health and wellbeing of individuals in their local communities implicates context. Gibson and Cameron (2001) suggest that as

... community has entered policy debate via a new language of economic management, it has also assumed its inherently geographical association with local places. In response the vitality of rural and regional areas in Australia has come under the scrutiny of research into new approaches to community development and economic management (p.3).

While discussion is galvanising around vocational training and non-formal learning in adult and community education as investments in social capital to reinvigorate communities, contemporary educators and theorists like Smith (in Bekerman *et al.* 2006:13) see the potential for education to counterbalance commodification through associations that foster dialogue, relationship and friendship in local places, typical attributes of social dances and markets that build community.

Community: people and place

‘Community’ is used commonly and unproblematically, yet it is an elusive concept on account of diverse usage (Mulligan 2006:18). It can infer limitation, constrained by geographic proximity and homogeneity, based on assumptions of shared understanding and common desires for sociality and social cohesion (Atherley 2006:349). It is also a politically malleable and idealistically persuasive term, suggesting both a site of resistance to globalisation and a cradle for the nurture of good citizenship. However, it is also understood as group interaction among individuals who experience a sense of identity through belonging that infers obligations and implies active participation (Ife & Tesoriero 2006:97). It is this idea of active participation that receives much attention in adult education and community development literature because it assumes personal agency, which is considered endangered by globalisation. Participating in community enables ‘people to become active producers of that culture rather than passive consumers (Ife & Tesoriero 2006:98). For this reason, dances and markets are a useful lens to explore informal learning because they involve active participation and a sense of belonging in community.

In this discussion, ‘community’ refers to the groups of participants and organisers at dances; at markets, this includes stallholders, organisers and visitors. Both involve changing groups of people.

The communities formed are not exclusive – not governed by a creed or formal incorporation. They comprise informal groups who gather and disband at each different location. The events offer the chance for conversation and discussion, the opportunity to learn and be informed by each other. The learning is diverse, informal and/or incidental. It may be specific, such as the dance steps, information about regional farming conditions or perhaps a particular community issue. Learning also happens in the practice of social skills, conversation, trust or cooperation. The purpose of the activities, for example the dancing and fundraising, the selling and buying, provides a bridge (Balatti *et al.* 2007:257 and Hayes *et al.* 2007:2) that facilitates an exchange of information and learning from one another.

Both situations are examples of contact zones where difference meets (Pratt 1991:33). New and unfamiliar perspectives are encountered at markets where information is often exchanged in lively conversations between customers and stallholders. At dances, individual differences are either suspended or tolerated for the sake of the shared activity.

Each different venue involves new knowledge – of the type of music that will be played, the program of dances, the preferred version of steps and whether or not participants should bring ‘a plate’ for supper. Davey and Seal explain that these preferences are part of the local culture (1993:76 & 98). ‘As newcomers move progressively from the periphery ... to the center, they become more active and engaged with the culture’ (Schugurensky 2006:168).

Understanding communities as forming, disbanding and reforming at different times and places for specific purposes acknowledges the increasing mobility of people where participation in multiple groups and various associations is no longer unusual. Community, then, is not a fixed and homogenised overarching collective but is more fluidly created when activities bring diverse groups into contact via informal networks. As Hayes *et al.* suggest, activities that bridge boundaries can broaden experience, sustaining one’s identity and valuing the identity of others (2007:2).

The sticky question of social capital

Participation is often used as a measure of social capital to gauge the wellbeing of communities (see Ife & Tesoriero 2006, Townsend 2006, Atherley 2006, Teather 1997). Social capital is a somewhat contested notion (McClenaghan 2000, Kilpatrick, Field & Falk 2003) broadly considered to involve the knowledge and identity resources (Balatti & Falk 2002:282) to access social goods in Bourdieu's terms, or 'as trust, norms and networks that facilitate cooperation and mutual benefit' in Putnam's view (Atherley 2006:349). In relation to adult education in community contexts, Townsend elaborates that there are 'three forms of social capital relevant' (Townsend 2006:161); these are: social capital that bonds or links homogenous groups, bridging capital that links heterogenous groups, and linking social capital that connects people and groups of different hierarchical levels (2006:161). As Falk explains, social capital involves a process of learning (2001:4) and dances and markets provide opportunities for all three of Townsend's forms of social capital. They are parts of networks that involve a degree of homogeneity in terms of interest, yet heterogeneity across different locations and the range of people they attract. In New England, the monthly Armidale Market attracts stall-holders and customers from a broad area, while regular dances held in the outlying communities of Ellsmore, Guyra, Kentucky and Puddledock draw people from different walks of life and distant places.

Whereas social capital is often referred to as the glue that sustains community, viewing community as formed around activities that bridge people and place pre-empt social capital developed interactively through flexible networks and multiple opportunities that facilitate learning, often informally (Balatti *et al.* 2007). This is a view of social capital as facilitating pliant and mobile communities.

Context and community

Recognising the groups of participants at dances and markets as communities opens new consideration of the specificity of the socio-economic context in each local place. In rural areas, dances are often held in support of local needs, for example, fundraising to support emergency transport services to metropolitan hospitals. Not for profit organisations like CareFlight in NSW depend on the 'generous donations of community minded people' and fundraising to provide 'equity of access to health care' (CareFlight website 2005). Dances in Guyra and Tamworth fundraise for Can-Assist – an organisation that supports country cancer patients' access to care and accommodation in the city. Local fundraising depends on unpaid work to organise and plan the activities and realise aims. Informal partnerships are created, for example among organisers, with charities, local councils or other organisations, and media to negotiate the use of premises and facilities, fundraising activities and advertising.

In a discussion of learning through social partnerships, Fennessy, Billett and Ovens point out that, 'at its best, the affective, relational learning that individuals experience develops understanding of self and other, and fosters a sense of belonging and community. At its worst, this sense of belonging may endorse exclusionary attitudes and behaviours' (2006:23). Either way, as suggested in this paper, Fennessy *et al.* argue that relational learning aside from educational functions involves significant new learning spaces (2006:23).

The centrality of place

Ife and Tesoriero (2006:98) differentiate between the notion of community based on a particular function, such as a church community or legal community, and community understood in geographic terms. They explain that communities based on function may not be related to a particular locality, whereas community as a

geographic entity invokes place (2006:98). Understanding dances and markets as sites of community draws on place and purpose, a combination that receives little attention in vocational education (Somerville 2008b) and community development literature. Lippard explains local places as the lived-in landscape, where ‘our personal relationships to history and place form us, as individuals and groups, and in reciprocal ways we form them’ (Lippard 1997:9). She explains that ‘each time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really what all “local places” consist of’ (1997:6). Place is central to exploring participation at dances and markets as a means to examine interconnected relationships between the social, economic and physical landscape.

Lippard’s view evokes the multi-layers of relationship implicated in place that influence psychological and social wellbeing. Even the physical and spatial particularities of places invoke distinct psychological meanings that also impact on the experience (Hornecker nd:1). Consider, for example, the different ambience and emotions produced by markets held outside in open space, and dancing in an enclosed hall crammed with twirling, hot and sweaty bodies. Physical and spatial conditions involve bodies differently through the engagement of the senses, as in movement.

Each venue offers different ambient pleasures, resplendent with local knowledge and opportunities for new connections. The Armidale Market is held in the local mall, a paved pedestrian area in the centre of the city’s shopping and business precinct. In Bellingen, the market is held in a large park. Stalls are set up around a football oval, large shady trees and an adjacent creek provide respite from the heat captured by the surrounding hills. Likewise, dance venues vary. In New England, many dances are held in halls that are the last remaining public building in that locality. The hall has been ‘the social lifeline for farming communities’ (Davison & Brodie 2005:3.6) and dances continue to instil them with life. Some halls have been

restored in recognition that these are icons ‘essential to ... sense of community’ (Davey & Seal 1993:73). On dance nights, a trail of headlights can be seen snaking through the darkness of otherwise quiet country roads.

A place-conscious approach to informal learning

A place-conscious approach to informal learning allows exploration of nuances and interconnections of social context, local responses to global trends, and the physical environment. This contrasts with the view expressed in the Victorian Parliamentary *Inquiry into building new communities* (Nardella 2006:20) that dismisses ‘place-based’ as local context independent of root causes. It is precisely on account of inter-dependencies that Gruenewald (2006) explains place matters to education, ‘because it expands the cultural landscape to include related ecosystems, bioregions, and all the place-specific interactions between human and the more-than-human world’ (p.2). Place matters to informal learning and community development for the same reasons. ‘Local knowledge is the foundation upon which appropriate responses to expressed needs must be built’ (Fussell 1996:53). Place shapes how we know ourselves – historically, ‘local and regional culture and geography were the contexts and the “texts” through which people learned who they were, and what they needed to know to live’ (Gruenewald 2006:2).

A place-conscious approach to informal learning admits tacit learning, the internalisation of attitudes and skills in the unplanned process of socialisation (Schugurensky 2006:167). Foley concurs that everyday learning ‘is largely informal and incidental – it is tacit and embedded in action and is often not recognized as learning’ (1991:1). Everyday learning embedded in action and place shapes perspective (Bird Rose 2004: 3). Bird Rose gives examples of powerful metaphors that make explicit the relationship between people and places, for instance, ‘the country gets under the skin’ (2004:3). The experience of

places in everyday life is embodied but not fixed once and for all time. Rather, learning shifts and moves through multiple experiences and situations.

Deeply embodied knowledge and experience is often expressed at country dances and markets in ordinary conversations, for instance, when a local farmer once warned me to be careful driving home after the dance: ‘watch out on the road when you get to the ten mile tonight, what with the moon coming up so late and the grass on the east side so sweet, all the mums’ll be out with the younguns, and you never know which way they’re likely to hop’. He was drawing from his knowledge of native animal behaviour to predict that the current weather patterns and growing conditions would bring the kangaroos out of the scrub late that hot night to graze on particular grasses growing in a very specific spot.

Situated knowledge is also evident at markets in conversations about local produce, food and plants but also more subtly in the range of stalls and goods. Craftwork produced from local materials can involve an historical dimension. Goods created using timber recycled from local woolsheds and fences are a feature of the Armidale Market. Conversations about the genealogy of each piece provide an opportunity for local history to be shared. Similarly, jewellery made from raw materials sourced nearby also prompts conversations about the locality. The friendly banter and sharing of information at markets is richly educational and indicative of knowledge based on experience. Gregson and Crewe (quoted by Holloway & Kneafsey 2000:292) ‘describe the temporary space of the market as “transgressive”, in that it is one where people come to play, where the conventions of retailing are suspended, and where the participants come to engage in and produce theatre, performance, spectacle and laughter’. Retailers are performers who demonstrate both knowledge of local history and contemporary trends in their wares. The suspension of the usual is a rich site for learning.

Learning that happens either incidentally or specifically as a result of involvement in activities is situated or mediated in particular sites where 'learners are involved in "communities of practice" that embody a set of values, behaviours, and skills to be acquired by members' (Schugurensky 2006:168).

Learning without boundaries

The terms 'non-formal' and 'informal' learning are often not well differentiated. Both socialisation and incidental learning are typified as informal in a taxonomy proposed by Schugurensky (2006:166). However, Silberman-Keller (2003:14) makes the point that, while non-formal learning takes place in time set aside for learning, it is conducted in places constructed as cosy and homelike, a vision that is reflected in the use of the term 'neighbourhood houses' to describe local adult learning centers, in Victoria for instance.

Silberman-Keller (2003:2) outlines four instructional practices common in non-formal learning that shape a unique definition of education. These are concerned with time and place, phenomenological teaching and learning, dialogue and discourse, and using play to expand the bounds of plausible reality (Silberman-Keller 2003:2). These practices are evident at dances and markets where there is no educational intention (Silberman-Keller 2003:9). Clearly there is slippage between the pedagogies of non-formal education and characteristics of informal learning. This is evident in Balatti, Black and Falk's (2007) point that social capital is built additionally to formal educational intentions. They believe research into pedagogical practices that increase social capital is needed to be clearer about how this is achieved. While it is difficult to conceptualise incidental or informal learning in terms of pedagogies, yet the notion of pedagogy is important in developing educational philosophies, theory and practices. An approach is needed that encapsulates embodied aspects of informal learning in place. A broad view of pedagogy may be useful,

such as suggested by Sanguinetti (2004) as involving 'the intangible aspects and processes of teaching and learning' (p.7).

Somerville (2008a) has conceptualised a place pedagogy framework based on embodied experience of place that is useful to researching informal learning at dances and markets. The framework animates place with interconnections, such as pleasure, desire and difference. It accommodates the educational practices Silberman-Keller points to in dialogue and play (2003:2). There are three key elements in Somerville's framework: our relationship to place is constituted in stories (and other representations), the body is at the centre of our experience of place, and place is a contact zone of cultural difference where diverse experiences are accommodated (2008a:10). These elements are compatible with my use of biographical methods including collective biography and semi-structured interviews to gather data (de Carteret 2008a, 2008b). The use of individual stories in the place pedagogy framework helps to reveal connections between the personal and the social, the local and the global.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to establish the framework to research informal learning in community through the lens of social dances and markets. I have suggested that these activities involve diverse pleasures and many attributes desired by community development projects from educational settings. Recognising these sites of informal learning can usefully inform educational theories because they are contact zones where difference is encountered. Managing difference is a significant challenge for contemporary educational practice and community building alike. At social dances and local markets, the purposeful activities bridge difference and facilitate social interaction. A place-conscious approach provides a framework to research distinctive features of experience at the interconnection of the social, environmental and economic landscapes in these diverse pleasures.

Valuing resilient, pleasurable activities as sites of adult learning admits the possibility of lifelong learning, 'without boundaries... not ... confined by predetermined outcomes, formal institutions, and epistemological control' (Edwards & Usher 2001:276). Perhaps this can also provide insight into reaching people who do not have formalised education on their horizons. It might reveal the extent to which a focus on formalised community processes has elided significant community work voluntarily undertaken for the wellbeing of local places and the people who call them home, and learning sites that have been off the radar of planners, policy makers and educators.

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Faces in tertiary places and spaces: experiences of learning in both higher education and VET

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The development in today's society of knowledge workers for tomorrow is of critical importance. Worldwide, there is considerable interest in the respective roles of higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET) in building human capability. This paper is designed to provoke such questions as: what kinds of learning places and spaces are Australia's HE and VET institutions? and how do individuals make sense of the learning and teaching in these sectors? The paper focuses on the experiences of those learners who have studied in both sectors – faces who are therefore in a unique position to analyse them as learning places and spaces.

A survey was undertaken of 556 learners who commenced study in technical and further education (TAFE) and universities in South Australia. Subsequent interviews with 69 of these students explored their educational histories in greater depth. The data reflected important differences in the learners' experiences within the sectors.

The findings can provide policy-makers and institutional leaders with insights into how best to position these two sectors to the advantage of learners with changing needs, expectations and desired pathways. They suggest that greater recognition could be afforded to the different but increasingly complementary roles that HE and VET play.

Introduction

There is considerable national and international interest in the respective roles of higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET) in building human capability. This theme is particularly significant in today's society where development of knowledge workers for tomorrow is of increasing importance. The relationship between these sectors, for example, was a priority of the Maastricht Communique in 2004 in the European Union. It was the subject of the 25th Agora in 2007 of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), and has formed a key theme in several recent journal editions. It is also a key theme in the Australian Government's (2008) *Review of Australian higher education* that is currently taking place.

In Australia, the HE and VET sectors both provide opportunities for tertiary education. They are different in missions, structures and funding regimes, as well as in number of students, age profile of students, and coverage of fields of education and equity groups (Karmel & Nguyen 2003). However, though different, they are not distinct and they display increasing overlap (Australian Government 2008:37). This paper aims to provoke such questions as: what kinds of learning places and spaces *are* Australia's HE and VET institutions? and how do individuals make sense of the learning and teaching in these sectors? The paper focuses on the experiences of those South Australian learners who have studied in *both* sectors

– faces who are therefore in a unique position to analyse them as learning places and spaces.

There is a growing, though still small, body of research on learner transitions within and between educational sectors. Much of it focuses on the transition from school to post-secondary settings (Hillman 2005) or work (Muller & Gangi 2003, OECD 2000), and particularly on policy and structural matters such as articulation and curriculum (Harreveld 2005, Hall & Thomas 2005, Keating 2006), sectoral boundaries (Young 2006, Grubb 2006, Gallacher 2006) and accreditation (West 2006). There is relatively little empirical attention paid to *learners'* experiences, especially related to learning and teaching, and what there is, tends to concentrate within one sector (e.g. Laanan 2007, Lowe & Gayle 2007, Auburn 2007, Kraus *et al.* 2005, Anderson 2005). While the Australian Government's (2008:39) recent discussion paper refers to the interface between the sectors being manifested in

credit transfer and articulation arrangements, dual sector universities, multi-sector campuses, some limited sharing of infrastructure, some research collaboration and increasing overlap in qualifications offered ..., little is known about the effect of these relationships on the quality of provision, satisfaction of students or the efficiency of the system.

Hence the focus in this paper is on (a) learners' experiences (rather than bureaucratic or literary opinions), (b) learning and teaching (rather than structures and policies) and (c) two-way transitions between VET and HE (rather than transitions from school to work or further education). In so doing, it explores issues related to 'boundary-crossing', to relationships between these two educational sectors, to structure and agency, and to perceptions of sectoral status.

Crossing boundaries

Crossing boundaries applies to almost all walks of life. Whether considering national, community, organisational or disciplinary borders, crossing affects language, relationships, cultural habits, citizenship and identity. Potential benefits are that such crossing can lead to the cutting edges where change, innovation, discovery are more likely to be generated and where there is a breaking out from silos or ruts. Potential dangers are that crossing can lead to culture/role conflict, tension and confusion. In the case of learners, boundary-crossing may occur in many ways – in this paper, however, the focus is limited to educational sectors and study fields.

Koeglreiter, Torlina and Smith (2008:170–1), in reminding us that boundaries are multi-dimensional and that cultural differences must be appreciated and addressed, have identified four types of boundaries with regard to organisations: social, information, structural and communication. It is the structural category – the physical and geographic aspects, organisational design, and procedures – that is perhaps the most applicable of these types in the instance of learners studying in VET and HE organisations. These authors refer also to ‘boundary spanning activities’ (p.172) that can help to minimise problems of information flow and decision-making. Thinking of such activities as occurring at both formal and informal levels, it is likely that lecturers and career advisors could be of assistance in the former and fellow learners and social networking in the latter. Similarly, Islam (2008) has highlighted how learner-led communities of practice can be important tools for learning, in that they can provide the context in which to learn professional identities that, beyond technical knowledge, facilitate the transition of learners from one setting to another. They act as ‘intermediary zones’ (p.279), offering opportunities to learn social and professional norms that would be difficult to acquire in traditional classroom settings. They provide a space between institutionalised fields that eases the crossing between settings.

Boundaries can be problematic in that they can be difficult places, with connotations of marginality and peripherality, being on the edge. Wenger (1998:254) warns us that they are places where 'one can anticipate problems of coordination, understand issues of miscommunication, and come to expect transformations as people and objects travel across the social landscape'. However, for that very reason they are worthy of attention as places of learning where meaning can be negotiated anew:

Boundaries are like fault lines: they are the locus of volcanic activity. They allow movement, they release tension; they create new mountains; they shake existing structures ... they are the likely locus of the production of radically new knowledge. They are where the unexpected can be expected, where innovative or unorthodox solutions are found, where serendipity is likely, and where old ideas find new life and new ideas propagate (Wenger 1998:254–5).

In analyses of sectoral boundary-crossing of learners, the literature reflects a pre-occupation with *structural* factors. Commonly, such interest is related to responses to government agendas on widening participation in tertiary education, increasing opportunities for adults to 'return-to-learn' (Warren & Webb 2006:2) and promoting lifelong learning. Studies frequently focus on the importance of articulation and curriculum issues between post-compulsory institutions (Knox 2005, Harreveld 2005, Keating 2006), attempts at blurring boundaries between sectors (Grubb 2006, Gallacher 2006) and differences in accreditation arrangements (West 2006). Other literature focuses on barriers to student movement. For example, the Australian government (DEST 2002:3) has acknowledged that 'the challenge is to develop in Australia a national system that underpins educational choice', yet concedes that 'significant barriers remain ... [including] fundamental differences in learning and assessment' between the sectors. Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training 2004–2010, *Shaping our future*, also recognises that, although pathways between education sectors have improved, barriers still exist, particularly between

vocational education and training and universities (ANTA 2003). Gardener's (2002:12) Queensland review of pathways articulation also concludes that:

Differences in the approaches of the ... education sectors make transition between them – with effective recognition of the prior knowledge and skills gained – complex, opaque and inconsistent. All these barriers make transitions for young people more difficult and time consuming.

Other research, with a focus more on *individual agency* than institutional factors, suggests that it is not simply a matter of smoothing credit transfer and administrative processes. McMillen, Rothman and Wernert (2005:32), for example, concluded that 'interests play a major role'. They found their data emphasised the importance of preferences and interests, such as wanting to get a job or new apprenticeship, the course turning out not to be what they wanted or losing interest as common factors for withdrawal or deferral, and that the high proportions indicating these reasons 'suggest a need for students to have better access to course and career guidance prior to entry to tertiary study' (p.36). Certainly, recent research has highlighted the prevalence of stress among university students (Robotham & Julian 2006), concerns over the balancing of study with other commitments (Christie *et al.* 2006; Harris *et al.* 2005) and considerable anxiety at leaving highly supported further education environments (Christie *et al.* 2006). Moreover, the work of Bloomer & Hodkinson (2000a & b) on the 'learning careers' of British young people aged 15 to 19 years illustrates that they are erratic rather than linear or entirely predictable, rarely the products of rationally determined choice, inextricably linked with other life experiences, and tightly bound up with the transforming personal identities of people at this age.

One study of factors affecting transition of business students from VET to university study in Victoria, Australia found that it was 'more complex than anticipated' (Pearce, Murphy & Conroy 2000:1). The difficulties centred on the sudden changes in the depth and detail

of subject knowledge, pedagogical approach and assessment, and the level, genre and independent nature of academic research and writing. This suggests that learners with fewer personal resources and lower competence may be unlikely to be able to adjust satisfactorily. Laanan (2007:37), too, speaking of community college students moving to universities in the USA, calls the transfer process ‘complex’, and refers to the concept of ‘transfer shock’. And Saunders (2006: 17–18) has referred to the ‘complex social and cognitive processes’ that take place in crossing boundaries, with individuals ‘struggling to make sense of their circumstances as they move from one set of practices to another’. This paper is offered as a contribution to the further unveiling of this ‘complex’ process.

Research approach

This study used a mixed-methods approach. First, extant national databases were mined for relevant information. Second, an online questionnaire survey was undertaken of 556 learners who commenced study in all eight VET institutes and the three universities in South Australia; these included VET students with university experience (n=190, hereafter labelled ‘HE→VET’) and university students with VET experience (n=366, labelled VET→HE). Third, interviews were held with 69 of these learners (22 HE→VET, 47 VET→HE) to probe their educational journeys in greater depth. Caution should be used in interpreting the quantitative findings due to the relatively low numbers of learners.

The learners in this study were purposively sampled precisely because they had experienced study in **both** sectors and therefore could be regarded as distinctive and credible commentators on similarities and differences (Harris *et al.* 2006, Harris, *et al.* 2005). They were also close enough to their entry into their current course to reflect back on their transitions and motivations, and far enough through the course to be able to speak with experience and knowledge on both sectors (cf. Warren & Webb 2006:3).

Main findings

1. What was the nature of their boundary-crossing?

In this study, boundary-crossing can be depicted in terms of both moving between and within sectors and changing study fields. In the detailed analysis of the 69 interviewees, for example, Table 1 reveals 186 boundary-crossings between (n=91) and within (n=95) the two sectors. Of the inter-sectoral moves, 60% were from VET to HE and 40% from HE to VET; in the case of intra-sectoral moves, 58% were within VET and 42% within HE (for further detail, see Harris *et al.* 2005).

Forty percent of all sectoral crossings were to the same study field and 60% to a different study field. For those who made only one inter-sectoral transition, most were into a different study field. Those moving from HE to VET were more inclined to enter a different study field than those moving the other way. There was very little movement from HE into the same study field in VET. On the other hand, the intra-sectoral transitions indicate that there is more movement within VET, both for the same and for different study fields, than there is within the HE sector.

Table 1: Transitions within and between tertiary sectors

	Same field of education		Different field of education	
Inter-sectoral transitions (91)	19	VET→HE	36	VET→HE
	9	HE→VET	27	HE→VET
Intra-sectoral transitions (95)	22	VET→VET	33	VET→VET
	25	HE→HE	15	HE→HE
Total transitions	75		111	

Note: 'Field of education' is the official classification used in Australia to describe tertiary education courses, specialisations and units of study, in order that all those with the same or similar vocational emphasis are reliably classified to the same 'field of education'. There are 12 broad fields of education.

2. What were their reasons for boundary-crossing?

There were important differences in the nature of their motivations for crossing sectors. First is their perceptions of the educational experience they would be receiving: getting a ‘broad education’ (VET→HE 69%; HE→VET 38%), a ‘prestigious qualification’ (VET→HE 65%; HE→VET 28%) and an update of their previous qualification (VET→HE 51%; HE→VET 30%). The crossing to university was clearly perceived as a broader and higher status education. Second is their occupational motivation: ‘retraining for a different career’ (VET→HE 63%; HE→VET 41%) and ‘improving their employment prospects’ (VET→HE 94%; HE→VET 81%). While the majority of the VET→HE learners reported that they were crossing to retrain for a *different* career (63%), the majority of the HE→VET learners were crossing to improve their career prospects in their *current* field (65%). Third, more VET→HE learners (83%) agreed that they were studying for ‘personal interest, development or recreation’ reasons than did HE→VET learners (70%).

The data therefore clearly reveal that the learners perceived their boundary-crossing to the other sector to undertake further study was driven by a combination of occupational and personal interests. The picture of this learner movement is the outcome of a process which starts at a very personal level – a process of career planning undertaken by each individual that starts with a goal or vision.

3. Did they experience barriers in boundary-crossing?

Around half of the learners considered that they did not encounter any barriers. Those who did report barriers expressed them in terms of difficulties with the transfer to university studies such as the adjustment to a different level and learning environment from VET, personal issues such as being unsure whether they would be able to cope with the demands of the course, and the course being academically less rigorous than previous studies and causing issues with adjustment.

The transition from [VET] to university – that was hard for me because it was very, very different. When I was in [VET] the learning was just business-like and you do reports, and when I went to uni it was a shift – we do essays – a different style ... The hardest part was the transition from [VET] to university because I was very busy and probably because university is just a very big overwhelming thing and I was alone at the time. (VET→HE, interviewee #216)

I think uni was very different to [VET], completely different ... I just didn't how big it actually was at that point. It opened my eyes quite a bit – a different world as such. University is very much theory based where VET is very much hands-on and I think the benefit for me is I got both of those and a lot of people don't – they just come straight to uni and I would certainly recommend to anyone to do both because they get both sides of it, rather than just the theory side. Certainly in that field [IT] that was a huge bonus and I am just glad I did it that way, because when I first came to uni, had I not been to VET, it would have been much harder to understand the whole process. (VET→HE, interviewee #174)

4. Were expectations met in crossing boundaries?

Despite any difficulties they experienced in crossing boundaries, most of those surveyed were confident that their expectations in choosing their program would be met (VET→HE 79%; HE→VET 73%). And the majority of those interviewed felt that their expectations at each move were met, particularly the case for those crossing from VET to HE. Where expectations had not been met, participants most commonly reported that this was because of curricular reasons, such as: the course changed, some modules were below expectations, concern over lack of intellectual rigour, the course found to be unhelpful as it was at a base level, not learning and developing skill as much as had been anticipated, inability to obtain the desired level of employment with this course which had been the motivating factor for initially undertaking the move, and perceptions that employers desired employees who had higher qualifications. One interviewee spoke of HE lecturer attitudes:

Yes, in most ways. I would say the response you get from some lecturers is a little disappointing and their attitude is poor – that could just be a personality thing that is part of life and people. That is probably the biggest disappointment, the disconnect that the lecturers seem to have with the students. (VET→HE, interviewee #253)

This comment supports the findings of Kraus *et al.* (2005), who found that HE students reported less access to staff, a substantial number of first-year students perceived staff as not accessible and less than one-third believed that staff took an interest in their progress and gave helpful feedback. Another interviewee in the current study referred to the lack of depth in the VET course:

Sort of. It wasn't really that in-depth. It could have probably been a lot better in a number of ways. I have done some project courses before that – just short industry courses that tended to repeated in some sections of it and other sections didn't provide the background that working in the area did. You came out of it not really understanding government finances which should have been the mainstay of it all and seeing how it went together. It was a mickey mouse course. (HE→VET, interviewee #2988)

5. What was their experience of boundary-crossing?

(1) Boundary crossing between sectors was not particularly difficult

The majority of surveyed students in both sectors found their crossing of sectors relatively easy. The exception was 'making changes in your life so that you had enough time to study' which 62% of VET→HE students and 53% of HE→VET students found difficult. (cf. Christie *et al.* 2006 also found this in her study of Scottish students).

Furthermore, the crossing of boundaries did not appear to have caused much consternation for these students. Almost three-quarters in both sectors reported feeling 'very' (VET→HE 31%, HE→VET 43%) or 'fairly' (VET→HE 42%, HE→VET 31%) comfortable crossing from one sector to the other.

(2) Boundary-crossing VET→HE was more difficult than HE→VET

Learners crossing from HE into VET found, on average of all the factors, the move easier than students moving into HE (VET→HE 51%; HE→VET 62%). There were major differences between the two groups of students with respect to financial issues: 66% of VET→HE students found 'having sufficient income to study' much more difficult compared with 37% of HE→VET students; and 57% of VET→HE students found 'paying the fees' difficult compared with 30% of HE→VET students.

There were also significant statistical differences in their level of response in other areas. HE→VET learners found the process easier, particularly (at the .01 level of significance) in respect to 'meeting the entry requirements for the course', 'having the confidence to undertake further study', 'getting advice from staff at the current institution' and 'going through the application process' and to a lesser extent (at the .05 level of significance) to 'getting careers guidance to help you make a decision', 'getting your employer's support to study' and 'doing something different from your friends'.

Confirming the finding above, it is in the boundary crossing from VET to HE where the greatest disjuncture occurs, with twice as many of those commencing HE than commencing VET reporting feelings of discomfort (significant at the .01 level).

*(3) Boundary-crossing between sectors was a **different** educational experience*

Transition between educational sectors necessarily involves adjustments to different systems of tertiary education. While these learners may not have found boundary-crossing between sectors particularly *difficult*, it was nevertheless perceived as quite *different*. Two features are prominent in Table 2. The first is that three-quarters of the learners, irrespective of direction of movement, found their boundary-crossing a different experience. The data highlight particular areas that have the potential to be stumbling blocks and

could lead to attrition if not carefully handled or negotiated. The second is the consistency in the figures of the two groups of learners. Not only are the various items in a similar sequence (for example, study cost, teaching style and assessment processes are in the top four in both lists), but the proportions from each sector are similar on each item (for example, on assessment processes, 80% of VET→HE and 82% of HE→VET learners reported these were different).

Table 2: Learners' judgements on how similar or different aspects of their current educational experience are from those in the other sector

Aspects of educational experience	VET→HE (HE commencers with VET experience)			HE→VET (VET commencers with HE experience)		
	Similar (%)	Different (%)	Total (N, %)	Similar (%)	Different (%)	Total (N, %)
How similar or different are each of the following aspects of your current educational experience compared with that in the institution at which you studied most recently?						
cost of studying **	7.6	92.4	100 (353)	18.5	81.5	100 (162)
teaching style	16.5	83.5	100 (351)	20.5	79.5	100 (176)
level of work in course **	17.6	82.4	100 (347)	29.0	71.0	100 (176)
assessment processes	20.3	79.7	100 (355)	18.2	81.8	100 (181)
amount of work in course	22.2	77.8	100 (351)	29.9	70.1	100 (177)
structure of course	22.8	77.2	100 (347)	18.3	81.7	100 (175)
practical content	24.1	75.9	100 (344)	24.3	75.7	100 (173)
theoretical content	25.8	74.2	100 (349)	28.5	71.5	100 (179)
class size *	26.5	73.5	100 (328)	37.7	62.3	100 (138)
institutional climate	31.6	68.4	100 (335)	25.5	74.5	100 (153)
provision of support services and facilities	46.5	53.5	100 (342)	46.8	53.2	100 (158)

** level of significance <.01

* level of significance <.05

It is clear that aspects mentioned in the literature earlier concerning different pedagogical approaches in the two sectors are indeed those reported by the learners in this study as different from what they had previously experienced in the other sector. Apart from study costs, the leading factors are all concerned with curriculum. For those crossing the boundary from VET to HE, teaching styles (84%), level of coursework (82%), and assessment processes (80%) show the greatest difference; while for those crossing from HE to VET, the top ones are assessment processes (82%), course structure (82%) and teaching style (80%). These key aspects are illustrated qualitatively through this paper.

(4) In crossing boundaries, significantly more VET→HE learners found difference with level of coursework than HE→VET learners

The statistically significant differences between the two groups were level of work, cost of studying and class size where, in all three, more VET→HE than HE→VET learners reported differences. In terms of the focus of this paper, it is the level of coursework that is the important factor to note here – learners reported higher levels of work at university than at the VET institutions.

... the difference in workload and the level of difficulty. When I got to university, I found out the workload was about 40% heavier. I also found out that the subjects themselves were about 25% harder which made it very difficult for each semester because I had gone from doing 2–3 subjects a week to 4 subjects at uni. At VET you might put 2–3 hours into a subject outside of lecture time, and uni you put about 10 hours to do it properly ... [For] someone from VET who wants to do a uni degree, it is a real culture shock. (HE→VET, interviewee #260)

... the main barriers are the totally different learning style and the workload that is placed on you at uni. They were unexpected for me and I found that really tough. It basically took me 12 months to settle into that totally different learning style and the commitment and the time management that is required

to churn out the assignments and be ready for exams and everything that is required ... I don't think anything will prepare you for the actual experience of doing uni other than doing it. I think it is a case of 'head down, bum up' and it is the only way you are going to learn. (HE→VET, interviewee #253)

I would say that at uni ... the level of commitment required is a little bit greater than at TAFE. The level that is taught at uni is more in-depth where you don't seem to get that same in-depth teaching at TAFE. No disrespect to TAFE, but ... the level of learning was a little bit higher at uni.
(HE→VET, interviewee #145)

In an open-ended survey question on differences between the sectors, learners' comments concentrated heavily on differences in interaction with and accessibility of staff, though other comments related to level of work, assessment approaches, nature of the study, course structure, degree of self-management and self-direction, available modes of study, timetabling issues and learning climate.

Many comments by VET commencers were about teachers. Teachers in VET were generally seen as 'more caring and approachable', 'very helpful', 'life-experienced', 'a lot more personal' and 'much nicer and kinder'. However, some respondents considered them 'less professional and academic', 'inexperienced in teaching', 'mostly HPIs [hourly-paid instructors] and you can't speak with them', '[needing] to be more in tune with adult learning principles, we are not children', and 'to be very patronising and not as professional ... more like school-teachers'.

VET courses were typically seen to be 'a lot more flexible' and 'far more applicable to getting a job, less theoretical and academic, more relevant'. Regarding the VET climate, respondents stated that 'we have school students studying at TAFE. This makes the place have a very different atmosphere – it makes it feel more like school instead of TAFE. I did not like this. It was very different to university'; while others thought that the 'VET experience has a more friendly atmosphere'.

Some other typical comments from the survey respondents included:

Homework requirements at VET, which have to be handed up and checked by the lecturer, unlike HE, which was based on adult learning theory – self-directed study with assistance available, as long as outcomes were met.

[A difference is the] amount of feedback on assignments. HE assignments were graded HD, D, C, P or F, with comments. VET, so far, after four topics, I have received ticks, and one question received ‘good’, and grading is simply pass or fail.

The HE institution provides a much better studying environment and the lecturers treat you with a lot more respect. Through my VET experience, everyone is treated like they are back at school. It is too much like school and not like the real world ...

The support, help and assistance offered at TAFE is much higher and you’re not just another number, the lecturers actually do their best to help you out.

Comments by HE commencers on the nature and level of work at university and the ways they were expected to study were very common, such as ‘study is much more impersonal’, ‘all my subjects are mainly theory’, ‘HE is much harder than VET and involves a lot more work’, ‘subjects [are] more theoretical’, ‘onus is on me at uni to organise my time how I see fit – TAFE was more like school!’, ‘the workload is huge compared to anything I have experienced before’, ‘this course is much more conceptual, abstract and theoretical’, ‘my VET course was like a production line!’, ‘uni is so much harder than TAFE’, ‘material for course is so much more difficult at uni level. TAFE did not prepare me at all’, and ‘workload is much more at HE level. Class sizes are substantially larger than at TAFE’. Positive comments about VET courses normally highlighted its relevance to the world of work: ‘theory and content were more applied to the workplace in the TAFE course; ‘used more work-based examples and course coordinators had practical experience in the area’ and ‘VET

was competency-based'. Two students bluntly contrasted the level of work in the two sectors:

... the intensity of study is very different; uni is a hard slog, long hours, a mind boggling amount of reading, but to get a good grasp of the topic, you need to do it.

It took me about 5–10 hours a week to complete a full-time load at TAFE and do very well. It takes me 50–60 hours a week to complete a full-time load at uni and do very well.

Once again there were many comments also about differences in teaching. Positive comments about HE teaching were that 'we are treated like adults. At [VET institution], we were treated like children', 'current teaching staff are much more professional', 'uni has a much better learning and helpful atmosphere – there are more opportunities for self-improvement', and 'uni is much more relaxed and casual. TAFE's attitude and structure are very similar to high school'. Two other typical comments that made direct contrasts between the sectors were:

University has more student support, informed lecturers who engage more readily in industry, theoretical discourse, and international practice. TAFE needs injections of international speakers, guest lecturers and more theory to create an informed student.

University has required a much deeper level of research, theory and analysis – much more academic. VET is more practical in relation to the workforce, more relevant skills are taught. However, to get a decent job, you need a degree from uni.

However, again there were far more positive comments about approachability of VET staff, such as 'TAFE is more about people, and how you are coping and more helpful', 'TAFE was more organised in terms of students knowing what was going on, ... where services were and what department you went to for any issues you had', 'the availability of lecturers and their willingness to help and support

students was much greater at VET institution', 'the lecturers/tutors are less accessible at uni than at TAFE', and 'more individual teacher assistance at my VET institute'. Some other features of VET teaching were:

... at [VET], there is more interaction between students and lecturer. [VET] lecturers appear more interested in their students than at Uni.

Level of personal interest in students was greater at [VET] and more flexible approach to work and more flexible, down-to-earth staff.

Much easier to communicate with staff/institution at [VET]. More practical focus and less emphasis on exam performance at [VET].

TAFE is a lot more personal in regards to teacher/student contact, as well as interaction within the classes, making it a lot more comfortable.

Many of the HE commencers' responses hinted at the structural problems facing higher education in particular. Costs came in for some strong criticism; for example, 'Uni costs an arm and a leg, and I need at least one of them', and 'the cost of HE is massive in comparison to TAFE'. Other comments were:

Class sizes for higher education are massive, cost is extreme and time spent studying at home is far greater. This has a large impact on the social and psychological well-being of students.

Due to smaller classes, high contact hours and the nature of the courses, the staff at TAFE are more like friends, are more approachable and it's easier to get help.

This course tends to lack the human contact and one-on-one attention. Much higher class numbers for external and internal lecturers, I feel like a number in the line ...

... uni has much more work and no personal contact with teachers; teachers don't know who you are due to no time to find out and to big classroom.

Conclusions

The paper illustrates that there is value in analysing ‘more fully and systematically student accounts of their experience’, as it escapes the constraints of a ‘factors-and-outcomes’ model (Auburn 2007:131). This helps in developing understanding of how phenomena are experienced by the actors themselves, thereby adding a valuable perspective to any official interpretation that can often be the only voice heard. It also adds to the literature on ‘subjective career’, where there is, as Walton and Mallon (2004:92) in New Zealand have observed, ‘a dearth of studies which give primacy to individual sense-making in career’, especially given career will increasingly be seen as a subjective phenomenon (see Simons *et al.* 2007).

The transcripts reflected important differences in the learners’ experiences of teaching and learning in the two sectors. Comments focused heavily on differences in interaction with and accessibility of staff, while others related to level of work, assessment approaches, nature of the study, course structure, degree of self-management and self-direction, available modes of study, timetabling issues and learning climate.

Although much of the literature on learners moving between higher education and VET focuses on structure and policy, the learner voices in this study rarely mentioned such issues. Rather, they referred to relational issues as being key factors in their reasons for studying across sectors, in coping with barriers in boundary-crossing, in whether their expectations were met and in their experiences of studying in both sectors. They spoke less often and with less passion about receiving course credit, articulation arrangements between courses or being offered program and career guidance, and more about (a) receiving assistance and empathy from lecturers and (b) being uplifted by the support from learner colleagues.

With regard to (a), this was expressed more commonly in the VET cases, which may have been because VET learners were more in need of assistance, or because they were studying in smaller institutions with smaller classes. Most likely, however, it was because the lecturers were more understanding and willing to provide such support as a result of having travelled that learning journey themselves. In the words of Koeglreiter *et al.* (2008:172), they were in a position to be able to engage in 'boundary spanning activities', helping to overcome difficulties in information flow and decision-making. Certainly many of the learners made positive comments about the caring nature of their VET teachers. They were perceived as 'nurturing', 'very helpful', 'more approachable' and 'more in touch with students'. One learner said, 'at uni you don't have anyone to guide you in a sense whereas at [VET] you did', while another spoke highly of the relationships with staff: '[in VET], I had a much closer relationship with my lecturers in that I felt I could confide, ask advice, get support and even gain employment opportunities through their connections'. With their likely experience of study in university and work in VET, they served as 'brokers', being 'able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination and open new possibilities for meaning' (Wenger 1998:109).

With regard to (b), this was articulated more frequently in the university sector, where often several learners moved on to HE having studied together in a VET course and become friends, encouraging and instilling confidence in one another. In this sense they formed a 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998), especially in cases where as mature-aged learners they banded together in the face of a sea of younger, less experienced school-leavers entering tertiary education for the first time. This phenomenon supports the findings of Islam (2008:279) on learner-led communities of practice being important tools for learning in that they act as 'intermediary zones', offering opportunities to learn social and professional norms that are difficult

to acquire in formal classrooms and providing the space that eases the boundary-crossing between settings.

These findings thus confirm McMillen, Rothman and Wernert (2005) in their assertion that facilitating transition is more than simply smoothing credit transfer and administrative processes.

The learner comments clearly cluster in the domain of *teaching and learning* – the interpersonal concerns – rather than institutional or policy matters. And, given that the learners spoke often, too, about their own agency in taking risks to cross sectoral and disciplinary (Dillon 2008) boundaries, about their persistence, their motivation and their desire to find the learning experience that was ‘right’ for them at that particular stage of their lives, the emphasis here was firmly on the *learning* rather than the teaching end of the educational seesaw. It might not be even too far-fetched to contend that, in past years, students may have been more concerned with issues pertaining to their lecturers and their teaching than with their own learning, while in this research, there is a glimpse of the nature of their personal learning, studying in the appropriate course and the camaraderie of fellow learners as critical factors in their educational journeys. If these latter matters were not perceived to be ‘right’, the learners were not averse to ‘jumping ship’ and crossing boundaries to another course, discipline and even sector. While it needs to be acknowledged that these learners were transient learners by virtue of the sampling, nevertheless this study does reveal and reinforce the significance of factors related to *learning* in decisions by adults who return-to-learn to cross boundaries in their educational journeys and as they increasingly construct their ‘portfolio careers’ (Anderson 2005:8).

In addition to empathetic staff acting as brokers, it may be that there is need for other forms of boundary-spanning activities. Hultberg *et al.* (2008), for example, argue for a well-planned and stimulating introduction to higher education that could be a natural component

of any transition process, assisting learners to develop better prerequisites to manage their studies at university level. Similarly, Abbott-Chapman (2006) advocates induction programs and study support to assist the first-year transition, given that it is in the first year that VET-background learners experience more study problems and less satisfaction than other learners. Saunders (2006:18) also believes that there may be a need for a wide range of what he calls 'bridging tools' to help learners and those supporting them to navigate the transitions.

The findings of this study provide policy-makers and institutional leaders with insights into how best to position the two sectors to the advantage of learners with such changing needs, expectations and desired pathways. Strategies to promote lifelong learning, as Anderson (2005:5) has observed, require deeper understanding of the factors that motivate individuals to engage in further education. While current policy tends to afford precedence to increasing employability, on the assumption that individuals are solely or largely motivated to enrol in courses for extrinsic, work-related reasons, this study supports other studies (for example, Anderson 2005) that identify the intrinsic value of further education as a strong motivating factor. The findings further suggest that greater recognition could be afforded to the different but increasingly complementary roles that HE and VET play. The VET sector could be more clearly and strongly positioned as a viable option for post-school education.

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The role of the University of the Third Age in meeting needs of adult learners in Victoria, Australia

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Many older adults are interested in learning long past the age dictated by social norms. Some want to learn simply for the joy of learning, others because of the social contacts made by joining a community of learners, and still others want to learn so that they have a purpose in life. The University of the Third Age (U3A) is one of several models for lifelong education after retirement which have been developed worldwide. This article reports on a survey which explored the experiences of U3A members of two selected U3As in Victoria, Australia. The findings indicated that respondents were satisfied with their U3A experiences which had contributed in various areas of their lives leading to personal, mental, social and physical enhancement. It emerged that U3A is an important means of enhancing the quality of life for older adults through the provision of lifelong education.

Introduction

Older adults comprise the fastest growing sector of the population in most developed countries and yet governments have been slow in recognising the need to provide educational opportunities for the elderly. Almost four decades ago, the Fauré Report, *Learning to Be* in (UNESCO 1972, cited in Jarvis & Griffin 2003:330) advocated lifelong learning for all. Although the slogan of learning for all has been frequently used by governments in electioneering, few countries include older people in their national policies for lifelong learning (Withnall 2000, Jarvis 2002). Lifelong learning continues to be viewed narrowly, as training for work and training in work, directed primarily at young and middle-aged people (NIACE 2000). Notwithstanding, in industrialised countries increased longevity and a burgeoning population over the age of 60 years has made aging a political and economic concern. People are retiring earlier and are demonstrating an interest in continuing, or returning to, learning designed for non-vocational purposes, self-fulfilment and the pursuit of leisure. Such learning has proven to provide multiple benefits for older adults: mental and physical improvement, increased confidence and self-esteem, and increased social contacts and relationships (Aldridge & Lavender 2000, Antonucci & Akiyama 1991, Swindell 1999, Andrews, Clark & Luszcz 2002, Dench & Regan 2000).

In light of the willingness of older adults to participate in education and the benefits provided, it is important to consider what kind of educational models best serve their interests and goals. A number of educational models have been specifically designed to meet the needs of older adults. The Elderhostel movement in the United States provides significant travel opportunities combined with education. Learning opportunities are usually provided through week-long, low-cost, non-credit courses by academics on academic campuses (Stephan, Leidheiser & Ansello 2004, Baires 1996).

The Institutes for Learning in Retirement (ILR), also US-based, are independent organisations affiliated with a college or university and offer college-level courses with members participating in all aspects of curriculum design, instruction and administration (Nordstrom 2002, Manheimer, Snodgrass & Moskow-McKenzie 1995). Another well-known model is the University of the Third Age (U3A). The term 'university' is used in the medieval sense of fellow students joined together in the selfless pursuit of knowledge and truth for its own sake (Midwinter 1984). The concept of the 'third age' relates to Laslett's description of the four ages in a lifespan, which are defined neither chronologically nor biologically. Retirement from the workforce and the freedom from many domestic responsibilities to pursue personal goals and interests is characteristic of the period known as the third age (Williamson 2000). The first University of the Third Age, *L'Université du Troisième Age*, was developed in Toulouse, France in 1972 to improve the quality of life for older adults (Glendenning 2001). According to the French model, university faculty on traditional campuses conduct courses for 'third age' students (Vellas 2003). Many U3As in Europe, or Universities for Seniors, follow the French model, and are linked to and administered by universities. The courses, usually seminars and open discussion sessions, are mainly teacher-directed. University committees draw up curricula and university faculty conduct the teaching. The fees, programs and the hours learners can attend per annum vary greatly. The courses offered are 'based on the assumed needs and interests of older persons' (Formosa 2000:323).

In 1981 the British version of the U3A was established in Cambridge. This model is based on 'self-help' and 'self-sufficiency' (Laslett 1996:228) and is not usually affiliated with traditional education institutions. It is 'open' in the sense that there are neither academic admission requirements nor examinations. A key principle (Laslett 1996:228) is that: 'The university shall consist of a body of

persons who undertake to learn and help others to learn. Those who teach shall also learn and those who learn shall also teach.' There are similarities between the British U3A and the ILR: both programs reflect an egalitarian, self-help philosophy. Peer teaching and the self-help philosophy combine to make a rare and provocative model of education (Brady, Holt & Welt 2003, Midwinter 2003, Manheimer 2002). The British U3A model, now in existence for over 25 years, continues to be based on self-help and the control of the U3A is in the hands of its members (Midwinter 2003). The British U3A model has been adopted and is operative in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

The first U3A in Australia was developed in Melbourne in 1984 (U3A Network Victoria 2004). The U3A movement firstly spread rapidly through Victoria, and later throughout the whole country. According to McDonnell (1995:3), 'U3As have become Australia's fastest growing educational movement'. The administration of U3A in Australia is based on volunteers for management, teaching and office positions with minimal operational costs (Swindell 1999). The peer teaching aspect allows members to take an active part in teaching on a voluntary basis with no costs involved. The range of courses offered is extensive and classes are conducted throughout the year. The low cost of membership is one of the most positive aspects of U3A. There are no course fees, only an annual membership fee of around \$A20 to 30 per annum. This makes U3A membership affordable for all, as most retirees have a limited income (Dale 2001).

The aim of this paper is to discuss the contribution of U3A to lifelong learning for older adults with specific reference to its functioning in Victoria, Australia. A survey of members of two selected U3As in Victoria explored the participation in and experience of U3A learners with regard to the lifelong learning needs of older adults.

Research design

Currently, the state of Victoria has 64 U3As with about 17,258 members (U3A Network Victoria 2004). This study investigated the role of U3A in Victoria. Data were gathered by means of a postal survey distributed to enrolled members of two selected U3As. A questionnaire comprising 18 questions was distributed by mail to 987 members of the two selected U3As – the return rate was 63.5% (N = 627). The two participating U3As chosen as the sample were considered representative of the broader target population comprising all U3As in Victoria. Both U3As have mixed gender membership and have been in existence for nearly 15 years. The first six items dealt with demographic data of respondents (identity was not requested); questions were structured but room for individual open-ended comment was included so that respondents could express their views freely on certain issues. The questionnaire was pilot tested and appropriate adjustments made. The questionnaire was mailed together with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the research. The data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency tables and other descriptive analyses and charts were produced to obtain an overall picture of the data collected.

Findings

The findings of the survey indicated the following:

Demographic profile of respondents

The mean age for male respondents was 73.3 years and for females 70.3 years. The largest group of members (44.3%) was in the 70–79 age category. The second largest group (36%) was in the 60–69 category and 14% of respondents were over 80 years. Hurworth and Rutter's (2001) study of U3A in Victoria produced similar findings regarding age. With regard to marital status, just

over half the respondents (57%) were married. With regard to level of education, 29.7% of the respondents had completed high school at the highest level of education, 23.4 % had completed an undergraduate university degree, 29.8 % had completed business/technical or trade certificates or undergraduate diplomas, and 11.2 % held postgraduate degrees. With regard to occupation prior to retirement, 45.3% indicated that they were in professional occupations, 25% indicated secretarial/office work, and 14% indicated management positions.

Preference for instructional settings

Table 1 indicates the respondents' preferences for instructional settings.

Table 1: Preference for instructional settings

	Frequency	Valid percent
Traditional classroom settings	172	27.7
Small informal groups	227	36.6
In private homes	3	0.5
It does not matter	219	35.3
Missing	6	-
Total	627	100

Little preference was expressed by respondents regarding the type of settings for instruction. 'Small informal groups' scored slightly higher (36.6%) than the category 'It does not matter' (35.3%). The 'traditional classroom' setting was slightly less popular (27.7%). A negligible 0.5% preferred private homes as the setting for instruction. U3A members' preference for classroom settings has been cited as important to levels of participation. Findsen (2001) found that formal classroom settings could constitute an institutional barrier to participation.

Reasons for joining U3A

Table 2 indicates the reasons for joining U3A.

Table 2: Reasons for joining U3A

	Frequency	Valid percent
Curiosity	12	1.9
To gain knowledge	438	70.2
Personal satisfaction	107	17.1
To mix with stimulating people	54	8.7
To escape daily routine	5	0.8
To make new friends	8	1.3
Missing	3	-
Total	627	100

The findings indicate that most respondents (70.2%) joined U3A ‘to gain knowledge’. Only 17.1% indicated that they had joined ‘for personal satisfaction’, while 8.7% joined U3A to ‘mix with stimulating people’.

Reasons for not joining U3A earlier are documented in Table 3.

Table 3: Reasons for not joining U3A earlier

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not aware of existence of U3A	250	31.8
Thought I was too old to learn	102	13.0
Negative experiences from previous educational circumstances	68	8.6
Term ‘university’ put me off	61	7.8
Lecture venue/environment not convenient	73	9.3
Other	233	29.6
Missing cases	66	-
Total responses	787	100

The largest group of respondents (31.8%) had not joined earlier as they had been unaware of U3A; 13% of the respondents had been reluctant to join as they had felt they were too old to learn. Negative perceptions about the learning environment (9.3%) and prior negative educational experiences (8.6%) had kept others from joining earlier. Almost a third (29.6%) of the respondents indicated 'other', citing reasons such as fulltime work, age, inadequate information and care-giving responsibilities in the space left for open ended responses. Peterson and Masunaga (1998) maintain that lack of awareness is one of the main obstacles preventing people from continuing with lifelong learning. The feeling that one is too old to learn is also a stereotype widely persisting in society (Lamdin & Fugate 1997).

Participation of respondents in TAFE or university courses

The question whether respondents had enrolled during the past five years in any TAFE or university courses was posed. Only eight percent of the respondents had enrolled in such courses during the past five years. Further, the majority of respondents who answered negatively to this question were asked to give a reason. Most respondents gave lack of interest as a reason. Another reason mentioned was the cost of TAFE and university courses in contrast to U3A courses which cost very little.

Enhanced quality of life due to participation

Respondents were asked to evaluate the benefits of U3A on a five-point scale in which 1 indicated 'not at all' and 5 'to a great extent'. The great majority (96%) of the respondents indicated that they had benefited from participation in U3A in some way.

Furthermore, respondents were asked to identify which aspects of their life had improved due to participation in U3A. Eight possible responses were given: social inclusion, intellectual development, self-esteem, independence, ability to find employment, memory,

health, ability to keep up with technical changes, and other. The responses are presented separately in Tables 4 to 10.

Table 4 indicates the findings dealing with social inclusion.

Table 4: Increased social inclusion

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not at all	24	4.4
Little extent	29	5.3
Some extent	208	37.9
More extent	178	32.4
Great extent	110	20.0
Missing	78	-
Total	627	100

Most respondents (90%) indicated that participation in U3A had contributed to social inclusion in some way. Twenty percent indicated that participation had contributed to a ‘great extent’. The importance of social inclusion in older adults has been well documented (Pinquart 2002, Antonucci & Akiyama 1991, Swindell 1999).

Findings regarding increased intellectual development are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Increased intellectual development

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not at all	6	1.1
Little extent	15	2.7
Some extent	217	38.5
More extent	235	41.7
Great extent	90	16.0
Missing	63	-
Total	627	100

Most respondents (96%) indicated that participation had increased their intellectual development. This is a positive result, as the main reason for most respondents joining U3A – as indicated in Table 2 – was ‘to gain knowledge’.

The findings for self-esteem are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6: Increased self-esteem

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not at all	35	7.2
Little extent	38	7.8
Some extent	198	40.6
More extent	133	27.2
Great extent	84	17.2
Missing	139	-
Total	627	100

Most respondents (85%) indicated that participation in U3A had increased their self-esteem. Pinquart (2002) found that social relationships contribute to older adults’ sense of self, and are important for self-esteem, well-being, and good mental and physical health. Blau (in Hall-Elston & Mullins 1999) also found that peer friendships in later life were critical to positive self-image, confidence and self-esteem.

With regard to increased independence, the findings are indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Increased feelings of independence

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not at all	85	20.7
Little extent	64	15.6
Some extent	116	28.3
More extent	93	22.7
Great extent	52	12.7
Missing	217	-
Total	627	100

The response, 'some extent', was indicated by 28.3%, while the second highest score was for 'more extent', with 22.7%. A total of 12.7% indicated 'great extent' ('not at all' had a response rate of 20.7%). In studies of older adults engaged in educational activities, independence has invariably been associated with older adults' perceptions that they had control over their lives and feel a sense of freedom (Searle, Mahon, Iso-Ahola, Solrolias & Van Dyck 1995:107, Kolland 1993:535).

Findings on whether participation increased their ability to find employment are indicated in Table 8. Only 11 males and 43 females out of the total sample answered this question. Of these, 74.1% indicated 'not at all', and 14.8% indicated 'little extent'. This in line with the aims of U3A which does not attempt to provide training for employment.

The response on whether participation improved memory is indicated in Table 8.

Table 8: Participation improved memory

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not at all	34	6.2
Little extent	32	5.8
Some extent	223	40.5
More extent	212	38.5
Great extent	49	8.9
Missing	77	-
Total	627	100

The majority of respondents felt that participation improved memory. The categories ‘some extent’ to ‘great extent’ were indicated by 88% of the respondents.

The response on whether participation improved health is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Participation improved health

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not at all	72	14.1
Little extent	68	13.3
Some extent	204	39.8
More extent	112	21.9
Great extent	56	10.9
Missing	115	-
Total	627	100

Three quarters of the respondents believed that participation improved health. The categories ‘some extent’ (39.8%) and ‘more extent’ (21.9%) showed the highest scores. A number of studies corroborate this finding that learning and well-being among

the elderly are positively correlated (Pinquart 2002, MacNeil & Teague 1987).

Findings regarding the increased ability to keep up with technical change are found in Table 10.

Table 10: Participation increased ability to keep up with technical change

	Frequency	Valid percent
Not at all	143	31.2
Little extent	76	16.6
Some extent	126	27.5
More extent	84	18.3
Great extent	30	6.5
Missing	168	-
Total	627	100

Of the respondents who answered this question, 31.2% indicated 'not at all' and 27.5% indicated to 'some extent'. There was a marked difference in the age category analysis of the question. The lower age groups, <60 (48.3%) and 60–69 (40.9%), indicated 'not at all', while 'some extent' scores were higher in the 70–79 (30.3%) and 80+ (47.2%) categories. The category 'more extent' was rated highest in the 70–79 group of respondents, with 22.9%.

Areas for improvement in U3A

Respondents were asked to indicate areas for improvement in U3A. Rank 1 indicated most important and Rank 2 indicated second in importance. The most important areas where U3A could be improved are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Areas where U3A could be improved (Rank 1)

	Frequency	Valid percent
Types of course offered	145	38.8
Quality of tutors	61	16.3
Classroom availability	111	29.7
Times and scheduling of courses	54	14.4
Other	3	0.8
Missing	253	40.4
Total	627	100

The category with the highest response was improvements in ‘types of courses offered’ (38.8%), followed by ‘classroom availability’ (29.7%). ‘Quality of tutors’ (16.3%) and ‘scheduling of courses’ (14.4%) were deemed of similar importance.

Table 12: Areas where U3A could be improved (Rank 2)

	Frequency	Valid percent
Types of course offered	64	26.8
Quality of tutors	45	18.8
Classroom availability	64	26.8
Times and scheduling of courses	62	25.9
Other	4	1.7
Missing	388	-
Total	627	100

Table 12 (Rank 2) also shows the highest proportions in the same categories, ‘types of courses offered’ (26.8%) and ‘classroom availability’ (26.8%). Together, these results indicate that types of courses offered and classroom availability are the main areas where members feel that improvement should occur. The reason why ‘types of courses offered’ is indicated as an area for improvement may be attributed to a lack of availability of tutors in certain subject areas.

Service as tutor or in U3A management

As mentioned, U3A is a self-help organisation as far as teaching and administration are concerned. However, only 15.1% of the respondents indicated that they had served as tutors at U3A. An analysis of educational background of tutors indicated that they are more likely to have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree than those who have not. Of those who served as tutors, 37.2% had an undergraduate degree and 17% had a postgraduate degree. The self-help philosophy of the U3A also includes members performing all administrative tasks. However, in this regard, only 8.2% of the respondents had served on a U3A management committee.

Responses to open-ended questions

The questionnaire allowed for open-ended comments. Respondents appreciated their teaching experiences as tutors at U3A. One respondent mentioned: 'I have been using my teaching experience at U3A which has given me great satisfaction'. Another respondent, with no previous teaching experience, commented: 'I discovered that I had a flair for teaching not thought of before. It has given me great pleasure to impart knowledge and see results'. Other members maintained that they benefited from participation on the management committee of U3A or helping with work in the office. Others mentioned the peer teaching aspect of U3A – being *both* a teacher *and* a student. This is in line with Gaskell's (1999:268) remark: 'Teachers and students are peers in the democratic University of the Third Age model'. Furthermore, respondents appreciated the affordability of U3A – class participation without undue competition and stress, and the kindness of fellow members *in general*. Frequently, respondents mentioned the advantage of relating to people of their own age group. Respondents also remarked that U3A gave structure to daily living. A respondent stated: 'Monday morning class "gets me going" for the week'. Similarly, Johnson (1995) found that older students enrolled in the UK's Open University

appreciated the structure it gave to retirement. An unexpected benefit for respondents was greater awareness of the multicultural society as they had engaged with members from other ethnic groups and backgrounds. Interestingly, women respondents mentioned that U3A gave them the opportunity to compensate for educational opportunities missed during youth or while raising children. Unlike men, women also mentioned a sense of power, a sense of achievement and confidence, as a benefit of U3A.

Conclusion

The U3A, especially the British model, is increasingly popular in a number of countries and is well established in Australia. This study explored the experience of respondents in U3A with regard to the lifelong education needs of a sample of older adults in Victoria, Australia. The U3A concept appealed to the respondents with its emphasis on peer-teaching philosophy, community orientation, accessibility, affordability, and the wide variety of courses offered throughout the year giving enjoyment and structure to members' lives. The results of the study showed that participants were very satisfied with their membership of U3A, that learning activities made substantial differences to their lives and that the benefits of participating in U3A activities were numerous.

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BOOK REVIEW

Jacques Lacan and education: a critical introduction

Donyell L. Roseboro

Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2008

ISBN: 978-90-8790-423-4, 116 pages, RRP \$74.99

Donyell Roseboro is Assistant Professor in education at the University of North Carolina. A former secondary teacher, Roseboro is critical of the regime of accountability and curriculum standardisation that has reached new heights under the *No child left behind* legislation in the United States. It is against this backdrop of the erosion of teacher professionalism that Roseboro finds solace and inspiration in the theories of eccentric psychoanalyst and structuralist, Jacques Lacan (1901–1981).

Lacan was among a group of French thinkers who applied the principles of structuralism to a range of established fields through the 1950s and 60s. Structuralism may be summarised as the doctrine that meaning is an affect of social structures rather than a property inherent in the individual words, rituals, institutions,

etc. that make them up. For example, the founder of structuralism, linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, proposed that the meaning of language was generated by the relationships *between* words, rather than something caused by an independent link between individual words and what they stand for. Other thinkers who applied the principles of structuralism included Claude Lévi-Strauss (in the field of anthropology) and Louis Althusser (to Marxism). Their efforts invigorated these fields, uncovering new possibilities and problems.

Lacan was a clinical psychiatrist, working in a field that was then dominated by the theories of Sigmund Freud. These theories (referred to as ‘psychoanalysis’) purported to account for the neuroses and psychoses suffered by psychiatric patients, and provided techniques that a trained analyst could employ to alleviate or cure these conditions. Psychoanalysis rests upon the assumption that a powerful influence on human behaviour is the unconscious mind, and that the potential exists for particular experiences in the lives of individuals to lead to entrenched disturbances in the delicate relationship between the unconscious and the conscious ‘ego’ of our everyday selves.

Lacan rose to prominence in the world of psychoanalysis when he introduced his theory of the ‘mirror stage’. Freud believed that infants go through distinct stages as bodily zones and functions succeed each other as preoccupations in the child’s life. These stages are the oral, anal and phallic, and their general validity can be attested by anyone who has observed very young people mouthing everything within reach, then going through toilet training and finally discovering sexual difference by around the age of five. These stages are important in psychoanalysis as possible starting points for later psychological disturbance, depending on just how the important figures in the infant’s life respond and interact with them in relation to the activities specific to the different stages. Lacan proposed that an extra stage needed to be acknowledged within psychoanalysis which revolved around the experiences of the infant with mirrors.

Roseboro dedicates a chapter to detailing the mechanics of the mirror stage and its impact on the development of self-awareness and identity, but better introductions to Lacan's ideas on this topic exist (for example, Roudinesco 2003, Bowie 1993 or Lee 1990). For Lacan, the infant is initially a mass of parts with no centralised controlling agency. However, when the infant begins to notice itself in the mirror an ideal of wholeness takes form. It is in the mirror that the infant discovers itself as a coherent, unified being. But not only that. The infant also sees significant others in the reflection as well, relating to the self in the mirror, approving, disapproving, ignoring. A self is created, but so is dependence upon the regard of others, a permanent sense of being sustained within a network of gazes that co-create the self.

A significant implication of the mirror stage – which, as Roseboro points out, is unique in being never completed – is that the unified self created through it is an illusion. This unsettling idea is rendered all the more poignant by another of Lacan's appropriations of Freud. According to Lacan, Freud did not see the conscious self as really separate from the unconscious. It followed for Lacan that the unconscious had a primacy in our lives and the tenuous and spectral nature of the conscious self and indeed the ego with which we identify, possesses a wholeness that is a projection from the unconscious. He also believed that the unconscious is the part of us that does our speaking, although it does so without talking from any 'where'. The subject of the unconscious, our 'real' self, has no centre, in contrast with the permanent illusion of a unified self that accompanies it in virtue of the mirror stage. It is the matrix of the unconscious, which is 'structured like a language', that produces the meaning affect that we cling to as our ownmost self.

Although, as Roseboro points out, Lacan's theories do not display the sensitivity to and articulation of issues of power that mark *post-structural* thought, his ideas of a de-centred subject, as well as the

clinical techniques that call for listening to the ‘marginalised voices’ of the unconscious, may contribute to the analysis of the post-modern world in general and, Roseboro believes, for education in particular.

However, this attempt to bring Lacan’s ideas to bear on the problems of (public) education is not uniformly successful. Perhaps it is to be expected of a brief, introductory text like *Jacques Lacan and education* that not all the implications of the complex field of Lacanian theory for education could be registered. Roseboro even suggests that such a systematic undertaking would be against the spirit of Lacan’s thought. What she does argue for, passionately, is an ideal of public education that gives teachers the time to learn about their students and implements a curriculum that actively undermines the pretensions to truth and normativity of the dominant discourse. She says:

Using Lacan, I envision public education as a process which encourages the distinctiveness of students, challenges normative assumptions about what a ‘good’ student is, and demands that teachers facilitate student understanding of multiple truths but that teachers also engage in an honest reconstruction of history – one that acknowledges the brutality of conquest, the arrogance of imperialism, and the illusiveness/elusiveness of peace. (p. 79)

She also emphasises a number of suggestive parallels between psychoanalysis and education. In Lacan’s psychoanalytic therapy, the patient talks and the analyst listens and interprets the words as symbolising the struggle of the ‘real’ subject of the unconscious to enter language, which it can only ever do obliquely through disturbances in the stories told by the ego. Through this process, the patient is never ‘cured’ but does acquire a measure of self-knowledge.

Lacan himself likened the educator’s position to that of the analyst in that the true teacher facilitates a process of self-knowledge in the learner as much as a process of knowing prescribed content. And where students disrupt lessons, these disturbances are to be read

as meaningful signs rather than something irrelevant requiring suppression. Finally, just as Lacan fought the standardisation of psychoanalytic practice in the years following Freud's death, Roseboro finds that the standardisation of curriculum looms as a fundamental threat to the ideals of public education.

The last chapters of Roseboro's book would be where we might expect the implications of Lacan's thought for education to be sketched, but here the argument occasionally becomes disjointed, and even slightly contradictory. As Roseboro finds full voice, we plunge into a wide-ranging discussion that encompasses figures such as Montessori, Parker Palmer, and practices such as the 'pedagogy of soul' and service learning. But Roseboro also talks about requiring evidence that teachers have undertaken activities that she approves, as well as 'precluding negative behaviours' and the need to 'make schools places where students want to be'. These tendentious demands seem to me to go against the grain of a Lacanian philosophy of education. Roseboro also endorses Palmer's vision of an education that seeks 'healing and wholeness', and professes that she 'fundamentally believes "truth" exists, that it serves as the impetus for social justice and forces us to sacrifice personal gain for the common good' (p. 80). In the end, despite the radicalness of Roseboro's suggested first step in the transformation of public education – closing the schools for as long as it takes to decide what should be done at each site to implement a post-formal model of schooling – the uneasy mixture of liberal, essentialist and post-structural elements in Roseboro's doctrine creates a sense of disunity. There is, of course, an irony in asking for unity from a writer fashioning a Lacanian interpretation of education, but the book represents a singular opportunity that could have been better realised. The situation is not helped by the fact that the text is riddled with errors and very expensive for a slender paperback.

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BOOK REVIEW

Green frontiers: environmental educators dancing away from mechanism

James Gray-Donald and David Selby (editors)
Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2008
ISBN 978-90-8790-463-0, 292 pages, £25

Environmental education, according to the editors of this book, is in danger of being co-opted by mainstream education and losing its edge. Worse, it is falling under the influence of 'education for sustainable development', with its implicit acceptance of globalisation, economic growth and a managerial approach to the environment. To counter this threat, the authors issue a passionate plea for a more radical environmental education (EE) that incorporates critical and cultural studies into a path towards transformation of self, society and relationships with the natural world. While Australian environmental educators might not characterise the state of their discipline in such dramatic terms, this book provides a worthwhile glimpse into international thinking on EE.

The 16 authors in this book have all taught or studied at the International Institute for Global Education (IIGE) at the University of Toronto, a dynamic interdisciplinary group with strong links with local activist communities. Sadly, the Institute ceased to exist in 2003, and in some ways the book is a celebration of IIGE and an attempt to reconstitute the work of the group in an international context. The editors, Professor David Selby and Dr James Gray-Donald, now hold academic positions at the Centre for Sustainable Futures at the University of Plymouth in England, and are well situated to carry on this work.

Any edited volume has the task of providing a meaningful structure within which a diversity of voices can be held. To this end, the editors present an Introduction that sets out the lofty aim to ‘deepen a holistic vision for EE’, that is, ‘critical to transformation of both human society and humanity’s relationship to nature’ (p. 6). They also provide useful overviews of each of the five sections of the book that cover, respectively, current dilemmas for the field of EE, the relationship between the inner and the outer worlds of education, questioning assumptions of normalcy within EE, the contribution of humane education to EE, and case studies of EE in schools. With such different sections that lack an immediate overall coherence, it is disappointing that the editors didn’t write a concluding chapter that brought the disparate threads together and assessed the extent to which the holistic vision for EE had been realised.

The book offers the tantalising prospect of encountering three true luminaries of education for social change in the one volume – Edmund O’Sullivan, the leading light in transformative learning for the past three decades; Jack Miller, the pioneer of holistic education; and David Selby, who has developed theories of global education and humane education. None of them has come out of the field of EE directly, so it is a very positive sign for the discipline that leading

educational theorists would be interested in exploring how their work could be seen as EE.

Selby notes that climate change presents a challenge for educational institutions that they are ill-prepared to meet, and argues that an expanded EE has a crucial role to play. To counter the perception of climate change as being too complex and ‘somebody else’s problem’, he calls for education in which learners explore their inner ecology as well as external ecological relationships. The commitment to reducing one’s ecological footprint has to be emotional, deriving from the felt connection between self and nature. For Jack Miller, Buddhist practices of loving kindness and mindfulness are effective ways to connect the inner and outer worlds. Ed O’Sullivan walks the more familiar path of the origins of the mechanistic worldview in the work of Newton and Descartes, and calls for education that re-enchants the natural world.

This writing is inspirational at times, which is a valuable service for teachers and teacher educators caught in the mire of curriculum. However, it is not very satisfying from a conceptual point of view. Of course, one would hope that good environmental education is transformative, holistic, humane and global in scope. But how do these ideas interact with the main theoretical currents within EE? What difference does this make for the day-to-day practice of EE?

James Gray-Donald attempts an answer to the first of these questions by revisiting recent scholarly debates about EE, critiques and studies of its effectiveness. His narrative approach, interspersed with personal stories, provides some necessary background, but ends with the observation: ‘EE is a cultural construction and is thus more porous and amorphous than I am. We are the moments where environmental education is smearing itself across us all’ (p. 33). EE is a difficult enough concept to grasp and discuss meaningfully without such vague and elusive language, which occurs all too frequently in these chapters.

The subtitle of the book, 'Environmental educators dancing away from mechanism', indicates the problem right away. 'Dancing' is fine as a metaphor, suggesting embodiment and pleasurable structured activity. However, one dances away from walls, from one's partner or the music. It makes little sense to dance away from an abstraction such as 'mechanism', particularly when it becomes clear that what is meant by the term is the familiar bogeyman of the Newtonian-Cartesian mechanistic worldview. Mechanisms are useful things, essential for understanding how a system works, and are not something to be avoided. The authors are quite right to point out the dangers of applying mechanistic ways of thinking too broadly, but if holistic education is to be truly inclusive, it must include appropriate mechanistic thinking. The more interesting question of how mechanistic and non-mechanistic ways of thinking can complement each other in the classroom is not addressed.

The second problem with the subtitle is that it only points to what environmental educators are, or should be, moving away from. What are they dancing towards? The editors and luminaries provide some pointers, but fall well short of the articulated vision for EE that was promised in the Introduction.

Fortunately, other contributors come to the rescue to some degree. Virginia Thompson draws on eco-feminist thought and the relational school of psychology to develop a model of empathetic mutuality in the educational relationship. It goes beyond simplistic conceptions of self-other boundaries to the notion of 'separateness-in-connection', which is relevant to relationships between learner and educator, and between learner and nature. When applied to pedagogical practice, an ethic of care and the learning community, it provides a more satisfying, theoretically-grounded 'frontier' for EE. Interestingly, Thompson argues that an eco-relational approach to education, 'in which neither part nor whole are reduced to the other' (p. 109), differs

from other related models of education, such as global, humane or peace education, which tend to stress the general over the particular.

Several other contributors write engagingly of their practice as innovative environmental educators. Sara Tillet describes how she enables her school students to 'live the big ideas' by spending weeks creating a rainforest or a space exploration program, and learning from the experience. Her students leave the school every Friday to experience the world beyond the school walls, they keep an ongoing nature journal, and have an extended 'Turtle Camp' field trip at the end of each year to maintain the learning culture. Wendy Agnew describes how her students developed dramatic presentations that brought rock and bone to life using chants and rituals. She set research assignments based on the role the moon plays in stabilising the earth's climate that required students to present their results in an integrated performance structure.

These examples are some of the most memorable in the book. The whole section on EE in schools should be recommended reading for teachers and teacher educators – there is a pressing need for the quality of teaching exemplified by Tillet and Agnew. The book is also worthwhile for those practitioners, students and general readers looking for ideas and inspiration for future directions for EE. Theorists of EE, though, will likely be disappointed by an account that is poorly-developed conceptually, with the exception of Thompson's work. That still leaves a large potential readership for this broad-ranging book that provides ample room for further research and exploration, and some room for optimism about the future of an expanded EE.

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BOOK REVIEW

Putting people in the picture: visual methodologies for social change

Naydene de Lange, Claudia Mitchell & Jean Stuart (eds.)
Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2008
ISBN: 978-90-8790-179-0, 290 pages

Instilling hope in the face of adversity is perhaps the greatest challenge of the twenty-first century. *Putting people in the picture: visual methodologies for social change* sets out a range of practical, creative ways of building hope in communities racked by poverty, dislocation, HIV and AIDS, substance abuse and gender inequality. The book demonstrates how researchers and social activists positively use photography, video, image pastiche and drawing to bring about positive action when addressing complex social problems.

The book is edited by three academics from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa: Naydene de Lange, Associate Professor in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education; Claudia Mitchell, who is a James McGill Professor in the Faculty

of Education, McGill University, and an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal; and Jean Stuart, Lecturer in Media Education, and Director for the Centre for Visual Methodologies for Social Change, in the Faculty of Education.

The book presents a range of practical, visual approaches and methodologies for social change. Using participatory and arts-based approaches that position participants as cultural producers, the book addresses social-cultural aspects of community and individual health and well-being. The writing will appeal to academics and researchers working in social change. Central to the book is an emphasis on positive approaches towards addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic entwined within the complex circumstances of poverty and associated social disconnect.

The traditional journal approach provides a wealth of material for postgraduate students and supervisors. In addition, there is much in the book to inspire community-based organisations working at the coalface. With modification, the design of the positive social change projects set out in the book has application for rural, suburban and inner city Australia.

A range of on-going community-based challenges facing South Africa sparked the publication: HIV and AIDS, impoverished schooling, poverty, gender violence, race, plus children's vision for the future. The majority of the chapters were first presented at the Putting People in the Picture Symposium held at the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban, South Africa in February 2006. The National Research Foundation, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, sponsored the editing of the book.

The personal accounts of teachers and researchers draw together a range of educative visual techniques and methodologies that can assist student, teacher and community leaders alike to move forward. As clichéd as the national catchcry 'the way forward' has become

in South Africa, this book epitomises hope and forwardness. The contributors capture, in words and images, the grassroots reality of fieldwork when dealing with messy, uncompromising, person-centred issues surrounding the transformation of harm into well-being. The book describes a range of visual approaches such as mapping, drawing and the use of photographs to engage in social science research and grounded action. The book covers ‘research that matters’ in terms of grassroots activism – research and action that make a difference.

The book is divided into five sections, beginning with four chapters on photovoice – a methodology mostly used in the field of education that combines photography with grassroots social action. The concept of photovoice owes a debt to Paulo Freire’s pedagogy related to critical consciousness, feminist theory and empowerment. With the aide of a camera, persons are asked to represent their community or point of view. The section provides insight into how students and teachers conceptualise their circumstances by presenting photos that ‘reach out and make a difference’ in order to change entrenched mindsets.

Section Two, ‘Materiality and the visual’, has three chapters dealing with how visual studies can contribute to personal and social change. Drawing on autoethnography and autobiography, the chapters are directed more towards the academy and less towards the grassroots practitioner. Section Three, ‘Interpreting the visual’, asks the question: ‘What to do with visual data?’ To this end it asks: ‘How is visual data read?’. The chapter points out that we read from the framework to which we have had access, and that educators and researchers alike need to recognise how this shapes or limits our interpretation. Section Four, ‘Tools’, looks at the tools and challenges required for managing the many photographs that can result from photovoice projects.

Section Five, 'Visualising social change', contains four chapters about the role that drawing, photography and video can play in research committed to social transformation.

Overall, this is a readable text. The four chapters in the first section clearly set out how photovoice can facilitate positive social change. Understandably, the text adheres to a regimented academic journal formula. That said, there are numerous colourful and insightful snippets that extend beyond such regimentation and personalise stories about the implementation of positive change in the face of substantial personal and community obstacles. At times, across the book, aspects of chapters are a little repetitious. However, the lessons therein, and methodological process of initiating positive change, make up for any shortcomings. Overall, the book achieves its goal of reflecting on and setting out sound creative processes for putting people in the picture when seeking visual methodologies for social change.

I don't know of another book that covers photovoice and its associated methodologies as well as this text. I am told that it is cheaper to import the book from the United Kingdom than the United States of America – check first. For anyone researching in this area, or for community groups and social change agents, *Putting people in the picture: visual methodologies for social change* will be a useful addition to their personal or institutional library.

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BOOK REVIEW

Using biographical and life history approaches in the study of adult and lifelong learning: European perspectives. *European Studies in Lifelong Learning and Adult Learning Research, Volume 2*

Linden West, Peter Alheit, Anders Siig Andersen, Barbara Merrill (eds.)

Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007
310 pages, ISBN: 978-3-631-56286-4 (pbk)

For anyone interested in weaving their knowledge and practice of adult learning from the perspective of life history, biography and 'auto/biography', I heartily recommend this volume as a basket of diverse threads to delve into. Casting a quick eye over the contents shows immediately that these threads have their origin in various European settings for study, and that their makers are skilled in a number of disciplines. The fifteen chapters lead the reader into expositions of findings and discussions from theoretical perspectives that one would expect to find in European fields of study and

research. The authors draw on existential theories, phenomenology, postmodernism, gender studies, critical theory and postpositivist research methods to address questions about learning in families, in therapy, in training adult educators; about using auto/biography in adult education; about professional identity, collective dimensions of life history; life history and language, gender and work.

The inspiration for this series of volumes to report European life history research, seminars and conferences comes from the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA). ESREA has had a Life History and Biography Network for more than 15 years, so the research reported in this volume has both a flavour of maturity and a zest to search out new ways and contexts for study. Some of the contributors – Linden West, Pierre Dominice, Agnieszka Bron and Peter Alheit are long-time members of the ESREA Life History and Biography Network and well known for their publications.

The text is directed to graduate level researchers, adult educators at work in various contexts, education policy-makers and practitioners who use life history methods. For researchers and educators less familiar with ESREA's conferences, there are several chapters that provide an overview of research and practices to show what is common and different in the national contexts of Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, Poland, Germany, Switzerland and France. It may be difficult for many of us who do not participate often in European scholarship to appreciate the degree to which adult education and research has taken place in a collaborative way within diverse language and cultural settings. All the chapters in this text are in English which for some is their second or third language. There is something exciting, at least for me, about discovering here the well-established interaction among these European scholars and practitioners.

The chapters cover a broad range of topics that refer to personal and social dimensions of formal and informal adult education practices

in a variety of national settings. The focus of the chapters moves from gender to family learning to working life, from therapy to professional identity and social awareness, from life history research methods to training adult educators to reflective practice. As an adult educator with a particular interest in autobiography, imagination and transformative learning, I found that the chapters which most engaged me were those by Barbara Merrill, Agnieszka Bron, Marlene Horsdahl, Nod Miller and Pierre Dominice. I will make a brief comment on aspects of these chapters, with the recognition that the other chapters also deserve appreciation and comment that a brief review does not accommodate.

Barbara Merrill's chapter, titled 'Recovering class and the collective in the stories of adult learners', drew attention to a common tendency in life history writing to emphasise principally the individuality of learners, ignoring collective dimensions of their identity such as class, gender and race. Influenced by postmodern perspectives, some sociologists and researchers have been inclined recently to see social identity in terms of lifestyle choices rather than as concomitants of the learner's gender, race or class. Merrill reported her research into participation or not in post-school education through stories gathered from Scottish adults. She had also researched stories of access and exclusion told by non-traditional adult learners in two other European contexts. Merrill identified in these stories the presence of strategies for learning and outcomes related to collective aspects of the learners' identity. She concluded that these stories about inequalities of power in society, elicited through this approach to researching adult learning, exposed these constraints for policy-makers to consider and served to lead some adult learners to engage in social action for improved educational policies and practices.

'Educational biography as a reflective approach to the training of adult educators' is the title of Pierre Dominice's chapter. Because the field of adult education practice has broadened its scope and extends

now to lifelong learning, and because there is an expectation that the educator will devote increasing amounts of time to managerial tasks and even marketing, it is crucial that the training of adult educators keeps its focus on the central principles of adult learning that have emerged within the past fifty years. Dominice, in a thoughtful reflection on the past and future life history of adult education, argued that educational biography is a sound approach to sustain lifelong learning for adult educators and to enable them to accommodate to the changing circumstances of their practice. He concluded his chapter proposing that the adult educator's use of educational biography promotes democratic practices, the conscious embrace of ethical values in public life, and commitment to personal and social health and ecological integrity.

Marlene Horsdahl in 'Therapy and narratives of self' illustrated how she evoked narratives from clients dealing with the fragmentation of identity that traumatic experiences had brought to their life. The telling of narratives that heal and integrate beyond stress reduction depends on both the intrapersonal strengths of the narrator and the interpersonal resource of an attuned listener. Horsdahl's case study shows how, through this collaborative narrative practice, the client narrator arrived at a sense of coherence in their life history and developed the ability to integrate ongoing experiences plausibly and authentically within the traumatic events of the past. The narrator regained the ability to imagine a future, and to construct their life history.

The theme of learning, self and identity in times of transition between cultures and contexts is taken up by Agnieszka Bron, with an emphasis on the factor of language. In her chapter, 'Learning, language and transition', she reported that for more than 20 years she has collected and analysed narratives of immigrants, students and others seeking a career change who enter a new culture for the sake of learning. They expect to need to learn a new professional

language yet find that it turns out to be not at all the language of everyday life. Knowing the words of the new language without also knowing the ‘mentality’ of native speakers is not enough to prevent misunderstanding, conflict and exclusion from information sharing. There is also the added challenge for learners in times of transition to discover the culture’s required ways of communicating, to learn ‘sociality’ – to be a self that can participate competently even when one does not belong.

Nod Miller’s ‘Developing an auto/biographical imagination’ is a reflection on her practice in adult education. With clarity and lightness of tone, she retraces some steps in her learning and research in British and other national contexts. Her reflections on her learning and her educational research and practice place her at the centre of the account but without egocentricity, thereby illustrating how auto/biographical writing is about both self and the various others – colleagues, authors, researchers – whose lives are joined to the narrator’s. This chapter is an illustration of how reflection on her practice allows her to consider and reconsider her experience of education and learning so that she gains ongoing appreciation of its significance for her.

My overall response to this volume is to be delighted by its demonstration of the current and potential uses of life history approaches in adult education and research. I believe that awareness of this rich source of knowledge and practice in European contexts of adult learning would encourage researchers and practitioners outside Europe to look for inspiration among these threads.

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BOOK REVIEW

A people learning. Colonial Victorians and their public museums, 1860–1880

Kathleen Fennessy

North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2007

ISBN: 978 1 74097 175 1 (pbk), A\$39-95

The volume contains 321+ xiii pages. There is an extensive though called ‘select’ bibliography (pp. 359–310), a useful index (pp. 311–321) and helpful notes on the text (pp. 208–258). The volume contains 17 illustrations that enliven the text.

The book focuses on the Australian state of Victoria over two decades in a period a long time ago. Fennessy’s documentation of the period provides a very detailed, well organised and strongly supported from the literature picture of these select institutions and the society in which they operated. But the work has value beyond its historical period. It provides a perspective on learning – whatever it is and however it occurs – in organisations that, in the contemporary world of the internet and digitilisation, are seeking to re-define themselves.

What are the organisations covered in the book? They are The Institution and the Gardens but that really means four institutions under the former term and two under the latter term. The four are the Public Library, the National Museum, the National Gallery and the Industrial and Technological Museum, while the two in the latter group are the Botanical Garden and the Zoological Garden. It is interesting to note that this is the first study that has covered as a whole the four organisations within the Institution.

The four parts of The Institution are discussed in turn in four chapters and then the two gardens are dealt with together in a single chapter. A brief Introduction and brief Conclusion begin and conclude the volume.

The volume caters for the interests of many readers. Firstly, Melbournians should read this broad and revealing analysis of their city in that important post-gold rush period. Those with an interest in the broad area of 'museums practice' (that includes galleries, gardens and libraries as well as museums) have the opportunity to appreciate how these different institutions served their city and beyond in an important period in the colony's development and of course makes comparisons with to-day's problems and solutions. Among the other reader interests that the volume may illustrate are the issues centred on the ways in which governments perceive problems, pose responses, use delay as a major tactic and/or devolve responsibility to others when the problem is difficult to resolve.

In a journal whose title includes the term 'adult learning', there is much on offer. This is not a volume devoted to the theory of adult learning, or learning in general, but it is a very useful illustration of that learning in practice. The volume is about those who have ideas about what others ought to or should learn and seek to achieve that goal. With the benefit of hindsight it may provide some humour to be critical of the ways those of the 1860s and 70s behaved in relation to providing and undertaking this learning. But of more value is a

reading of the volume noting examples of current problems in the practice of that earlier period and acknowledging the achievements of both the providers and consumers of the learning provided through The Institution and Gardens.

Those who organised the learning certainly sought to control the learning of their visitors, and believed that if they set up the right environment they could achieve this learning. This aspect was specially important in the Public Library and National Museum (e.g. pp. 23–24). But the organisers' goal was not as easy to achieve as they believed.

They were certainly aware of various types of learning, from the formal to the informal. Lectures were favoured and over 8,000 persons attended them at the Industrial and Technological Museum in 1870–72 (p. 141). But they also discovered the value of labels and leaflets and the provision of catalogues to assist in the learning by their visitors. The organisers responded to the use of these learning aids by their visitors in a positive way.

The civic goal of these institutions regarding the education and learning of the community as a whole was expressed in different ways. For the Library the goal was for visitors to have an 'uplifting experience' (p. 24). For the National Museum a key goal was to allow the visitors to have 'access' (p. 62) to the collections and the learning would be a result. The Zoos were identified with a special sort of learning, 'recreational learning' (p. 183).

There were problems, however, with vocational learning, that type of learning that had also proven a problem for the Mechanics' Institutes. But these 'collection' organisations were unlikely to make a significant contribution to vocational learning when there was no clearly defined system in which they could establish their niche. The various levels of knowledge and skill required in particular occupations, for example the mining industry, or for a specific set of skills such as telegraphy

(pp. 154–58), made the provision of this type of learning in these special institutions very difficult.

There was also the problem that some people actually came to these vocational programs for reasons other than those assumed by the people who had organised the programs. That problem of course has not been limited to the 1860s and 70s.

Reading the stories of the management of these institutions reveals how important were the philosophies of those who were given responsibility for the institutions, or sought to hold those roles. In the National Museum there was the ongoing conflict between McCoy and his Darwinian opponents (p. 73). That conflict had a major impact on the National Museum and how it presented itself to the community. Then there were the different views on the role of a botanical garden espoused by Mueller and Guilfoyle (p. 168).

What is also evident in the recording of the events of these institutions over those 20 years is that there was a relationship between what the institutions offered and how they were supported by governments and visitors and the issues and conditions in the colony at that time. There was uncertainty as the colony moved into the post-gold rush period and there was also political instability. These institutions mirror their societies but also need to offer alternatives and choices. Or did they offer just an important escape?

What is clear is that the citizens of Melbourne showed their support for these institutions by visiting them. At a time when Sunday for many was the only non-work day and public transport was not available, the people of Melbourne visited in their thousands. The contemporary systems for data collection and interviewing of these visitors did not operate at that time so what the people learned is not known. There were claims made by governments and those in charge of the institutions. There is some social, media and literary evidence

of what was learned but this information does not provide a basis for firm conclusions.

Overall it seems that these Melbourne institutions in those two decades of the nineteenth century did provide opportunities for Melbourne citizens to participate in a range of learning activities. Like visitors to these institutions at that time, as in the first decade of the current century, the citizens learnt. But what they learnt is likely to have been what was important and relevant to them rather than what others thought may have been 'good' or 'useful' for them.

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BOOK REVIEW

Inside intuition

Eugene Sadler-Smith

Milton Park, Oxon: Routledge, 2007

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Everybody has 'gut feelings'; most of us have tried to base an argument on a 'gut feeling' and have lost to a Rationalist, a believer in the ascendancy of the analytical approach justified by Lord Kelvin's 'If it cannot be measured, it does not exist'. *Inside intuition*, by Eugene Sadler-Smith, Professor of Management Development and Organisational Behaviour in the School of Management, University of Surrey, takes the reader through a selection of the information now available which demonstrates that intuition, the source of 'gut feelings', not only exists but is a basic mechanism, in some contexts the primary mechanism, by which *homo sapiens* makes decisions. Intuition may not be measurable in feet, pounds and seconds, the units of Kelvin's domain of science and engineering, but its existence can be demonstrated, its operation explained and understood and its importance in decision-making established.

Sadler-Smith lists his research interests as cognition and learning styles in individuals and organisations and has extended his interests to decision-making in complex and ambiguous situations. He draws on several sources, including Polanyi on tacit (or implicit) knowledge, Miller on associative chunks in long-term memory, Wallas on the art of thought, the Dreyfus brothers on domain specific experience and expertise, Damasio on Descartes' error in separating mind and body, Klein on recognition primed decisions, and Daniel Goleman on emotional intelligence, as well as the information on the architecture of the human brain from functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). From those sources and others, he constructs his case for the instatement of intuition alongside the rational, analytical style, as a legitimate component of management decisions, whether they are made by individuals in their personal life or by managers of large enterprises or somewhere in between.

The book deals effectively with the warnings of no less a person than John Stuart Mill who described intuitionism as 'an instrument for consecrating all deep-seated prejudices' and on another occasion as 'a philosophy which makes opinions their own proof and feelings their own justification'. Sadler-Smith is alert to this danger and reiterates the importance of the two approaches to decision-making working together such that a 'gut feeling' is verified by analysis and vice versa. My experience in the engineering profession is that the most successful project teams invariably would subject a decision formed on the basis of analysis of available information to the 'gut feeling' test. If the decision didn't *feel* right, the information and the analysis were revisited.

I responded to four main threads in *Inside intuition*. They are:

- Intuition is real and can be explained
- Intuition and rational analysis form a complementary pair of decision-making tools available to *homo sapiens*

- Either on its own can lead to poor decisions – their use, together with cross-verification, produces the best decisions
- There are many researchers and authors in support of the above three

These threads recur throughout the book with differing emphasis at each stage in the construction of the understanding of intuition. The first section introduces the subject, presents a case for taking intuition seriously through examples when people in dire circumstances have listened to their intuitive promptings and avoided bad outcomes. There is also a selection of well-known people who attributed their success to acceptance of their ‘gut feelings’. Among these witnesses are Albert Einstein, Igor Stravinsky, Michael Tippett, Chester Barnard, Charles Darwin and a number of Nobel Prize Laureates. For an open-minded person, this first section establishes that intuition is real, can be explained and has been harnessed in decision-making particularly when information is incomplete and/or ambiguous and time is of the essence. But the evidence of a small number of selected examples and a handful of successful people is probably insufficient to persuade committed Rationalists to abandon their position. And so the author shifts the focus from ‘here is something of value that the West has derided for some 200 years that we all should know about’ to a presentation and examination of the evidence in support of such an assertion.

Intuition as a conscious manifestation of the workings of the mind of *homo sapiens* is placed on a very firm intellectual footing. The author relates intuition to current knowledge of the architecture of our brain, particularly our long-term memory, and the organisation of our experiences into chunks, including the emotions associated with those experiences. Our brains are constantly and subconsciously seeking congruence between current and past sensory inputs and putting out conscious signals which amount to ‘the current environment is okay, benign or dangerous’. Where the choice is between ‘stay and prosper’

or ‘fight or flee’, the most reliable decisions are those that check the ‘gut feeling’ against the known facts. The intuitive approach by itself can lead to mistakes, while the analytical approach by itself can lead to ‘paralysis by analysis’.

Having established a credible knowledge base in support of intuition, Sadler-Smith calls up further witnesses from a different set of researchers and to some extent retraces the argument, albeit from a number of different angles. Why do this? Remember that Sadler-Smith gives his research interests as cognition and learning styles. It is reasonable to expect someone who recognises that different people understand and learn in different ways to accommodate those differences by presenting an argument in several ways such that at least one way will register with the reader.

The one drawback of this edition is nothing to do with the content or the intent. There are just too many simple typographical errors and, notwithstanding that the author confesses to two in order to make a point, it is clear that proof-reading has been inadequate. In most instances the meaning can be deduced. However, the direct line into long-term memory is interrupted too often for this edition to be an easy read.

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