



The Mt Evelyn Football & Netball Club History Project

Outcomes and Achievements

This project aimed to engage community members, young and old, involved with the local football and netball club. It centred on increasing participants' knowledge and skills in the use of multi-literacies with the goal of creating a digital history of their beloved football & netball clubs.

The project was inspired by the Tynecastle Initiative set up by Edinburgh's Adult Learning Project (Scott, 2006, Player, 2007), Scotland, where following Paulo Freire's principles of focusing on the dialogue and the experiences of the participants has resulted in a successful adult literacy program. The project used football (soccer) as a "hook" to engage low level literacy fans of football. Throughout the project participants discussed football, developed critical literacy skills and began to enjoy reading and writing about their favourite subject. Our project too was underpinned by this socio-cultural approach that highlights the importance of building on participants' strengths and passions along with the power of dialogical learning.

To generate interest we invited David Parkin, a well known AFL identity and motivational speaker to launch our project. He spoke at the Mt Evelyn Club Rooms, attracting over 50 people involved with of the Football & Netball club. The Club President, who worked closely with the project team, described the goal of creating a modern digital History of the Football & Netball Clubs. We outlined the project, highlighting the digital literacy practices that would be enjoyed through the course and the fact that the project would result in digital history generated by the participants and that would belong to the Club for future generations.

The learning program took place at the Football Club Rooms "on their turf". The familiar surroundings encouraged a secure, non -threatening and comfortable learning environment. Participants and facilitators met one night a week for the length of the 11 week project in the club rooms after training. Two afternoon sessions were held at Morrisons Computer Rooms. One Saturday afternoon session occurred pre-game and during-game at the local football oval and was utilised for interviews and data collection.

Twenty seven participants signed in, on at least one session. Eleven core group members attended regularly. There was also those who sat at the other end of the club room after training, far enough away to feel inconspicuous but close enough to hear and observe what their football and netball peers were achieving in the sessions.

The project used the Skills Victoria's A-Frame (an ACE Framework for non-accredited learning) to develop the program and guide the quality assurance and evaluation. In the planning, delivery and outcome stages, Employability Skills were embedded in the program; communication, working in teams, problem solving, using initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self management, learning and the use of technology.

The content of the sessions involved not only technological skill development, but built on existing paper based literacy practices along with the development of new conceptual skills and ways of learning. All participants, no matter what their role or level of education embraced the challenge and worked together to meet their desired outcome. The experience of gaining new skills in the familiar and unthreatening environment of the football club rooms, while acknowledging the participants' passion for their club worked to:

- Enhance self esteem
- Improve literacy confidence, especially in the use of computers and other technologies.

- Encourage enrolment in a computer class, CGEA or VET program by the creation of friendly links to their local Adult Community Education Provider
- Create positive community networks outside of the football club
- Develop a learning culture within the participants themselves and their families

Networks between the participants were strengthened and new ones formed. For example, younger members actively sought out older members to answer their research questions. In this way it was possible to value all contributions and to demonstrate the holistic nature of what can be achieved when individuals with different strengths and knowledge come together. It was also excellent to see up to three generations of family involved in the project. This built a respect among the age groups and further valued the knowledge and skills that the different personalities brought to the project.

Inevitably, researching the local football and netball clubs' history unearthed further information about the development of the local environment and larger community also. Participants not only were increasing their digital and paper based literacy skills but gaining an increased awareness of their local physical environment and community.

The project also developed a close relationship between the Mt Evelyn football Netball Club and Morrisons. This relationship will provide the opportunity for strong community development between these two key community groups. These personal and group networks are critical in building social capital outcomes.

Learner Focus

Literacy activities focused on dialogical learning, increasing basic reading, writing and numeracy skills as well as increasing awareness and skills in digital literacies.

In all sessions, after a briefing, small groups of participants or individuals in parallel learning arrangements, engaged in a range of activities such as scanning, sorting photos, designing photo stories, collating historical data, designing research questions, therefore the club room was a hive of activity most nights. Amidst the buzz, literacy specialists were able to spend one on one time with those who needed support with basic computer and writing and reading skills.

Activities included:

- Turning a computer on and off
- Navigating a computer
- Using a memory stick
- Using software such as WORD, Publisher & Photostory
- Writing scripts and short biographies
- Using a video recorder and accompanying software
- Creation of interview questions
- Interviewing/videoing members
- Uploading videos and photos
- Editing videos
- Organising chronological timelines
- Researching, asking questions, sourcing people
- Creating historical summaries of each decade
- Scanning photos and documents
- Creating photostories

Through this process a number of digital products were created by participants that have become an asset to the Football/Netball Club and can be enjoyed by all community members. In the final weeks, a wiki site (a type of web site) was created by the participants in the computer room at Morrisons to "house" the products the participants had created. Importantly the digital product can be added to, so that the product becomes a living history.

The products are:

- Bio- cards created with Publisher software of members (similar to the popular format of footy cards)
- Photostory with voice overs of the history of the Football Club
- Photostory with voice overs of the history of the Netball Club
- Edited interviews of club members
- Photostory of the re-construction of the ground
- Various other photostories
- List of Life members

The wiki site is www.mefnc.wikispaces.com

Below is the homepage blurb created by participants.

The MEFNC History Project

Welcome to the history of the Mt Evelyn Football Netball club which has been created by past and present players and members of the Senior and Junior football teams and our netballers.

It contains a history of the club and includes videos, photos and an overview of the club since it commenced in 1931.

You will find stories from some of the club legends, anecdotes and stories, pictures and videos of past and present members as well as our history including the Juniors, Auskick and our netball teams.

The history has been put together with the assistance and learning's from the team from Morrison's which the club truly appreciates. This is our attempt to record the early and recent history of our club in a digital format and we hope you like it. We apologise for any omissions to anyone we have missed.

You can navigate around the site by clicking on the links on the left hand side of the page. If you would like to contribute to the site then create an account and request to join from the administrator. This will allow you to upload photos and videos and to contribute to the discussion of our history.

Facilitators were delighted with the consistent interest and commitment to the project, even when frustration was experienced and patience needed when learning new skills. This sustained interest can be attributed to a number of aspects of the course:

- The learning program took place at the Football Clubrooms "on their turf". It was a familiar place to all participants and this facilitated a relaxed and secure learning environment.
- The project acknowledged and used the sociocultural world of the participants and consequently, the passion, pride and knowledge of their local football and netball club proved to be powerful springboard for learning digital literacy skills and building a life long learning identity in the individuals who attended. In other words, reading, writing and learning digital literacies was perceived as means to an end and not irrelevant isolated skills. (We never simply just read and write, but read and write in a situated place, with a social identity and history, making meaning of what we read and write though our own particular world paradigm. In other words literacy only makes sense when it reflects our own sociocultural worlds. (Gee, 2000, p180).
- Participants were observed helping each other by sharing their skills. Participants had what is known in literacy circles as "spikey profiles", for example, one participant could navigate a computer and some aspects of soft ware with relative ease but found it difficult to craft a short script using appropriate grammar and punctuation. While another member of the group had very competent reading and writing skills yet struggled with the learning involved in digital uploading.
- Learning was experiential learning (learning through doing)
- Facilitators took on the role of mentors by helping participants achieve a shared goal.

Future potential and sustainability

The project strengthened community networks. For example, younger members actively sought out older members to answer their research questions. In this way it was possible to value all contributions and to demonstrate the holistic nature of what can be achieved when individuals with different strengths and knowledge come together. It was also excellent to see up to three generations of family involved in the project. This built a respect among the age groups and further valued the knowledge and skills that the different personalities brought to the project.

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The project also developed a close relationship between the Mt Evelyn Football Netball Club and Morrisons. This relationship will provide the opportunity for strong community development between these two key community groups. It also introduced those unfamiliar with life long learning to education opportunities in their community. Several participants have expressed a desire to enrol in Computer courses. These personal and group networks are critical in building social capital outcomes.

We strongly advocate this model of learning, inspired by the Tyncastle project in Edinburgh. (Scott, 2006, Player, 2007). It engaged our participants in a learning experience that many, we feel, would not have actively sought without the hook of their beloved football & netball club. It brought people together with shared passions and importantly a shared learning goal.

The "Final Siren"; the launch of the project where participants will show case the Mt Evelyn Football & Netball Club digital history and wiki page will be held in the community library of the learning town of Mt Evelyn. Members of the public will be invited to celebrate the achievements of the FSTC participants.

This model underpinned by socio cultural and Friereien concepts has great potential for other sporting groups situated in low level literacy and/or social disadvantage environments. The project has clearly demonstrated that this model can manage to create and strengthen community and literacy outcomes simultaneously in a positive and sustainable manner.

References

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- Player, J., (2007) "La Societe du Spectacle: The Glory and Dismay Football Literacies Programme" *Concept Vol. 17 No.3*
- Scott, K., (2006) "Literacy is the goal." *The Guardian*, 12/12/2006
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