Speaking in September at the Adult Learning Australia national seminar A learning society, Phil Candy, Academic Vice-Chancellor University of Ballarat, talked of our ‘compartmentalised mentality—responsibilities are all over the place... We have a problem with the language of power’ and an ‘inappropriate preoccupation with quantification, though we do need to be accountable.’ (p 13)

In the ACAL View ‘Literacy and lifelong learning: social justice for all?’ distributed with Literacy Link this month, Rosie Wickert writes (p 7) it has been ACAL strategy to support the development of accountability mechanisms, but that the existence of such instruments ‘has enabled the extension of tendering which, many argue, has divided, demoralised and casualised the field at the same time as putting up greater barriers to participation... And, as many have passionately argued, these tools are manipulated for purposes other than educational ones.’

Geraldine Castleton in ‘Adult literacy a decade after the White Paper’ (p 3) writes about a lack of analysis regarding the accountability measures our profession has to deal with: ‘We lack publicly available information on the success or otherwise of accountability mechanisms already in place. There has been little public debate over what might constitute ‘success’ in adult literacy programs, beyond a simplistic, narrow focus on employment-related outcomes.’

In our last issue Rosemary Wood pointed out (p. 2) that our profession has had to adopt a ‘submissive posture’ because providers have to compete against their colleagues for work’ and that literacy providers are ‘frequently overwhelmed by the complexity of assessment tasks needed to demonstrate NRS indicators of competence to the standard required by Verification Australia’ (a private company appointed by DETYA to maintain a moderated assessment standard).

ACAL’s strategy has been to support the development of accountability mechanisms as long as they are theoretically sustainable, further debate is needed now to tease out ways to make them sustainable in practical terms.

Readers are invited to contribute their responses to the question of accountability mechanisms to Soapbox, and to debate current and future strategies ACAL might adopt in dealing with policy on this important issue.
ACAL National Forum
Literacy and learning at work: achievements and challenges

The workplace has long been recognised as an invaluable site of informal learning but in recent times it has been increasingly acknowledged as an appropriate setting for more formal forms of learning.

In Australia, the introduction of the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program has contributed significantly to the recognition of workplaces as important contexts for effective learning. Workplace literacy delivery has been further expanded by increasing acknowledgment in Australian Industry of the need for good communication skills in the workplace and of the importance of including communication skills in industry training.

This ACAL Forum will focus on recognising the achievements of the WELL program and other workplace-based learning programs as well as on identifying the challenges that face policy makers, industry, practitioners and researchers in the years to come.

The forum will feature panel sessions by Australian and international speakers working in the workplace literacy field as well as workshop and discussion sessions led by representatives from industry and practitioners. The panel members will assist in focusing on current issues and debates in workplace literacy and learning while the workshops and discussions will enable participants to pursue their own interests in this area.

The closing session of the forum will explore topics addressed during the day as well as identify issues to be taken up by ACAL for future action. Programs and registrations will be soon be available.

Date: 1 November, 2001
Time: 8.45 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.
Venue: Parkroyal Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast Queensland
Cost: $82.50 (inc GST) $66.00 (inc GST) if included in ACAL conference registration
This article was originally written as Adult Learning Commentary Number 20, 18 July 2001. It is one of Adult Learning Australia’s weekly adult learning commentaries which are archived as a forum at http://www.ala.asn.au/commentaries/forum2001

This year is the 10th anniversary of the release of Australia’s Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) by the Labor government in 1991. This was a landmark document for a number of reasons, but significantly for adult literacy, it placed adult English language and literacy concerns on the national education agenda while linking the language and literacy competence of adult Australians to national economic imperatives shaped by technological advances and globalisation. It is an appropriate time to take stock, asking questions such as ‘what has been achieved?’ and ‘what remains to be done?’

Undoubtedly, there have been significant achievements over the last ten years, but there is still much to be done. At the time of the ALLP’s release Australia was thought to be at the vanguard of adult literacy policy and provision internationally. Now, ten years down the track, we are falling behind efforts in other countries. Some even say that adult literacy in Australia is as badly served as it was before ALLP, with a dying commitment from federal and state governments resulting in poorly coordinated action, fragmented, under-resourced provision and lack of appropriate accountability measures.

We have two federally funded and managed programs: the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) and the Literacy and Numeracy Training (LANT) Program, part of the government’s mutual obligation arrangements. States receive annual funding through their training plans. We know little about the relationship between these programs and what happens within the states where money is allocated to public providers through recurrent funding agreements, or through direct grants and competitive tendering arrangements. We know that good provision is happening across a variety of sites for many client groups through appropriately resourced programs, but we also know that good provision is happening in some settings not because of funding and systemic support, but rather in its notable absence.

Among the many unknowns is any global sense of what is and isn’t working, and for whom. We lack publicly available information on the success or otherwise of programs, funding and accountability mechanisms already in place. There has been little public debate over what might constitute ‘success’ in adult literacy programs, beyond a simplistic, narrow focus on employment-related outcomes. Related to this, there has not been enough critical debate around the relationship between pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. There is still limited recognition in current education and social policies of the relationship between literacy and health, social welfare, justice and labour market participation. There has been no significant consideration of the consequences of the ‘digital divide’ and the push for online delivery for adults with literacy needs nor has it been made clear where adult literacy learners’ needs are accommodated within official discourses of lifelong learning.

OECD (2000) findings indicate that member countries have somewhere between one-quarter to one-half of their adult populations failing to reach the threshold level of literacy competence considered as minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life. These issues become too critical to ignore, particularly by countries that profess, or aspire, to be a ‘knowledge’ nation or society.

So what should be done at this particular point in time? Federal and state governments must recommit to addressing the human rights of adults with limited literacy skills and to providing education that meets their needs. In the first instance this requires a mapping and rigorous evaluation of existing provision. Where and how is appropriate provision taking place? More importantly, what significant gaps in provision exist within the community? On the basis of this evaluation and following wide consultation, the federal government needs to develop a comprehensive, suitably resourced strategy that takes a whole-of-government approach to addressing social exclusion more broadly, through recognising the interrelatedness of literacy to individual and group social and economic well-being. Included in this strategy must be transparent evaluation and accountability mechanisms for all stakeholders to ensure that progress towards achieving goals can be monitored and reviewed.

Geraldine Castleton is President of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy
Manufacturing Learning Victoria (MLV) has been working with small businesses around Victoria over the past twelve months for the specific purposes of:
(i) encouraging small businesses to access funding for language and literacy training to support the development of skills and
(ii) to identify training providers who can deliver this training to small markets.

It has been a considerable challenge to identify training providers that are able to deliver at a sustainable cost to small businesses when the numbers to be trained are small, particularly in rural areas.

Ace to the rescue! Local community providers are found to be the key to assisting small businesses in non metropolitan locations. One example of a positive and effective response to the challenge is the partnership developed between the Bacchus Marsh Adult Community Education Centre (BMAEC) and Darley Refractories in Bacchus Marsh.

Darley Refractories employ six operators who produce fire bricks, tiles and refractory concrete. MLV arranged for the assessment of workers against the competencies of the recently endorsed Manufactured Mineral Products Training Package in late 2000. Through this process it became evident that the operators would benefit greatly from training that focused on improving communication between workers and between workers and management, developing plant documentation and increasing the level of teamwork.

The company was successful in achieving Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) funding from DETYA and the search for an appropriate provider began. In a semi-rural location like Bacchus Marsh, it became evident that an industry training provider would need to travel from Melbourne or Ballarat to deliver training. This would add a high delivery cost to what was already a tight budget. In the search, we passed BMAEC on numerous occasions, until it dawned us that we had the most appropriate training provider right under our nose within five minutes drive from the worksite. In discussing the program with Coral Arnold, Manager at BMAEC, it became increasingly obvious that Ace providers have a wealth of experience and skill to contribute to industry training.

The partnership between BMAEC and Darley Refractories was developed and Barry Sproull was appointed to deliver the training. It was not that easy at first and we have learnt a lot about working with industry over the course of the project.

Firstly, for BMAEC to deliver accredited training to industry they were required to increase their scope of registration to include the Manufactured Mineral Products Training Package. (This process will be simplified with the introduction of the Australian Quality Training Framework, which will enable the registration of single units of competency.)

Secondly, Barry expected the guys would be coming into the BMAEC for training, but the Darley management required the training to occur at the worksite. This was a challenge in a company where the training facilities are limited.

The initial training plan was developed to focus on skill development through a number of activities such as writing instructions for simple work procedures, writing descriptions of photographed procedures and basic word processing activities. The final eight weeks of the plan was to be devoted to team writing of standard operating procedures. When Barry presented the training plan to the guys, it became obvious that they were uncomfortable with the ‘back to school’ approach of the program. Barry picked up on the attitudes and worked with the guys to develop a program that was comfortable for the group. The guys put it to Barry ‘Tell us what you want us to achieve mate, and we will tell you how we can work with you to achieve it, but don’t send us back to school!’

The program was restructured and the team decided to proceed directly to the development of operating procedures and introducing the learning of required skills as the needs arose.
This meant that the operators were involved in describing, discussing, editing and testing 20 standard operating procedures. OH&S and computing sessions were included where required. A good outcome was achieved because the guys felt that they owned the program and therefore were committed to achieving the negotiated outcomes.

‘Lifelong Learning’ became a part the process when the guys agreed to undertake computer training and the guys became aware of the scope of training offered by BMAEC. Access to the computers stimulated an interest in further computer training for the purposes of keeping up with ‘our kids’ (or at least understanding what they are doing on computers!). A sign on ‘safe lifting techniques’ also sparked an interest in training that would develop these skills.

The project has now progressed to a second successful application for WELL project funding. This will focus on the language and literacy skills needed to develop relevant workplace signage to facilitate efficient movement of loads and awareness of sound OH&S practices.

We are aware that this is but one example of ACE working closely with industry. It is important that we promote these examples to change the image that industry sectors have of ACE training as only offering hobby or recreational courses.

John Molenaar
Manufacturing Learning Victoria

ANTA adult literacy national project
—summary of 2001 innovative projects

• Redesigning social features: supporting women from domestic violence situations with literacy needs
This project aims to develop a collaborative process between community health agencies, community groups and adult literacy providers to address the literacy needs of women who have experienced violence at home.
   Adelaide Central Community Health Service: SA
   Contact: Jane Gunn (08) 8440 2417

• Step Into Voluntary Work
This project will develop the English literacy skills of Khmer, Somali and Afghan women with the express purpose of encouraging and supporting their active involvement in the community, through participation in voluntary work. The project will also extend and develop their knowledge and experience of the Australian voluntary sector and will provide the opportunity to pursue further training pathways.
   Australian Multicultural Foundation: VIC
   Contact: Judith Miralles (03) 9387 8106

• Family Literacy Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families in Logan
This project aims to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families living in the Logan, Beaudesert and North Gold Coast Region through raising literacy and numeracy levels within the family and community context. The project also involves documenting the process and establishing a model for community based family literacy training for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
   Combined Housing Organisation: QLD
   Contact: Dr Karen Thurecht (07) 3808 9957

• Real Life Literacy
This project will establish networks, pathways and empowerment processes for local caravan park residents to access and participate in the development of their own literacy skills. This will be done through peer mentoring, functional literacy workshops, story circles and an everyday literacy library. Models of practice will be developed and piloted which could then be adopted by other caravan parks or high density housing.
   Kruger State School: QLD
   Contact: Penny Creamer (07) 3814 1822

• From the Known to the Unknown
This project aims to use an integrated, visual health document ‘Health Icons’ which presents
health knowledge using the ‘known’ visual process of sand painting forms. The project will present this information to a group of Indigenous people in the ‘known’ local indigenous language of the community. Adults can then proceed to learning written and spoken English covering the same material. Sections of the ‘Certificate 3 Aboriginal Primary Health Care Work Course’ will be piloted using the same techniques.

Ngaanyatjarra Health Service (Aboriginal Corporation): NT
Contact: Douglas Josif  (08) 8950 1730

• Financial Numeracy for Members of Nonprofit Boards

This project will develop and trial innovative strategies and resources for enhancing the financial numeracy skills of people who are volunteer members of boards of management for nonprofit community organisations.

Nonprofit Governance and Management Centre: NSW
Contact: Maureen Cleary  (02) 9879 6674

• A resource and teaching module for the development of literacy for adults with intellectual disabilities

This project will develop a resource and training module for the development of literacy for young adults with intellectual disabilities. It will employ a more comprehensive view of literacy and an expanded notion of engagement with texts, including multi-media texts.

Fred and Eleanor Schonell Special Education Research Centre, The University of Queensland: QLD
Contact: Dr Christa van Kraayenoord  (07) 3365 6472

• Learning-In-Circles

This project focuses on young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five who have incomplete and negative experiences of learning. It aims to develop skills in reading, writing and oral communication in a participative learning environment that encourages social interaction and direct engagement in the learning process. The main objective will be to promote the growth of self-esteem, feelings of empowerment and community linkages through participation in a Learning Circle.

SkillsPlus Peninsula Inc: VIC
Contact: Kristine Helisma  (03) 9781 3388

• Networking and Support for Australian Youth Literacy Providers

This project will further develop the Innovative CGEA Youth Curriculum Project - 2000 and aims to establish a referral base for other Youth Literacy providers. The project will have two stages involving the creation of a Youth Literacy Providers Web Page and the conduct of Youth Literacy workshops.

Swinburne University of Technology - TAFE: VIC
Contact: Cate Thompson  (03) 9214 5577

• Peer Tutor Literacy Training Video

This project will produce a professionally made video to support modules and learning guides used in the implementation of State and National adult literacy tutor training courses. The Learning Guides have been rewritten with an indigenous community focus and the video is needed to supplement the written materials in the peer tutor training courses so that students who are geographically remote can observe best practice in literacy tutoring strategies.

Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE: Contact: Darcel Moyle  (07) 4042 2480

• Teaching to Learn: exploring alternative teaching strategies for oral/aural learners

This project aims to:

i) explore and document innovative learning and teaching strategies that complement the learning styles of learners from a predominantly oral/aural society;

ii) identify teaching strategies, activities and text types that are conceptually difficult for these learners; and

iii) provide information for VET staff to raise awareness of the problems these students experience with traditional print based teaching materials.

West Coast College of TAFE - Adult Migrant Education Service: WA
Contact: Nita Johnson  (08) 9229 3651

• Jump on the cyber bandwagon! Young and young at heart strengthen the virtual bridge of language, numeracy and computer literacy of migrants in cyber age Australia

This project will build a model of a self-sustaining three-way relationship between adult non-English speaking migrants and English speaking background residents, senior volunteers and computer savvy youth. This will be done through:

• enhancing the language, numeracy and computer literacy of adult migrants, as well as their job prospects;

• enhancing and refreshing the computer literacy of senior volunteers and assisting them in communicating better with the younger computer savvy generation; and

• preparing the young people for a possible future contribution in the use of online technology in adult literacy and providing an opportunity for them to interact with adult migrants and senior residents.

West Coast College of TAFE - QRD Consulting: WA
Contact: Lindsay Nicholson  (08) 9233 1194
National Reporting System Assessment Exemplars

by Chris Lake, Rosemary Wood, Chris Campbell and Paul Mulroney

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For more information about the project and reporting exemplars described here please contact ALNARC (SA). Email: sue.shore@unisa.edu.au

The work described in this report was assisted by a grant from the Spencer Foundation (USA). Acknowledgment of this support would be appreciated in any further development of the projects. The data presented, the statements made, and the views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.

INTRODUCTION

From July to December 2000 a group of South Australian literacy practitioners worked together to devise a set of numeracy assessment materials, to be used in pre-training assessments for DETYA-funded LANT programs. These materials were designed to demonstrate NRS indicators of competence for numeracy from levels 1 to 4.

What follows in this package is the product of many hours of voluntary work by ourselves and others. The materials have been looked at by colleagues from Verification Australia and Communication in Education. They have also been informally trialled by literacy assessors working in LANT programs. We have already revised the materials in response to some of the feedback we have received, but this package is a work in progress, and will change as we use it.

We do not have any particular authority for the NRS indicators ascribed to the tasks, except our best efforts to get it right. Nor do we think the tasks are ideal. We can already see how they could be improved. Nevertheless, we hope the package will be useful to you.

Please read the advice to assessors that follows this introduction, and also read the Educator Information at the top of the answer sheets. The advice is crucial.

We acknowledge the support of the Spencer Foundation for providing a small grant to help with the desk-topping, publishing and distribution of the materials, and thank you to Sue Shore (University of South Australia) for advice about this grant and other support. We also acknowledge that through the monthly LANT meetings, begun by Kevin Crathern and continued by Fran Edwards from DETYA SA, the LANT providers formed links which assisted in carrying out this co-operative venture. Thank you to Status Employment Services for some clerical assistance.

ADVICE TO ASSESSORS

The way you deliver the assessment, how you explain tasks and, in particular, the degree of assistance given, are crucial to the validity of the levels ascribed. Therefore it is absolutely essential that comments are added to each assessment. Write plenty of notes on the applicant's work (after the assessment), or on a cover sheet. These notes should indicate:

¥ how much help the applicant needed
¥ any comments or discussions about processes, especially if working out has not been shown
¥ any questions they may have asked
¥ discussions about method and reasonableness of answers to help in assessing the third strand (see pp 6, 7 of NRS for discussion of strands)

Comments could include things like independent, needed help with the English, very slow, worked out in head & then explained in the following way ..., and so on. It is not intended that an applicant will necessarily start at the beginning and work through every task. You will be able to work out a likely starting point from prior discussion.

The applicant should not be simply left to tackle the assessment alone. For one thing, in that situation, the applicant's literacy could interfere with the numeracy assessment. Furthermore, for strands 3 and 4 (see pp 6, 7 of the NRS) oral discussion is required.

We wish you all the best in your LANT assessments and hope that the materials we have produced will be of some use.
Worksheet 3

NAME: .................................... DATE: ..........................

Use the "DON'T MISS A BARGAIN" page and answer the following question.

1) Find the advertisement for the COMPLETE CORNINGWARE SET.
   a) How much does it cost?
      Answer _____________________________
   b) How much does it cost with $35.00 off?
      Answer _____________________________
   c) How much does it cost with 25% off?
      Answer _____________________________
   d) Which would be the better buy, 25% off or $35.00 off?
      Answer _____________________________

2) Write 35% as a fraction and as a decimal.
   Answer _____________________________

Use the Saucy Stir Fry Noodles recipe and answer the following question.

3) How much of the following three ingredients would you need to feed 10 people:
   a) Soy Fillets
      Answer _____________________________
   b) Baby Bok Choy
      Answer _____________________________
   c) Hoisin Sauce
      Answer _____________________________

4) A kitchen bench top measuring 2200mm by 750mm needs to be replaced.
   a) Convert the measurements (above) to metres.
      Answer _____________________________
   b) Work out the area of the bench top.
      Answer _____________________________

5) If you have already completed the graph in worksheet 2, leave this question out.
   Draw a graph in the area provided to illustrate the following delivery of shopping
catalogues: Monday 200, Tuesday 175, Wednesday 325, Thursday 400, and Friday 50.

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Worksheet 4

NAME: ___________________________ DATE: ___________________________

1) Maria is a fitness instructor with a fitness centre. She is paid a retainer of $350.00 plus 15% of all weekly sales over $250.00. How much does she earn if her sales for the week total $700.00?

Answer __________________________________________

2) An exercise bicycle is bought for $180 and sold for $210. Find the simplest ratio of:
   a) Purchase price to selling price.
   Answer __________________________________________

   b) Profit to purchase price.
   Answer __________________________________________

3) A circular running track has a diameter of 100m.
   a) How long is one lap of the track if the runner runs on the outer edge of the track?
   Answer __________________________________________

   b) The track is 10m wide and needs resurfacing. What is its area?
   Answer __________________________________________

4) A human heart is beating 70 times per minute and pumps about 70ml of blood with each beat. How many litres of blood are pumped each hour?

Answer __________________________________________

5) In a jetty fishing competition the fish of one contestant weighed $1\frac{1}{4}$ kg, 3.4 kg and $2\frac{3}{4}$ kg. Calculate the total weight of the fish.

Answer __________________________________________

6) In a fish throwing competition, points were determined by multiplying the weight of the fish in kilograms by the distance they were thrown in metres. How many points did each contestant score if Brian tossed the $2\frac{1}{4}$ kg fish a distance of $7\frac{1}{4}$ metres and Rene tossed the $2\frac{1}{4}$ kg fish a distance of $7\frac{1}{4}$ metres? Who won the competition?

Answer __________________________________________
EDUCATOR INFORMATION & ANSWERS

Worksheet 3

It is important to add your comments to the applicant’s work, as these are essential to support your decisions for allocating NRS indicators.

The indicators in brackets can be achieved if the assessor confirms and notes that the applicant “reflects on and checks reasonableness and appropriateness of the purpose, process and outcomes of a mathematical activity”.

The indicators listed are achieved if the task is completed successfully.

Indicator 3.11: If most tasks at this level are successfully completed, the applicant has demonstrated “a range of mathematical strategies to solve problems in a number of contexts, which are familiar and may be interrelated”.

1) a) Find the advertisement for the COMPLETE CORNINGWARE SET.
   How much does it cost?
   Answer  $179

b) How much does it cost with $35.00 off?
   Answer  $144

   179
   - 35
   144

c) How much does it cost with 25% off
   Answer  $134.25

   179
   x 0.25
   44.75
   134.25

   25% is $44.75
   or 179.00
   44.75
   134.25

   d) Which would be the better buy, 25% off or $35.00 off?
   Answer  25% off

2) Write 35% as a fraction and as a decimal.
   Answer  3/10 or 7/20 and 0.35

3) Using the recipe for Sauce Stir Fry Noodles work out how much of the following three ingredients you would need to feed 10 people?
   a) Soy Fillets 312.5g (125g doubled = 250g + half of 125g = 62.5g)
   b) Baby Bok Choy 1,000g
   c) Hoisin Sauce 5/8 cup

4) A kitchen bench top measuring 2200mm by 750mm needs to be replaced.
   a) Convert these measurements (above) to metres.
      Answer  2.2m x 0.75m

   b) Work out the area of the bench top.
      Answer  1.65m²

5) Draw a graph in the area provided to illustrate the following delivery of shopping catalogues: Monday 200, Tuesday 175, Wednesday 325, Thursday 400, and Friday 50.

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THE GRAPH IN WORKSHEET 2, LEAVE THIS QUESTION OUT.

\begin{tikzpicture}
\begin{axis}[
    width=\textwidth,\]
\addplot coordinates {
(0,0) (1,200) (2,175) (3,325) (4,400) (5,50)
};
\end{axis}
\end{tikzpicture}
EDUCATOR INFORMATION & ANSWERS

Worksheet 4

It is important to add your comments to the applicant’s work, as these are essential to support your decisions for allocating NRS indicators.

The indicators in brackets can be achieved when the assessor confirms and notes that the applicant “examines and questions the appropriateness, possible interpretations and implications of aspects of a mathematical activity.”

The indicators listed are achieved if the task is successfully completed.

Indicator 4.1.1: If most tasks at this level are successfully completed, this demonstrates “a range of mathematical strategies to solve problems in a number of contexts, which are familiar and may be interrelated”

1) Maria is a fitness instructor with a fitness centre. She is paid a retainer of $350.00 plus 15% of all weekly sales over $250.00. How much does she earn if her sales for the week total $700.00?

Answer $417.50 3.11 (3.12) 3.13

2) An exercise bicycle is bought for $180 and sold for $210. Find the simplest ratio of

a) Purchase price to selling price.

Answer 6:7 (4.12) 4.13

b) Profit to purchase price.

Answer 1:6 (4.12) 4.13

3) A circular running track has a diameter of 100m.

a) What is the length of one lap of the track if the runner runs on the outer edge of the track?

Answer 314m \( C = \pi D \) 4.10 (4.12) 4.13

b) The track is 10m wide and needs resurfacing. What is its area?

Answer 1,491.5m² 4.10 (4.12) 4.13

Outside area = 7,850m² minus inside area = 6,358.5m² equals 1,491.5m²

Area = \( m^2 \)

4) A human heart is beating 70 times per minute and pumps about 70ml of blood with each beat. How many litres of blood are pumped each hour?

Answer 294 litres per hour (4.12) 4.13

5) In a jetty fishing competition the fish of one contestant weighed 1\( \frac{1}{4} \) kg, 3.4 kg and 2\( \frac{3}{4} \) kg. Calculate the total weight of the fish.

Answer 7\( \frac{3}{60} \) kg (4.12) 4.13

\[
1 + \frac{3}{4} + \frac{2}{4} = \frac{75}{60} + \frac{204}{60} + \frac{170}{60} = \frac{449}{60}
\]

6) In a fish throwing competition, points were determined by multiplying the weight of the fish in kilograms by the distance they were thrown in metres. How many points did each contestant score if Brian tossed the 2\( \frac{3}{4} \) kg fish a distance of 7\( \frac{3}{4} \) metres and Rene tossed the 2\( \frac{3}{4} \) kg fish a distance of 7\( \frac{1}{4} \) metres. Who won the competition?

Answer Brian 18.375 points (4.12) 4.13

Brian \( 2\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{4} = 2\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{31}{4} = \frac{441}{16} = 18.375 \) points

Rene \( 2 \times \frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4} = \frac{21}{4} \times \frac{30}{4} = 16.312 \) points
A learning society: What will it be like?
Adult Learners Week national seminar

The title for the recent Adult Learning Australia (ALA) seminar was A learning society: What will it be like? How can we make it happen? Tony Brown, Executive Director of Adult Learning Australia welcomed delegates by suggesting that a key ingredient to a learning society is missing—the lack of a bold vision for the near future. He posed the question ‘Do we need to seek new opportunities rather than continue to spend on things the way they are?’ The theme of doing things in new ways was a recurrent one through the day.

Who will make lifelong learning happen?
Three speakers addressed the first session. First was Jenny Morawska-Ahearn, General Manager, People and Performance, Westpac. Jenny shared her view that lifelong learning is about linking a community for good learning outcomes. She noted that organisations, including banks, are communities. But they need to shift from valuing content to valuing input. So Westpac has shifted its focus. One example is a change of language, eg from ‘lender’ to ‘borrower’. She pointed out that an initiator of change is the enemy of those who profit by the old ways, but only has lukewarm support from those who will benefit by the change.

She identified levels of reorganisation and change. We have been through stages - react, restructure, redesign, reframe with the current stage being regenerate. She questioned whether the changes were sustainable. Jenny concluded by offering some advice, quoting Ghandi ‘be the change you wish to see’ and Nike ‘Just do it!’—don’t take too long planning.

Next speaker was Robert Fitzgerald, Community Services Commissioner, NSW. He began by pointing out Australia’s ability to talk ‘inclusion’ and act ‘exclusion’, as exemplified in the ongoing Tampa crisis. He noted that in lifelong learning those who’d benefit most are those who are excluded, and stressed that lifelong learning shouldn’t reinforce existing patterns of access and privilege.

Robert sees schools as the most sustainable part of our community, as other community organisations have diminished. They offer an entry point for lifelong learning. Other community organisations can also become bodies involved in the learning experience, using their existing structures. He pointed out that from an economic view, we are not providing the learning we need, for example Australia has a high number of people with post graduate qualifications employed in jobs that require no qualifications at all. Lifelong learning is needed at critical points of change, and it needs to match the economic requirements of society as well community and personal needs.

The final speaker of the first session was Elaine Henry, Chief Executive of The Smith Family. She outlined the Smith Family’s Learning for Life program with a vision of a more caring and cohesive community. The Smith Family has shifted the basis of support from crisis assistance to one of prevention and early intervention. This program has now expanded, linking with other learning organisations. It commences with early childhood, which really means working with parents and bringing them into lifelong learning. Elaine discussed the merging of formal and informal learning systems. She says that we need an education system that is joined up, shifting from ‘education’ being a separate sector.

What will a learning society look like? What will it take for lifelong learning to become normal: a facilitated discussion
This session was hosted by Geraldine Doogue, of ABC TV and Radio National fame, who offered some provocative challenges:

• There is a problem with definition. Without a definition lifelong learning is obtuse, and how can government engage with this?

• The language she was hearing didn’t resonate with the world of power, which is a worry. We need to go to governments with solutions, not with problems. We need to know what we want. (She cautioned against using schools as the hub, because schools can also be seen as part of the problem).

• We who are thriving need to be as interested in the solutions as the recipients—the instigators need to be involved.

Some of the discussion points that followed:

• A framework of thinking would be useful for governments

• We have to have measurements, but whose? It matters which measurements we choose.

• In Australia if something goes across a range of portfolios nothing happens because no single career rests on it.

• You can’t sell social justice in Australia
today, but you have to value it.

- Falling participation in learning by young men is a measurable issue that points to a way in.
- Schools give an entry point to learning for adults.
- Australia is currently anti-intellectual.
- We need a specific proposal such as a Minister for Adult Skills.

**Lifelong learning in the UK: A progress report**

Bill Lucas is Chief Executive, UK Campaign for Learning. He outlined the lifelong learning initiatives that have taken place in UK since the Labor Government came to power, following the issuing of a green paper ‘The Learning Age’ in 1997. He spoke about the formation of a Learning Skills Council which developed a myriad of ideas, some of which have led to the success that is being experienced.

He says that if we present the government with issues, they can go with vote winning ideas and see them funded. We need to involve key stakeholders and have big policy and big people.

Lucas put particular emphasis on the importance of learning to learn. He says we put little of what we know about the mind into learning - and introduced the term ‘learnacy’, going hand in hand with literacy and numeracy. He provided a concept for learning (fully developed in his book Power Up Your Mind). He has identified five keys to the operating systems of the brain: the brain loves to explore and make sense, loves to make connections, thrives on patterns, loves to imitate and does not perform well under too much stress.

He divides learning into three agendas: school, workplace and family. In schools the aim is to achieve a love of learning and confidence in being able to learn. But for many, school is part of the problem. In workplaces, there needs to be a culture of learning. Families are an undeveloped area of lifelong learning, and it needs not just promotion, but policy too.

**Organisational change and learning: a view from the USA.**

Wesley McClendon Jr, Manager, Deloitte and Touche Consulting Group, Change Leadership Practice, told how a recent report on US schools system has shown great failure. He explained the US funding system for education, via property tax, so that wealthy areas have wealthy schools, and vice versa. This means that if schools are not wealthy they have to be very creative. Partnerships with business are the only way US can get around solutions for education. But it’s hard to get partners if educators are unsure what their part of the deal is.

Wesley said that we need to be able to clearly articulate values—how has this changed me, the company, the community? We have to solve problems locally—there is no one best fit.

**Bringing it all back home: Future learning policy in Australia**

Kaye Schofield, Chair, NSW Board of Adult and Community Education; Executive Director, UTS Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training, said the real game is not policy or plans—the real game is strategy. She suggests that we have no shortage of policies, but no one funds them. We need to find the common ground between the economic/sociologic and political accounts of lifelong learning.

**Bill Lucas (UK) said we put little of what we know about the mind into learning - and introduced the term ‘learnacy’, going hand in hand with literacy and numeracy.**

**What did we learn?**

Phil Candy, Academic Vice-Chancellor, University of Ballarat, drew together the following common threads from the day:

- Anti-intellectualism is entrenched.
- Possibility—we want to achieve a culture where learning is normal.
- Platforms—We need to hitch lifelong learning to existing imperatives, smuggle it into everyday situations and partnerships.
- Problems—we have a compartmentalised mentality,—responsibilities are all over the place. We have a problem with the language of power. We have an inappropriate preoccupation with quantification, though we do need to be accountable.
- Plans—make a start, work with stakeholders that exist, connect with other groups. Be bold, have a vision. Identify champions (the policy entrepreneurs). Keep the number of priorities limited. Have a good look at learning credits. We need something exciting or uplifting to do with learning that will galvanise society.
While employed as a Workplace English Literacy and Language Project Manager for West Coast College of TAFE I was asked to recognise the prior learning of staff employed in an aged care hostel in Perth, Western Australia, in November 2000. The assessments took place soon after the workplace had been accredited by the Aged Care Accreditation Board. In Australia, many changes have been occurring in this industry over the past few years. More changes are anticipated and the assessments were seen as necessary to equip staff for future changes.

RPL Assessment of Aged Care Workers

It was clear from interviews conducted with assesses that their knowledge was not the result of knowledge provided by educational institutions. It was largely the result of informal learning. Mostly, assesses had worked in the industry for periods of time varying from four to fifteen years. They had acquired their skills and knowledge on the job or through attending training sessions aimed at specific areas such as working with residents with dementia. Learners, however, did experience problems ‘proving’ their competence.

Some of the issues for learners included:
1. obtaining information and support from training providers they approached about RPL
2. finding the time to gather sufficient evidence
3. wondering if their competencies reached the standard required to meet the learning outcomes
4. finding evidence of prior learning which specifically related to the learning outcomes
5. understanding the language of some modules/units
6. knowing their prior learning was solid but based on experience, not theory, and not knowing if this was sufficient to meet the learning outcomes/elements
7. thinking they may have missed the chance to learn from others in a group.

I decided to conduct an initial orientation session, designed to inform potential applicants of the process and provide them with the opportunity to ask questions before they decided whether or not to proceed with the RPL assessments. The questions asked by potential applicants indicated that the third and fifth areas identified above by Crothers (1996) were major areas of concern.

A portfolio development workshop was conducted with a focus on the creation of a Curriculum Vitae that clearly described the work history, current skills and competencies of candidates. This process encouraged candidates to evaluate their own skills and knowledge. Checklists were presented so that candidates could develop their own profiles. This provided candidates with the opportunity to compare their own profile with the performance criteria outlined in the core and elective units comprising the Certificate. The candidates were able to form peer-support groups that then met informally to help one another in the development of their portfolios. I visited the work-site before assessments were scheduled to commence and staff were advised that I would be available to answer questions that they might have regarding the assessments. Many of the candidates who talked with me prior to the interviews demonstrated fears of being assessed and were worried that they might not meet the requirements of the assessments.

Issues in the RPL process

Firstly, I often found that assesses could not see the relationship between the text language used in the competency standards in the Training Package and the workplace competencies that they had displayed over the years.

Secondly, the way the elements and performance criteria in the Training Package are written meant that it was often difficult to understand exactly what was meant and required of the assesses. The assesses were discouraged by the intimidating language embedded in the competency standards. The text language was very different to the language used in the workplace.

Thirdly, the coordinators and I spent a lot of time trying to understand exactly what was required of the assesse and how the competency could be demonstrated.

To overcome some of these problems, a checklist of evidence was compiled by myself and coordinators whose usual work duties involved supervising the staff who were candidates. The coordinators were familiar with the types of workplace documentation that would be suitable as evidence, so we discussed the elements of competency in detail to jointly construct the types of evidence that would satisfactorily meet the performance criteria.
The four criteria used to select the evidence were based on the principles of validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity. Daily hand-over files, hazard report forms, and documentation required in the applicants' daily duties such as residents' progress notes were identified as being suitable pieces of evidence for the portfolios.

All candidates were asked the same questions for each core unit and each elective unit chosen. Because the certificate comprises 13 units, log-books were purchased to record the results of assessment interviews. This enabled me to record judgements and decisions, and create an ongoing assessment plan that assisted candidates to collect or generate the necessary additional evidence for completion of the assessment. It was decided beforehand not to give credit for part units.

Coordinators agreed that staff could be released during work hours to participate in interviews so that the burden of time constraints was not an obstacle. The interviews were conducted on site. This offered some advantages as candidates had access to workplace records that could be used as evidence.

Another advantage was that staff did not have to travel to another venue. In addition, the work-site was familiar to all candidates and provided a venue where candidates felt relatively at ease and comfortable. It also meant that if staff were needed for an emergency, they could be available. However, one significant disadvantage was that it was difficult to find a venue where staff would not be interrupted during the interviews.

The total time needed for individual assessments varied due to a number of factors. One of the most significant factors was how well organised the candidate presenting for assessment was. The range and quality of the evidence presented by candidates varied considerably. This meant that more time was spent with candidates whose evidence was insufficient or lacked the quality necessary to meet performance criteria.

Candidates also differed in their ability to respond succinctly to questions. Some candidates required more prompting to reply to questions. Some candidates needed questions paraphrased more often than others. In addition, some candidates were more likely to offer lengthy explanations in response to questions whereas others employed a more direct verbal communication style. During the assessments, many candidates offered anecdotes related to specific incidents they recalled when discussing actions taken in the workplace. For example, anecdotes related to a hazard encountered or a response to a resident with dementia. On average, each interview took a minimum of two hours and each candidate presented a minimum of three times.

Most candidates who participated in the assessments reported increased confidence in themselves and the process after the first interview session. Most reported that they had held a preconception that the assessment was likely to be more 'difficult' than it proved to be. Many candidates were surprised by their own ability to respond to questions appropriately. One candidate commented: 'I didn't realise I knew so much'. The experience of being able to answer questions seemed to have a positive effect on the morale of participants. Coordinators reported that assessees were demonstrating greater levels of self-esteem and belief in their own ability to perform the job satisfactorily after the assessments were carried out.

Candidates who had been interviewed reported to other candidates that they had not been asked 'difficult' questions. Candidates encouraged other candidates with comments like: 'You only have to talk about what you do everyday', and 'You know it all, you just need to answer the questions, and if you don't understand a question, just get her to ask you the question again using different words'.

One of the factors that contributed to candidates' success in answering questions was the amount of recent training staff had participated in prior to the accreditation process. Candidates had been exposed to current 'best practice' in many aspects of their daily duties.

During the assessments, candidates often reflected on their experiences and it appeared that they were able to make generalisations about these experiences. Thus, learning occurred during the assessment procedure. All 14 staff proved competent in all 13 of the units assessed. Five of the 14 staff who achieved Certificate III in Aged Care as a result of the RPL assessments that were carried out in 2000 have enrolled in Certificate IV of Aged Care.

In conclusion, the problems experienced implementing the process are issues that must be considered when an assessor undertakes RPL. The time involved in the process is one of the factors that will determine if an RPL assessment is feasible. In addition, adequate support mechanisms must be provided for assessees.

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