

The AQTF—challenges and opportunities for the literacy profession

Sharon Coates, Director, National Training Framework, Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), gave the keynote address at the recent ACAL forum 'Breaking New Ground: the AQTF—Challenges and Opportunities' held in Melbourne in June. She pointed to the opportunities the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) offers the literacy profession and challenged ACAL as its peak body to participate in the continuous improvement process which is built into the AQTF.

Sharon opened her address by looking first at the big picture, and asking, 'Where have we come from?' She depicted Australia's workforce up to the 1980's as having a few highly

skilled people at the top and a large number employed in routine and low skilled jobs. This has been replaced, she said, by a vision of Australia as a *learning society*—where the nation's enterprises, individuals and communities participate in *lifelong learning* because they understand the benefits include a highly skilled workforce and a stronger economic performance; a more inclusive society with a stronger democracy, and more personally rewarding lives. (see fig. 1 below).



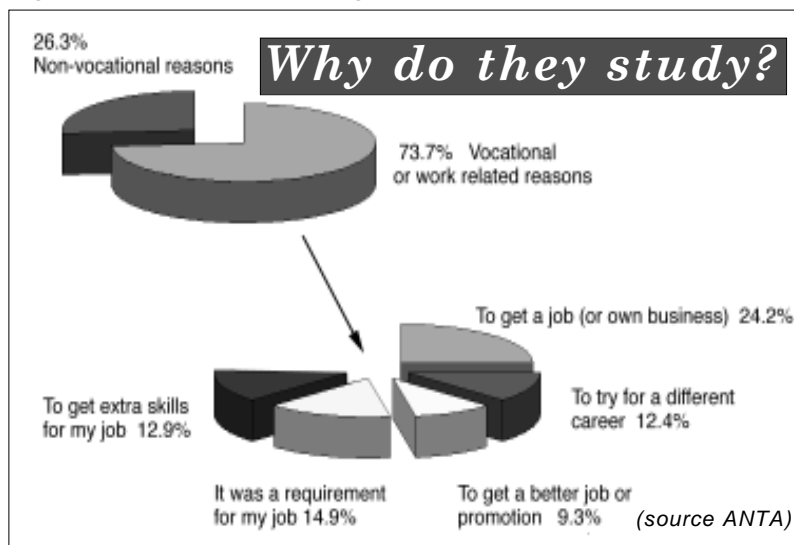
• Sharon Coates, keynote speaker at AQTF forum

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Sharon continued by describing the current policy framework and its origins in the Australian Recognition Framework. She described the evolution of the AQTF and how it will affect literacy professionals. (See the article 'Quality language, literacy and numeracy provision in the AQTF' by Rosa McKenna on page 3.)

fig. 1 A snapshot of training in Australia



Speaking of continuous improvement being built into the AQTF, Sharon noted that this offers the literacy profession and ACAL, as its peak body, the opportunity for input into:

- Targeted language, literacy and numeracy initiatives
- Review of the scope and purpose of the Training Package for Workplace Assessment and Training
- Development of a specialisation stream for language, literacy & numeracy within the reviewed Training Package for Assessment Training
- Opportunity to inform the forthcoming review of the AQTF standards in July 2003
- Contribution to the debate now about the vocational competencies required of language, literacy & numeracy professionals

Sharon challenged ACAL to consider linking its agenda to the AQTF Reference Group's agenda, making the point also that ACAL now has the opportunity to have a real impact on literacy policy through the consultations around the development of the new national strategy for VET.

Helen Foley, a project officer currently working with the Department of Employment and Training (DET) Queensland, spoke at the ACAL forum in Melbourne about her work developing a resource that will enable Queensland Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to respond to the Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) requirements of the AQTF. Through a process of internal and external consultation, the limits and needs of RTOs in Queensland were established and resource development begun which focuses on the following:

- Gaining a better understanding of LLN in vocational training and the need to account for this as part of the expectation of the AQTF

- Developing skills in applying that understanding in assessment and training contexts such as LLN identification, appropriate training and assessment methods and provision of practice opportunities in LLN for *all* students
- Working with LLN specialists to enhance staff development and student outcomes

The complete resource will be available in July 2002.

Peter De Natris, Planning and Performance Management, Adult Community and Further Education Victoria, spoke at the forum mainly in terms of the AQTF's likely impact on small providers. He warned that the AQTF has the potential to cause some small providers to just want to walk away—to leave the field because they will not see themselves as having the resources to deal with what they will perceive as an additional burden.



• Peter De Natris

To a question from the floor, 'Qualifications may not be the only measure of success—what counts as success?' Peter responded, 'The needs for all learners and indeed Adult & Community Education learners are diverse, and therefore so should the measures for success.'

'What is important is that the AQTF provides us with an opportunity to explore this, open up the debate further on measuring a successful outcome from a program in the correct context. The AQTF in time will allow this, as our understanding of the framework matures. The standards in the future are a framework which will create an environment which measures a range of success indicators linked to agreed goals and objectives.'



• Helen Foley

Literacy Link (ISSN 0158-3026) is the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, a voluntary organisation set up in 1976 to support the development of adult literacy, numeracy and basic education in Australia.

ACAL promotes co-operation among interested organisations and individuals, both government and non-government, by undertaking and encouraging appropriate study, research and action.

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Quality language, literacy & numeracy provision in the AQTF

by Rosa McKenna

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) will be implemented in July 2002. State systems and RTOs have been preparing for its implementation for some months. A number of questions have been directed to ANTA with regard to language, literacy and numeracy issues in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Auditors. A project to develop supplementary resources for language, literacy and numeracy was tendered. The project is being undertaken by Rosa McKenna of Communication in Education and Training Pty Ltd.

The first resource, Language, literacy and numeracy requirements in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations identifies the issues for language, literacy and numeracy in Standards 1, 6, 7, 8, & 9 of the Standards for RTOs and Auditors. It provides a detailed interpretation of the standards and provides links to resources, support materials and samples of evidence to meet the Standards. This document is currently in draft stage. The second resource is a set of case studies of different types of RTOs showing how they build in language, literacy and numeracy to deliver quality training. This resource includes samples of evidence for standards 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

This article introduces readers to the AQTF and discusses some of the issues that have arisen in the consultation to develop the resources. It originally appeared in 'Fine Print'.

What is the AQTF? The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and Training Packages together make up the National Training Framework (NTF). The NTF is endorsed by Ministers for vocational education and training and applies nationally.

The AQTF seeks to ensure nationally consistent and quality provision of vocational education and training (VET) by registered training organisations (RTOs) and quality training outcomes.

The AQTF includes two sets of standards:

- Standards for Registered Training Organisations; and
- Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies.

The Standards for Registered Training Organisations provide a single level of registration for training organisations, a 5-year registration period and 12 clear standards. This comprehensive set of standards provides the benchmarks with which the broad range of RTOs must comply to gain and retain registration.

RTOs are registered by a State or Territory registering body in accordance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations. In registering training organisations and conducting audits for compliance, States and Territories comply with the Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies.

Features of RTOs

Nationally recognised vocational education and training is provided by RTOs registered in accordance with the AQTF within a defined scope of registration to issue Australian

Qualifications Framework qualifications. RTOs can vary considerably. An RTO could be a publicly funded education provider such as a TAFE college or institute; a school or tertiary education institution; a community based organisation; a provider of adult community or further education; a business or enterprise whose core business is not training or a commercial training business.

On registration, an RTO's scope of registration is defined identifying the particular products and services that can be provided. This scope can cover assessment and delivery of training to meet units of competency and qualifications in Training Packages, as well as the assessment and training conducted as general education, including access and pre-vocational courses, further education and adult community education.

RTOs can also be registered to provide assessment only services. The scope of registration is defined by Training Packages and accredited courses entered on the National Training Information Service (NTIS) database.

Language, literacy and numeracy in the VET System

There is no specific industry training advisory body or Training Package covering language, literacy and numeracy. Under the Standards for Registered Training Organisations all RTOs have responsibilities in regard to language, literacy and numeracy across their scope of registration. Assessment and training under the National Training Framework is based on Training Packages, or, where they do not exist, courses accredited by state training authorities

under the guidance of the Standards for State and Territory Registering and Course Accrediting Bodies.

Training Packages

Training Packages are based on a concept of competency that specifies knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. Where communication is central to performance in the workplace, Training Packages have included core units that provide detailed description of the language, literacy and numeracy practised within that industry context. That is, the sorts of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills used, for example, to provide information, deal with customers, prepare budgets or manage work teams, and so forth.

These reading, writing, listening and speaking practices also underpin all aspects of work performance such as working in a team, following instructions, following operating procedures, negotiating an employment contract or planning training. The skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are also crucial as the means for learning in a classroom, on the job or on line. These language, literacy and numeracy practices are articulated throughout the components of the Training Packages.

Accredited courses

Accredited adult language, literacy and numeracy courses are delivered in the general education category of the VET system. The Commonwealth funds the delivery of these courses as part of programs to implement the Mutual Obligation policy. State and Territory training authorities and adult community education bodies also fund access, further education or pre-vocational courses or pathways programs using accredited adult language, literacy and numeracy courses.

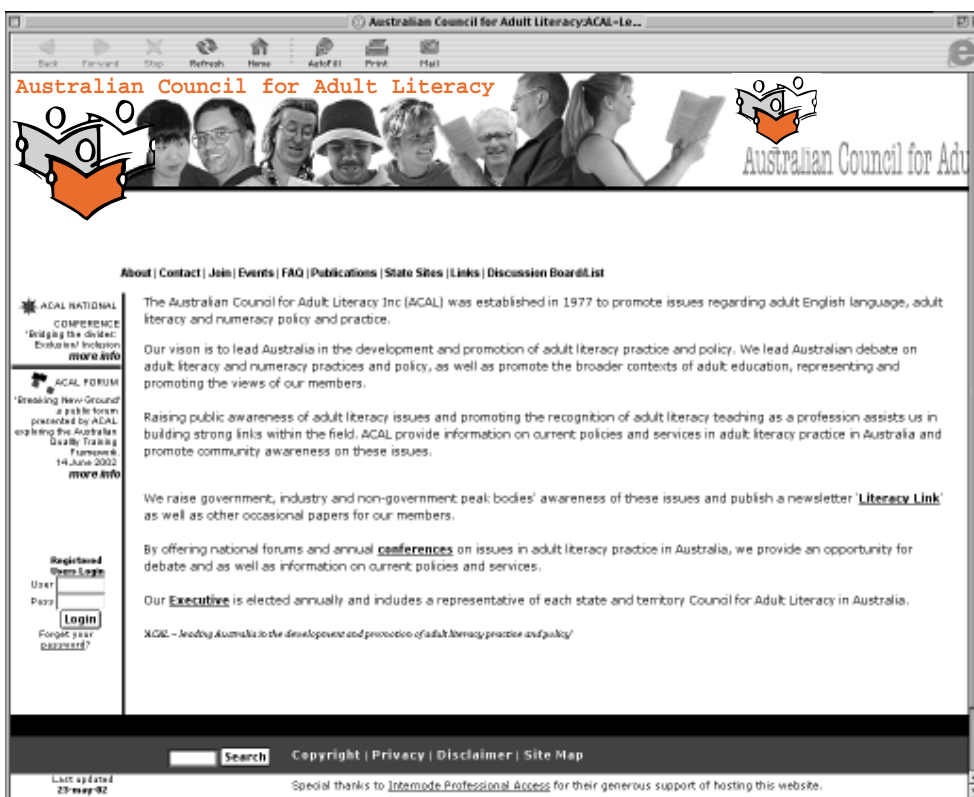
Links to the AQTF

Language, literacy and numeracy are directly referred to in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations. Firstly, in terms of quality there are language, literacy and numeracy requirements in regard to the capacity of the RTO to produce written documentation for compliance with the AQTF and to communicate with their customers and staff in Standard 1; ensuring that staff have the capacity to deliver quality services within the scope of registration in Standard 7.1, 7.3 and 7.4; assessment in Standard 8.1 (v); and learning and assessment strategies in Standard 9.3 (v). Secondly, in terms of access and equity, language, literacy and numeracy are clearly an issue in assisting identified target groups participate in vocational education and training in Standard 6.

New design for ACAL web site

Redesign of the ACAL web site has aimed at striking a sensible balance between as short a

download time as possible and the need to reflect the professionalism of ACAL through attractive, up-to-date graphics on the home page.



Ease of navigation is enhanced—menu bars and buttons are clear and provide a logical progression throughout the web site. The revised web site is able to be accessed by all, including those who only have access to a fairly modest computer (say, up to five years old).

The new web site has an excellent resource in the archives of *Literacy Link*, *ACAL Views* and the occasional papers that can be accessed by researchers, students and others.

All data on the revised web site is better able to be effectively located. Check it out—

www.acal.edu.au

A quality issue

There is credible evidence from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) conducted in a number of countries including Australia, by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that significant proportions of whole populations have inadequate literacy skills for processing information in everyday life. This view is confirmed in the Australian vocational and education and training context by an NCVER review of language, literacy and numeracy in vocational education and training in which it was concluded that—

'... the view that literacy and numeracy problems affect only a limited number of people involved in entry-level training and in limited industries can no longer be sustained....'

The relevance of literacy and numeracy support at all levels of training and across all sectors needs to be an extension of the application of literacy and numeracy support across a wide range of fields.'

Contemporary understandings of literacy recognise it as involving a repertoire of 'practices' around the spoken and written texts of traditional and new communications technologies as they are used purposefully in society - at home, in the community, at school, on the job. We use literacy to interact with one another to achieve particular purposes: to argue, to explain, to debate, to provide information, to explore issues, to entertain and to create.

Literacy practices themselves change over time and have been expanded in the last decade by emerging multimedia and information technologies and by increasingly multicultural communities. The literacy needs of individuals also change throughout their lifetime. As they move into different situations or specialised areas of learning and experience they are continually required to adapt and extend their knowledge and literacy skills so that they can understand and use language appropriately.

This concept is evident in Training Packages in that there are no defined language, literacy and numeracy levels of skill assigned to a specific certificate level of the Australian Qualifications Framework. Training Packages are based on a concept of competency that specifies knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace, that is, describing the literacy practices generally used within an industry.

These skills are described in relation to all aspects of work performance including:

- task skills—performing individual tasks;
- task management skills—managing a

number of different tasks;

- contingency management skills—responding to irregularities and breakdowns in routine; and
- job/role environment skills—dealing with the responsibilities and expectations of the work environment, including working with others.

Each of these aspects of work performance describes the repertoire of language, literacy and numeracy practices within the competencies to specify workplace communication.

Competency standards are intended to provide unambiguous guidance to their users on the language, literacy and numeracy practices embedded in work activities. To ensure the training and assessment processes are able to develop the appropriate language, literacy and numeracy skills so that learners can participate in these practices, users of Training Packages are responsible for addressing language, literacy and numeracy in:

- the development of learning activities/training;
- the delivery of training;
- the development or sourcing of learning resources;
- the development and conduct of assessment; and
- reporting on workplace competence.

Assessment and training activities are based on interaction between the assessors/trainers and the learners/trainees using oral, written and electronic forms of language. The training context has its own literacy practices and these are different from and sometimes more complex than the literacy practices of the workplace. The nature and modality of these assessment and training events available for selection by RTOs within the NTF, are a matter of professional choice and available resources.

From this perspective, RTOs need to ensure that, within their scope of registration, they have:

- a thorough understanding of the literacy practices and communication systems involved in the industry, workplace and the educational environment in which the assessment and training will take place;
- the capacity, skills and professional knowledge to analyse the Training Package or accredited course to identify the language, literacy and numeracy skills needed;
- the capacity to identify the capabilities, skills and knowledge that the learner already has; and
- the capacity, skills and professional knowledge to select activities and modes of learning and assessment to promote the development of the language, literacy and numeracy practices needed for training and gaining competency.

An equity issue

It is important that all Australians have the opportunity to participate in vocational education and training to meet their personal aspirations as well as the needs of their employers. RTOs which deliver quality training will ensure that all clients have access to information about their services using communication strategies that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the communities in which they operate. Furthermore, the assessment and training services offered to clients will be developed using planning processes that take account of the diversity in the community.

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) has set targets and endorsed strategies to increase the participation of under-represented or marginalised groups in VET (Achieving Equitable Outcomes—A supporting paper to Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998-2003). All RTOs must commit to meeting these policy targets and must comply with anti-discrimination, equal opportunity and human rights laws as applicable.

Access and equity principles set out how an RTO should respond to an individual from one of these target groups to allow them to participate successfully in VET. The thrust is to

ensure individuals have information on what is available, how they can be assisted and be confident their rights are upheld. RTOs need to demonstrate they are capable of accommodating, identifying and providing appropriate forms of support to these client groups and of maintaining commitment to specific target groups nominated in their own business plans.

Staff competency

The minimum standard for all RTO staff outlined in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations is equivalence to Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training plus the vocational competencies in the subject area. 'Vocational competency' for language, literacy and numeracy staff is not covered by a Training Package qualification and has not, at this stage been defined. In the long term these issues will be resolved in the development of the Trainers and Assessors Training Package currently being undertaken by the Business Services ITAB.

For further information about the AQTF visit the ANTA web site and download documents and resources—www.anta.gov.au or go to your state training authority for local implementation guides and resources.

Rosa McKenna

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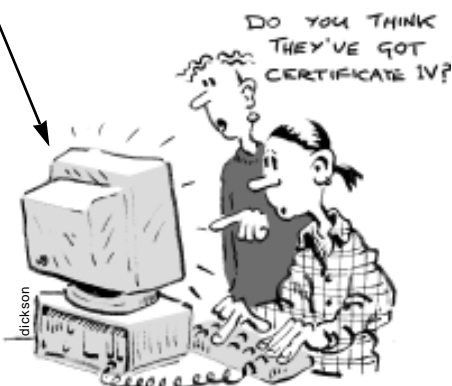
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soapbox

Volunteers and apostrophes

I refer to Aileen Harrison's letter (Soapbox *Literacy Link* April 2002) and would heartily agree that those who use acronyms can be frustrating, (I find that newsreaders are the worst offenders). However, I would like to point out to Eileen that she is definitely not 'only a volunteer'. Volunteers in any organisation are as worthwhile (if not more so) as anyone else.

May I also chastise *Literacy Link* for the punctuation error in the first paragraph of Eileen's letter (its should not have an apostrophe). My apologies for being so 'picky', but it just seems to me that the humble apostrophe is the most misused, or unused, part of the English language.

Brenda Hunt



Queensland Rail's *Support Indicator Tool*

Debra Littlewood

As a Senior Training Adviser with the Queensland Rail (QR) Training and Development Unit, my area of expertise involves the management of workplace literacy training within the organisation. My work with QR commenced in 1995, when I was seconded from the Open Learning Institute of TAFE to QR to work as a literacy consultant. My role at that stage was to co-ordinate WELL funded training programs for QR Civil Infrastructure (trackworkers) employees across Queensland.

I had to travel to work depots throughout Queensland and talk to the employees to encourage them to participate in the programs. At that stage a new competency based work system was being introduced to the Civil Infrastructure work area and so the training focused on the literacy/numeracy skills that underpinned the competencies.

As part of the process to implement WELL-funded programs, initial assessments had to be conducted for the participants who volunteered to do the training. The Support Indicator Tool (SIT) was developed for all providers to use as the initial assessment tool for Queensland Rail's track workers. It was important to have a moderated tool to determine literacy and numeracy skill levels for each participant because of the number of providers and employees across Queensland.

Although WELL funding only requires assessment outcomes at the completion of the program it is important to have each learner's initial skill levels so that learning development can be assessed and performance measured.



So that training providers could understand and use the assessment tool, three booklets were developed: the activity booklet, an answer booklet and a criteria booklet.

The activities in the workbook range from NRS level 1 to NRS Level 4 reading, writing, listening and speaking and numeracy skills.

The level of each activity is not marked in the booklet, but they get obviously more difficult as the booklet progresses. The learners are encouraged to work through the booklet and do as many activities as they feel comfortable with, but they are not to treat the assessment as a

test. All the activities are workplace focused. In the workplace the outcomes of the assessment are important for the individual as well as the workplace. The individual's outcomes are kept confidential, but the overall outcomes provide an idea of the learning that is required to have people reach their full performance potential.

The SIT is called an indicator tool because that is what it provides - an indication of skill levels. An exact level of literacy/numeracy competence is always difficult to assess because of the variables involved at the time of the assessment. These include things such as:

- Prior knowledge of the assessment - being made feel comfortable about it
- Previous experience
- Self-confidence
- Self-consciousness about doing the assessment
- Familiarity with the context of the activities

The tool was developed to provide an indication of where an individual 'is at' so that this can be compared to where they need to be (in the workplace). This provides what is referred to as 'the learning gap' so the training can be developed and implemented appropriately to help close this gap or at least begin to do so.

WELL-funded training programs for Infrastructure commenced in 1995/96 and they were delivered across Queensland. Initially TAFE was accessed as the training provider and QR contracted those TAFEs that were located closest to the worksite. The SIT was not used at that time and providers implemented their own initial assessments and provided the outcomes to QR. However, there were many variations in the tasks and the NRS levels associated with those tasks so we developed our own initial assessment tool, as described above.

As the Support Indicator Tool is a QR document the full booklet is not generally available. However, some examples of activities, the expected responses and their NRS levels and aspects are provided on the following pages.

Queensland Rail's *Support Indicator Tool*

Activity 2

In the left-hand column are signs you may see at your workplace. The meanings of the signs are on the right.

▶ Look at each sign and draw a line from the sign to its correct meaning. The first one has been done.

Sign	Meaning
	This tells you that the substance will catch on fire easily
	This is a caution sign that is placed on the kilometre from a problem on the track. A caution sign tells the driver to slow down.
	Always wear a hard hat when you see the handhat sign.
	Always wear hearing protection when you see the hearing protection sign.
	This sign tells you that special footwear must be worn.
	This tells the train driver to slow down.

QUEENSLAND RAIL

UP SI FIRST AID'S THE FIRST AID KIT

4

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QUEENSLAND RAIL

UP SI FIRST AID'S THE FIRST AID KIT

4

Activity Number	Activity Type	Literacy Activity	NRS Level	NRS Aspect
2	reading & writing	• relate safety symbols and meanings	1.1 1.2	Systems Procedural Personal

Activity 7



Read the text below. It explains how accidents can happen.

An accident is usually not planned and is something we do not want to happen. An accident can cause people to be injured or property to be damaged. Sometimes when people are tired or stressed they may be injured.

If people are new to a job or try to take short cuts doing their job, an accident might happen.

In some jobs people need special tools or clothing to work safely. If they do not use these things they may hurt themselves or someone else.

In the text above, underline two reasons why an accident could happen.

Choose one of the reasons underlined. Write a sentence explaining how this could cause an accident in your workplace.

Write your answer in your notebook.

_____ 11

Activity 7



Candidates should have underlined any two of the following points of the text.

An accident is usually not planned and is something we do not want to happen. An accident can cause people to be injured or property to be damaged. Sometimes when people are tired or stressed they may be injured.

If people are new to a job or try to take short cuts doing their job, an accident might happen.

In some jobs people need special tools or clothing to work safely. If they do not use these things they may hurt themselves or someone else.

Candidates should have written a sentence about one of the four reasons underlined above.

Example:

1. When people are tired and stressed, they may not concentrate on what they are doing and could injure themselves or someone else.
2. If people are new to a job, they might not know everything about safety issues to do with the job.
3. If people take a short cut to do their job it may be unsafe or not the right way to do the job.
4. If people do not use the right tools or wear the correct safety clothing needed for the job, then they are not working safely.

FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT USE

11

Activity Number	Activity Type	Literacy Activity	NRS Level	NRS Aspect
7	reading & writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reads a short simple text about accidents in the workplace write information relating to the text—reading and writing integrated 	2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4	Cooperative Systems

Jump on the cyber bandwagon project

Jo Hart & Renu Sharma

This article describes 'Jump on the Cyber Bandwagon' a project funded under the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Adult Literacy National Innovative Projects Program 2001/2. The pilot project was conceived and carried out by the Research and Development Division at West Coast College of TAFE, WA.

The article describes the methodology and effectiveness of the innovative approach adopted in the pilot project to facilitate improved English literacy/language and computer literacy skills in learners from both non-English speaking (NESB) and English speaking backgrounds (ESB). The model utilises a three-way interaction between the learners and two groups of volunteer trainer/mentors to develop English literacy/language skills through the medium of information technology.

'Jump on the Cyber Bandwagon' is an action research project in two phases involving migrants and people of ESB who needed to increase their English literacy/language and computer literacy skills, senior volunteers and computer literate young adults. These three groups were drawn together in the educational setting of an introductory computer course. Throughout the first phase of the project support materials for the students and volunteers were developed and used. In Phase II the materials were used to enable self-paced learning. They are being compiled into booklets for potential future use. The project resulted in a rich and positive interaction of participants and volunteers. Their activities and experiences were analysed to generate semi-quantitative and qualitative data. This has informed the development of a model, which has been evaluated and refined throughout and is applicable for future use in the community.

Objectives



The main project objectives were centred around utilising computer literacy, cross-cultural and cross-generational interaction to:

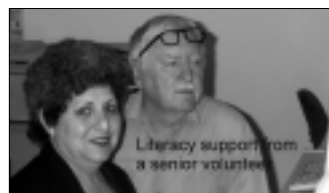
- enhance the language, numeracy and computer literacy skills of both adult migrants and participants of ESB thus increasing their confidence and job prospects
- enhance the computer literacy of senior volunteers and consolidate their cross-cultural and cross-generational communication skills
- develop the communication skills of young IT volunteers through cross-cultural/generational interaction, thus preparing them for potential future involvement in adult literacy development

- build a model of a self-sustaining three-way relationship between adult NESB migrants/ESB residents, senior volunteers and computer literate young people.

The delivery model

The objectives of the program in terms of English literacy and information technology were stated as competence statements developed by the investigators/facilitators. Individual sessions were planned on a weekly basis during the first phase to better accommodate learners' needs. The session plans were designed to assist the IT and also, to some extent, the senior volunteers by including suggested tasks and strategies as well as student objectives. Learner support materials were designed by a developer experienced in working with students of NESB and in IT with input from one of the investigator/facilitators. These materials make use of a combination of strategies including: simple language; signposting to images of the screens and menus being discussed; and in-text activities and questions signposted by icons.

	<p>Practise using the mouse <i>You cannot break anything by practising with the mouse</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move the mouse pointer around the screen 2. Place the pointer over an object on the screen and try left-clicking
	<p>What happens to the object when you click the mouse?</p>
<p>Activity and question icons</p>	



The second phase utilised the previously developed materials on a self-paced basis refining the delivery

model to allow greater flexibility of attendance with the potential for the program to run on a 'drop in' or 'roll-on roll-off' basis in community contexts where resources (including computers and volunteers) might be limited. The intention for the first phase was for each student to be



supported by both a senior and an IT volunteer. However, because of the challenge of recruiting sufficient seniors, the model was refined enabling seniors to adopt a 'floating' role providing input as required. Several of the IT volunteers gained sufficient experience and confidence to provide one-to-two support to students by the later stages of the first phase.



Social interaction between group members leading to the formation of a socially cohesive group was perceived as a very

significant contributory factor to the potential success of the program. Each session included morning tea.

The general structure of the program

- Introduction to the computer (including useful words)
- File management
- Mouse manipulation and keyboarding
- Basic word-processing—writing, simple editing and formatting Word documents
- Inserting images and graphics
- Handling simple numeric data and producing a simple bar chart with *Excel*
- English literacy exercises (completed on the computer)
- Accessing the Internet for information
- Setting up and using an email account
- Integrating information and images from the Internet into documents
- Adaptation of a *Word* document into a *Powerpoint* presentation.

The theme of writing a story was woven throughout and used as the basis for many of the word processing and image manipulation exercises.

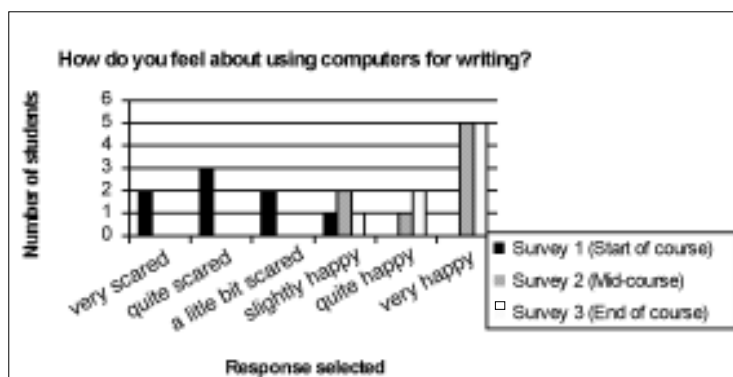
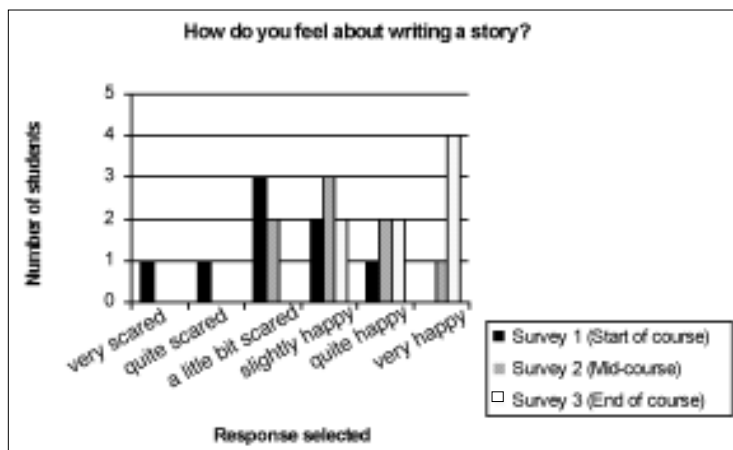
Evaluation

Methodology used to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery model and materials included: surveys throughout the course; an attitudinal survey at the mid-point and comparison of student work at different stages of the course.

Each participant stream was surveyed during the course: in the early stages; at the mid-point; and in the penultimate session. The surveys asked each stream similar questions relating to levels of confidence and interactions with other streams. The same questions were employed at each stage to facilitate comparison over time within the streams. Similar trends indicating increasing confidence and self-esteem over time were identified for all questions and all streams.

The greatest differences over time were

demonstrated by the student stream. Particularly satisfying were the responses to questions on feelings about writing a story in English and using computers for writing. Over the duration of the course feelings about using computers for writing changed from very negative to very positive with most of the change occurring in the early part of the course. There was a similar change in feelings about writing a story. Here the most significant change occurred between the middle and end, possibly because story development was only in the very early stages by the mid-point of the course.



At the mid-point, focus questions relating to the level of learning and the inter-stream interactions were used to provide opportunities for comment by all participants. These generated a range of positive comments.

To provide some semi-quantitative data, attitudes to the course were sought by using positive and negative stimulus words/phrases for participants to select all that they felt were applicable to them. None of the negative options were selected by any participants.

Students kept a weekly record of their increasing skill levels by saving their work to floppy disk. This progress is illustrated by the work of one individual (a female of Middle Eastern origin—and thus a written language using different characters from English) from the introduction of word processing to the final product—the story. It took most of the 1½ hour

'Small business setting the standards'

Lyn Hunter



him the prestigious award of 2002 International Retailer of the Year, Owner Operator Category.

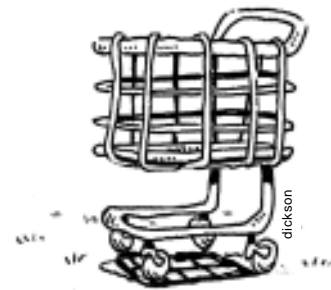
To win this prestigious award (which was announced on 12 April 2002, supported by IGA, an International Grocers Association), Foodland North Adelaide had to beat 4000 international entrants. Joseph submitted a detailed portfolio of evidence that met pre-determined criteria to the selection panel.

There are many challenges faced by small businesses in today's economic climate. Being able to successfully recruit, train and develop staff is expensive and labour intensive for small businesses. Small owner operators are often reluctant to invest in the development of employees. This has resulted in fewer individuals being attracted to join smaller businesses and those that do, often consider the positions temporary.

However, one family owned and operated business has adopted a different approach. Joseph Romeo, the owner operator of Foodland North Adelaide, believes that his most valuable asset is his employees.

Joseph Romeo's business approach has won

A key criterion is the company's commitment to staff training and development. This was made possible by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training funded



Jump on the cyber bandwagon (cont)

second session for her to produce and save these two lines of text—

'Cyber bandwagon project

This is the first time I have used computer.'

The next five sessions focused on developing computer skills, including inserting pictures and introducing numerical applications, and on completing some literacy exercises. Students were encouraged to begin thinking about their own stories and during the eighth session to begin writing.

By the tenth session the student's story began—'I was born in a small town in Iran where I grew up and finished my primary school. I have nice memories of my time there, especially the very cold winters when I had to go to school through very deep snow but I enjoyed it...'

and continued for a further 130 words. By the end of the course the story extended to a 280 word illustrated Powerpoint presentation.

Conclusion

The project has been successful in achieving

the given objectives for the participants in terms of confidence and enhanced skills. It has also given rise to a model of delivery and social interaction which may be utilised in a community setting. Two of the students have gained employment. Four senior and four IT volunteers are keen to volunteer if the model is utilised in the local community. Both the WA Adult Literacy Council and a WA Adult Migrant Education Service provider have expressed interest in utilising the model and materials, and the interim results were presented at the Fifth Australian VET Research Association Conference—'Making a World of Difference?' March, 2002.

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Workplace English and Literacy (WELL) Program implemented by Workplace Education Service (WES), Adelaide Institute of TAFE (AIT).

Foodland North Adelaide's training commitment, approaches and outcomes have demonstrated that a business operation and a learning organisation are complementary to each other. Staff training is an integral part of the business strategies to achieve the company's vision - to be the Number 1 owner operator in the South Australian supermarket industry.

To achieve the company's vision, last year Joseph Romeo met with Lyn Hunter, training consultant of WES, AIT to plan training strategies for the company. By working in partnership with AIT, Foodland North Adelaide was successful in applying for WELL funds. This funding enabled the company to turn its training plans into a reality in 2002, which otherwise would have been a difficult process for a family owned business.

The focus of WES training was setting and improving business standards whereby employees learned to take an active role in contributing to organisational success. After winning the award, Joseph said the holistic approach of the training has raised the professionalism of the staff. This impressed the IGA and the international selection panel, which acknowledged the importance of the multi-skilled employees in gaining a competitive edge in this highly competitive industry.

Joseph and his team have successfully implemented sound business strategies that enable employees to have a clear understanding of the business goals, objectives and philosophies which translate into a professionally presented and pleasant retail shopping environment. Joseph stated 'we want to promote our business standards from within and to be able to do this effectively we need to train all our staff in a range of disciplines.'

The AIT training program has enabled the company to make nationally accredited training accessible for 70 employees, including full-time, part-time and casual staff.

Joseph acknowledges that Foodland North Adelaide has a fantastic group of employees that are dedicated to their jobs. Many employees did not finish high school and had limited opportunity to return to study. WES on-the-job training program provides an opportunity for the employees to improve their work skills whilst enhancing their career prospects.

Joseph summarized his success by saying, 'The training helped employees see the long-term opportunities within small business. I see the investment in training as absolutely necessary to secure and retain key employees'.



• **Lyn Hunter conducting on-the-job assessment with Paula Cabone, Assistant Store Manager of Foodland North Adelaide**

The dynamic training approach by WES removed traditional classroom fear from employees. As Joseph said, 'Even those employees that were originally skeptical have been converted'. WES approach has successfully incorporated language and literacy skills in a fun, interesting and meaningful manner. The themes of the training program cover the core business of Workplace Communication, Quality Customer Care, Safe Work Practices and Hygiene for fresh food handlers. The program is called 'Setting the Standards' and that is exactly what Foodland North Adelaide is doing!



• **Lyn Hunter with Joseph Romeo and Foodland North Adelaide employees in a training session**

Joseph, together with his parents, Antonio and Elizabeth Romeo, founders of the business, will fly to Chicago to formally collect the award. They will take with them a video introducing Foodland North Adelaide. The AIT training program is a highlight of the video to be shown at the international award presentation ceremony.

The Training for Adult Literacy Teaching Project 'Know the Trade, Not Only the Tricks of Trade' was funded by Department of Education, Science and Training. The following article comprises excerpts from the Final Report. It originally was prepared for the ACAL Forum on the Australian Quality Training Framework in June 2002.

The most significant finding of the Training for Adult Literacy Teaching Project is that the strengths of the ALBE courses are as much to do with generic competencies as they are with specialist adult literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge, ie. they focus on what makes for good teaching practice in any adult learning situation, including vocational contexts. Only when these generic competencies have been recognised and extracted from the ALBE courses is it possible to identify the unique skills and knowledge that distinguish specialist adult literacy and numeracy teachers from other VET practitioners.

This Project has recommended the addition of a number of generic Assessment and Workplace Trainers (AWT) competencies at both Certificate IV and Diploma level to focus on the awareness and the skills needed by all VET practitioners working in a diverse training environment. As the ALBE courses have shown, the recommended generic competencies are very good vehicles for addressing a range of linguistic and cultural needs. Even so, it is unlikely that Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) will be addressed effectively unless the responsibilities of LLN specialists and other VET trainers are made explicit.

In addition, the Training for Adult Literacy Teaching Project has also recommended a number of specialist units for adult literacy and numeracy which should be included in the Training Package if the AWT Review proceeds to include specialist competencies at Diploma level.

The detailed analysis of the documents carried out by the Training for Adult Literacy Teaching Project will also provide a resource for the second or third stages of the review of AWT. The mapping in Volume 2 of the Project's Final Report reveals the gaps in the two sets of training documents, but also shows how the different sets of competencies/outcomes have expressed the same or similar ideas. This should help future writers in re-casting and reforming the statements in the Training Package.

ALBE professional development

It must be acknowledged that the future of professional development for adult literacy and numeracy practitioners will not rest alone and

entirely with the Training Package for AWT. ALBE professional development can be at risk in a number of ways. There is a general demise of true professional development (as opposed to staff training) provided by employers, and there has been a decline in opportunities for post-graduate study in adult literacy and TESOL.

The ALT and ANT were still being used in several states. Their re-accreditation would depend on two considerations:

- whether or not there were equivalent endorsed competency standards in the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (AWT) to match the ALBE courses
- whether or not the ALBE courses covered a gap within the Training Package for AWT

Furthermore, it is in the nature of things that new professional development needs will continue to emerge. The AWT Review should be seen by the ALBE field as an opportunity to re-assess the distinction between initial teacher training and professional development, and to move on to new areas.

The Training for Adult Literacy Teaching Project therefore recommended that the ALBE field instigate a national review of professional development in the ALBE field, especially in the light of the forthcoming changes to the AWT Training Package.

The National Assessors and Workplace Trainers (NAWT) published the Review of the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training Stage I Final Report in November 2001. Most of the seventeen recommendations were accepted by ANTA. Stage 2 of the Review of the Training Package will commence in June 2002. Other projects relating to the language, literacy and numeracy within the AQTF have been undertaken since the completion of the ALT project. Discussion on the future directions of professional development for the ALBE field should take all the findings and recommendations into consideration.

Issues raised

What are the different professional development needs of new and experienced ALBE trainers? What would be the model to address

continued page 16

Bridging the divides—national literacy conference

Fri 1 - Sat 2 November 2002, Manly Pacific Park Royal, Sydney



Important dates

Conference 1st and 2nd November
National Forum 31st October (see below)

Register online now at
www.hotelnetwork.com.au
Earlybird registration closes 31st July
Registrations close 25th October

Keynote speakers

Mary Hamilton, Professor of Adult Learning and Literacy, Lancaster University—addresses the gap between those with access to information and those without it, and promotes the notion that literacy is a powerful means for social change.

Sue Shore, National Director of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Research Consortium (ALNARC)—research has focused on how race contributes to identity. She's particularly interested in understanding 'whiteness'.

Focus speakers

Phil Glendinning, Director of Edmund Rice Centre of NSW for Justice and Community Education—works closely with groups at the margins of society both in Australia and internationally, especially with regard to youth and indigenous people.

Helen Verran—involved in the social study of science, through involvement with science and maths education; currently writing a book, *Science and the dreaming*, which grows from 12 years work with an Aboriginal community.

Darryl Griffin, College Director, EORA—the Centre for Performing and Visual Arts, TAFE NSW—where Aboriginal people can acquire the academic skills needed for higher education or employment, in an environment which is accustomed to Aboriginal learning styles.

Hermine Scheeres, lecturer in Language and Literacy at UTS—co-editor of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, and one of the authors of *The ABE profession and Competence: Promoting Best Practice* (1993).

Beth Marr, lecturer RMIT Melbourne—adult numeracy educator and writer of internationally known teaching and professional development materials.

Jenny Hammond, lecturer at the University of Technology, Sydney—research interests in the area of spoken and written language and literacy development of first and second language theory and the role of classroom talk in the construction

of knowledge—using 'scaffolding' theories.

Workshops

There are about 65 presentations around the conference theme of Bridging the divides.

- Cartoons and adult literacy
- Teachers sharing stories
- Training packages: locked out or invited in?
- Can numeracy work on line?
- Rural, remote literacy for indigenous women
- Music as an entry point for inmates
- The web: inform, distribute or teach
- Teaching LLNP: Keeping the teachers teaching
- Hot potatoes!

Special features

Numeracy Professional Development

- Four sessions for inexperienced practitioners in the field of adult numeracy.

Computer room and Internet café

- A computer room will be available throughout the conference with Internet availability.

Arch Nelson Debate

- The conference will conclude with a debate on issues emerging from the conference, and addressing the theme of 'Bridging the divides'.

The Conference Dinner

- To be held at the International Hotel School located in the former St Patrick's Seminary, a historic sandstone landmark at Manly.

ACAL forum—31 October

Also at the Manly Pacific Park Royal, this forum will focus on the language, literacy and numeracy needs of new arrivals in Australia, as they take up active roles as citizens of this country. It will address issues pertinent to the relationship between language, literacy and numeracy and aspects of everyday life such as health, justice, welfare and education.

Who should come?

- teachers in community colleges, TAFE, workplaces, LLNP, correctional institutions, AMES
- community workers and advocates
- inexperienced teachers who want professional development in numeracy
- researchers, teacher educators, teacher trainees
- planners, policy makers, program managers

Registration—

On-line registration is now available
www.hotelnetwork.com.au

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Training for ALT Project (cont)

both induction training for new ALBE trainers and ongoing professional development?

With the wide application of the Training Package for AWT within VET, what are the needs for separate accreditation of qualifications for specialist groups of VET trainers, including LL&N trainers? What will be the future of ALT and ANT?

Given the Review of the Training Package for AWT has recommended the effective representation of adult learning principles and relevant learning theory, what are the other ALBE competencies that have not been captured? Based on the mapping results of the Training for Adult Literacy Teaching Project, should those underpinning values and competencies of the ALBE professional courses be separately endorsed as the specialist stream for ALBE trainers?

(The Certificate IV in Language and Literacy Assessment and Training, which was recently endorsed in Queensland, can be considered as one of the models. However, there are still other key strengths, values and the professional needs of the ALBE that have not been

covered by this qualification.)

Given the Recommendation 5 of the Review of Training Package for AWT Stage I Report stated that LL&N entry requirements and expectations of trainers be specified in the Implementation Guidelines, it would be an ideal opportunity for the ALBE field to provide input to the 'requirements and expectations'.

The writers for the ALBE Professional Development courses believe that adult literacy and numeracy teaching must be informed by specialist knowledge and understanding about the core skills and knowledge that underpin good adult teaching practice. It is this aspect of ALBE competencies that distinguishes them from generic competencies. Will it be possible to transfer the strengths of the underpinning concepts and values of the ALBE professional development courses as stated by the Training for Adult Literacy Teaching Project to the revised Training Package for AWT (which will be named Training Package for Training and Assessment)?

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