



Farewell and thanks to ANTA

The shift of Australian National Training Authority responsibilities to the Department of Education, Training and Science (DEST) after July brings to an end the ANTA Workplace Communication project. This project which began in 1997 oversaw the explicit integration of language, literacy and numeracy into Training Packages, and through this, into the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

The integrated approach is articulated in ANTA policy as part of a group of strategies to achieve equity and mobility within the training system, within guidelines for the writing of Training Packages, and in resources to support the national VET system. Registered training organisations (RTOs) are now responsible for addressing literacy as part of compliance within the Australian Quality Training Framework.

So, it is timely to thank the ANTA officers who designed the strategy, devised activities to support it, and maintained the insistence that language, literacy and numeracy be built in and bolted on throughout numerous forums, memos, presentations, and policy documents. Thanks to former ANTA officers Sharon Coates, Marlene

Johnstone and Anita Roberts who designed and carried out the strategy in the early years of the project.

This was ground-breaking stuff—

Training Packages were being developed with little research and development, building language, literacy and numeracy into industry standards had not been attempted in such a systematic way elsewhere. There were no models to emulate. This approach is now seen by other countries as the way to go. (See 'Embedded learners' *The Guardian* 15 Mar '05 UK.)



Special thanks are due to Louise Wignall for keeping the flag flying within and without ANTA since 1998, re-defining strategies, building linkages and networks, and embedding language, literacy and numeracy into ANTA's strategies.

Lynne Fitzpatrick

(Lynne is co-writer with Rosa McKenna of *Building sustainable adult literacy provision, a review of international trends in adult literacy policy and programs*, NCVER 2004.)

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What's happening nationally?

The new national training arrangements 'Skills for Australia—New Directions for Vocational Education and Training' directions paper was released by Ministers Nelson and Hardgrave in February this year. The paper sets out possible models for the future operation of the national training system from July 2005 when functions of the Australian National Training Authority transfer to the Department of Education, Science and Training. Read the paper at—
http://www.dest.gov.au/anta_transition/information.htm

continued over

National and International Conference

ACAL & ALM (Adults Learning Mathematics) 2005
Adult Numeracy/Mathematics Conference

Connecting voices: practitioners, researchers and learners in adult mathematics and numeracy

Sunday 3rd July (evening) to Thursday 7th July, 2005, Melbourne

For the first time ever, we are having an adult numeracy conference in Australia. It is this year's ACAL conference, and will be held in Melbourne as a joint event with the 12th conference of the international group Adults Learning Maths (ALM). The Australasian Bridging Maths Network (BMN) will also be a partner in the conference.

Take this chance to catch up on professional development, to share your experiences, to explore current issues affecting the range of numeracy and mathematics education for adults, to meet Australian and overseas practitioners and researchers, and to find out what people are doing around the globe.

There will be a particular emphasis in the first two days (Monday and Tuesday) on workshops for practitioners in adult literacy, language and numeracy.

For details about the conference go to the Adults Learning Mathematics website: <http://www.alm-online.org/>



What's happening nationally?

The funding for the 2005 Adult Literacy National Project is approved and the work from this project will continue through to April 2006. Key areas of work are the Innovative projects, NCVER research, Reading and Writing Hotline, review of the NRS and funding of *Literacy Link* and the ACAL forum.

The review of the National Reporting System is now under way with Linda Wyse and Associates, Kulu Consulting and the CAE as the successful consortium. National consultations will take place in coming months through surveys and interviews. Please respond to the survey if you are asked as this is a important national initiative that requires as much feedback from the field as possible.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is confirmed

to carry out the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills survey in Australia in 2006 with data becoming available in 2007. (see opposite page)

Addendum—Building family literacy in Tasmanian libraries

Last issue of *Literacy Link* mentioned the trial and establishment of a Family Literacy Strategy by the State Library of Tasmania in partnership with the TAFE Tasmania Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) Program. This will be a staged strategy and focus on four communities: Sorell, Bridgewater, Queenstown and Kingston. Further information can be obtained from—

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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.

Literacy Link is distributed FREE—to obtain your copy contact ACAL. Back issues are available from the ACAL web site— www.acal.edu.au

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The forthcoming Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) survey

The Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) Survey is a large-scale, comparative survey that goes beyond previous international studies. In addition to the literacy skills measured in the previous International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), ALL is designed to identify and measure a broader range of skills in the adult population in each participating country. The skills to be directly measured are—

- prose and document literacy
- numeracy
- problem solving/analytical reasoning.

In addition the assessment will be accompanied by a comprehensive Background Questionnaire, which will collect participant information and indirectly measure two other skill domains as well. Those skills are—

- teamwork
- information and communication technology (ICT) Literacy.

This first international comparative report from the survey will be published in May this year, and will include data for Canada, Norway, Italy, Switzerland, United States, Bermuda and the state of Nuevo Leon in Mexico. A second wave of collection is under way in South Korea, Hungary, New Zealand, and the Netherlands. Australia is in the picture as well, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) will be conducting the survey across Australia in 2006. There are other countries interested as well and they will come on board in future years to extend the international comparative aspects.

Key motivations for conducting the ALL survey are: to inform policy makers and educators regarding levels (and distributions) of various skills, including numeracy; to explore factors associated with observed skill levels (e.g., literacy); and to examine links between numeracy (or other skills) and important human capital and social variables, such as earnings, labour force participation, unemployment, or health related behaviours.

The scale and methodology

As in IALS, literacy and numeracy ability will be expressed as a score on a scale ranging from 0-500 points. The score is the point at which a person has an 80% chance of successfully performing tasks at that level. The scale is grouped into five levels (not directly equivalent to the five levels of the National Reporting System). The design ensures that the results can be reported on the full scale for each domain. This methodology is unique in that an individual respondent is NOT given a score or a mark—the

items themselves are scored and placed on the continuum of difficulty.

Using household survey methods, respondents are asked a series of background questions and are then presented with a booklet containing a small number of simple (level 1) tasks. If the respondent fails to complete two or more of these tasks correctly, the interview is concluded. If the respondent completes two or more tasks correctly, they are given a separate booklet which contains a selection of the assessment tasks. The tasks are, supposedly, based on 'real-life' scenarios and texts. There is no time limit and respondents are urged to try each exercise.

The Background Questionnaire

The primary objective of ALL is to profile the distribution of prose and document literacy, analytic reasoning and numeracy in the adult population and to determine the relationship of each of these skills one to another. A second and equally important objective is to determine the relationship of each of the tested skills to individual economic and social success and in so doing, to identify sub-populations whose performance in the skill domains places them at risk. A more long-term objective of ALL is to shed light on the causes and consequences of the observed skill distributions. To accomplish these latter objectives, ALL requires a well-developed background questionnaire that will provide the necessary variables to add analytical depth and policy relevance to the skill assessment information.

A first for numeracy

In an important step forward for the field of adult numeracy, numeracy was given the opportunity to be part of the ALL survey. Why was numeracy included? In recent years, many countries have increasingly attended to the need to improve workplace efficiency, promote proper utilisation of public and health care services, and ensure informed civic participation. While literacy skills have been shown to contribute to adults' ability to effectively function in modern society, adults' numeracy has been a neglected but critical factor in this regard. In the home, workplace, or community, adults often need to manage various types of quantitative situations or interpret information that may involve numbers, measurements, probabilities, shapes, statistical information, or quantitative arguments. Numeracy skills help adults to keep up with a rapidly changing world, underlie independent functioning and action as a parent, citizen or worker, are a gatekeeper for entrance

into further education in many technical and other occupational areas, and critically affect employability and career options.

Description of numeracy

The ALL numeracy team saw numeracy as a complex, multi-faceted and sometimes slippery construct. The basic premise was that numeracy is the bridge that links mathematical knowledge, whether acquired via formal or informal learning, with functional and information-processing demands encountered in the real world. An evaluation of a person's numeracy is far from being a trivial matter, as it has to take into account task and situational demands, type of mathematical information available, the way in which that information is represented, prior practices, individual dispositions, cultural norms, and more.

The numeracy framework defined numeracy as follows—

Numeracy is the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage and respond to the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

However, since an assessment can only examine observed behaviour, not internal processes or capacities, this framework uses a more detailed definition of 'numerate behaviour' as a means to guide the development of items for the survey—

Numerate behaviour is observed when people manage a situation or solve a problem in a real context; it involves responding to information about mathematical ideas that may be represented in a range of ways; it requires the activation of a range of enabling knowledge, factors, and processes.

The ALL description of numerate behaviour distinguishes what are called five facets, each with several components. The first facet is about the purpose or goal of the numeracy activity—a numeracy action takes place in some context. The framework describes four types of contexts: everyday life, work, societal, and further learning. The second facet concerns the fact that people have to respond in some way. The framework suggests four different ways to respond or act: identify or locate; act upon; interpret; and/or communicate about the activity or situation. The third facet is about what type of mathematical information or ideas are embedded within the numeracy situation: quantity & number; dimension & shape; pattern and relationships; data & chance; and change. The fourth facet describes how the mathematics can be represented: as concrete objects (e.g. people, buildings, cars, etc.) or as pictures of such things; through mathematical symbols,

notations, or formulae; in a diagram or chart or a map; in graphs and tables; or as part of visual displays or text. The way in which each person responds to the contexts, tasks, and mathematical representations discussed above will depend on the unique combination of existing mathematical knowledge, problem-solving skills and strategies, literacy skills, and dispositions that he or she brings to each situation—this is the fifth and final facet in the numeracy construct.

Complexity factors

As mentioned earlier, there were a number of requirements expected of the numeracy construct, one of which was to develop a scheme that would be able to predict the difficulty or complexity of a numeracy assessment task. A scheme of five factors was developed that attempted to account for the difficulty of different tasks. These five factors are: (1) complexity of mathematical information/data; (2) type of operation/skill; (3) expected number of operations; (4) plausibility of distractors (including in text); (5) type of match/problem transparency. These factors have been used to attempt to estimate, separately and in interaction, the difficulty level of the numeracy tasks. For each of these factors a detailed description was developed against a scoring system in the range from 1 through to 3 or 5.

The assessment items

A pool of items was developed that attempted to satisfy the breadth of the conceptual framework and the facets described above. The items attempted to be as realistic as possible, but there are restrictions on developing items for a large scale survey that is to be delivered to thousands of people in all participating countries. The items are based upon simulated texts such as advertisements, newspaper articles, maps, diagrams and plans, photos, etc. A ruler and a calculator are provided to all respondents. In the Background Questionnaire there is a range of questions that specifically ask about the respondent's perceptions of their own maths attitudes, skills and success and of their participation in, and use of, mathematical tasks at home or at work.

Implications for research and policy

For the first time the ALL survey will enable policy-makers, planners and researchers to have data about the numeracy and problem solving levels of the general adult population and about variables associated with it. Along with that, there will be the comparative data from the 1996 IALS data for the document and prose literacy scales.

Behind such surveys as the IALS and ALL there is a wealth of ideas and concepts that can be of

interest to the wider educational sector. These surveys are not just about the final statistics that are released that show that x number or percent of people are at such and such a level, and (yet again) we fall well behind Sweden. There are data, concepts and theoretical works behind these surveys that should be of interest and of use to researchers and teachers. Unfortunately in Australia there seems to have been little of that sort of reflection, analysis or research undertaken on the IALS framework or data. One example was Geraldine Castleton's article 'Adult Literacy in Australia: Reading Beyond the Figures' 2002, and the data has been used as background information for various research.

This is not true of other countries. Jan Hagston researched what other countries had done with their IALS data, and her report documents a wide range of activities and possible follow up research questions that Australia could have attempted to take up and answer. Since then further research has come out of the international IALS data. One of the more interesting was in regards to human capital and the knowledge economy which demonstrated, amongst other things, that investment in increasing the literacy skills of adults has a direct and positive impact on labour productivity and in GDP per

capita. It highlighted that the greatest impact was gained by investing in improving the skills at the lower levels of IALS and that the relationship between investment in human capital and economic performance is much stronger if women's literacy skills are considered rather than men's.

It is hoped that Australia's investment in ALL will result in valuable data and outcomes for all interested in improving the literacy and numeracy skills of the Australian population—including Government, policy and program makers and planners, educational organisations, researchers, teachers and trainers.

For more information about the ALL survey visit these Web sites at—<http://www.ets.org/all/>
<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/all/>

At the forthcoming July 2005 ACAL National Conference, in conjunction with the ALM international numeracy conference, papers will be presented on the ALL survey in Australia and on the results from the first round of ALL overseas.

*Dave Tout
CAE & Multifangled P/L, a
consultant on the Numeracy Working
Group of the ALL survey*

Letter to the Editor— Educating Our Masters

In *Literacy Link* Vol 24 No 6, Leesa Wheelahan and Gillian Chadwick alerted readers to key aspects of the federal government's plans to reform the VET system in Australia. Both contributors were clearly alarmed by the plan to set up federally funded technical colleges, firmly under employer control, outside existing state TAFE systems. This plan appears to reflect a conviction that TAFE in its present form is ailing and no longer up to the task of meeting Australia's adult training needs.

Whatever our opinion of government policy, it is something we are going to have to live with and if possible learn, if not to love, at all events to turn to our advantage. For literacy teachers, the central question is the one posed by Margaret McHugh in her article 'What happens when ANTA goes?' Will literacy find a place at any level under the new dispensation? As a perennial optimist, I suggest that we should use the changes as an opportunity to educate our masters in government and industry in what literacy really means in the VET context and how it might best be taught.

Employers often complain of what they perceive as poor and declining standards of literacy and

numeracy among school leavers entering the workforce. The difficulty here is that while the problem may be obvious, the solution is not. It is easy for people who succeeded in English and Maths at school to suppose that what struggling school leavers need is more of the English and Maths they are probably trying to escape from. That is not what they need, or what teaching literacy is about.

Our opportunity, and our task, in the government's brave new world of VET is to argue the case for literacy. In other words, to convince the proprietors and directors of the new system not only that literacy teaching, as distinct from English and Maths, really works but also that it is vital to achieving 'skill excellence' and high levels of productivity in any occupation or trade.

At the same time we shouldn't forget our underlying agenda as literacy teachers, which has less to do with profits and pay-packets than with enriching the capacity of our students for personal fulfilment and self-determination across the whole of their lives—a prerequisite for 'skill excellence', whatever cynics may say. We should not be afraid to argue that case, too, though I confess that at this point my optimism starts to waver.

James V Plumridge

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letters—

A practitioner's perspective of the NRS three years after the introduction of LLNP

I have been a teacher in ABE and multicultural education in TAFE since the start of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP). I have been intimately involved in LLNP delivery at the basic and advanced levels. In my experience there is a wide discrepancy in the completions of the two different strands, with the advanced stream having a high number of students who complete the training. Unfortunately the number of completions for people in the basic strand appears to be almost nonexistent because of the barriers experienced by students in this strand.

The NRS is the lynchpin for the LLNP in that it would not be possible for a program funded by LLNP to avoid using the NRS. Student competencies are assessed against the NRS and the work provided to students should be mapped against it. It is with this aspect that teachers involved in LLNP have difficulties.

1. Auditors require that portfolios of students work be kept to verify that the competencies decided by teachers are accurate or reasonable. At least six items in each of the competencies of reading, writing, numeracy and oral communication must be collected as well as evidence about learning strategies. Some of the evidence can be provided in the form of integrated tasks, thus in theory reducing the amount of evidence to be collected. The problem here is that each piece of evidence must be mapped against the NRS for each competency and each aspect within that competency, a task that is time consuming and far outside the normal requirements of a teacher. Many teachers reject working on LLNP classes because of this burden. It requires dedicated follow up of students to obtain the

evidence as some are reluctant to part with first draft work. Keeping track of individuals' portfolios is onerous as absences can really upset the tally of collected work.

2. Auditors require that work in the portfolios be mapped against the NRS and that teachers provide an indication of the circumstances under which the work was carried out. If the task, for example, is numeracy, then the teacher should indicate if it was a class activity, if the student used a calculator and if the student required particular assistance with either the language or the mathematics. Who is the teacher working for? Is it the auditor of the LLNP or is it the students who have particular needs with regards to language, literacy and numeracy? The latter does not necessarily require that the students' work be marked in this way. With respect to the Basic stream the focus should be the student and the student-teacher interaction rather than marking of paper in a particular way.

3. Preparation of teaching sessions and marking student work is definitely within the work of a teacher but the evidence collection for the verification process and the evaluation of the students' work against the NRS is certainly not a normal duty for teachers. As a teacher involved in the delivery of the advanced stream I have had to collect and mark work of 15 to 12 students based on the NRS as part of my normal teaching. As no extra time is provided I do some of this in class as I have spent non-class time on lesson preparation.

4. The DEST funding does not allow for payment of post course assessments so coordinators find it difficult to pay teachers for extra work. However, if a 'hollow log' can be found they try to accommodate teachers by paying something, at least in part, especially for assessing the portfolio and providing a report on each student for the verification process. This is a bonus, not something that occurs automatically.

5. Having to report on all aspects of the NRS is artificial and ignores the fact that students have variable abilities across the strands. It does not allow the teacher to focus on the specific needs of the students. While this is under review by DEST, the alternative offered in the proposed changes to the LLNP suggests that there will be an even greater requirement to map work against the NRS for those needs that



Adult literacy and numeracy research program

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has managed the adult literacy and numeracy research program since 2002 with funding provided through the Department of Education, Science and Training under the ANTA Adult Literacy National Project. The research program link to the overall strategy for VET, *Shaping our Future*. The strategy explicitly acknowledges that among the drivers for greater investment in vocational education and training is the growing significance of knowledge and the ability to handle new literacy demands.

Where have we come from?

Across VET policy, practice and research there is an explicit awareness of the importance of literacy and numeracy. An extensive body of research conducted during 1999–2001 by the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium exists, particularly in relation to the integration of literacy and numeracy in Training Packages and practitioner focused research. The research program managed by NCVER during the period 2002–2004 covered five main themes:

- changing contexts and dimensions of literacy and numeracy
- impacts of poor literacy on society, the economy, health and welfare
- models of teaching and learning practices for ongoing provision
- re-engaging those with literacy needs
- the professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce

The research confirms that our challenge is to extend current concepts of literacy and numeracy. Our challenge is not confined to those with poor basic skills but extends to all people trying to derive meaning from new forms of information as they take on different roles in life and work. Recognising the multiple dimensions of literacy and numeracy should lead to diverse

teaching and learning strategies, this has implications for literacy practitioners and points to the need for more professional development.

Where are we now?

Research is under way that will collectively provide more reliable and useful evidence of the economic and social benefits associated with literacy across various social domains in Australia. Research is also being undertaken into the professional development needs of the workforce. NCVER is undertaking a statistical time-series analysis of literacy and numeracy courses. We are also undertaking a pilot exercise to examine and quantify the amount of embedded literacy within public funded vocational training programs.

Where to next?

NCVER is now seeking to identify research priorities for 2006 in areas where there are identified gaps in knowledge. The final set of priorities will be determined by the Adult Literacy Research Advisory Group, keeping in mind a range of broader initiatives and directions which include:

- DEST's review of the National Reporting System (NRS) for adult literacy and numeracy
- The Australian Council for Adult Literacy strategy for 2005-2006
- Australia's participation in the 2006 International Adult Literacy Survey.

If you would like to contribute ideas for future research please e-mail—
joanne.hargreaves@ncver.edu.au
by 31 May 2005.

Summaries of the adult literacy research that has been completed are available on the National Centre for Vocational Education Research website

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1485.htm>

Jo Hargreaves, NCVER

were identified in the initial assessment. It also ignores the fact that the initial assessment may be faulty. There is room for fallibility in the interpretation of the NRS when used as an assessment tool!

If I were to use the NRS as a guide as to the progress of a student I would definitely find it useful. My complaint is not really about the tool, but about the way I have been forced to use it and the time that this takes. This time is stolen from student/teacher interaction. It is in these interactions that learning may take place, not

through keeping complicated portfolios for the funding body as part a verification process.

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Creating learning pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in VET.

*You gonna find a place, pick a chair
And that gonna be your home
You gonna wonder, do I really want to be here
If you scared you wanna shout, 'No way!'
But something inside you gonna say, 'Shit yeah!'
Sometimes over time
The doors and windows to your heart and soul
They gonna be shut real tight
But slowly, little bit slowly
They gonna open and let the words come out
And they gonna be different shapes and sizes
Some of them words gonna be
Skipping around hopping and cart wheeling and sliding
Some gonna be strolling with hands on the hips
And sneaky way too
And some gonna be walking real sorry way, head down
And all the words gonna just jump out of there and
Sneak down your arm and into that writing stick in your hand
And then? They gonna be your story
Right on that piece of paper in front of you
Nobody gonna force you to do that one
If it meant to happen it will
And sometimes there gonna be saltwater coming from your eye
But that's alright, we all been there
Might be your turn now."*

© Ronda Ross Alice Springs/Docker River

Ronda Ross in her poem sets a scene. She starts by providing you with a place. *Pick a chair.* She encourages you to take the plunge and say what you need to say. *They gonna open and let the words come out.* She promotes truth and how it really is. *And all the words gonna just jump out of there and sneak down your arm and into that writing stick.* She encourages you to be yourself, the way you see it. If it meant to happen it will. And finally she invites you to take your place, when you're ready to go for it. *Might be your turn now.*

I am no literary critic but I do know when words speak to me and these have stayed with me now for two and a half years since I sat at a Batchelor Graduation ceremony in Alice Springs and she read them to us. Her intent was to encourage the creative word but for me they went further. This article is about how those words took me on a new path, a path that has brought me to sharing my story with you.

For too many years now, the VET sector in the mainstream, has offered a one size fits all approach to vocational and educational training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Despite the intention to customise, to be flexible and to be community and industry driven, the majority of us, not all, have not been able to really offer what our Indigenous client groups want for their communities, family and them-

selves. We somehow forgot to acknowledge their stories and their culture and instead assumed that the dominant cultures through Industry Advisory bodies would lead the way, set the scene metaphorically speaking, and set the Australian standards. Maybe that is the short version of the VET story but whichever way you look at it, someone keeps drawing the short straw. On one hand we see an increase in participation with ATSI people but on the other we are left with appalling completion rates compared with non-indigenous people. This tells me that they want to enter but for whatever reasons, the VET sector is not providing appropriate strategies to meet their cultural and community needs.

This is where my story begins. My story presents an attempt to reconsider the position of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the VET sector and examine why I think we need to do this.

In 2002 I was lucky enough to gain a Flexible Learning Leader scholarship. My objective was, and still is, to build more collaborative networks to develop more inclusive and flexible practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This scholarship gave me opportunities to meet with people around Australia and discuss strategies that are more reflective of the needs of ATSI people. Whilst

this article is not about 2002, it brings me to where I sit as an educational practitioner in VET in Queensland today. I hope it will present some ideas for you to consider in your practice.

During my travels in 2002 one group in particular made a huge impact on me. These people are currently working from Swinburne Institute. It was there that I was introduced to the Certificate I, II and III in Learning Pathways of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This program was developed in 1999-2000 and formally called 'Coorong Tongala'. Through meeting Sharon Rice, Manager of Regional Learning Networks—Indigenous programs, that I took a major turning point in the way I worked as a literacy teacher. Sharon sat with me for hours and shared a vision embraced not only the education and training as we know it but repositioned it in a way that puts the client forward and creates spaces or builds pathways that are inclusive of culture, history, community and family.

What is so impressive about this program?

This program offers a more holistic, culturally appropriate process and content that still delivers nationally accredited qualifications and makes direct links to the wider community through work placements and community projects. The VET sector has used approaches for Indigenous people that are based on 'integrated models'. That means that in many instances mainstream programs have been made to fit the needs of Indigenous people and their communities whilst overlooking the cultural needs of the group and the community. This program does not compromise Australian standards but it does implement more 'inclusive practices' that invite the wider community to play a role in the pathways for Indigenous learners. It also invites the learner to pick a chair and take the time that is needed to investigate and map out a learning pathway that is right for them.

In Victoria more inclusive practices have been implemented through considerable strategic planning. It has overwhelming support of local Indigenous Communities as expressed through Traditional Owners, local networks and community organisation representatives. Ongoing discussion and planning is undertaken to customise the program through consultation processes that require input of a range of relevant stakeholders.

This has taken many years and a team of dedicated people who have together teased out the training packages, looked at good pedagogical practice, project orientated learning, really focused on the client and at the same time ensured that the right people are consulted with in regard culture and history and support. There are currently many exemplary models

working from Swinburne in conjunction with other organisations and they are well worth looking at.

It is with these learnings in mind and a scene set that I began my journey.

What relevance does this have for Queensland Indigenous peoples?

Since returning from a number of consultations with my VET partners in the southern state of Victoria, a number of events have happened which have lead TAFE Queensland into our own pathway in implementing the "Learning Pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples" program.

From 2000 to midyear 2004 I was the chair for the access and equity and general education strategic product and implementation group. (SPIG) In this role I consulted with the product services unit and we registered the three certificate levels on CAPs (now ISAS). This was the first step to making the program accessible to Institutes across the state. Simultaneously another challenge presented itself. How was I going to share with others what I had learnt from my southern counterparts and see if they were interested in implementing the program in their locations? Over the next year I presented at a number of conferences and forums and explained the value in what the program has on offer. In the meantime, with the help of Charlie Goldsmith (LLN teacher), Daniel Geia (student support officer) and Murray Holm (LLN teacher) and our director, Wendy Lang, we set up the program with a series of sessions seeking community consultation with the Palm Island community. The response was very good and so we then got the program registered and started delivering this year.

Since then other doors opened. After presenting at the state Indigenous coordination meeting at Barrier Reef Institute in 2003 many of the student support officers came up to me and asked how they could be involved in the program. A few months later a whole new change management initiative across regional Queensland, set up a project called, Networked Learning. This opened another door for me. I then invited those who had shown interest in the program concept into a project which I called, Treading New Territories. Whilst the project was about investigating blended, distributed and collaborative models of delivery across Institutes, this gave us the opportunity to put into practice some of the philosophy of the program and consider the implementation of it across the state. "The treading new territories" project is one of 10 of these projects to achieve these new approaches to delivery but it is the only one that is ATSI specific. Our project was called treading new territories

because that is what I thought we needed to do. We needed to learn to appreciate different contexts and communities and consider what that might mean for the learners in a range of locations. In December 2003 we first met with some of the elders on Palm Island. In March we had a lunch with some of the community in Camooweal, 200 kms from Mt Isa. In May we went to Brisbane and through the Open Learning Institute (OLI) we considered the challenges of working with community from a distant education setting. In September we went to Cairns and moderated part of the course and began the MOU for working in partnership and just last week we went to Melbourne to seek council from the original developers/community of the program. We also attend a professional development with representatives from NSW, SA and Victoria. This was part of a Reframing the Future and hosted by Swinburne Institute to build communities of practice with those people who are interested in implementing the program.

As for the readers... it has now put us on good footing to design, implement and get ready for delivery in February next year.

But this is not all!

Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE have funded three projects under their NETlearn community for me to progress from the delivery side. The

NETlearn community has just entered its fourth round of projects to implement more flexible options for its client group across BRIT. In the first project I have developed a quarter of the course online using our ilearn platform. The online component is only one of the 6 key learning areas, called *Where you goin?* In the second and third projects I am currently working on two outcomes. Project two which is called, "Let's pass go" is about getting BRITs student support officers and future indigenous tutors together and working through an implementation plan for February 2004 and modelling community consultation. It is hoped that each campus will set up their own community advocates and learning partners group. (CALP) The CALPs will be representative of people in the community and may be indigenous and non indigenous. The most important aspect of the CALP is that they are formulated to support the learner and help progress the learning pathway for the student. The CALP can also take on roles such as: role models; mentors; coaches; health care support workers or family and friends.

The third project is called, 'TTT'—a teacher-to-tutor template and it is designed to provide pedagogical support to the tutor using a distributed model. For each of the 20 tasks on line the TTT will give the tutor a run down on the task at hand and why the students are doing it, how to cope with the faster and slower learners and how to keep the students on their path.

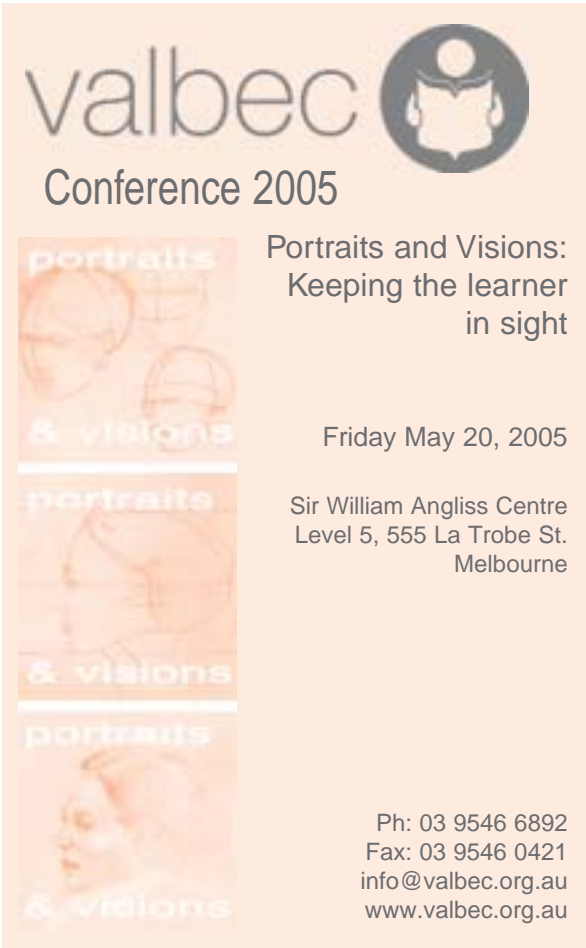
Last October the SPIG hosted a 2-day face-to-face meeting. For every product in Queensland a voluntary working party has been set up. The Learning Pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples will be formulating their working party officially on the 18th of November via video conference. The purpose of this working party will be to provide a supportive network with those people who are either delivering or want to deliver the program. This working party will include both the delivery staff and the services staff in the one working party to ensure the interests and well being of the learners is more holistic in its approach.

If you would like to find out more about the program and how both indigenous and non-indigenous staff can work together please email me— julie.woodlock@det.qld.gov.au


It is also our intention to explore how we can maintain a community of practice across Australia. We are looking at setting up a web site. If you are interested please email Tanya Tankard—ttankard@swin.edu.au

As Rhonda said, *Might be your turn now*

*Julie Woodlock
Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE
Townsville Queensland*



The poster for the Valbec Conference 2005 features a repeating graphic on the left side consisting of the words "portraits & visions" in a stylized font, with a faint image of a person's face in the background. To the right of this graphic, the text reads:

valbec 
Conference 2005

**Portraits and Visions:
Keeping the learner
in sight**

Friday May 20, 2005

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Level 5, 555 La Trobe St.
Melbourne**

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Changing faces of adult literacy, numeracy & ESOL

It was lovely to see a large turn out of members at the first Queensland Council for Adult Literacy (QCAL) Twilight Seminar for 2005 at the new venue of Bardon Professional Development Centre. We all gathered on Monday 7 March to hear Yvonne Hillier (Professor of Post-compulsory Education and Training, City University, London) present the findings from the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) funded project entitled 'Changing faces of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL', or, alternatively, 'How did we get from the lovely smiling face of Bob Hoskins, the affable (il)literate truck driver, to the menacing gremlin adverts for literacy programs today?' Some QCAL members who attended the 2003 ACAL conference in Sydney will recall Professor Mary Hamilton (co-researcher with, Professor Yvonne Hillier and Sam Parsons) outlining the project at its commencement, so it was good to hear about the forces which shaped the study and the key issues which have emerged.

The Changing Faces project involved tracking policy initiatives in England, stemming from the major adult literacy campaign in the 1970s (some of you will recall the BBC *On the Move* series) to the launch of the adult basic skills campaign as part of the National Literacy Strategy in 2000. The 'tracking' of policy included the mapping of 'key policy moments' along a timeline as well as examining the shift in policy discourses, that is how learners, teachers and practitioners are 'framed' at different times. The study aimed to:

- identify the key issues and forces that have driven change in the field
- bring together the perspectives of the main interest groups: policy makers, practitioners and learners
- create an archive of material that can be used by future participants and researchers in the field (currently located at Lancaster University, UK).

Along with an examination of policy documents, the team also conducted a large number of interviews, with key people who influenced the national scene but also, to account for regional variations in policy and practice, key people in each of four regions: North East London, Norfolk, Leicestershire, and Manchester. To gather data from learners, the team tapped into data from a longitudinal study which is following a national cohort of people born in 1958 and approached many of these people for interview.

The timeline allowed four broad phases in the shifting shape and culture of the field to be

identified:

- Mid 1970s: Literacy Campaign led by a coalition of voluntary agencies with a powerful media partner, the BBC.
- 1980s: Provision developed substantially, supported by Local Education Authority (LEA) Adult Education Services and voluntary organisations, with leadership, training and development funding from a national agency (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Agency, later the Basic Skills Agency, BSA).
- 1989–1998: Depletion of LEA funding and control, statutory status of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) through a more formalized further education (FE) system, dependent on national funding.
- 1998–present: Development of Skills for Life policy: New government strategy unit created, strongly controlled by the Cabinet Office. £1.5 billion of government money is committed. Local strategic partnerships allow for collaboration, replacing former competitive nature of funding.

The forces which have driven change during these phases are not peculiar to England. We can all relate to the 'tools' of government regulation, such as changing methods of funding, changing structures of consultation and decision making, legislation, auditing, performance indicators and so on. Changes to national policy initiatives in adjacent areas such as Vocational Education & Training have also had an impact on the field, as have employment; immigration and economic policies and the globalised goals of international agencies, such as the OECD. In addition, some of the tensions which were identified by the project are very familiar to us here. For example,

- Professionalism versus voluntarism
- Nomenclature of the field and its participants: tension around the discourses but deeper ideological debates
- Different groupings in the field of adult continuing education: literacy, numeracy, ESOL; private trainers v college v community-based tutors; voluntary & statutory
- Marketisation v collaboration
- Rights v obligations
- Boundary issues about what counts as LLN.

continued over



Dr Jean Searle and Prof. Yvonne Hillier at the QCAL Twilight Seminar

Towards full functional illiteracy in the UK

In 1973 I published an article describing a new formula for estimating the reading difficulty of reading materials for adults. This formula was used by the British Association of Settlements in its study of adult illiteracy in the United Kingdom, which was published in 1974 in a call for a British Right to Read program. In that report it was stated that there were some 2 million functionally illiterate adults in the UK.

Almost 20 years later, I gave presentations on family literacy and workplace literacy in several locations in the UK in which I described research that colleagues and I had done in these areas of adult literacy education. Shortly after these talks, the Observer of June 6 reported that Baroness Blatch, Minister of State for Education, a close confidante of the Prime Minister, was impressed by what I had to say and the paper then reported that "One in six adults - about six million people - has serious literacy and numeracy problems".

Some seven years later, in 1998, I was contacted to address the Moser Group, the advisory group being chaired by Lord Claus Moser to study the extent of adult literacy problems in the UK. Later, when the report of the Moser Group came out, it was announced that some 7 million adults in the UK were "at risk" because of low literacy skills.

Most recently, in October of 2004 I was invited to give a presentation on adult literacy by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy at the Institute of Education in London. Shortly thereafter, on 15 December 2004, the online Guardian ran an article under Further Education News with the headline: "Four out of five adults 'lack basic skills'". That means that following my last pre-

sentation in the UK the problem of poor adult literacy reached some 80 percent, or about 26 million adults.

In thirty years then, from the first appearance of my work in the UK in 1974, up until 2004, when I made my last visit to speak about adult literacy, adults having literacy problems increased 13 fold from just 2 million in 1974 to 26 million in 2004. Following just three presentations of my work in the UK, adults who suffer from inadequate literacy skills have grown to include 80 percent of the UK adult population according to government figures as reported in the press.

This does leave a challenge though, because 20 percent of adults in the UK, some 6.5 million, have yet to be declared incompetent with respect to their basic skills. To this end, I have been having confidential discussions with some of those educators who engage in adult basic skills provision about the possibility of my having another shot at the problem, with perhaps another visit to the UK early this summer.

With just the right message, it may be possible to get 100 percent of adults declared functionally illiterate. This offers all sorts of possibilities for promising speeches by those seeking political office. And setting targets for government action couldn't be easier.

Tom Sticht
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This article was first published on The Basic Skills Agency (UK) web site—
<http://www.basic-skills.co.uk/>

Changing faces of adult literacy, numeracy & ESOL *(continued for previous page)*

These are currently especially sharp around ICT and around notions of key skills and basic skills

- Embedded versus stand alone provision

This project has been a huge undertaking which has resulted in not only extensive archival material but also volumes of interview transcripts—a gold mine for future researchers. While the final report will soon be submitted to the funding body, what will be of interest to the field are the emerging issues or implications. On the basis of this study, what can we say about literacy learners, their needs and aspirations? What are the policy implications for

implementing programs in different regions with varying demographics? Further, what can we, as members of QCAL, take from this research? Should we be suggesting to ACAL that we lobby for similar research in Australia? Is it time for a new Australian Languages and Literacy Policy? Should we take a 'whole of government' approach to language, literacy and numeracy issues with responsibility being held in the office of Prime Minister and Cabinet? Why not send us your thoughts.

Jean Searle
QCAL

This article first appeared in
QCAL's newsletter *Write On*

The 'Where's the Party at?' Toolbox is aimed at youth (15-19), and provides online materials that explore personal development growth and support the development of reading, writing, numeracy and general skills. The content will also allow learners to also develop online and general computing skills. This particular Toolbox was a finalist in the Australian Interactive Media Industry Association awards held earlier this year. It has experienced strong sales from range of organisations including ACE, private RTOs and TAFEs. Toolboxes are developed for the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, and retail for approximately \$400. Over 80 Toolboxes are now available. Toolboxes currently under development in industry areas not previously covered include: Horse/Greyhound racing, Furniture, Aeroskills, Fitness, Event Management, and Indigenous cultural awareness.

Where's the party at? is a Toolbox that presents a range of youth centred interactive learning activities. The activities are colourful and engaging, and embed the literacy and numeracy in a relevant context. You can view *Where's the party at?* at—<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox/index.htm>



Typically, this learner group has been difficult to engage and keep on task for extended periods of time. Feedback from practitioners in this field shows a preference for short units of work and supporting materials that can be dipped into and customised to suit the interests of the learners. Because of this, the activities in *Where's the party at?* have been designed so that they can be delivered in short snappy blocks.

Unlike many resources for this target group, the learning activities in *Where's the party at?* are, on the whole, quite explicit. They have been designed to ensure that the opportunity to really enhance literacy and numeracy skills is given to this learner group, rather than relying totally on incidental learning simply through exposure to engaging activities.

Key Features

The activities in *Where's the party at?* provide a wide range of reading, writing and numeracy experiences, and include general skills tasks that are based on developing the Mayer competencies (in CGEA, these are GCO competencies). *Where's the party at?* offers support for students who may encounter difficulty with the tasks along the way. The activities and content are customisable enabling the Toolbox to meet the needs of a

broad range of learners.

The topics are particularly significant for the target group. The activities not only develop literacy and numeracy skills, but deal in a realistic way with the 'personal risk-management' issues that these learners can face at this stage of their lives.

The demand for online resources for youth literacy learners is increasing because of the growth of post-compulsory school age learners in non-school environments. Many young learners who attempt prevocational or vocational courses delivered in registered training organisations are found to have gaps in their literacy / numeracy skills.

Providers need to have flexibility in delivering literacy and numeracy training via a range of both online and traditional resources - this applies particularly to situations where providers run dedicated youth literacy programs or where they have a few youth learners in a mixed-age group. The online delivery platform is particularly suited to many of these learners because they have often been immersed in technology through school and leisure activities.

This project is an initiative within the Australian Flexible Learning Framework.



Useful computer resources for adult literacy

Dorothy Waterhouse is a teacher with the NSW Adult Migrant English Service (AMES). Over the years she has worked on a number of projects for NSW AMES that have focused on ways to integrate computer resources with classroom provision of the curriculum. In 2004 Dorothy was a Flexible Learning Leader. In this article Dorothy shares a range of useful resources for adult literacy.

My strength and passion is planning and providing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) professional development for teachers/trainers of NESB, indigenous, and learners with literacy, language and learning needs, including metropolitan, rural and remote learners. I am particularly concerned to make the training relevant and enjoyable for beginner/less confident computer users.

While this group of teachers/trainers have been keen to develop their ICT skills this whole range of clients have been under represented in adoption of e-learning due to: the lack of trained teachers and suitable PD courses, the lack of suitable online student courses and the general emphasis on text based course content and communications, in student online courses. There is currently a general sense of excitement about the possibilities for these students now that voice is a reliable and affordable part of the online environment.

2004 gave me the opportunity to:

discover the existence of and importance of online communities and networks.

research and trial:

- voice tools and current Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) suitable for both training teachers and to support blended delivery for the learner groups identified above
- models of training in online facilitation for teachers and trainers

survey teachers and trainers widely to gauge the skills teachers need, to be able to effectively provide an online component for their courses. This article will touch on each of these and you might find the links of interest.

1 Online networks and communities

My FLL year in 2004 enabled me to move from an early adopter—where I have been a risk taker, reasonably self sufficient but in many ways isolated—to an innovator, through the ability to become a member of broad networks of like-minded individuals. Groups such as:

1.1. The Natvoice project—Michael Coghlan's study into the use of online voice tools

<http://users.chariot.net.au/~michaelc/fll/blog.htm>

A fantastic opportunity to try voice tools, develop the skills to use them and become part of this ongoing community.

1.2. Ace Diamonds—Learnscope teams with members from NSW ACE English, Language, Literacy & Numeracy teaching, across NSW,

<http://www.communityzero.com/acensw>, a project managed by Robyn Jay and facilitated by Vivian Evans who met weekly in a virtual classroom using Compued, www.compued.com.au

We are excited by its potential use with students

1.3. The Australian Flexible Learning Community—a place for vocational education and training practitioners to collaborate and learn about the applications of technology for quality teaching and learning.

<http://www.groups.edna.edu.au/course/view.php?id=40>

2. Voice tools

2.1 Online conferencing and virtual classrooms

Providing distance training using a similar virtual classroom tool to Compued, Elluminate, was a wonderful opportunity to experiment with tools that more closely preserved my skills as a f2f (face-to-face) teacher. This was more satisfying than my earlier experiences as a distance learning teacher, using the telephone and posting tapes and documents. With virtual classrooms I still didn't have to dress up! but the documents could be transferred as we spoke, or the contents loaded to a shared white board for instant correction or collaboration, and isolated students could experience being part of a class instead of one on one using the phone.

2.2 Integration of new technologies

Various technologies can be combined in ways that may not necessarily have been envisaged by their developers, but which nevertheless contribute to teaching and learning.

www.geocities.com/mstrial04

The above link opens an activity designed for beginner English learners. A simple web created using publisher is hosted at Geocities. The web includes: hotpotatoes quizzes, powerpoint, sound, an amp, and a surveymonkey survey. This combines a fairly common web designing program, a free web hosting site, several examples of the use of sound created using a commonly available program, and the free versions of Amplify www.amplify.com and SurveyMonkey www.surveymonkey.com.

<http://amplification.com/~64C4DDA6EABC4F22ADC9C5866F9DB371>

The above link opens an activity designed to practice listening to information for post beginner English learners. It contains: instructions on what to do to complete the activity, live links to

other web sites, a link to a sound file hosted on Geocities created using the free program, Audacity <http://audacity.sourceforge.net> and a worksheet created using surveymonkey.

2.3 Communication tools

www.skype.com

Skype is a program that enables you to talk to up to four people (free version) online anywhere in the world, at the same time. File sharing and typed chat is included. This program seems to work well on dial-up internet connections.

<http://www.horizonwimba.com/>

Wimba (not free) provides some amazing resources that are easy to use and would improve the ability to communicate online with students with limited written English. Teachers were very excited when given the opportunity to try the voice emails and bulletin boards.

2.4 Digital Stories—only the beginning

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/plus/tryit.asp>

If you have Microsoft Windows XP then you can download Photo Story (free). This has been picked up rapidly by teachers and used in some exciting ways. Absolute beginner English learners who also have no computer experience have been able to insert pictures of importance to them and then speak about them, creating a movie file that is small enough to email to family and friends or turn into a PowerPoint. Teachers have created spoken stories for listening practice.

3. Models of training in online facilitation for teachers and trainers

Courses in online facilitating recommended by experienced online facilitators:

- All Things in Moderation (ATIMOD) which is Gilly Salmon's 5 week emoderating course. Enrol at <http://www.atimod.com/>
- Basic computer skills (not so basic!) ICDL 7 modules/tests—managed by The Australian Computer Society <http://www.acs.org.au/icdl/>
- Dip E-learning course Tropical North TAFE, Queensland - contact Leonie Sperry
- eLearning Facilitators' Basic Course (ELF) - 10-week <http://www.elearnaustralia.com.au>
- Gipps TAFE 'The Online Facilitation (Teaching and Communicating Online) course' is a 3 week course. <http://www.gippstafe.vic.edu.au/ilearning/aboutcourse.html>
- Graduate Certificate in Facilitating and Managing eLearning (FAMe) 36 week course. <http://learn.rit.tafensw.edu.au/OnlineConnect/FAMe.htm>
- The Introduction to Teaching Online (ItTO) course NSW TaFE (6 weeks)

None of these courses currently address the issues of blended delivery and low literacy students nor do they include voice tools but still depend heavily on typed chat and forums.

4. Surveys of teachers and trainers

Michael Gwyther and I co-presented at NET*Working 2004 Inclusion and Inspiration, an online conference focused on technology to deliver education. To inform our discussion we ran a national online skills survey that continued throughout the conference.

'Determining future work skills and training needs for online delivery' From here to where? What skills do tomorrow's trainers need.

Prior to 2004 I couldn't have imagined this collaboration. It didn't matter where we were in Australia (never in the same city!) Michael and I were able to meet the deadlines and responsibilities inherent in this type of project using a mixture of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and NW2004 online tools.

The idea for the survey grew from the fact that many trainers are beginning to be faced with the need to provide an online component for their courses. This nationwide survey of 355 participants is a snapshot of where many teachers and trainers see themselves. The survey was confidential and anonymous. Participant's teaching locations: metropolitan - 60%, regional - 33.5% remote - 6.5%

Two of the most interesting results were the responses to questions 15 and 16.

Question 15. Do you see yourself teaching students online as part of your ongoing teaching career?

Yes = 65.9%, No = 5.4%, Maybe = 28.7%

Question 16. What would need to happen to enable you to include teaching online in your range of teaching modes?

Identified barriers included:

- Lack of facilities for teachers and/or students at work and/or at home
- Lack of available courses that include an online component
- Concern over reliability of online environment
- Need to first gain necessary skills
- Concern over access to ongoing support

A few were reluctant.

- I'm not completely convinced that it will ever replace face to face, especially with low motivation students.
- Not keen but would respond to students demands
- Till now there has been some choice about being involved in CALL. If online teaching proves unavoidable, then I will be involved.

Other factors reducing teacher use of ICT

ANTA research (*From Content to Construction*, 2003) that targeted teachers of learners who speak English as a Second Language, found that while teachers were using a number of IT tools, that very few were using these activities

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collaboratively in the classroom. Rather the students were working individually on the computer with little or no interaction with others, either in their physical class or more globally.

The research suggested that most teachers are at the content-driven end of the 'content-driven continuum' rather than using a 'social interaction and collaboration' or 'knowledge construction' approach to using ICTs and therefore they may not necessarily fully understand how a socio-collaborative pedagogy translates into an online environment. I believe this will not change without effective professional development that is project based and models social interaction and collaboration approaches to online activities, including examining voice and other new technologies for their applicability to student needs.

I am currently working with the teachers in our centres who have IT support roles to excite them with the possibilities of online tools, in particular voice. The aim is to move this group towards becoming a network able to support each other as the group provides mentoring and support for our class teachers. The next phase will plan to move teachers towards adopting a social interaction and collaboration approach to online

activities through providing opportunities to experience being an online learner, trying out the tools we will use with our students and working in a supportive group to complete a relevant project. These plans will, I hope, build on several partnership possibilities that will widen the support networks and opportunities for idea exchange for staff, and include TAFE and ACE and the wider VET.

A last word. If you have low literacy students and want to involve them more in online learning keep it blended and experiment with the great voice tools around. Use face-to-face time to get comfortable with the technology and build group dynamics before going online as a class. Then continue to employ your good classroom teaching practices and sound adult learner principles that make you an expert.

Dorothy Waterhouse
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Details of the Flexible Learning Leaders program and Dorothy's professional development year can be found at http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/leaders/fl_leaders/leader_profile.php?key=180