



## Stretching the boundaries—literacy strategy update

Since 2001 ACAL has put a great deal of effort into defining a strategic direction for adult literacy in Australia. Successive ACAL workplans have progressively incorporated the advice provided by the ACAL strategy group which has been responsible for: commissioning a number of pieces of research (one of which is current—see page 4); setting the focus for DEST-sponsored consultative forums; and analysing and consolidating the outcomes of these consultations with stakeholders.

ACAL's vision for future policy and provision in Australia is that literacy will become 'life-wide'. This is a new term appearing increasingly in the life-long learning literature and adopted by ACAL to describe a situation that locates issues of cross-sectoral involvement at the centre of any literacy policy (ie, housing, physical and mental health, community participation, finance, welfare, justice).

This concept for a new national literacy policy acknowledges the success of the current policy that integrates literacy provision with labour market and employment outcomes. It proposes to replicate this success by advocating the integration of literacy policy and provision with other agencies that enact a wide range of social policies and working with them.

This is a bold step; however, it does align with existing concerns of Governments that service provision could be more effective if there was greater collaboration between governments and between public and non-public sector agencies. The goal of 'joined-up' government is a current priority for service provision to Indigenous peoples and communities, and there appears to be genuine political interest in dismantling the 'silo' approach to service delivery. This political reality presents an

opportunity for ACAL whose focus is now firmly on the development of partnerships beyond just those in the educational and vocational training sector. ACAL's mission is to engender understanding about literacy by more agencies, and to develop collaborations to increase opportunities for adults to learn and apply literacy skills.

In order to clarify this goal, the ACAL Executive undertook a range of research activities and consultative processes including forums in Launceston (2003, Beyond training: locating literacy in social policy); Sydney (2004, Responding to Diversity: building literate and numerate communities), and in Alice Springs, (2003, Indigenous ways of knowing). These activities contributed to ACAL's understanding of the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships in building community capacity.

Behind the scenes, ACAL commissioned a number of papers to develop a clearer set of messages about what needs to be done. These papers can be found on the ACAL web site [www.acal.edu.au/publications\\_papers.shtml](http://www.acal.edu.au/publications_papers.shtml) and include: A Literate Australia, a national position paper, ACAL 2001; Where is the research up to? Carolyn Williams 2003; ACAL

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Strategy Development Project Report, Jane Figgis 2004; and the current project Adult literacy and numeracy: approaches to exploring the social and economic costs and benefits across sectors (see page 4 this issue).

In addition, in August 2004, a think-tank was convened and attended by Dr Geoff Bates, of the Birmingham Core Skills Development partnership, UK; Jane Figgis, education author; Prof. Rod McDonald, former advisor to the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and a professor of adult education; and a small group of key players in language, literacy and numeracy fields. This think-tank wrestled with the challenge of how to go beyond the rhetoric of collaboration and actually put it into practice. The outcomes of this meeting were considered at the ACAL Forum held the next day where Rod McDonald used the opportunity to critically examine a framework to articulate and inform a strategic direction for ACAL.

#### ACAL's position

The ACAL Executive is finalising its strategy for 2005-6 and the proposed action plan will shortly be available for comment on the ACAL web site. The strategy proposes objectives and roles for other public sector agencies with an interest in fostering the adult literacy agenda.

Underpinning all of this thinking and planning is a commitment to the concept of literacy as social practice: this means that teachers of literacy see their students as users of language as well as learners of language. This concept implies that literacy skills are most effectively learnt in contexts and for purposes that have real meaning and relevance to the lives that adults lead; work is just one of these contexts. There are others, but as yet, there is no secure means for developing literacy skills in settings beyond formal (now usually vocational) educational institutions.

ACAL Executive

## Course fees in Victoria become too expensive

In October 2004 the Victorian Government issued a ministerial statement which indicated that further education students who were in receipt of particular concession cards only would be eligible for the minimum tuition fee of \$51. All other students would be expected to pay the \$1.28 Student Contact Hours (SCH) rate, capped at \$819. While many students would meet the criteria that would enable them to pay minimum tuition fees, this would not be the case for all. The new policy would put significant groups of students at a disadvantage and with this in mind VALBEC conducted a state-wide survey targeting students in ALBE, ESL and General Education courses in Victoria.

The survey asked students where they were studying and for how many hours, whether they held one of the concession cards named in the ministerial statement and, if not, could they afford to pay the \$1.28 per SCH. The survey also asked them what they would do this year if they could not afford to re-enrol in their course in 2005. VALBEC received over 1100 responses from six TAFE institutes and nine ACE providers in the survey. The results indicated overall that 34% of students who responded and were enrolled in courses in 2004 did not hold one of the above cards. Of these students, 91% indicated that they could not afford to pay the \$1.28 per SCH. Of particular concern to VALBEC is the number of students who could not afford the fees and indicated that they would probably drop out of the system.

It is too early in the semester yet to see what effect this policy change has had; however, VALBEC is planning to follow up in 2005 and examine the impact of this policy on provision across Victoria.

For further information contact VALBEC  
email: [info@valbec.org.au](mailto:info@valbec.org.au)

**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](http://www.acal.edu.au)

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#### Disclaimer

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## 2005 annual conference

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

Sunday 3 July—Thursday 7 July

Australian Catholic University  
Melbourne, Victoria AUSTRALIA

This year's conference is hosted by ACAL jointly with Adults Learning Mathematics (ALM) and in cooperation with the Australasian Bridging Mathematics Network (BMN)

#### Three conferences in one

As well as papers, workshops and round-tables, the full four-day (Monday to Thursday) conference program will include plenaries, focus speakers, a maths activities smorgasbord, a conference dinner, and, on the final day, an international focus on policy and the politics of the adult numeracy and mathematics field.

The first two days will include a particular focus on issues relating to both the adult numeracy and literacy and language field, and will offer a series of practical interactive workshops as well as plenaries and research papers related to the literacy, language and numeracy interface. Papers and workshops relevant to all three groups (ALM, ACAL and the BMN) will run throughout the whole conference.

#### The venue

The conference will run from Sunday evening until Thursday afternoon. Most sessions will take place at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in Melbourne. The University is located close to the city centre, with easy access to accommodation, transport and restaurants.

#### Call for papers

Teachers, researchers, writers, managers, policy makers and analysts working in the fields of adult numeracy and mathematics are invited to submit proposals for presenting at the conference.

#### Conference themes

Sessions should address the following themes:

- Language and literacy interfaces
- Numeracy teaching, learning and assessment practices
- Numeracy in, and for, the workplace
- Issues in Indigenous numeracy
- Mathematics learning: parents and the community
- Financial numeracy
- Vocational numeracy and applied learning
- New technologies and numeracy
- Politics and social justice issues of mathematics and numeracy education
- Bridging mathematics
- Teacher education and professional development.

#### Deadline

All submissions are to be received by 18 March, 2005.

Further information and application forms at—  
[www.acal.edu.au](http://www.acal.edu.au)

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## Building family literacy in Tasmanian libraries

An exciting innovation in Tasmania this year is 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.

Initially the program will deliver awareness raising sessions for library staff. These sessions will cover:

- issues surrounding adults with low level literacy skills;
- a range of reading and pre-reading activities which parents or carers and children can include in their daily lives;
- introduction to a resource collection which will be purchased and located in each of the participating libraries; and
- strategies which can be used by library and Online Access Centre Staff and family

literacy volunteers to support adults using the collection.

Once this phase of the project has been completed the participating state libraries will commence regular weekly family literacy sessions for parents, grandparents or carers and children where they can bring their pre-school-age children along to hear stories, sing songs and engage in a wide range of enjoyable pre-reading activities.

The ALBE program will also be delivering nationally accredited Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Training sessions for people in each of the participating communities who are interested in becoming adult literacy volunteers for the Library and Online Access centre. These volunteers will then be available to support parents, grandparents or carers involved in the family literacy sessions who require support to further develop their own literacy skills.

## Researching the costs and benefits of adult literacy

ACAL has received funding from NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) to undertake a research project in 2005. The research will explore whether and how we can obtain more reliable and useful estimates of the economic and social costs of poor adult literacy and numeracy, and the benefits of improving literacy.

It is clear that literacy is a community issue as well as an educational issue, a matter for communities and non-government organisations and groups, as well as for governments and policy makers. A better and more broadly based understanding of the importance of literacy could lead to a broader alliance of advocates for the development of adult literacy.

The research questions are:

- What effective means of measuring costs and benefits are available in life domains such as health, finance and small business, families, and community involvement?
- What frameworks are available for examining the importance of literacy and numeracy skills for individuals and across areas of social, economic and community life?
- What possibilities exist in the short and longer term for establishing a framework for ongoing monitoring and analysis of costs and benefits in relation to literacy and numeracy?
- What existing information is available for modelling and assessing economic and social costs and benefits, and what new data might need to be collected?

The first stage of the research involves a literature review of approaches to identifying and measuring benefits and costs, and consultations with people working in various sectors such as health, and family and financial literacy. An interim report of stage 1 will be completed before the project is developed further.

For more information contact  
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## Hotline takes its 100,000th call

On Thursday 3 February the following call came through to the Reading Writing Hotline—My best friend's husband is 41 and works for a telecommunications company. He's just been promoted (but) when somebody discovers how badly he writes and spells, he'll be publicly humiliated or given the sack.

Over the past 11 years, many similar scenarios have been related by callers to the adult

literacy teachers who answer the telephones at the Hotline. This particular caller made history by being the 100,000th person to call.

The Hotline is funded by DEST and managed by the TAFE NSW Access and General Education Curriculum Centre since 1994 to provide callers from anywhere in Australia with advice and referrals to adult literacy courses.

If there was such a thing as a typical caller to the Hotline, such a person would be male, aged 35-54, from an English-speaking background, left school before Year 10, is employed and wishes to improve his skills for employment-related reasons. Nonetheless, the diversity of callers is enormous and a growing group of callers to the Hotline is employers. Most calls to the Hotline result in the caller being given a referral to one or more of the 1200 adult literacy course providers listed on the Hotline database.

Reading Writing Hotline  
ph 1300 6555 06  
or visit [www.literacyline.edu.au](http://www.literacyline.edu.au)

## What's happening with the NRS?

In 2003, DEST commissioned the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) through the Adult Literacy National Project to carry out research into the current and future uses for the National Reporting System (NRS).

The NRS Future Directions project was a scoping exercise intended to initiate consideration of possible future applications of the NRS. The NRS was originally designed and implemented, with the support of the States and Territories, as a reporting tool for the Commonwealth-funded language and literacy programs. The report from the scoping project, 'Reframe, Rename, Revitalise: Future Directions for the National Reporting System', will be available in March from the NCVER web site. Its author is Kate Perkins.

In the meantime, DEST has initiated a project to implement some of the recommendations of the report and to conduct a review of the NRS. The first stage of the new project is to conduct consultations with key stakeholders in the States and Territories to validate the recommendations of the Perkins report. Stage 1 also includes a brief to revise the NRS framework. Subsequent stages are planned that will include trialling a revised NRS framework and the development of additional support resources.

Further information and a chance to comment will be available on the ACAL web site as the new project develops and the first report is available for comment.

## Letters to the editor—

### The passing of ARIS

It is with considerable interest and some sadness that I note the passing of ARIS (the Adult (Literacy and Basic) Education Resource and Information Service). It means practitioners no longer have information services with the capacity to help.

At this stage, the Council for Adult Education (CAE) will continue to make available the on-line databases and teaching and professional support web sites (CGEA, SciWeb, Learn2Learn). There are also a number of useful web sites sponsored by DEST (literacy-net, NRS, LLNP) and ANTA (Online literacy and numeracy resource centre, equity tool boxes). However, on-line resources cannot replace personal communication, the capacity to explore teaching and learning issues, and the development of networks through regular publications such as the Monthly Memo and the ARIS Bulletin.

As the former State Coordinator for the CGEA in WA, I found ARIS a focal point for literacy teachers across Australia. I express my appreciation to the ARIS team for their assistance through the years. I am sure that all educators wish them well in their new endeavours.

Jim Thompson  
Immediate Past-President ACAL

### Partnerships and 'In' words

'Partnership' might be the latest 'in' word but the teachers of Birmingham seem to have made inroads using it ('Birmingham's aspiration to become a 'learning city' has lessons for Australia' Literacy Link, October 2004).

I think we need to take a trip to Birmingham and copy their lesson plans. But what I want to know is how did they:

- establish and maintain Partnerships between major training bodies, learning centres, schools and community centres without dissensions over money and ideology;
- redefine a budget set for 'area based regeneration' as being 'applicable to the regeneration of people' without being penalised in the next funding round;
- mention money 'only in passing'?

Perhaps the absolute importance of being able to put it in words is a given in Birmingham. Not so in Australia. Birmingham provides a model our government ought to look very closely at.

Jacinta Agostinelli

### Accepting Aboriginal English

I was impressed by the in-depth article included in the last issue of Literacy Link. 'Accepting

Aboriginal English—the ABC of two-way literacy and learning' was particularly exciting. I wrote an article (back in 1995 I think) about how enlightening I found my brief exposure to the FELIKS program (Fostering English Language in Kimberley Schools). It is great to see how far the concept of acknowledging a student's first dialect has developed since then. We as an adult literacy field need a better grasp of linguistics and what better way to learn than in the context of Indigenous education in our local areas, where we have the opportunity to mesh theory with practice.

Can we have a continued development of this topic? ie, articles on practical strategies that create the space for Indigenous educators, Indigenous students and other educators to recognise students' existing language skills as the foundation for literacy and language development and a discussion of the theories that underpin recent work in this field. Perhaps we could have a debate on the topic in the pages of Literacy Link? I am sure there are readers able to present the counter-views that have prevailed in education systems for generations: ie, it is inequitable to give recognition, however slight, to dialects of English that are not the standard form 'educated' people use; that there is really only one correct form of English and only the lazy or the unintelligent will fail to master it; maybe even the total refusal to accept that there is a distinct dialect of English used by Indigenous people in urban, rural and remote locations in modern Australia. There will also no doubt be a range of views about how far bi-dialectal education should and can go. One end of the scale is the acceptance that teachers need to understand some of the grammatical features of Aboriginal English so they can teach Standard English better. The other end is the belief that literacy in the students' home dialect is a worthwhile goal, quite separate from their achievement of high levels of literacy in Standard Australian English. We could all learn from debating the issues in an open forum.

For those of you who didn't find time to read the article, put it at the top of your must read pile. This is not just about Indigenous education, important as that should be to all adult educators. The concepts of two-way learning should be the cornerstone of all adult literacy teaching: unless teachers learn about each students' language usage and the way literacy and language is affected by their social and cultural worlds, students will continue to perform well below their potential. I personally will have the opportunity to learn more about the practicalities of two-way learning this year. I hope that Literacy Link readers get that chance too.

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*Letters*

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Literacy is highly pertinent to current policy interest in broader themes such as lifelong learning, financial and consumer literacy, ageing and welfare reform). It is helpful to consider the congruence of these themes with ACAL's vision of future directions for literacy policy in Australia.

This issue of Literacy Link focuses, albeit briefly and selectively, on five significant papers published in 2004: the reports of two commissioned NCVER projects—Lonsdale and McCurry's comprehensive exploration of Literacy in the New Millennium and McKenna and Fitzpatrick's substantial review of international adult literacy policy and practice—and three discussion papers commissioned by DEST (Balzary, Beddie, Wickert).

The major thrust of ACAL's advice about future policy directions for the field is that Australia should not only strengthen its integrated approach to language and literacy in vocational education and training, but should also actively work to extend the notion of 'built-in' approaches into other areas of social activity. With this in mind, we have asked the following questions of each of the five documents under consideration here:

- What is its approach to integration?
- What does it say about partnerships?
- What approach to literacy is advocated?
- What major challenges raised in the reports are of relevance to ACAL's current advice about future directions?

• **Building sustainable adult literacy provision: A review of international trends in adult literacy policy and programs** by Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, NCVER 2004

This paper is published in two parts. The first part (hereafter referred to as the summary report) is an abridged version of an extensive study, undertaken in 2003, of adult literacy and basic education policy and practices in Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the USA, the UK and Australia. The second part, the full detailed original report, is available on the NCVER web site as a support document—[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1515.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1515.html). The two documents are based largely on a desktop audit of the available international literature and online information, although experts from each country provided additional valuable material to the researchers. The reference list alone is a remarkable resource. Taken together, the summary and support reports provide an impressively comprehensive picture of current adult literacy and basic education in the selected countries, as well as enough information to get some historical sense of how policy and provision has developed.

The five countries were chosen for two main reasons; they face similar economic, demographic and social challenges and they participated in the OECD/Statistics Canada's

International Adult Literacy Surveys in the 1990s (IALS). Of particular interest to the researchers are the varying ways in which the countries studied responded, in relation to adults with literacy and numeracy learning needs, to the results of the IALS and to the socio-economic pressures. Although there are differing national governance systems across the countries researched, which have differing effects on policy and practice, most countries are undergoing increasing levels of national intervention, support, strategy and accountability. The reports outline, in differing degrees of detail, these formal policy responses as well as areas of tension and debate across the countries, such as understandings of literacy, approaches to pedagogy and assessment, appropriate curriculum frameworks, and current capabilities of teachers and tutors—all debates familiar to Australian readers.

The information in the support document is reported, largely, according to each country. The summary report (50 pp) presents comparative information organised around four key features of effective adult literacy policy, which then also provide the organising framework for drawing out implications for Australia. The four features are: policy contexts and concepts; program development and delivery; regulatory frameworks, product development and quality assurance; and the teaching workforce.

## Approach to integration

McKenna and Fitzpatrick support the integrated approach to LLN and its further application although there are some cautions about this (more on this later). The dominant approach to integration in Australia is the integration of literacy and basic education needs with broader occupation standards in industry training packages and thus with national VET qualifications and quality frameworks. Australia is a world leader in the systematic application of this approach to integration, although all other countries studied are moving in this direction. However, unlike some other countries, Australia has yet to expand the integrated model beyond worker training to other activity in social policy. Ireland, for example, is actively building literacy awareness into the training of corrections, health and childcare workers as part of a broader strategy of integrating literacy and numeracy development with health and childcare service delivery; the Basic Skills Strategy Unit in England is working in partnership with the Financial Services Authority to build financial literacy skills; the inter-generational aspect of literacy is well understood in Canada, the UK and the USA and much is happening in these countries regarding family learning and literacy.

In most of these examples, the LLN initiatives are part of broader national development strategies and linked into national plans. In Australia, with the exception of some Training Packages (such as Community Services) where literacy development is being strategically written into the training of particular 'front-line' occupational groups, there are few examples of literacy and numeracy work embedded in other social policy areas, and what exists is reported to be scattered, ad hoc and unconnected with any coordinating national strategy.

There are a fair number of references in the reports about the need for better integration of the various offerings within the field itself; ie, the need for a more nationally integrated system of LLN provision. There are concerns about the plethora of 'stand-alone' courses, accredited and non-accredited, that 'sit to the side of' the formal VET system, are not well understood nationally, and are unconnected either to industry related qualifications or to recognised generic skills. This issue of 'unconnectedness' to coordinated formal accrediting and quality assurance systems is one of the cautions that apply to extending the notion of integration beyond VET.

Although the educational arguments for embedding learning in 'context' are sound and supported, the authors caution that the more embedded in context and thus disconnected from available 'systems' these approaches

become, the greater the challenge for educator accountability and the greater the need to revise the scope and delivery of teacher professional training to meet changing approaches to delivery and conceptualisations of literacy. Even within the VET system, argue McKenna and Fitzpatrick, too little is known about the effectiveness of integrated approach in VET and the relationship between levels of qualification and literacy and numeracy skills.

In addition to the challenges of how to account for the impact of integrated provision unconnected to the VET system, there are important issues concerning a lack of detailed information about population needs that could drive the development of a more coherent strategy. Other countries have made greater use of IALS data in their needs analysis and planning activities. Research recently undertaken on behalf of ACAL has confirmed the need for much greater clarity about what LLN can offer in terms of partnership and integration before knocking on the doors of other sectors (Figgis 2004).

## Partnerships

The support report provides many examples from other countries of different kinds of partnerships between education and other parts of government, community and business. Reference is made, for example, to the importance of the 'whole-of-government' approach in the UK in building partnerships, and to the commitment to cross-cultural partnerships in New Zealand.

In Australia, the latest VET strategy aims to promote partnerships, but the writers consider that the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program is really the only current example of active support of partnerships through incentive funding. A broader range of partnerships beyond VET is suggested, along with more flexible funding models to encourage them, research and development to inform them, and innovative grants to facilitate cooperation, support pilot projects and help embed successful approaches. A revised, updated National Reporting System (NRS), the authors argue, can provide a reporting framework capable of accommodating diversity, accounting for new approaches to literacy and generic skills and describing such skills in ascending levels up to, and even beyond, a Certificate IV.

## What approach to literacy is advocated?

'Situated' or 'contextualised' provision of LLN not only focuses attention on the choice of approaches to motivate and engage adult learners but also on delivery strategies and conceptualisations of literacy and numeracy.

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- **Literacy in the new millennium**, by Michele Lonsdale and Doug McCurry, NCVET 2004

This paper details the different and contradictory ways in which literacy is, and has been, conceptualised. Lonsdale and McCurry conclude 'literacy has no single or universal definition and its meaning has changed over time from an elementary 'decoding' of written information to a range of more complex and diverse skills and understandings' (p.5). A large part of the paper is devoted to tracing what the authors see as a paradigmatic shift in the way literacy is perceived.

They give clear detail of the way in which changing conceptions of literacy need to be understood against a background of profound change—economic, political and social. Such changes include developments in technology and information, those brought about as a result of increased globalisation, changes in work, in cultural perspectives, in teaching and learning practices and in modes of delivery.

The strength of the work done by Lonsdale and McCurry is the way it contextualises the manner in which the conceptualisation of literacy has changed over time. This is not just an intellectual exercise, as they make clear that how literacy is perceived affects 'the kinds of policies developed and the teaching/learning practices adopted' (p5). Interestingly, though, while literacy is now predominantly accepted as situated social practice there remains some dis-

junction between definition and practice.

While the authors clearly endorse a view of literacy as situated social practice they highlight the ongoing contradictory tension (as detailed in Baynham 2000) between literacy being perceived as generic transferable skills and literacy as social and cultural practice. They point to other tensions and disjunctions '(h)ow literacy is understood by theorists engaged in academic discourse, for example, may be quite different from how employers, information communication technology experts, teachers, government policy makers, Indigenous leaders, adult learners in a small rural setting, or students in a suburban high school' understand literacy.

How literacy is understood, they stress, has important implications for 'which aspects of literacy are favoured and supported, which research is funded, how literacy is measured and valued and the teaching and learning approaches adopted'. Further implications that they highlight are the need for:

- a review of the emphasis on training and employability outcomes in current national literacy frameworks
- a shift in emphasis in policy and practice from the current dominance of print based literacies
- new flexible national policy that recognises the changes outlined above and accommodates current and future literacies
- greater integration between federal and state

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McKenna and Fitzpatrick found it hard to provide an overview of conceptualisations across countries because of varied and inconsistent treatments of literacy and numeracy in policy, finding a tendency to favour measurable indicators of basic skills. All countries were reported to already have, or be in the process of developing, reporting or curriculum frameworks, with some more concerned with standardisation of outcomes (USA, England) than others (Canada, Ireland, New Zealand). In the USA, the pressure for standardised outcomes has intensified since the publication of this report, with a two-thirds cut in federal funding proposed for 2006 because of a supposed inability of adult education to show adequate performance against national evidence-based evaluation requirements (see the US National Literacy Advocacy list FY06 budget discussion, Feb 2006, aaace-nla@lists.literacytent.org). There are major and intensifying contradictions in some countries between expert recognition of the necessity for 'new basics' and the conservative 'back to basics' pressures of central funding agencies.

Although the importance of new literacies, such as effective use of technology, effective communication and problem solving were identified as critical, print-based concepts of literacy remain the focus of many countries. McKenna and Fitzpatrick found useful Lankshear's distinction between lingering basics, new basics and elite literacies in providing a language for talking about these different policy treatments (cited in Lonsdale and McCurry 2004), not only in relation to provision, but also regarding the tension between the demands that new conceptualisations of literacy are making on the skills base of literacy educators and the reduction of opportunities available for building the capability of the workforce to acquire these teaching skills.

In summary

McKenna and Fitzpatrick support a strengthening as well as a broadening of Australia's approach to integration and they advocate the promotion and support of partnerships with other government and with non-government sectors. A number of suggestions about how to do this are made in both reports and come

- and territory level approaches
- policies to support community capacity building, not just individual skilling
- valuing the full range of literacies possessed by learners.

Lonsdale and McCurry pose three major questions:

- How can broad views of literacy be enacted and implemented?
- How can the new literacies be accommodated in policy and teaching/learning practices?
- How can they be assessed?

These three questions accord with those that the ACAL strategy group have been thinking through. A view of literacy as situated social practice is congruent with an orientation towards literacy approaches that are cross-sectoral and integrated. While Lonsdale and McCurry indicate the need for this integration to occur, detailing ways this could occur successfully to deliver literacy benefits to individuals, communities and organisations is beyond the scope of their paper. However, the paper points to the way this endeavour needs to be approached with its call for changes in policy and practice that align with the definitional shift they articulate.

This work would, as Figgis' conclusions in her 2004 report to ACAL make clear, involve the hard 'pavement pounding' work of building partnerships. Again, the Lonsdale and McCurry paper doesn't give us any specific suggestions

for how this work can be started and/or sustained. They do, however, stress that a new national policy is necessary to align new understandings about literacy with broad integrated practice that reflects multiple methods of teaching literacy. ACAL agrees that all areas of social policy need to embed an understanding of literacy as an integrated part of the whole of life.

Lonsdale and McCurry draw the conclusion that learners should be able to make sense of the world and develop their own perspectives (p.41). This aligns with ACAL's work to promote understandings that literacy development is a whole of life/whole of government policy challenge. There is much work to be done in this endeavour and ACAL is confident that the direction we are taking addresses this important challenge of integrating literacy into the whole of life of adults. We support Lonsdale and McCurry's call for a new flexible national policy and remain committed to working with government to achieve a viable whole of life/whole of government approach.

Pauline O'Maley  
ACAL strategy group



together in a proposed framework for action. The feasibility of the recommendations depend on the will to cooperate across state, territory and federal jurisdictions and the capacity to innovate, to deliver and to sustain change.

Central to the proposed framework for action are the importance of better information; national leadership to create forums for fresh dialogue and develop 'refreshed', manageable, policy; diversity and flexibility in provision; nationally coordinated action plans; consistent regulatory and reporting frameworks linked to new funding models; greater incentives for partnership arrangements and building the capacity of the teaching workforce.

#### Challenges raised in the report

There are many important challenges raised in the report, some of which have been referred to above. Some of the recommendations will generate controversy within the LLN field - but it is nigh time for such debate to occur so that it can better inform future decision-making. In summary, the key challenges concern the impact of federalism on achieving national con-

sistency; the need for a better alignment of the VET system with general education to enable greater flexibility for adults to devise appropriate learning pathways; a national reporting system that supports flexibility but enables consistency; achieving effective models of situated learning; how best to design the training of workers in other occupations as well as upskilling VET trainers and adult literacy and numeracy educators.

Although many of the building blocks for the future are in place, the findings of this report are that major changes, structurally and culturally, are needed to achieve a system that can support greater integration and deliver greater accountability and impact. Above all, such change requires political champions and the resources and implementation structures to accommodate state and territory interests and take literacy and numeracy beyond boundary maintenance, beyond VET, beyond lingering basics and into other areas of social policy.

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• **Everybody's responsibility: towards meeting the adult language, literacy and numeracy needs of a modern Australia**

by Rosie Wickert, University of Technology Sydney (DEST 2004)

This paper proposes a comprehensive connected approach to the work required to build Australia's literacy and numeracy capability. The paper encourages state, territory and national governments to develop a nationally coherent and non-partisan commitment to address the individual, social and economic consequences for over 2.5 million Australians with poor literacy and numeracy.

This commitment would recognise the diversity of people with learning needs and the barriers they face due to social exclusion, work exclusion, age, and the changing literacy and numeracy demands of life and work. It would be based on research evidence; and demonstrated by the development of a national over-arching plan linking initiatives from national strategies for the VET sector, and areas such as health, employment, welfare and community development. The more collaborative approach would require coordination beyond education and training and perhaps be situated under a national agency such as the Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Partnerships produced under this plan would require agencies to work together to identify needs and implement plans for cross-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration. Flexibility would need to be built into funding mechanisms so that activity isn't tied to short term, one-off opportunities that have been so prevalent in adult literacy and numeracy programs to date. Long term partnerships would need to be encouraged between major education and training providers, and industry and community groups. Such partnerships should facilitate learning pathways for adults in education, work and community life.

Underlying principles of a national strategy and action plan for adult language, literacy and numeracy include accountability so that no learning is wasted or not recognised, availability of expertise in a range of modes, assurance of quality, and developing the capacity to work together to create more effective strategies, programs and solutions.

Current definitions of literacy and numeracy encompass more than knowing how to read, write and calculate. They include the ability to understand and use multiple forms of print and digital text in daily activities at home, work or in the community. Employability and life skills incorporate literacy and numeracy as key components but go far beyond that. To assist

learners in developing these skills in a collaborative, cross-sectoral environment may require a model of literacy workers who are no longer located solely in educational providers or industry based programs. This new model, together with working in completely different ways in new environments, requires a significant national professional development strategy for adult literacy and numeracy workers. The strategy would need to be attached, with appropriate resources, to the proposed national action plan for adult language, literacy and numeracy. There are also significant implications for teacher training with this model.

In 2004, ACAL through a process of consultation and research proposed the national approach to adult literacy and numeracy which is consistent with many aspects of 'Everybody's responsibility'. The ACAL strategic directions proposed more effective collaboration across sectors, greater connectedness with communities and responsiveness to needs of individuals. This could only be achieved through the expansion and reworking of the notion of what counts as successful adult literacy and numeracy provision and a more expansive, yet managed, response to individual needs. The way we talk needs to be shifted away from teaching, to literacy working as a community resource that works alongside others in many and varied ways. A broader funding base is one of the bigger challenges which must be met if these directions are to be achieved.

ACAL needs to actively pursue its intention of assuring the quality of adult literacy and numeracy education, and to support the further development of a national strategy and action plan for literacy and numeracy. 'Everybody's Responsibility' recognises the accumulated knowledge and good practice in Australia and overseas and suggests a comprehensive model of collaboration, integration and action to meet the increasing needs of a diverse Australian society and economy.

• **Community Literacy**

by Francesca Beddie, DEST 2004

The purpose of Francesca Beddie's discussion paper, 'Community Literacy' is to 'stimulate thinking about how Australia will meet the future language, literacy and numeracy needs of its communities.' She encourages and suggests a range of ways in which the government could move forward. Much of her paper is in strong agreement with ACAL's strategic direction of encouraging more effective collaboration across the sectors and greater connectedness with communities.

The paper focuses on supporting community literacy programs, which have a people-centred

approach, shared responsibility and are based on taking advantage of community learning opportunities. A practical and pro-active position is taken in the paper, raising the questions of what needs to happen to ensure that the diverse literacy and numeracy needs of communities are met. Beddie also examines the critical success factors underpinning effective programs, and looks to see how we can use best practice examples and the accumulated knowledge of the field.

Beddie argues effectively that the integration of literacy into community settings, such as schools, health centres, libraries, museums and homes will not only result in increased adult literacy levels, but also demonstrate multiple benefits to the community, as well as opening new pathways for employment and training. Her views are based strongly on a model of community capacity building, where shared relationships and partnerships can extend literacy from individual skills to contributing to sustainable communities.

Beddie suggests that new approaches to partnerships should be considered, in which the regulatory environment still insists on the highest possible quality but with a delivery model that extends beyond standard registered training organisations. Beddie highlights a number of communities in which low levels of literacy are a significant barrier to personal achievement (eg, disengaged youth, prisoners, migrants) suggesting that a structured literacy class is not always the answer. Beddie argues that government could harness the potential in local institutions, government and business to meet people where they are located—in the market place as it were. Moving beyond the classroom, she also suggests we look at other facilitators of learning—family, doctors, nurses, coaches and colleagues. Co-operation with community based mentors could open doors to literacy learning that may otherwise remain closed.

This approach supports ACAL's position of providing greater responsiveness to the needs of the individual. In this argument for integrating literacy links into the community, and building partnerships with a range of organisations and mentors, Beddie argues that the most appropriate entry point for learners may be a more flexible and less orthodox one. In this she supports and sustains the approach endorsed by ACAL, that literacy must be 'built in, not bolted on'. In her arguments she clearly approaches literacy as a whole-of-life, holistic and dynamic concept, which is again, the approach strongly endorsed by ACAL.

Beddie's article moves beyond conceptualising

to considering the nitty-gritty of making it work. She acknowledges that a key strategy must be to raise awareness to gain widespread acceptance of the multi-faceted nature of contemporary literacy and the often hidden needs of learners. Her notion of the necessity to enable communities to first identify the barriers people may have to learning is a very valuable and achievable approach. Beddie acknowledges that it is often an act of bravery to admit to literacy problems. She recommends that locating and supporting local champions can be an effective strategy. If we consider the ways in which a range of health issues has been approached in this way, one can imagine a very powerful campaign.

Beddie does not shirk from the ever-present issue of funding in considering the challenges that such an integrated and collaborative approach could face. She argues that funds do currently exist in a range of community grants, private funding and public coffers. Beddie argues that the challenge to government is to introduce sufficient flexibility for these funds to be learner focused. In this, Beddie calls for the need for 'providers, in whatever field they operate, to abandon their rivalries and work together on a people-centred approach to meeting community need'. Beddie goes on to cite a number of examples of programs, ideas and solutions to achieving this goal. Depressingly, many of these ideas and approaches are long gone, victims of funding cuts and restructuring. As one reads, there is a temptation to say, 'yes, yes, but we've done that!' having found that it has gone up in smoke.

Perhaps Beddie's most valuable suggestions to fight the accelerating disappearance of wonderful professional development and programs are her recommendation of establishing a National Literacy Secretariat. As ANTA disappears there may be the opportunity for 'a new model which encourages better liaison and co-operation and communication between governments, private and public providers, industry, community services and learners'. Australia has had similar models on a smaller scale and they work. There would be merit in taking up Beddie's suggestion to invest in this kind of infrastructure and it is in line with ACAL's position.

The need for a national policy framework is also clear, to make the needed links between government and to create strong, co-operative networks on the ground. Beddie's recommendations and approaches are sound, positive and achievable. She has taken a no-nonsense, practical approach to the pressing need to address the issue of literacy in the 21st century, based in people as the common denominator of progress.

• **Back to the New Basics for Business—the importance of literacy and numeracy skills**

by Steve Balzary, DEST 2004

Balzary begins his paper by building his case for a highly literate and numerate workforce and population, noting the benefits to employers and the economy generally. He proceeds by informing the reader that employers expect schools, VET and higher education to ensure that those leaving education will have literacy and numeracy skills appropriate to the level of education they have achieved. He expresses the concern of employers that a growing number of job applicants lack the literacy and numeracy skills required for the jobs they have applied for and that this may be due to falling skill levels.

In relation to the existing workforce, Balzary notes challenges arising from the ageing Australian population and workforce. Mature aged people are less likely to hold post-compulsory qualifications or to undertake training and are more likely to have low literacy and numeracy skills. While mature aged workers are being encouraged to stay at work for longer they may not have the required skills and may need to retrain.

In addition, 25 per cent of new entrants to the labour market are from overseas and for many English is not their first language. Inadequate literacy and numeracy skills may prevent or discourage older workers and non-English speaking background workers from undertaking training and/or from effectively undertaking all aspects of their jobs.

Balzary recognises the government's Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program in responding to these challenges. However, he believes that the WELL program needs a 'significant injection of funds targeted at specific groups, industries and workplaces'. While recognising the success of the WELL program to date, ACAL would support the injection of funds for workplace programs but not at the expense of other adult literacy and numeracy programs and only in relation to ensuring sustained and appropriate provision which is flexible and responsive to needs and demands.

Consideration is given in the paper to literacy and numeracy in relation to Employability Skills and whether literacy and numeracy skills should be seen as stand alone identified skills, or as components of an Employability Skills Framework. Balzary expresses concern that the emphasis on literacy and numeracy as distinctive skills may lead to limited connections being made to employability skills and the

contribution they make in bringing together the skill requirements of the modern workforce. His judgment is that within a good 'general education' all individuals need to develop literacy and numeracy and that modern pedagogical approaches take account of learning in context.

The paper ends with proposals for further action. These are broad-ranging, covering school and tertiary literacy levels as well as what is considered to be 'adult literacy'. Those related broadly to adult literacy include further research to identify the economic impact of literacy and numeracy deficits; a comprehensive approach by government, industry, enterprises and the community; and policy work connecting literacy and numeracy to the Employability Skills Framework. In relation to workplace language, literacy and numeracy Balzary proposes that Australia should look to other countries (namely the United States and the United Kingdom) to identify the lessons learnt there and that any approach adopted should be adequately supported by government and use employer organisations as a central communication vehicle.

Balzary is writing from an industry perspective, where the value of integration, collaboration and partnership is well understood. However, in relation to some of the more specific suggestions around the conundrum of literacy and numeracy concepts and standards, there are a number of issues that Literacy Link readers would have difficulty supporting. His case is weakened by a number of generalisations and unsubstantiated references to research findings. In places Balzary acknowledges that literacy and numeracy cannot be defined narrowly. In others, particularly when referring to the views of employers, he engages a much narrower definition. ACAL would find it difficult to agree with, for example, an implication that literacy testing would 'fix the problem' thus weakening arguments for the ongoing development of literacy skills across the workforce.

Although Balzary calls for a comprehensive approach to improving literacy and numeracy skills of the population, his focus is on government and education institutions ensuring the appropriate development of literacy and numeracy skills. ACAL would also like to see the development of stronger partnerships between government, industry and enterprises with serious consideration given to the potential of industry and enterprises contributing to the LLN skills of the population.

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# Recognising ICT skills

Despite arguments to exclude Information and Communication Technology (ICT) from the list of 'basic skills' (see "Why ICT should not be included as a basic skill" by Allan Wells, 'Literacy Link' Dec 2004) there is an awareness amongst language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) practitioners of its importance. Students must have basic ICT skills to engage in the contemporary literacy classroom even while the focus remains LLN. During 2004, 18 LLN teachers in NSW undertook a challenging RPL assessment process to have their ICT skills formally recognised.

Ignoring ICT will simply broaden the divides that currently exist for learners. For three years LLN teachers from three NSW regional groups of providers worked together on a series of LearnScope projects. For the first two years our focus was on building our ICT skills within a supportive group, and investigating how ICT could be integrated into teaching practice. We learned about and trialled desktop publishing, digital cameras and the manipulation of images, voice and video, using a variety of software packages including Hot Potatoes and PowerPoint, Moviemaker and Flash for Digital Storytelling. The scattered locations of our workplaces meant refining our email skills, and using online communication tools such as discussion boards and voice/ text chat options.

## The project

What had begun as a basic upgrading of skills, rapidly turned into a steep learning-curve as we learned to connect the basics to achieve practical outcomes for ourselves and our students. During 2004 we decided to focus our efforts on acquiring formal recognition (RPL) of the skills and knowledge we had acquired.

## Eyes wide shut!

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) means recognition of current competency regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred. Under the Australian Quality Training Framework, competencies may be attained in a number of ways including any 'combination of formal or informal training and education, work experience or general life experience.'

Despite being a cornerstone of the National Training Framework, the national uptake and implementation of RPL processes has been far from ideal. RPL issues have been well documented and we entered the project aware of the horror stories and the need to simplify processes, and to provide ample paid time and lots of easily accessible support.

## Getting going

While the idea was warmly received by the team of 18 teachers, the actual process of identifying and gathering evidence was another matter altogether, despite our preparation. SOS calls and rumours of impending panic began to

arrive, so we organised a face-to-face meeting to clarify the process. The most difficult thing was convincing teachers that the everyday IT-related tasks they completed were in fact viable evidence of competence. Table 1 (below) outlines the tasks we brainstormed as potential evidence.

Table 1

curriculum vitae	brochures
class worksheets	emails with attachments
reports & memos	homemade 'readers' with graphics
PowerPoint presentations	digital stories
Hot Potato exercises	sound files
our web sites	files with hyperlinks
online chats	library databases
letters	budgets in Excel
letterheads	memos
testimonials from managers	notices to students
marketing materials	student handbooks

A good PowerPoint file for example provided evidence of use of software, formatting, manipulating images, use of templates, importing sound files, use of hyperlinks, copyright etc

We encouraged teachers to present their evidence in creative ways that provided further evidence of competence. Some of us explored the use of web sites, use of PowerPoint presentations and CDs of hyperlinked files while others used text based portfolios.

We used one central Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and assessor team in order to simplify validation processes. This meant that the teachers did not have immediate face to face access to the assessor although email contact was encouraged. Issues and queries were usually dealt with as a team to maximise the shared knowledge and minimise the emails to the RTO.

## Issues encountered

Despite the project's success, the process was quite a challenge. The IT Training Package itself does not have a reputation for ease of use (hopefully we'll see some improvements in the revised edition now out), but this was overshadowed by the inaccessibility of the National

Training Information Service (NTIS) web site from which we had to gather details for individual units. Once we finally accessed the Units we discovered that Certificate 2 in IT has clearly been written for people entering the IT industry and we needed to interpret Standards to suit our own unique context. The challenge for our assessors was to make judgements that were fair to the LLN teachers but still credible within the broader IT context.

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*'The paradox of RPL is that it is assessing an individual's learning that has occurred mostly outside formal education and training, but it requires high levels of knowledge of these formal education and training contexts and the structure of qualifications and language used in education, to prepare a successful RPL application'*

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Wheelahan et al, 2003

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For Certificate 2 it is possible to complete two units from other Training Packages as electives. Many of our team had previously completed the Certificate 4 in Assessment and Workplace Training and were keen to use relevant units from this. While our assessor assured us that she would accept these units trainers from other colleges indicated that the elective units had to be from the same certificate level or one above. Struggling with the logic of this we approached the national Industry Training body for assistance only to be told that they didn't know and to contact our state body which appeared to no longer exist or at least was uncontactable. Finally our state VET field officer contacted our state accreditation body VETAB for us and confirmed that we could use Cert 4 units. A clear case for validation!

Some units were much harder than others to provide evidence for. One of the main trouble makers was the OH&S unit. Thankfully an online 'OH&S in the Office' course became available that supported other documentary evidence of competence such as testimonials or self assessments etc. Other Units that described our actual skills were not available at a Certificate 2 level. The multimedia components of our skills were predominantly located within some Units at a Certificate 4 level and outside the scope of our assessing RTO.

The process of gathering and recording evidence is very time consuming and while the teachers' time was paid, all put in additional hours. It's no wonder that RPL as an option for prospective students has been minimal.

So why bother?

ACE teachers in NSW hold Education qualifications, often to Masters level as well as in some instances the Certificate 4 in Assessment and

Workplace Training. So why pursue yet another piece of paper?

a) Formal recognition of teachers' IT skills

The most obvious outcome of the project is the formal (transferable) recognition of LLN teachers' ICT skills and knowledge via the award of the Certificate 2 in Information Technology, or Statements of Attainment where a full Certificate was not sought. Two members of our team who had less involvement in prior PD projects quickly made the decision to use the funding opportunity to work through Certificate 1 in IT with their local IT trainers—both have been awarded the Certificate 1.

b) Benefits to students

Teachers can map classroom activities back against the Training Package units for Certificate 1 IT and award Statements of Attainment wherever possible as well as the LLN qualifications (CGEA or CSWE). Students will leave our programs with an IT qualification that can be used for entry into further IT related training or as a bonus when job hunting. It is likely that initially teachers will work in partnership with or seek support from their IT trainer colleagues to achieve this.

c) Benefits to colleges

RPL is a way of assisting college management to understand the existing knowledge, skill and experience of their staff so the college can maximise productive use of the staff. Outside the traditional LLN context, colleges are also finding that students enrolling in the Certificate 1 IT courses such as BITES or the International Computer Drivers Licence (ICDL) require additional learning support. Some Colleges are now using their LLN staff to teach these courses.

Summary

It was a difficult project with successful outcomes but not one we would recommend without adequate preparation and resources. Funding for time release and support staff is vital; our project extended over six months and I'd question whether it could be done quicker given our busy lives. You need an LLN-friendly assessment team and support from your management. Some knowledge of Training Packages and Competency Standards is essential, as is knowledge of IT support networks and key IT contacts. During the project we developed checklists, model portfolios and reference materials for guidance, but above all we survived because of our membership in a cohesive, supportive team which had developed over three years.

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# Towards professional standards relating to ESL

Developed by the SA branch of ACTA (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, sister organisation to ACAL), this proposal for a framework describing professional competence covers all fields of ESL teaching. It is interesting to compare this approach with that taken by ANTA in the drafting of ESL/adult literacy teacher competence in the Advanced Diploma qualification (AQF Level 6) in the new Training and Assessment Training Package. The Advanced Diploma was withdrawn from the Training Package pending further discussion. The main difference between the approach in the proposal below and that taken by ANTA is that the new VET-sector qualification could be perceived as a replacement for existing teacher qualifications, many of which are at a higher AQF level. A Framework of Competence, on the other hand, could be useful for mapping existing qualifications and informing the development of new ones. It may be timely to ask: 'Do we need a VET-sector qualification for language, literacy and numeracy teachers and if so, for which group of teachers will this be useful and at what AQF level(s) should the qualification be?'

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), as the national professional association of ESL educators, has taken steps over the last two years to develop two sets of professional standards. One set is intended to reflect the professionalism required of TESOL practitioners and the complex nature of professional TESOL practice. The other is intended to identify particular features of professionalism required by any educator working with students of culturally and linguistically diverse heritages. Both sets of standards encompass all student cohorts and all sectors—from childcare to adult education, and from new arrivals programs to university academic programs. At this stage both sets represent only 'accomplished teachers'.

The TESOL specialist standards highlight the particular dispositions, understandings and skills such teachers bring to their work, specifically in regard to the socio-cultural milieu of English in Australia, theory of learning and teaching a second language, and professional practice in TESOL. The draft standards proposed for consultation comprise nine core standards, elaborated through an additional eighteen subsidiary standards. These can be viewed at <http://www.tesol.org.au/ted/index.htm>. The proposed standards for other educators relate more generally to the role of language and culture in learning, as well as ways of positively building on cultural diversity and developing English within and through every subject area. These standards are still in the early stages of development.

## The development process

While the current development of TESOL specialist standards is part of a wider national move towards developing teacher standards, it also builds on extensive work carried out in the early 1990s on TESOL teacher competencies. In 2002, ESL Educators (ESLE), the SA branch of ACTA, formed a working party which then devised a survey to canvass practitioners' views, across all sectors, on the potential role

of professional standards and the types of knowledge required of an accomplished TESOL/ESL practitioner. Respondents were asked the following questions:

- What do you think a TESOL/ESL teacher needs to understand in order to be described as accomplished?
- What do you think a TESOL/ESL teacher needs to be able to do in their distinctive roles with students from language backgrounds other than English?
- Who do you think an accomplished TESOL/ESL teacher needs to be professionally?

Both Likert-type and discursive responses were requested, and 97 practitioners responded, which represents approximately 60% of the full-time equivalent number of practitioners in SA.

A focus group, consisting of some members of the original working party and other interested experts analysed the responses and structured them into a draft of the framework of 27 standards. The 'types of knowledge' referred to above were represented as dispositions, understandings and professional practice. For each type of knowledge, the group identified standards relating to the following aspects of practitioners' work: engagement with the socio-cultural milieu of English in Australia, the specialist knowledge relating to learning and teaching a second language, and the day-to-day materialities of this professional practice. It was from these 27 standards that the nine core standards were identified. The theoretical underpinnings of the process to this stage can be found in theorisations of teacher knowledge (e.g. Shulman, 1987; Clandinin and Connelly, 1995) and cultural-historical activity theory (Leont'ev, 1981), which together provided a framework for the construction of teachers' work as a dynamic, multidimensional 'activity system'.

Several practitioner focus groups were conducted across Australia, each providing feedback on the standards. Three annotated case narratives, based on interviews with practitioners,

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have been written to provide authentic examples of the standards in professional practice and are available on the ACTA web site.

## Directions for 2005

Since the start of the current project, TESOL professional standards have been brought to the attention of approximately 3000 teachers. ACTA is now well on the way to being able to present TESOL as a cohesive and substantial field. This will help to define the role of TESOL practitioners, to advocate the importance of filling that role in educational settings, and to guide the development of strategies for improved outcomes for ESL students. ACTA will use the standards to lobby for appropriate preparation of teachers in undergraduate and post-graduate courses. ACTA will also use the standards to increase recognition of the need for qualified TESOL teachers and to ensure adequate professional development.

In future, TESOL professional standards will involve aligning them with the 2003 National Framework adopted by Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). The MCEETYA framework identifies four 'career dimensions' in profes-

sional practice, ranging from graduate level to leadership level, and four 'elements' of professional practice: knowledge, practice, values and relationships. The ACTA professional standards for TESOL practitioners complement many of the generic professional elements identified in the MCEETYA document and clearly reflect the specialist nature of TESOL practice in relation to those elements.

In addition to the above planned developments, further work by ACTA will commence on identifying key competencies for the career dimensions for each of the major TESOL employment sectors. Work will continue on the development of standards for other educators working with students of culturally and linguistically diverse heritages, and it is anticipated that a process similar to that used to develop the TESOL standards will be followed, this time involving a range of professional teaching associations and their memberships. This work should prove fruitful in the consultation process with educators of ESL students in mainstream environments.

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