

four seasons in one day –

literacies in changing climates

Adult Literacy Conference ■ Melbourne ■ September 10-11, 2004



Literacy outcomes: Winter of our discontent or season of mists and mellow fruitfulness?

Part 1: Focus Session

**Literacy Outcomes: Analysis, Theory and Personal
Challenge**

Part 2: Concurrent session

**Literacy Outcomes: Follow-up Workshop to explore
Application and Consequences**

**Helen Macrae and Robyn Hartley, with assistance from
Delia Bradshaw**

We have three outcomes in mind for this interactive focus session:

1. A critique of outcomes frameworks in current use, including an examination of the word 'outcomes'
2. Collection of research data from focus session participants concerning the use of current outcomes frameworks
3. An exploration of dilemmas posed by the proliferation of 'outcomes' statements.

In this workshop, the group will engage with the following questions:

1. What does the word *outcomes* mean to us? What do we think and feel about this word?
2. What education outcomes do we work towards - our own, something we choose off the shelf, something imposed on us, something else or possibly a mix of all or any of these?
3. What is the range of 'off the shelf' outcomes frameworks available to literacy workers?
4. What are their relative strengths/weaknesses? On what basis can we judge them?
5. Is something missing from existing ACE/adult literacy outcomes thinking? For example, does community capacity building (aka social capital) fit into thinking about outcomes in adult literacy work? Is there a more imaginative and inspiring set of outcomes we can opt for? Can we make room for creativity, critical questioning, civic courage and community connection in literacy teaching? What about peace, justice and Freirean freedom?
6. Do outcomes matter anyway? Why not make the whole idea of 'outcomes' a Don Watson type pariah in public discourse?

Part 2: Concurrent session

Literacy Outcomes: Follow-up Workshop to explore Application and Consequences

(It is assumed that participants in this follow-up concurrent session will have attended the introductory focus session, Part 1, at 10.15am.)

Presenter: Delia Bradshaw, with assistance from Helen Macrae and Robyn Hartley

We have five outcomes in mind for this interactive follow-up session:

1. To invite participants to name 'outcomes frameworks' they choose for their situation
2. To discuss if participants would prefer to choose other 'outcomes' for their situation
3. To articulate processes/strategies (aka careful plans) that would achieve and support 'number 2' choices
4. To explore the question: How do/can I justify my choices?
5. To encourage participants to meet *and go beyond* the 'formulas' and 'rules' of funding requirements.

In this workshop, participants will be asked to think about:

1. How much do 'outcomes' matter in practice?
2. What is their place and role in adult literacy work, in classrooms and in organisations?
3. What are good ways to describe and measure 'outcomes' in adult literacy or should we not bother?
4. How do we make choices in our own situations: do we name and plan desired 'outcomes', choose official 'outcomes', leave them to individual learner and teacher and organisational preferences and/or even to chance?
5. How do we justify our choices in these matters?

6. What are the consequences of our choices?
7. How do the 'outcomes frameworks' we use help/hinder what you think really matters educationally?
8. How good is the fit between what we are required to do and what we believe in? If there's a gap, how do we bridge it?

The questions will be applied to two case studies:

- curriculum practices of the good teacher and
- pathways planning of the good organisation.

Handouts

In both sessions, participants will receive a series of handouts related to this topic, **LITERACY OUTCOMES: winter of our discontent or seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness?**

Post-conference work

It is intended that the information and insights shared and collected in these two workshops will provide the basis for an article on our research findings.

Presenters

All three of us have extensive teaching experience in secondary, tertiary and community education settings and we have all attempted to name and frame outcomes of adult education. Delia is the author of *Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities*, a further (general) education outcomes framework published by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and used in Victorian accreditation processes. Helen and Robyn co-authored *ACE Outcomes* with Allie Clemans, a national framework commissioned by NCVER. Summaries of this published work – along with other handouts will be distributed at the focus session. We don't have a vested interest in the use of the frameworks we have devised; and all three of us consider the question *Do outcomes matter anyway?* an open one.

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