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Editorial

It has been the business of adult education, since its inception, to tinker at the edges of social systems: loosening here, altering there, improvising and redefining like a mechanic or dressmaker. Ultimately, it has been the business of adult education to prove that difference need not mean deficit. At the recent VALBEC conference I had a conversation with Rowena Allen, the Chair of the Adult Community and Further Education Board, and I quote her, ‘people make systems so people can change systems’. That’s why we come together at conferences, workshops and showcases, and why we publish journals such as Fine Print—to find the tools for tinkering. I also like to think of it as making opportunity equal.

In this issue of Fine Print we look at how various organisations and individuals within the adult education sector are making opportunity equal. Our first feature article heads to the core of adult education—Freire. I have a delightful story to tell about getting to the ‘Reloading Freire’ workshop—which I will tell another time, however it does include carrying a stack of Marxist texts for a young man who is studying the same classical social theory subject at uni that I studied eons ago—anyway, to listen to and meet the inspiring author of ‘Schooling bodies: critical pedagogies and urban youth’, Antonia Darder. Antonia applies classical Freiren thought to the education of youth who are disadvantaged within present day systems.

Second up we have a team from the Victoria University research arm, WERK appropriately acronymic, discussing current research projects. Mary Hamilton describes how interaction between the local and global influences policy around further education, and as such introduces the term glocalisation. And in a more local and specific sense, Joy Harley discusses how changing behaviour can change systems.

Check out our regular sections and note that our numeracy article is there, and I think you will like it even if you don’t teach numeracy. In Open Forum our column continues; two VALBEC and Fine Print committee members discuss their personal reading; and two conference attendees reflect on the highlights for them of VALBEC’s recent conference, Read the word, Read the world.

It’s a great read!
Schooling bodies: critical pedagogy and urban youth

By Dr Antonia Darder

Antonia Darder is a professor of education and cultural studies, political activist, artist, poet and author. In this article, written especially for Fine Print, Antonia details how Freire can still inspire and guide us towards education that is just, democratic and transformative. With a focus on marginalised youth, and the role of the body in the construction of knowledge, Antonia provides a creative application of Freirian thought. Learning, she argues, occurs holistically, that is through the intellect and the body, yet current learning and teaching methods disregard the role of the body in their emphasis on the intellect. The separation of the body and intellect leads to alienation in learning, particularly in relation to youth.

The body is our medium for having a world. (Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

[T]he body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. (Michel Foucault)

Estranged labor…estranges humanity from its own body, as it does the external, natural world, as it does…[our] mental existence…[our] human existence. (Karl Marx)

The human body constitutes primacy in all material relationships. Without the materiality of the body, all notions of teaching and learning are reduced to mere abstractions that attempt to situate the mind as an independent agent, absent of both individual and collective emotions, sensations, yearnings, fears and joys. It is the body that provides the medium for our existence as subjects of history and politically empowered agents of change; but, as Peter McLaren (1999) reminds us, ‘bodies are also the primary means by which capitalism does its job.’ We are molded and shaped by the structures, policies and practices of domination and exclusion that violently insert our bodies into the alienating morass of an intensified global division of labour.

In Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body, Sherry Shapiro (1999) contends that ‘any approach committed to human liberation must seriously address the body as a site for both oppression and liberation.’ Yet, seldom is the significance and place of the body made central to discussions of emancipatory pedagogy. As a consequence, educational efforts to reinvent the social and material conditions within classrooms do not closely consider the significance of the flesh in the process of teaching and learning. That is, unless the discussion turns to classroom management—a convenient euphemism for both the covert and overt control of youth’s corporeality. Meanwhile, many classrooms and community settings exist as arenas where knowledge is objectified and abstracted from its concrete reality. Youth are then expected to acquiesce to an alienating function, which artificially severs their body from its role in the construction of knowledge. Hence, the production of knowledge is neither engaged nor presented as a historical and collective process, occurring within the flesh and all its sensual capacities for experiencing and responding to the world.

Urban youth as integral beings

The notion of engaging urban youth as embodied and integral human beings has received limited attention. Instead psychosocial discussions tend to over-emphasize the role of subjectivity or over-psychologised notions of the self, at the expense of critical development and collective consciousness. This inadvertently sidelines affective and relational needs of the body that must endure, resist, and struggle to become free from the ideological and
corporal entanglements that domesticate youth. Yet, educators and cultural workers, we cannot deny that the body is enormously significant to the development of critical capacities in youth. Often missing in discussions of pedagogy is a more complex understanding of our humanity, in which the body is central to critical formation. Paulo Freire, particularly in his later works, attested firmly to this significance of the body in the act of knowing. ‘I know with my entire body, with feelings, with passion and also with reason’ (1995, p. 30). ‘It is my entire body that socially knows. I cannot, in the name of exactness and rigor, negate my body, my emotions and my feelings’ (1993, p. 105).

Unfortunately, however, the rubrics of traditional pedagogy assume that teaching and learning are solely cognitive acts. As such, educators and cultural workers need not concern themselves with the affective responses of youth, unless they are deemed as inappropriate, at which time the psychologist or social worker is summoned to evaluate the problem youth. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that learning, as well as teaching, can be very exciting, painful, frustrating, and joyful. Freire often referred to these very human responses when he considered the process of studying. ‘Studying is a demanding occupation, in the process of which we will encounter pain, pleasure, victory, defeat, doubt and happiness’ (1998, p. 78)—all, affective and physical responses of the body.

Thus, to become full subjects of history requires that educators grapple with the fact that intellect is but one aspect of our humanity, which evolves from the body’s collective interactions with the world. And as such, this requires our willingness to engage with youth bodies more substantively, in our efforts to forge a revolutionary practice of education. It is not enough then to teach and learn solely as an abstract cognitive process, where the analysis of words and texts are considered paramount to the construction of knowledge. Such an educational process of estrangement functions to alienate youth from ‘nature…the inorganic body of humanity’ (Marx, 1844). As such, they become alienated from their own bodies and that of others. Hence, educators must create the conditions for urban youth to labour in the flesh, investing themselves materially, in the construction of meaning and in the struggle to reinvent their world. This is vital to a critical pedagogy of the body, given that ‘we learn things about the world by acting and changing the world around us. It is [through] this process of change, of transforming the material world from which we emerged, [where] creation of the cultural and historical world takes place. This transformation of the world [is] done by us while it makes and remakes us’ (Freire 1993, p. 108).

Teaching in the flesh
In our efforts to understand the dynamics of the classroom, teaching and learning have to be acknowledged as human labour that takes place within our bodies, as we strive to make sense of the material conditions and social relations of power that shape our particular histories. Only through such an approach can educators begin to build an emancipatory practice of education where youth are not expected to confront themselves, and one another, as strangers, but rather as fully embodied human beings, from the moment they enter the classroom. This is to say that a pedagogy of the body seeks to contend in the flesh with the embodied histories and knowledge of the disenfranchised, as well as the social and material forces that shape the conditions in which we teach and learn. This requires that educators acknowledge with legitimacy the manner in which youth read their world, without denying their own visceral responses—whether these include fear, confusion, doubt or anger. Instead, educators can create
meaningful opportunities to grapple with the tensions that differences in worldview create. In this way, our bodies remain central to the construction of knowledge.

Again, Freire (1993) speaks to the undeniable centrality of the body in the act of knowing:

The importance of the body is indisputable; the body moves, acts, rememorizes, the struggle for its liberation; the body in sum, desires, points out, announces, protests, curves itself, rises, designs and remakes the world...and its importance has to do with a certain sensualism...contained by the body, even in connection with cognitive ability...its absurd to separate the rigorous acts of knowing the world from the [body’s] passionate ability to know (p. 87).

But it is exactly this sensualism with its revolutionary potential to nurture self-determination and the empowerment of youth as both individuals and social beings that is systematically stripped away from the educational process of public schools and community programs. Conservative ideologies of social control historically linked to Puritanical notions of the body as evil, sensual pleasure as sinful, and passions as corrupting to the sanctity of the spirit continue to be reflected in the rule-based pedagogical policies and practices of schooling today. The sensuality of the body is discouraged in schools through the prominent practice of containing and immobilizing youth bodies within hard chairs and desks that restrict their contact with each other and the environment around them. In the classical tradition, the sensual body is quickly subordinated to the mind, while ideas are privileged over the senses (Seidel 1964). As a consequence, urban youth, who come from working class or cultural communities where the senses and the body are given greater primacy in the act of knowing and being, are often coerced into sacrificing their knowledge of the body’s sensuality, creativity and vitality, in favor of an atomized, deadened, and analytical logic of existence. This may help to explain the propensity for white educators to diagnose African American boys as hyperactive or Chicano boys as suffering from attention deficit disorder.

Sexuality is also strongly repressed and denied within the four walls of the classroom, despite the fact that it is an ever-present human phenomenon. This is the case even at puberty, when youth bodies are particularly sensitive to often heightened and confusing sensations. Many educators who are not particularly comfortable with their bodies fail to critically engage questions of sexuality, beyond the often repeated cliché of raging hormones to refer to teenage sexuality. Consequently, youth are not only pedagogically abandoned, but also left at the mercy of the media and corporate pirates (see the Frontline production of Merchants of Cool by Douglas Rushkoff, an incisive report on the creators and marketers of popular culture for teenagers), that very deliberately and systematically prey upon the field of powerful bodily sensations, emotions and stirrings of youth.

In the slick world of advertising, teenage bodies are sought after for the exchange value they generate in marketing an adolescent sexuality that offers a marginal exoticism and ample pleasures for the largely male consumer. Commodification reifies and fixes the complexity of youth and the range of possible identities they might assume while simultaneously exploiting them as fodder for the logic of the market (Giroux 1998).

Frightened by their ambivalence and fear of youth bodies, public schooling and even community policies and practices coerce educators into silence, rigidly limiting any discussion of one of the most significant aspects of our humanity. The message is clear; everyone, especially youth, are expected to check their sexuality (along with all other aspects of their lived histories) at the door prior to entering. Yet despite the difficulties and hardships that such silence creates for many youth—suicide and increasing rates of suicide among many gay and lesbian youth, for instance—schools, much like churches, act as moral leaders monitoring and repressing the body’s participation.

Missing is both the school and community’s willingness to bring together the sexuality and intellectuality of youth in the process of their social and academic formation. This functions to sever the body’s desires and sensations from the construction of knowledge and consciousness. In turn,
this also interferes dramatically with the capacity of urban youth to know themselves, one another, and their world. Similarly, such practices negatively impact their knowledge of the other, rendering youth alienated and estranged to any human suffering that exists outside of the particular and limited scope of their identities, whether linked to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or skin-color (Soelle 1975; Shapiro 1999).

Hence, it should be no surprise to learn that domesticating policies and practices of urban education (i.e. high stakes testing, teaching-to-the-test, tracking, etc.) which abstract, fragment, and decontextualize theories of teaching and learning, seldom function in the interest of oppressed populations (Darder 2012). Instead, youth are objectified, alienated and domesticated into passive roles that not only debilitate, but also sabotage their capacity for social agency. In so doing, the existing physical needs of urban youth are generally ignored or rendered insignificant, in an overriding effort to obtain their obedience and conformity to the oppressive policies and practices of public schooling.

Yet in spite of major institutional efforts to control the body’s desires, pleasures and mobility, youth seldom surrender their bodies completely or readily acquiesce to authoritarian practices—practices which in themselves provide the impetus for resistance, especially in those youth whose dynamic histories are excluded within mainstream life (Shapiro 1999). Instead, many of them engage in the construction of their own cultural forms of resistance that may or may not always function in their best interest. More often than not these expressions of youth resistance are enacted through their body—be it with clothing, hairstyle, postures, manner of walking, way of speaking, and the piercing and tattooing of the body. These represent not only acts of resistance but alternative ways of knowing and being in the world, generally perceived by officials as both transgressive and disruptive to the social order of schools. Moreover, such views of youth are exacerbated by what Henry Giroux (1998) contends is a ‘new form of representational politics [that] has emerged in media culture fueled by degrading visual depictions of youth as criminal, sexually decadent, drug crazed, and illiterate. In short, youth are viewed as a growing threat to the public order.’

Educators, whose bodies are similarly restricted, alienated and domesticated by their school districts, are under enormous pressure to follow strict district policies and procedures for classroom conduct. This includes dispensing pre-packaged curricula, instead of employing more creative and critical approaches, grounded in the actual needs of youth. Given the impact of disembodied practices, urban educators often experience uphill battles in meeting the standardized mandates, which systematically extricate youth bodies from their learning. Nowhere is this more apparent than in low-income schools across the nation where teaching-to-the-test has become the curricula of choice.

As a consequence, many educators, consciously or unconsciously, reproduce a variety of authoritarian practices—in the name of classroom or group management—in efforts to maintain physical control of youth. Those who struggle in these repressive contexts to implement more liberating strategies are often forced to become masters of deception—saying what the school principal wishes to hear, while doing behind closed doors what they believe is in concert with a more democratic vision of education. Unfortunately, having to shoulder the hidden physical stress of such duplicity can drive some of the most effective educators away from their chosen vocation, irrespective of their political commitment. The experience of alienation that this engenders often becomes intolerable. While others, who begin to feel defeated and frustrated, begin to adopt more authoritarian approaches to manipulate and coerce cooperation, while justifying the means in the name of helping urban youth succeed socially, academically, or as good workers. What cannot be overlooked here is the manner in which authoritarian practices are designed not only to ‘blindfold youth and lead them to a domesticated future’ (Freire 1970, p. 79), but also to alienate and estrange educators and cultural workers from their labour as well. Concerned with the need to restore greater freedom, joy and creativity in their pedagogy, Freire (1998) urged educators to:

- critically reject their domesticating role; in so doing, they affirm themselves ...as educators and cultural workers by demythologizing the authoritarianism of teaching packages [or prescribed youth programs] and their administration in the intimacy of their world, which is also the world of [the youth with whom they labour]. In classrooms, with the doors closed, it is difficult to have the world unveiled.

A critical pedagogy of the body is also salient to rethinking university education, where there seems to be little pedagogical tolerance for the emotional needs of young adults. ‘Somewhere in the intellectual history
of the West there developed the wrongheaded idea that mind and heart are antagonists, that scholarship must be divested of emotion, that spiritual journeys must avoid intellectual concerns’ (Lifton 1990, p. 29). This tradition sets an expectation, for example, that professors and students compartmentalize themselves within the classroom, without any serious concern for the manner in which the very essence of university education is often tied to major moments of life transitions. That is to say that it is a time when students are being asked to make major commitments and material investments related to the direction of their very uncertain futures. Simultaneously, students are expected to engage their studies and research as objective, impartial observers, even when the object of their study is intimately linked to conditions of human suffering.

Freire (1993, p. 106) argues that traditional academic expectations of the university affirm ‘that feelings corrupt research and its findings, the fear of intuition, the categorical negation of emotion and passion, the belief in technicism [which] all ends convincing many that, the more neutral we are in our actions, the more objective and efficient we will be.’ Hence, college youth are slowly but surely socialised to labour as uncritical, descriptive, neutral scholars, dispassionate and removed from their intellectual constructions of the world. This results in scholarship conceived through a deeply alienated way of knowing, where ‘values are restricted to a scientific definition and knowledge becomes the property of something separated from human emotions, feeling, and connection’ (Shapiro 1999, p. 40). The sad and unfortunate consequence here is that such knowledge seldom leads urban youth to grapple with moral questions that might fundamentally challenge the social and material relations that sustain human suffering in their communities. Hence, as Shapiro (1999) argues, such ‘abstraction and exclusion break down relational understanding and bleed history dry, leaving the scars of separation.’

**A critical pedagogy of the body**

As our consciousness becomes more and more abstracted, we become more and more detached from our bodies. One could say that a hidden function of public schooling is, indeed, to initiate and incorporate poor, working class, and youth of color into social and material conditions of labour that normalise their alienation and detachment from the body. This function is absolutely necessary for social control and the extraction of surplus labour, given that the body is the medium through which we wage political struggle and through which we transform our historical conditions as individuals and social beings.

Hence, the perception of youth as integral human beings is paramount to both questions of ethics and the development of critical consciousness. All aspects of our humanity, with their particular pedagogical needs, are present and active at all times—that is to say, that all aspects of our humanity are integral to the process of teaching and learning. Hence, to perceive students in terms of only their minds and to subscribe to only one way of knowing can translate into an objectifying and debilitating experience for urban youth, despite the intellectual and cultural strengths they might possess. Instead, they must be acknowledged as entering any context as whole persons and should be respected and treated as such. The degree to which this is possible, however, is directly linked to how willing and able educators and are to be fully present, as well as their capacity to enter into intimate and meaningful relationships with urban youth, their parents, and their communities.

For educators who aspire to a critical pedagogy of the body, the willingness to enter into relationships with urban youth that are respectfully personal and intimate is paramount. Such horizontal relationships go hand in hand with obliterating the debilitating myth that an impersonal and emotionally distant approach to engaging youth is more professional or appropriate. Similarly, the notion of being *professional* is also often tied to the belief that our
For this reason, enacting a critical pedagogy of the body within the classroom demands that educators be cognizant of the social, political, and economic conditions that shape urban communities and the youth who share their classrooms. To do this requires the integration of critical principles that can support urban youth in their struggle to name their own world and to consider ways in which to transform conditions of inequalities that reproduce their marginalisation. In brief, this calls for an educational approach that encompasses the following principles of practice associated with the incorporation of the body into the process of teaching and learning:

- Educators engage the emotional and physical responses and experiences of urban youth as meaningful indicators of strengths and limitations that they face in the process of their academic, social, and political formation.
- Knowledge is understood as a historical and collective process, emanating from the body’s relationship to the world. The body is seen as primary in efforts by urban youth to construct knowledge and in the development of moral thought.
- The mind and its cognitive capacities are understood as only one medium for the construction of knowledge. With this in mind, urban youth are seen as integral human beings, whose minds, bodies, hearts and spirits are all implicated in the process of teaching and learning. This also speaks to the manner in which our educational practices must reach youth in their innermost emotional and psychic centers.
- Cultural knowledge derived from the body’s collective interactions with the world constitutes a significant resource of human survival. Classroom and community relationships, materials, and activities must reflect this knowledge with both respect for difference and cultural accuracy.
- Teaching and learning is understood as a process of human labour that is intricately tied to the material conditions and social relations of power that shape classroom life. Hence the question of power and the uses of authority must be interrogated consistently, in academic relationships with urban youth.
- Knowledge construction is a collective, historical phenomenon, which occurs continuously, both in and outside of the school environment. To privilege school knowledge and ignore the lived experience of urban youth limits their capacities to participate effectively in the construction of knowledge.
- Educators are committed to creating meaningful interactions and activities within classrooms that support urban youth to grapple honestly with tensions of inequality they encounter daily, whether these are associated with race, class, gender, sexuality, or other forms of difference.
- Educators’ knowledge of their own bodies, including their sexuality, is an important teaching competency and understood as significant to their ability to interact effectively with urban youth.
- Acts of resistance by urban youth tied to their bodies (i.e. clothes, piercings, tattoos, etc.) can signal meaningful and alternative ways of knowing and relating to the world. Opportunities are created for youth to reflect, affirm and challenge the meaning of these acts of resistance in their lives.
- Space is consistently created within classrooms to permit urban youth to control the aesthetic and physical conditions, including the definition and execution of their knowledge, politics, fashion, voice, and participation.
- Decolonizing the body from educational and social constraints that limit and repress the development of social agency is a major intent within a critical pedagogy of the body. Educators work together with urban youth to challenge those conditions of their labour within schools that render them passive and domesticate their dreams.

Forging an emancipatory vision

Forging an emancipatory educational practice, then, is about bringing us all back home to our bodies in a world where every aspect of our daily life—birth, death, marriage, family, school, work, leisure, parenthood, spirituality, and even entertainment—is monitored and controlled (Lefebvre, 1971). Under such a regime of power our bodies are left numb; alienated and fragmented, urban youth are left defenseless and at the mercy of capital. The
consequence is a deep sense of personal and collective
dissatisfaction generated by a marketplace that cannot
satisfy the human needs of the body—needs that can only
be met through relationships that break the alienation
and isolation so prevalent in the classroom life of urban
youth today (Brosio, 1994). Through integrating principles
that sustain a critical pedagogy of the body, educators
in concert with youth can create a space in which such
relationships can be established and nourished within the
process of teaching and learning.

As such, it is absolutely imperative that in constructing
principles for a critical pedagogy, we acknowledge that the
origin of emancipatory possibility and human solidarity
resides squarely in the body (Eagleton, 2003). It is through
the collective interactions of integral bodies within the
classroom that the possibility of moral thought can be
awakened. And it is such moral thought that places our
collective bodies back into history and into the political
discourse. Moreover, it is the absence of a truly democratic
moral language and practice of the body that stifles our
capacity for social struggle today. For example, many
educators across the country bemoan, justifiably so, the
conditions created by high-stakes testing and other ac-
countability measures that negatively impact their lives
as educators and the lives of their students. Yet, there has
been a failure among educators to communicate a clear
and coherent emancipatory moral message to challenge
the shallow moralism of No Child Left Behind (Karp,
www.rethinkingschools.org). In response, there are those
that would argue that this is a direct result of educators’
alienated complicity with the structure of educational
inequalities and the contradictions inherent in their lack
of politics, within a highly charged political arena.

However, what I argue here is that life within schools
and society requires the development of a moral political
language that can safeguard the dignity and integrity of
all human differences, intrinsic to a pluralistic nation. This
is impossible to achieve without an educational approach
anchored in the needs of the body. For without a critical
pedagogy of the body to enact an emancipatory vision,
the rhetoric of democratic education or democratic society
is rendered meaningless. Genuine democracy requires
the body’s interaction with the social and material world
in ways that nurture meaningful and transformative
participation. It must exist as a practice in which human
beings interact individually and collectively as equally
empowered subjects.

Since we produce our lives collectively, any critical praxis
of the body must engage oppression as ‘the starting point
for the explanation of human history. This then becomes
a materialist liberation, where explanations cannot be
limited to any one oppression, or leave untouched any
part of reality, any domain of knowledge, any aspect of
the world’ (Shapiro, 1999 p. 65). For all forms of social
and material oppression block, disrupt and corrupt the
fluid participation of oppressed bodies within the world,
reifying exclusionary human relations in the interest of
economic imperatives, without regard for the destruction
to bodies left behind. When human needs such as food,
shelter, meaningful livelihood, healthcare, education and
the intimacy of a community are not met, bodies are
violated. Violated bodies easily gravitate to whatever can
provide a quick fix to ease the pain and isolation of an
alienated existence. As such, a critical pedagogy of the body
must seek to create the social and material conditions that
can give rise to the organic expression of our humanity
and the practice of teaching as an act of love (Darder, 2004;

Love as an emancipatory and revolutionary principle
compels us to become part of a new, decolonising and
embodied culture that cultivates human connection,
imintacy, trust and honesty, from the body out into the
world. ‘With love we affirm and are affirmed. In the
sociopolitical struggle against death from hunger, disease,
exploitation, war, destruction of the earth, and against
hopelessness, there is a great and growing need for our
capacity to become body-full with love’ (Shapiro, 1999 p.
Love, here, functions as an ethical principle, which motivates the struggle to create mutually life-enhancing opportunities for all students. It is for this reason that Freire (1998, 1998, 1993) repeatedly argued that ethics is a significant place of departure, for both our private and public lives. Here, ethics constitutes a political question, which in the final analysis is also a moral one.

In times of uncertainty and economic instabilities, as are currently at work in large urban settings, great moral courage is required to voice our dissent against public policies and practices that betray urban youth and their communities, systematically rendering them expendable and disposable. To transform such conditions within classrooms and society, we need a critical pedagogy solidly committed to the body’s liberation as a sensual, thinking, knowing, and feeling subject of history. This entails rewriting the body into our understanding of teaching, through calling forth the establishment of new conditions for both thinking and acting within urban schools. Classroom conditions that begin with the primacy of the body carry radical possibilities for reconnecting urban youth more deeply to their development as fully integral human beings. Most importantly, the body ‘is the material foundation upon which the desire for human liberation and social transformation rest’ (Shapiro, 1999 p. 100). And in so being, the body constitutes an essential dimension in the development of a critical pedagogy for the schooling of urban youth today.

Antonia Darder is an internationally recognized Frerian scholar. She holds the Leavey Presidential Chair of Ethics and Moral Leadership at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. Her scholarship focuses on racism, class inequalities, education, and society. She is the author of *Culture and Power in the Classroom and Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*.

**References**


An introduction to WERC

By Stefan Schutt, Shelley Gillis and Geri Pancini

The Work-based Education Research Centre (WERC) is a modernist concrete and glass edifice located in an old tannery district of inner-city industrial Footscray. The building rises starkly and incongruously from a landscape of warehouses and empty lots that slope down to the banks of the Maribyrnong River. This landscape is about to be transformed by a host of new apartment developments and an upgraded railway link catering for the massive expansion of Melbourne’s western suburbs.

WERC’s setting is an apt symbol of the activities undertaken by this unique Victoria University (VU) research centre. As its acronym suggests, WERC is concerned with work: about how people learn about and within places of work; what makes them able to tap into, or miss out on, its benefits; and how work itself is changing with the times we live in. These concerns bring in a number of areas of enquiry including language, literacy and numeracy, vocational and higher education, the use of educational technology, and assessment and moderation.

WERC’s work

Here, we try to present some examples of this work and to explain who we are, what we do, and who we undertake research for. WERC, as our website http://www.vu.edu.au/work-based-education-research-centre-werc, states, ‘investigates how learning takes place in, through and for the workplace’. Our activities include research and evaluations for VU but we also tender for and undertake a range of national consultancies as well. As a research centre, we publish occasional papers, journal articles and book chapters, and we undertake professional networking.

Three areas make up the focus of our work: work-based learning, assessment and evaluation, and technology in learning.

Work-based learning

We conduct work-based learning projects for a number of organisations. Amongst a number of projects for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), is the Building Researcher Capacity Community of Practice. For this project, WERC manages the process of supporting and mentoring ten new researchers from the vocational education training (VET) sector each year to undertake a small research project on a problem in their workplace. NCVER provides a scholarship to each successful applicant and WERC introduces the participants to the research process in a guided and scaffolded manner through an online community of practice and two workshops conducted at Victoria University. Mentors are also organised for each new researcher from a pool of experienced researchers from the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA). NCVER, WERC and AVETRA each play a role in supporting the new researchers to shape and complete their research project. The project is now in its fifth year and research themes to date represent a wide range of topics of interest to the VET sector including organisational culture, e-learning, sustainability, mentoring for both students and staff, trades areas, Indigenous participation, youth engagement, literacy and support for students with disabilities.

Disadvantaged young people

In the area of preparing disadvantaged young people for the world of work, a DEEWR-funded project entitled Enhancing Retention of Young People to Year 12, Especially through Vocational Skills saw WERC investigating innovative programmes that have successfully retained disadvantaged young people in education, and provided new pathways to further education and work. These case studies led to the development of an innovative framework...
for developing and evaluating vocational programmes for at-risk young people. The resulting report was launched by the Minister for Schools Education, The Hon. Peter Garrett (MP), in Parliament House, Canberra in November 2010.

In addition to capacity building activities such as the NCVER Building Researcher Capacity Community of Practice and research projects that investigate programmes that work for a particular cohort such as youth, WERC has also researched aspects of workplace learning. For example, in a project undertaken for BHP Billiton Iron Ore, WERC completed a literature review on skills acquisition, retention and transfer of learning. The final report titled, Review of research on effective work-based learning, retention and transfer, offered guiding principles for the design and development of effective training; crucially, the report also offered recommendations that were inclusive of the importance of the need for quality trainers and assessors as well as the importance of including strategies for assisting those with LLN needs, needs that for some, could present as significant barriers to effective training.

Technology in learning
Projects in this WERC programme explore innovative approaches to teaching and learning that use digital technologies and have application for VU, the workplace and the community at large. One of these projects is The Lab, www.thelab.org.au, a weekly after-school technology club for young people aged eight to sixteen with Asperger’s syndrome, who enjoy working with computers. This project offers professional mentoring in computer programming and design plus the opportunity to connect with peers with similar interests. Parents and carers also meet to discuss issues and strategies.

The Lab, which is being undertaken in partnership with the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre www.yawcrc.org.au, has been operating since April 2011. It aims to develop a model for effectively deploying technology to improve the well-being and skills of young people with Asperger’s syndrome, that can also be adopted by other organisations including schools, health bodies and youth organisations. So far, The Lab has been the subject of numerous media articles, has inspired a number of schools and community organisations to start similar initiatives, and has won a local City of Maribyrnong award.

A cluster of other WERC projects involve the use of 3D virtual world and computer games technology for trades-related teaching. This includes the development of computer games for providing OH&S training to the Engineering industry; a related OH&S game for pre-apprentices in the construction industry who are disengaged from traditional modes of learning; a current NBN-funded Construction White Card training game; an immersive building sustainability simulator incorporating energy efficiency calculators and choices of building materials, layouts and alignments.

Assessment and evaluation
One of WERC’s technical strengths is its expertise in the practices and processes of vocational and work-based assessments. Leading activities here include a series of national studies, funded by the National Quality Council (NQC), to improve the quality of competency based assessments. These studies sought to address industry and government concerns with the lack of consistency of VET assessment within and across registered training organisations (RTO). Ensuring the comparability of standards was seen to be pertinent in the VET sector as assessment occurred across a range of contexts (e.g. vocational education, educational and industrial contexts) and was undertaken by a diverse range of assessors using highly contextualised performance based tasks that required professional judgement. The research explored the contexts in which validation and/or moderation processes occurred; compared assessment quality management processes and procedures currently being implemented; identified potential barriers and/or facilitators that impacted on the design and maintenance of assessment quality management processes within diverse RTO settings. Its findings have been recognised at a national policy level, and have led to the development of a series of NQC published materials including the Code of Professional Practice: Validation and Moderation (NQC 2009); Implementation Guide: Validation
& Moderation (NQC 2009); Guide to Develop Assessment Tools (NQC 2009); Assessor Guide: Validation & Moderation (NQC, 2010).

In 2010, the AQF Council commissioned WERC to lead a research team of psychometricians to empirically validate the architectural design of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). This study used survey methodology to measure the complexity of the fourteen qualification types (ranging from Certificate I to PhD) and the ten level descriptors, and to empirically position each of these qualifications and level descriptors onto the same scale of measurement using item response theory. This study was the first of its kind, either nationally or internationally, to empirically position qualifications onto a levels framework. Prior to this study, qualification frameworks worldwide had adopted a qualitative, consultative approach to determine relationships between qualifications and complexity levels. The findings from this study were endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Tertiary, Education and Employment in 2010 and led to the Australian Qualifications Framework Council launching the new ten level framework in 2011.

WERC, is also leading a research team to empirically calibrate the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) to the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) OCED international survey. This NCVER funded study has been designed to examine the structure of the ACSF reading and numeracy domains using item response theory and align these domains to the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) scales of document literacy, prose literacy and numeracy (previously referred to as quantitative literacy within the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)).

WERC is also currently part of an international research team responsible for producing a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) quality assurance framework (QAF) for the East Asia Summit (EAS) countries, consisting of a set of principles, guidelines and assessment procedures which will help EAS countries develop, improve, reform, guide and assess the quality of their TVET systems. This study has been funded by DEEWR.

**Challenges**

As can be seen above WERC does many different things. This is because workplaces are complex and varied, and forever changing—and so too are the educational challenges that accompany them. Examples of these challenges are as follows: How do we best prepare different generations for work, and changes in work? How do we help the disadvantaged gain a foothold in the employment market and create a future for themselves? How can we use technology to enhance workplace learning? How do we make sure workplace knowledge is passed on and shared? How do we make sure that assessment is doing its job and is consistent across contexts? How do we know standards are being maintained in training?

These are the kinds of challenges we WERC workers try to address from our concrete and glass edifice in inner-city, industrial Footscray.

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Geri Pancini has been involved in adult literacy for a number of years and is currently president of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

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Adult literacy in a global marketplace

By Mary Hamilton

In this topical article Mary Hamilton describes the global influences on local policy and practice. The complex relationship between global and local gives rise to such things as the International Adult Literacy Survey, and the more recent and as yet incomplete, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC). The PIACC is likely to shape policy development and definitions of literacy. Mary invites local Australian comment on PIACC at the end of her article, so be sure to spend some time reflecting on her ideas.

Introduction

This article addresses recent changes in how adult literacy is viewed and organised in the context of rapid and complex change in global educational policy. What causes change to local practice is not always clear to practitioners who feel outside of processes of consultation and decision-making but have to deal with the chaotic or contradictory effects of policies, which seem to arrive (and leave) without explanation. In particular, in the UK the origins and development of international policy agendas have not generally been visible to practitioners who only become aware of them through the changing discourses of policy documents and demands to implement them, enforced through the funding of jobs and programmes (Hodgson et al 2007).

Adult literacy policy is typically discussed as being nationally or locally determined. Although many people feel uncomfortable with the national frameworks derived from them, the facts and figures emerging from international leagues tables are used uncritically for advocacy purposes. There is little public debate or questioning about the underlying ways in which these facts represent literacy and literacy learners or what the effects of standardised models of assessment might be in relation to the diversity of needs in local populations and on undermining professional judgements (McCormack, 2009:9)

In trying to understand the shape and fortunes of adult literacy policy and practice in the UK, I have always found it useful to step back and compare notes with people in other countries. I present the UK case here in the knowledge of recent rises and falls in policy interest in other Anglophone countries, and especially Australia, New Zealand and Canada which often have uncanny resemblances, but are differently phased (Darville, 2011). My aim is to tell the story of a specific case in a way that will enable others to see parallels, or at least common factors, with their own situation. The comparative study of adult literacy is still to be developed but the framework I offer here might help us identify some of the ways in which the effects of global policy regimes play out across different countries. The idea is to tease out specific, local characteristics from the broader layers of international interventions so that we could learn from each other.

The Skills for Life strategy introduced into England by a New Labour administration in 2001 transformed the field of adult literacy from one characterised by informal and fragmented practices, highly dependent on part-time and volunteer labour, to a professionalized subject area within the further education sector (DES, 2001). Skills for Life was preceded by review of existing provision (Moser, 1999) and, as in a number of other countries, the rationale given for the sudden and urgent attention to adult literacy was based on the results from the International Adult Literacy Survey, organized by the OECD which indicated that seven million adults were in need of help with literacy and numeracy (OECD, 2000).

The strategy reflected the broader goals of social and educational policy of the time, which talked about lifelong learning and social inclusion. These were consistent with policy in the European Union, which is now a major funder of UK policy. New Labour applied a common, top-down approach to all the policy areas it tackled. It used the language of supply and demand to set up what it called a new infrastructure for adult literacy. This relied on precise measurement of achievements, ambitious target setting and micromanaged audit and accountability processes (Newman, 2001). Specialised qualifications and professional standards for teachers were introduced for the first time, along with some training. New core curricula in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), numeracy, and literacy were devised, which drew heavily on the curriculum used in schools. A variety of new assessments were put in place to measure learner progress, including a national test of achievement. Abundant planning tools and materials were produced for course providers and a high profile media publicity campaign targeted specific groups of adults. Courses were free to students and providers were generously resourced.
To those of us who had been involved in the field of literacy previously, living through the Skills for Life era felt like being picked up and carried along by a giant and unexpected wave. Now, under a new government administration, which has made deep cuts in public funding in response to a perceived economic crisis, this wave has passed and the key question is: What will be the legacy of the Skills for Life infrastructure? What will be sustained as adult literacy returns to its more familiar marginal role on the edges of educational and social provision, with all the instabilities of workforce and funding that implies?

Creating adult literacy as an international field

Literacy work with adults as a distinct field of policy and practice is relatively new and this makes it a good example to track how it has emerged on the international scene. It was first named and defined by UNESCO in the 1950s in countries where there was little access to schooling (Jones, 2006). In the 1960/1970s attention turned also to the schooled countries of North America, Australasia and Europe. From the start, UNESCO assembled estimates of the number and percentages of adults who were literate in each country, often based on very inadequate data. It encouraged attention to adult literacy not so much through direct funding as through symbolic activities—designating special years, organizing campaigns, conferences and other events. Through its publications the idea of functional adult literacy gradually came to have an international presence. Countries responded in specific local ways to this new field of educational activity. For example, Bev Campbell in her history of VALBEC (Campbell, 2009, pp. 23–7) describes how the organisation started in 1978 as part of grassroots civil rights movements and how it connected to a broader international literacy movement through networks and visits between countries. National or provincial government action has typically followed on from activist movements though resourcing has often been minimal.

National policies and practices now play out against an increasingly active backdrop of international interest in adult literacy, which is part of wider changes in ways the education is governed and valued as a global commodity. There is a growing body of scholarship focussing on globalisation and education (Rizvi and Lingard, 2011; Ball, 2012; Lawn and Grek, 2012) pointing out that education is no longer controlled by national governments but by much more diffuse networks that include regional and international agencies, private philanthropists and businesses as well as NGOs.

Global pressures

Currently the most important external influences on literacy policy in the UK are the OECD and its regional partners in the European Union. UNESCO still promotes a view of literacy as an individual universal human right, while the OECD and the EU primarily view countries, and their citizens, as competitors in a global marketplace. All these agencies place high importance on policy indicators that can measure performance across nations and thus on developing common measures of achievement. Their efforts toward practical commensurability have contributed to a more general trend of governance through the use of data and quantification. This trend in turn reflects a model of literacy as a commodity that can be traded in the international markets of education and employment. Grek and Ozga (2010) link this to the management of multi-national companies, which require comparative quality standards to be established for products and operations in widely varying contexts across the globe. Ball (2012) has been tracking the influence of new networks of travelling entrepreneurs who are also promoting (and often selling) educational commodities in the international marketplace.

As well as aligning the UK with regional policy within the EU, this has led to continuing efforts since the late 1980s to produce a standardised national framework for adult literacy and numeracy qualifications that can be calibrated against the national and international survey measures (specifically the IALS and, most recently, the PIACC—see later).

A framework for understanding global and local policy links

But how do these global pressures and rhetorics of adult literacy relate to the everyday local experience of teachers and learners, and in what ways, if at all, do they affect opportunities for literacy education in particular contexts? Adult literacy always seems so local, responding to the needs of specific communities and sustained by grassroots advocacy and volunteer support.

In addressing these questions I have drawn on an archive of oral history and documentary data about adult literacy in the UK since the 1970s, which I have used to analyse the shifting representations of learners, teachers and learning during this period (see Hamilton and Hillier, 2006 and Hamilton, 2012 for details).

I use two theoretical approaches to analyse literacy policy and practice in the light of the complex policy environment
Literacy studies sees literacies as part of social practice. The meanings and values of literacy are situated and shift according to context, purpose and social relations. Research in this tradition has concentrated mainly on describing the vernacular, everyday practices of reading and writing (Street and Lefstein, 2008). It views institutions as selecting and valuing certain practices over others but has not delved much into the processes whereby this happens. Actor network theory can add to the insights of literacy studies. ANT scholars have focused on the social, material and institutional processes that accompany technological innovations. Their ideas can be applied to educational policies, which can be seen as social projects that aim to organise and make it possible to work with diverse everyday lived experience (see Fenwick and Edwards, 2010).

Rather than seeing society as a set of structures within which individuals act or are prevented from acting, ANT views it in a more fluid way as a force field within which different projects of social ordering (such as a scientific innovation or a government policy initiative) vie for influence. Influences may run in many directions, sometimes competing, sometimes working together. This vision of a flexible, malleable, social reality fits with the idea of glocalisation espoused by social complexity theorists like John Urry, 2003, by emphasising that many agents are active in the everyday flows between local and global. A project of social ordering is more or less powerful dependent on the size of the network of actants (both people and things) that gathers around it. Social projects are not stable but are constantly emerging and unravelling through everyday activities, in the push and pull of the active forces that seek to shape them.

Such a view of social reality seems particularly appropriate to adult literacy given the history described above and it is possible to see the Skills for Life strategy as a social project in the making, one that for more than a decade had the backing of a powerful actor network—a national government and its associated agencies together with international alliances. Local agents, however also were active in shaping the project and in present circumstances the network frays and becomes less powerful. The field of adult literacy escapes from Skills for Life to be reconfigured once more.

In the creation of new social projects, a great deal is accomplished at the discoursal level of social action through which meanings are framed and shared. Both literacy studies and ANT point to the importance of cultural artefacts like texts and tests that are embedded in everyday social interactions. Such artefacts have both material and semiotic aspects and can be used by researchers as analytical doorways into an understanding of social systems. The international surveys which have developed sophisticated technologies of measurement, through the combined efforts of international agencies, educational testing experts and national governments have generated a set of mediating artefacts that act in just this way: to fix the definition of adult literacy and to offer shared meanings that we can all act upon.

Local factors
The external pressures described above constrain national policy and tend to standardise local practices. However, they play out in different ways in specific national contexts; influences also flow from local actors and their perceptions of global systems. In the case of the Skills for Life policy a number of local factors and agents can be identified as having been relevant to ways in which it was shaped. Some of them reinforced the international agendas, others did not.

Firstly, like a number of other recent governments, New Labour was committed to the idea of evidence-based policy and was therefore very receptive to the kind of survey research employed by the International Adult Literacy Survey as a justification for large-scale funding of adult literacy. However, unlike some countries in the OECD...
and beyond, the UK has a good existing national statistical research base that has been used to generate home grown measures of literacy. This meant it did not have to rely on international surveys and benchmarks alone for developing curriculum, tests and standards. As a result, its use of the IALS findings in domestic policy was convoluted and at times resistant (Brookes, 2011).

Secondly, New Labour’s signature style of governance was a technocratic one involving micromanaged practice and the use of high stakes targets and auditing to enforce change (Seldon, 2007). This style of governance had immediate everyday effects on teachers’ lives and workplaces, not least the intensification of paperwork demands that entangled teachers in the detailed demands of the policy.

Thirdly it made great efforts to respond to social policy issues in the round through joined up government. Literacy was strongly linked with other current policy concerns such as the effects of digital technologies, community regeneration, supporting family learning and the well-being of children and young people. Skills for Life itself was introduced as an integral part of an all-age National Literacy Strategy in the context of debates about school failure. It adapted a school-based core curriculum for use with adults and there was a strong pull to treat adult literacy as an extension of schooling at the expense of other valued goals, such as lifelong learning and vocational training.

Finally, there are particularly contentious discourses in the UK around notions of citizenship and immigration and the role of language in relation to these. Special attention focuses on the role of the proper use of the English language versus other languages and while English for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers was included in the original Skills for Life strategy this proved difficult to sustain and this was one of the first parts of the strategy to unravel (Cooke and Simpson, 2009).

Recognising the global in the local
New Labour was extremely sensitive to the mass media and the first to embrace online government. This, together with its tendencies toward bureaucratic micromanagement, and the availability of new forms of digital media, led to a step-change in the textual mediation of policy. The traditional strategies of campaigning for literacy—mass media advertisements and public announcements—were supplemented by many new branded products from beer mats to footballs. Textual representations of literacy and literacy learners became commonplace and powerfully reinforced the policy line. Just like the international surveys, themselves, we can see these texts as significant mediators between policy and practice and deserving of careful attention and analysis. In different papers I have written about representations of literacy and literacy learners in the mass media, in policy documents, in national tests and externally defined curricula for literacy (Hamilton, 2012). I have also looked at performance indicators based on individual records of student achievement (called Individual Learning Plans in Skills for Life programmes) which use categories of learning that are mapped to the curriculum and to higher level policy documents. The ILPs complete the chain of texts, which carry policy discourses from distant places, finally reaching into everyday encounters between teachers and learners.

We can look briefly at one link in this chain—the alignment of international tests with national reporting frameworks and curricula. This is an aspect of adult literacy that is immediately recognisable in many countries—negotiated in a unique way in each country (and often each province or district) but linked to an underlying pressure that is common to all. This is why we recognise the same issues and processes in very different local contexts.

As explained above, the IALS has played a significant role in the justification and shaping of UK policy by offering comparative data, which we can use to measure ourselves against other countries. International league tables generated from these surveys are reported in the media, and the research is used as part of the arguments made in policy documents to justify and legitimate the detailed case for policy initiatives. National assessment frameworks, curricula and tests are aligned with them and these reach into the heart of local sites of learning through the use of performance indicators like the ILPs mentioned above. It is therefore possible to track the influence of the international agendas via these surveys.

A common artefact is that of the matrix or table that is used to compare and align different measurement systems. Such devices make equivalences between the unlike worlds of school and adult education, national and international contexts. Their use is enforced by material incentives and penalties and these entangle policymakers, practitioners and learners alike. They smooth over and delete the diverse features of student learning goals and other features of local populations that do not fit the categories used in the table.
More important even than the details of the measurements themselves, are the underlying features of the model of literacy promoted by surveys like the IALS. The figure of seven million adults in need has been repeatedly used for policy advocacy in the UK. The model of literacy levels that the IALS embodies, its legitimation of comparative measurement and external definitions of what should count as literacy, the rationale for supporting adult literacy as part of human resource development are all clearly present in UK policy discourses and have become naturalised within practice.

**Conclusion**

National governments operate within layers of international policy and are invited to compete in terms of adult literacy and many other indicators of social and economic well-being. The measures on which these comparisons are based reflect the change agendas of international agencies and networks. They strongly shape our ideas about what adult literacy is, who adult learners are and the nature of citizenship. The good adult literacy learner is imagined not so much as a person with human rights and entitlements, but as a responsible citizen obligated to contribute to national prosperity in a global marketplace.

Analysing global influences on local practice can open up an alternative, collaborative strategy for activists in the field: to pool our experiences in different localities in order to develop a better understanding of the common factors that are shaping our work and the ways in which our own actions are implicated in them. In doing so we change our position as actants in the field and create new opportunities for intervening in it.

One such opportunity presents itself in the shape of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies PIAAC, started in 2011. PIAAC is the latest initiative to collect comparative statistics for adult lifelong learning (Schleicher, 2008) and will be reporting over the coming months. PIAAC has been developed through the combined efforts of the OECD and the European Union and twenty-six countries are currently participating including Australia, the USA, the UK, Canada, Japan and Korea. It focuses on what are considered to be the key cognitive and workplace skills required for successful participation in the economy and society of the 21st century. PIAAC builds on the literacy and numeracy measures developed for PISA and the International Adult Literacy Survey, and, like the IALS, it is likely to be very influential in the way that policy is developed and in shaping our definitions of adult literacy and numeracy in the future.

The opportunity is wide open to adapt and develop the kind of analysis I have suggested here, looking at responses to these new developments in Australia and elsewhere. I would welcome comments from Fine Print Readers especially anyone who is interested in sharing information about the impact of the PIAAC in the coming months. Mary Hamilton: m.hamilton@lancaster.ac.uk

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**References**

The motivation to engage in a dual skills set in sustainability at Swinburne University of Technology came about partly as a result of personal interest in the application of sustainability in education, aroused after accessing a number of Commonwealth Government documents discussing the subject, including the National VET Sector Sustainability Policy and Action Plan (2009 to 2012); and partly as a result of a conversation with a nine year old child, Mirriyindi.

Mirriyindi and I were making pancakes together in her kitchen, one of her favourite things to do, and instead of using the electric mixer to make the batter, as she usually did, Mirriyindi pulled out a hand whisk. As she started to whisk the eggs, milk and flour together she commented on the beauty of the design of the hand whisk, of its brilliant functionality—’really cool!’—and on the quality of the batter, which she believed was of a much higher standard having been made by hand. As the first pancake slowly made its exit from the mixing bowl to the fry pan she further predicted that these pancakes would quite possibly be the best pancakes she had ever made. And, what was more, she said, they would be sustainable.

The last part of Mirriyindi’s statement interested me and I asked her why she thought the pancakes would be sustainable. She explained that the hand whisk she was using had originally belonged to her Dearie, her grandmother, and now that her Dearie had passed away it belonged to her own mother. And now, here she was, using the hand whisk too, the third generation of her family to use the hand whisk to make pancakes. And, the great thing was, the hand whisk wasn’t using any power. So these pancakes really were sustainable, weren’t they.

Mirriyindi’s comment about the hand whisk and her reference to its sustainability made me stop and pause, because it told a different story to a discussion I’d had with a CGEA class around the same time. In the class, in response to an article we were reading about recycling, I’d asked students to respond to the statement ‘What is sustainability?’ Out of a class of twenty-one students, only seven felt able to make any response to the question at all, and the confidence of those who did reply was fragile. And this wasn’t a class who were shy to talk.

So, how was it that Mirriyindi, a nine year old, could engage comfortably in the conversation, or discourse, of sustainability, while the adults in my class could not? And what could I do about that? How could I get the students in the CGEA class to confidently discuss sustainability?

**Pilot programme**

Fortuitously, a short time after the above two events, I became aware of a pilot programme at Swinburne University of Technology, in partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), which offered the dual-unit Sustainable Practice Skill Set. I applied to take part in the pilot programme, was accepted into the course, and completed the units at the end of 2011.

The consequences of participating in the course were, and continue to be, transformative, not just in terms of my own approach to teaching, but also in terms of the effect on the students I work with. This was unexpected in many ways; and, I hope, far-reaching.

So, what has transformed, or changed?

Firstly, I became aware that I had become lethargic around my thinking and my personal action around sustainability issues. According to the What Matters to Australians report, as discussed in the Sydney Morning Herald (April 30, 2012), concern for the environment, has ‘dwindled into a “middling” issue that many people do not have strong feelings about…’. Like many of the participants in that report, my concern about the environment had been overtaken by more local or personal concerns. To be confronted with raw data was something of a much-needed wake-up call.

Secondly, through investigation and discussion, I achieved a clear understanding of what education for sustainability,
and education about sustainability are, and how I might apply these pedagogies into my own teaching.

**Education and sustainability**

Quite simply, education about sustainability (EaS) is what we teach: the scientific, theoretical and technical knowledge about the biosphere; technologies that support a sustainable future; the subject matter, or content, of our classes. (The EfS Resource Hub, April, 2012). By contrast, education for sustainability (EfS), now recognised internationally as the educational and pedagogical platform by which we can reorient thinking and behaviour towards sustainability, is how we teach, our approach or pedagogy (The EfS Resource Hub, 2012). And it is primarily the implementation of EfS pedagogy which is reshaping the way my classroom looks and sounds.

Education for sustainability works alongside education about sustainability, but rather than just offering knowledge acquisition, it offers a transformative process: Students can engage in a shared vision for the future, challenge their own belief systems, recognise assumptions and promote alternative ways of thinking through critical thinking and reflection. Education for sustainability seeks to inspire us to actively bring about change, and to inspire the action that is required to create and maintain a sustainable future (Swinburne University of Technology, 2011b p. 36). Moreover, it is inter-generational, takes place over a life time and is both present and future-oriented since it’s about learning to design and implement actions, in the knowledge that the impact of these actions will be experienced in the future (Swinburne University of Technology, 2011b pp. 36–48).

**Principles**

The Australian Government’s National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability (2009) outlines seven key EfS principles for teaching:

- systems thinking
- envisioning a better future
- critical thinking and reflection
- transformation and change
- education for all and lifelong learning
- participation
- partnerships for change

Of the above seven principles, three in particular, provide a range of useful tools for EfS classrooms and have been instrumental in my own teaching.

The first principle, systems thinking teaches us to look at the big picture, to examine the connections between the environmental, economic, social and political in a way that allows us to identify ways of changing the status quo, of looking for alternatives (EfS 2012). An example of an activity which supports the systems thinking principle is the examination of the life cycle of a product or building, around topics such as how people’s lives are affected (social); how plants and animals are affected (environmental); how local, national and international economies are affected (economic); and, what influencing political philosophies there are.

The second principle envisioning a better future shows us how to develop a shared vision for the future. How do we want the world to look? What are the challenges that will present along the way? How can we plan in a way that will allow improvement? This principle is a vital component of discussion around sustainability, to ensure that students do not feel powerless, but are able to envisage positive outcomes for the future (EfS 2012).

And thirdly, critical thinking and reflection offers students an opportunity to reflect on their own personal experiences and world views, and to challenge current belief systems and accepted ways of interpreting and engaging with the world (EfS 2012).

**Applying the principles**

I dived into the world of EaS and EfS principles while doing a project with a general education class, which involved an investigation into the merits of eBooks versus traditional paper books.

The project required students to (re)examine the statement ‘Sustainability is…’ through group discussion, then proceed to read and/or view a range of articles about
personal consumption before observing their personal rubbish creation.

In subsequent lessons, students have looked at the life cycle of a cheap take-away meal of hamburger, chips and a drink, and investigated the social, economical, environmental and political effects of producing these products from the point of extraction through production, distribution, consumption to the point of disposal. They have also considered the life cycles of mobile phones and DVDs. Further, they have calculated their own ecological footprint using the State Government of Victoria’s Ecological Footprint calculator available at <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/ecologicalfootprint/calculators/default.asp>; read about workers being exploited in sweatshops in Melbourne; written up workplace policy statements which incorporate workplace conditions and environmental impacts; and will shortly consider the hidden cost of products for example, pollution and employee health. From there they will examine how advertising connects to consumer choices, define what ‘things’ positively contribute to their own personal happiness in life and come up with ways to deal with our ever increasing consumer waste.

Student response to the implementation of EfS through some of the above activities has been, from my observation, quietly overwhelming. From being a group who were reticent to contribute to a class definition of sustainability, they now have their own, highly regarded, whole group definition. Furthermore, there is now lively and sometimes heated discussion of the issues around sustainability: Where once there was indolence, there is a new confidence in making the connections and understanding the implications of our own and others’ actions on the world around us and, most surprisingly, there is a growing but steady contemplation of our potential as individuals and collectively, to make a difference.

The reason for this subtle but nevertheless significant shift in confidence is, without any doubt in my mind, the result of the implementation of EfS principles through activities that encourage and support learners to have conversations around issues of sustainability: Not as experts but as people who are informed enough both conceptually and linguistically to be able to think well in the discourse and as people who know what questions to ask in the discourse, and therefore, as people who know how to make discerning decisions about the discourse.

Challenges
As a teacher, the challenges of implementing EfS pedagogy have been noteworthy without being burdensome. As with any lesson planning, I have had to actively consider the knowledge and values the class bring with them and identify the underpinning knowledge, concepts and linguistic features the group will need to know to be able to engage as active participants. This means I have had to do some systems thinking activities myself to work it out. I have also had to set aside extra time to think, plan and resource specific activities to support EfS pedagogy. And in this regard, the EfS Sustainability Resource Hub website has, and continues to be, invaluable.

But perhaps the most challenging aspects of implementing EfS pedagogy have been, in the first instance, the leap of faith needed to talk about issues in which I myself have no expertise; and in the second instance a shift in accepting that I do not always have all the answers. And perhaps that isn’t such a bad shift!

The concept of sustainability is, of course, not a new idea. The long-term sustainability of indigenous economic and cultural systems is the result of indigenous cultures having established a human and natural ecology totally at one with each other, a world view in stark contrast to many Western cultures who have, and continue to have, a view of the natural environment as an unlimited resource which exists only to further their own economic development (Swinburne University of Technology, 2011b p1).

But today, reorienting education towards sustainable development requires a new vision for education. Critical
global challenges demand new ways of thinking and new solutions. Education for sustainability teaches people to question, test and think differently about current processes and practices, and to have the resilience and fortitude to carry out new ways (EfS 2012).

And if that feels uncomfortable for a while, then so be it. As teachers, the responsibility is on me, or you, or us.

The choice is ours—yours and mine. We can stay with business as usual and preside over an economy that continues to destroy its natural support systems until it destroys itself, or we can adopt plan B and be the generation that changes direction, moving the world onto a path of sustained progress. The choice will be made by our generation, but it will affect life on earth for all generations to come. (Brown, 20080)

Joy Harley works at Victoria University as an ESL/literacy teacher. Previous to this she worked with adult literacy learners in remote and urban communities in the Northern Territory, on projects with industry. In 2011 she was one of the first participants to complete the dual-unit Sustainable Practice Skill Set as part of a pilot programme at Swinburne University of Technology. The skill set provides VET practitioners with the skills, knowledge and base accreditation to embed sustainability into training programmes and apply education for sustainability (EfS) principles and practice.

References

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The little bit often rule

Unless we are insomniacs, most of us won’t watch the infomercials on late night TV that run for a full programme. Advertisers know that they have to catch us while we are watching other programmes. They use the *little bit often* rule. They give us short ads—from thirty seconds to ninety seconds—but show the same ad often. Sometimes, you will even see the same ad in the one advertisement break.

This rule is an effective way of learning. We need to have information given to us in small amounts and we have to see that information often enough so that we don’t forget it. With mathematics, it is much better to have short bursts of important ideas repeated many times than to have one long session.

For learners with difficulties with memory, this approach is particularly effective as it provides the learner with opportunities to learn, remember and make connections with other learning.

Pick out the big ideas of mathematics for this special focus:

- Counting. For students who have trouble remembering the sequence 14, 15, 16, whenever you remember say the sequence aloud.
- Money is another big one. Every time you use a coin, hold it up and say what it is. You might want to focus on one coin at a time e.g. a dollar, before moving to another type.
- Encourage learners to wear a watch (analogue gives a good visual cue to the passing of time) and every hour or so, draw their attention to the time.

Prime time

Advertisers will pay top money for the best slots. Often, the station will reserve the first and last advertisement in a slot for their own advertisements. They know that these are *prime time* slots. People remember the first and last items in a list better than those in the middle. When in a mathematics lesson, the learner will remember the beginning and the conclusion of the lesson best; these should be phases of the lesson that contain important information.

Advertisers also want slots when most people are watching. We need to teach our students when they are at their most alert. For some this will be in the morning, but not all. Teenagers are notorious for waiting till the afternoon to hit their stride! We need to know our students to find their best time.

Slogans for the big ideas

Many of the most effective advertisements have slogans to help people remember the big ideas. This technique is useful in mathematics. Teachers need to identify the important ideas in the material they are teaching. These can be given a short title or phrase to help the learner remember what they are doing. For example, if you are teaching the different combination of numbers that add to 10, you could call this *make 10* or *benchmarks to 10* or *number bonds to 10*; I have known them to be called *rainbow facts* because the number combinations can be represented by a rainbow diagram (See Figure 1, Rainbow facts).

The slogans can then become a label to attach the concept in the memory of the learner.

Use the visual

Apart from radio, most advertisements make use of visual information. Carefully chosen images support the message.
In mathematics, we need to make considerable use of the visual. There is evidence that much mathematical thinking occurs on a sketchpad in the brain (Baddeley, 2003), and not through natural language. We can assist our learners by making careful use of visual information in the form of real objects, diagrams, pictures and symbols.

Advertisements on television are rarely silent, though. Just because there is a focus on the visual does not mean there should not be auditory information provided as well. Students need to have language to link to the visual images they are forming in their brain. There is a translation process that occurs to change what is visualised into what can be communicated to others. Language is a powerful mechanism for storing concepts in memory.

As you are teaching, provide language alongside visual work. Use spoken language and write words as well. Some teachers write a sentence or two at the end of a teaching session for students to put in their notebooks. A sentence strip can be put on the fridge at home and referred to later (bringing back the little bit often rule).

The element of surprise
A very successful advertisement on Australian television had the catch phrase: Which bank? followed by a pause and then the name of the advertised bank was displayed. This ad was effective because it gave viewers time to wonder what the product was and this engagement encouraged thinking about the product and remembering the brand. In teaching, we can use this pausing for the same effect. We can ask a question, pause and then reveal the answer. In between asking the question and revealing the answer, we can watch the student and if they know the answer, we can let them respond, otherwise, we can supply the answer. Revealing the answer models the response for the student. We can model in this way until the student is able to give the response.

Break down the learning
Advertisers have a strategy of introducing a new product or concept in small steps. Firstly, they might heighten our interest, then once we are engaged, offer us a small piece of information about the product. Once we know a little, we can be introduced to the finer detail. An example of this was used in an advertising campaign for a new insurance product. The slogan the power of ‘un’ was displayed everywhere from the sides of buses to full-page advertisements in newspapers. Once people were asking what on earth the power of un could be, new ads appeared with albeit ugly unwords such as unworry. The public was ready to find out it was about insurance.

In teaching mathematics, we need to break learning into small steps (Mighton, 2003). We need to engage the learner—sometimes so the learner will see a need for mathematics, but other times because the mathematics is fascinating in its own right. Once we have the learner interested in knowing more, we need to make each piece of information small enough for the learner to follow and experience success before we continue on.

Learning in small steps is sometimes known as task analysis. It can be very effective in mathematics when there is a set procedure to be learnt. It is helpful for learners who find learning difficult as it allows them to accomplish each step.

Ads teach—they don’t test
Ads tell us and show us what they want us to know. Ads don’t test us or make us play the guess what’s in the teacher’s head game. If we ask a question and we already know the answer, we are testing, not teaching!

Of course, we ask questions to find out if the learner is learning! We need to know what they are thinking and if they understand what we are teaching. One approach to overcome this conundrum is to ask a question and then pause to see if the student can answer. If it is clear they do not know, we need to offer support for them. Beware! Some students with learning difficulties can require a long response time. If we jump in too soon to tell them, they will not gain practice in processing their response.

Modelling learning is an important way to teach mathematics. We use this to show learners the correct response and help them to copy us. One approach can be to work alongside the student. For example, if we are using a number line to calculate 9–5, we could have a number line and our student could have their own. Talk out loud saying what you are doing. ‘I’m going to start at 9. I’ll colour a dot on the 9. I now need to count back to the left. [Draw jumps on the number line going 5 to the left]. That’s 5 taken away. I’m at 4. I’ll colour in 4. The answer to 9–5 is 4’. Do other examples and invite the learners to copy you or join in when they are ready.

Learning is fun! We are all experts at it. It is harder for learners with an intellectual or learning disability to learn Continued on page 37 ...
I want to learn, but the voices in my head won’t stop.

Sometimes I just cannot learn, I find it hard to understand.

These are just a few of the quotes from students with a disability whom I have taught over the years. Despite the fact that we have progressed in the 21st century, stigma and discrimination towards people with a disability—especially mental illness—still prevail today. I would like to share some of the classroom strategies that have worked for me.

- A priority for teachers, in any adult class, is to create a safe and non-threatening environment for learning to happen; a class of students who have a disability will be no different. The best way to create a safe and non-threatening environment is to have respect and dignity.
- In all my years of teaching people with a disability, I very rarely, if at all, have mentioned the word disability; instead the word ability is the key word. I respect each student’s right to be heard and right to offer a contribution.
- I always have a movie on during class. Other teachers often comment on why I always have movie on during class, but there are two main reasons: I have the volume down low to create an appropriate homely feel; if students want to have a break from work, they can switch their attention to the movie.
- Routine, routine and more routine. In my class students know the first task is to copy down in their books the notes I have on the whiteboard. Hence I am always early before class to set up the room with the notes on the board and video in place and handouts ready for the students.
- Short activities are important, mainly due to the short attention spans of students with an intellectual disability. For example students would copy notes from the board for fifteen minutes. Then it’s pens down and I explain what the lesson is about, for around five minutes. Next step is either reading aloud or completing a writing activity, once again fifteen minutes on this task. During this time my volunteers and I move amongst the students commenting on their work in a positive manner. Routine again as the students know the time for the break, which is at the same time every week. Movie is still going on in the background.
- Highlight ability; it goes a long way in removing stigma. I remember quite vividly one student Mary, who arrived in tears to her first lesson for the year. This class was a literacy and road rules class. Mary had a challenging disability but really wanted to drive. To help Mary gain her learner’s permit I gave her tasks that focused on her ability. I used practical test texts that started with very simple questions and used simple language, for example, what does a stop sign mean? She would read the questions quietly and I would get her to explain what the question was. In this way I was focussing on ability. The outcome was success: A year later, Mary gained her driver’s license. Mary proudly visited the class with her new car and excitedly showed the class her driver’s license.

Paul Pollard teaches literacy at Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Melbourne’s outer north-west.
Practical matters

Speaking sustainability

By Joy Harley

In December 2011, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), in partnership with the National Centre for Sustainability (NCS) Swinburne University, launched a suite of teaching and learning resources to support the new TAE10 Sustainable Practice Skill Set. For more teaching activities and resources visit their website listed in the references. All the activities on the site can be adapted for different levels and themes.

The following activities represent two of the principles of education for sustainability (EfS) pedagogy, discussed in the article ‘I change myself, I change the world’ in the Features section of this issue of Fine Print: critical thinking and reflection, and systems thinking. They have been taken and/or adapted from the EfS Resource Hub at Swinburne University of Technology.

Activity One: Sustainability is...
This activity can be used to ascertain the students’ level of comprehension and different views and values around the idea of sustainability. It allows students to conceptualise sustainability through discussion, collaboration and reflection:

1. Individually, write a statement beginning with ‘Sustainability is... ’.
2. In groups of four or five, discuss what has been written.
3. Appoint a scribe and, as a group, write out a one-sentence definition that combines everyone’s ideas.
4. Report back to the whole group.
5. Form a definition that satisfies the whole group.

For more confident classes this activity can be modified. After point three above, contributors in a group can physically move around to a different scribe to see if they can offer any further suggestions which haven’t already been offered by the previous group. In this way, students are able to see the contributions of the whole group. This is adapted from the World Café method approach.

Activity Two: Dimensions of sustainability
Whilst we often think of sustainability as being primarily about the environment, we also need to consider the dimensions of sustainability: the economy, society, and the political philosophies which influence decisions.

The questions below give students a framework from which to actively participate in the discourse of sustainability and can be applied to any teaching situation.

For example, in response to the statement, ‘Government slashes construction of stand-alone cycling paths’, students can use the questions to have a conversation to guide their discussion, and to make a decision about the sustainability factor of an issue. Depending on the level of the group, teachers can adapt the questions to be more or less specific. See Table 1.
Activity Three: Life cycle activity

1. This activity is useful when students are considering values for the first time.
2. Ask each group to think about everything they did today from waking up to arriving at their class. Give them about five minutes to discuss this.

Ask each group to select one of the activities they did this morning e.g. having a shower, making toast etc. and then ask them to write out a mind map about the environmental impacts they think resulted from their chosen activity.

For example, making a cup of coffee:

- Where did the tea or coffee come from? Has it travelled a long distance? Was it fair trade? Who picked the tea or coffee?
- Where did the milk come from—supermarket, local farm, corner shop?
- Where did the sugar come from? Has it travelled a long distance? Has it been processed?
- Did you measure the amount of water according to the number of cups that are to be made?
- Did you fill up the kettle and have to boil it again because the water has cooled?
- What did you do with any leftover water?
- What did you do with coffee filters or tea bags/leaves?
- What did you do with the package the breakfast items came in?

For more teaching resources including multimedia resources, classroom activities and assignment topics visit the Education for Sustainability Hub http://www.swinburne.edu.au/ncs/efshub/index.html

Joy Harley works at Victoria University as an ESL/literacy teacher. Previous to this she worked with adult literacy learners in remote and urban communities in the Northern Territory, on projects with industry. In 2011 she was one of the first participants to complete the dual-unit Sustainable Practice Skill Set as part of a pilot programme at Swinburne University of Technology. The skill set provides VET practitioners with the skills, knowledge and base accreditation to embed sustainability into training programmes and apply education for sustainability (EfS) principles and practice.

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World Café process and resources http://www.theworldcafe.com/index.html
A collection of innovative new e-learning packages continues to provide education and training assistance to some of Australia’s most critical industries. Developed by the national training system’s e-learning strategy, the National VET E-Learning Strategy (the Strategy), the Series 14 Flexible Learning Toolboxes (the Toolbox) supports the online delivery of nationally endorsed training packages across a variety of industries.

There are currently over 120 toolboxes available that have been designed to be used by all sectors of the VET system—TAFE Institutes, private providers, adult and community education (ACE), VET in schools, industry and enterprise—to deliver on and off the job training. Toolboxes can be used to support the online delivery of VET qualifications from certificate one to diploma level. The total range of toolboxes has the capability to deliver over 180 qualifications and more than 2,000 competencies from a wide range of nationally endorsed training packages.

For teachers and trainers not familiar with the Toolbox product, it is a high quality, cost effective interactive e-learning and assessment resource featuring scenarios, images and activities that simulate real life. All toolboxes support nationally endorsed training packages and are designed for use by registered training organisations and business and industry.

The Toolbox is provided on CD-ROM and can be installed on a server or used on a stand-alone computer. Toolboxes are provided with a comprehensive teaching guide and installation booklet, can be customised to suit different learner or workplace training needs, and support nationally endorsed training packages. Learners do not need to have experience in e-learning to use the toolboxes; all they need are basic computer skills.

In 2011/2012, Series 14 Toolboxes were developed with a specific focus on language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) and sustainability. Here we look at two products developed for language and numeracy.

**Numbers**

Numeracy is an underpinning skill occurring in many vocational units. In seeking to follow the best practice principle of an integrated approach to LLN, the content and activities of the numeracy toolbox have been contextualised to the building and construction industry. The Numbers toolbox assists in meeting the current and future numeracy needs of the construction sector, as well as being an excellent resource for the LLN classroom.

The topics and content support the delivery of ‘Carry out measurements and calculations’. However, the resource has been designed to also support development of the numeracy skills required in a broad range of qualifications, including a selection of units from the Construction, Plumbing and Services Training Package and the Certificate in Building and Construction, and identified the numeracy skills and knowledge that are critical to the success of entry level students in these units.

The resource has a what I need when I need it design with great flexibility to be utilised by learners from many different qualifications as required. The strength of the numeracy toolbox content is its flexibility to be used to support foundation skills courses, including VET in schools, VCAL and CGEA courses. The learning objects, with or without customisation, would also provide...
beneficial learning for other industry sectors including local government, operational works, the water industry, horticulture or electrotechnology.

The toolbox will suit a range of delivery and assessment contexts—workplace trainers working in a one-to-one or group training situation; vocational trainers and/or assessors in an educational or workplace setting who deliver training, conduct assessments and issue qualifications; and facilitators of online learning programmes.

The ‘Calculations’ topic contains the following subtopics: whole numbers, decimal numbers, fractions and percentages. Measurement focuses on metric lengths, using a ruler and a tape measure. ‘Angles’ contains two subtopics: recognising angles and right angles. ‘Area’ focuses on area examples, squares and rectangles, triangles, circles and combined shapes. ‘Volume’ looks at measuring volume, rectangular and triangular prisms and cylinders. ‘Ratio’ covers understanding what ratio is, how to use ratios, understanding scale and building scale. Underpinning knowledge is developed by progress through subtopics, which should be completed in order. Within each topic, there is a further subtopic titled ‘Sharing’. The purpose of this subtopic is to provide learners with collaborative opportunities.

Whilst not an assessment tool, the activities contained in the toolbox include multiple choice questions and practical tasks. The outcomes from the practical tasks can be used as one piece of evidence towards gaining the knowledge component of the unit of competency. Assessment activities in this toolbox include observation of practical tasks, verbal questioning, notes/charts/drawings, calculations, written tests, etc.

This toolbox has been developed to support learners requiring numeracy assistance associated with selected units of competence. The content supports the following Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) numeracy indicators 09, 10, 11. The teacher/mentor should assess each topic to determine the ACSF level applicable.

English at work

The target audience for this toolbox is culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) individuals who require advanced English language skills to access employment in an Australian context. This may also include individuals who have already commenced work in Australia, however, the primary audience is migrant jobseekers who are new to the Australian labour market.

The English at Work Toolbox supports the Certificate IV in English Proficiency, plus ESL Framework units of competency are also relevant. The units of competency from the English proficiency certificate are: ‘Prepare for a field placement’ and ‘Work effectively in an Australian workplace’. The unit from the Frameworks course is ‘Work effectively in an Australian workplace’.

Although the toolbox has not been produced specifically to align to other courses or units, activities and information may be useful in supporting delivery of Certificate IV in English Proficiency, Certificate IV in ESL (Employment/Professional), the CGEA and other courses incorporating delivery of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). It is the first toolbox produced that specifically supports English as a second language curriculum.

There are six topics within the English at Work Toolbox. Characters representing the broad range of learners who undertake English as a second language courses and training, introduce the various topics. Each topic walks...
the learner through a different aspect of understanding the Australian workplace and preparing for a field placement. It includes a character reflection, development of skills pertinent to the topic and then application to the learner’s real life experiences and situations.

Each of the six topics is introduced on the ‘What’s the story?’ page by a different person. Images and audio are used to present a real life problem faced by the person and the learner then follows this person through the topic to find out what he/she did.

In ‘Getting Started’, Khir, who has recently arrived from Malaysia, is wanting to use the skills he has gained from his studies and work experience in a new industry so that he can learn more and enjoy a new and rewarding job in Australia. In ‘Selecting a Placement’, Cynthia would like to find a placement that will help her get a job. She has a good understanding of her skills, qualifications and personal attributes and needs to find out what is needed for the type of job she is interested in. In ‘Applying for a Placement’, we are introduced to Asha who has found a placement she’s interested in applying for. The topic focuses on resume writing, job applications and job interviews. In ‘Getting Ready’ Husani has found a job placement and is getting ready to start. This topic focuses on the Australian workforce and how it differs from other workforces around the world, how to get job ready and organised and what to expect on the first day. In ‘The Australian Workplace’, Ameen wishes to find out more about working conditions in Australia. In the final module, ‘Getting Along’, Angelina has researched the Australian workplace, found a placement to suit her skills and experience and is wondering what it will be like.

To further support the learners’ understanding, five people are used throughout the resource as case study examples. These people are: Phillipa an aged care worker, Marcia a courier, Ella an administrative officer, Jonathon a chef and Rohan a retail manager.

There is extensive use of audio to assist learners with pronunciation of words, key definitions and useful terms. Preparation, practice and project areas include eJournal activities that provide opportunities for independent reflection and collaborative learning. The ‘Resources’ page includes links to resource sheets. The resource sheets provide information that could be useful across the whole six topics of the toolbox. Each resource sheet includes explanations, examples and activities on areas such as colloquial language, making verbal presentations and note taking.

What’s Coming Up?
As part of the ongoing maintenance of over 120 toolbox products, a select number of toolboxes are redeveloped each year—technically, to meet compliant standards governing accessibility of the product for students with disabilities (referred to as WCAG2++); and educationally, when qualifications and frameworks are re-accredited. In 2012, with a focus on equity issues, maintenance is occurring to the following products (available in early July, 2012): The World of Work, Where’s the Party At?, Basic Skills in Cyberspace, and Workplace Trainer.

National collection of learning objects
The national collection is a bank of free learning objects available for teachers and trainers to download for use with their learners. Learning objects can be downloaded from <http://tle.tafevc.com.au/toolbox/access/home.do>. Learning objects are small chunks of e-learning content that form a self-contained sequence of learning. Learning objects range in size, with some supporting entire units of competency and others supporting one or more performance criteria at a task level. They can take the form of interactive scenarios, quizzes, games and more.

Over 2,000 learning objects supporting a range of industries, training packages and competency units are currently available in the national collection. Many of the learning objects come from the Strategy’s toolboxes. In addition, there are learning objects that have been included from the Australian Flexible Learning Framework’s e-learning innovations projects.

Decontextualised learning objects
During 2011, a detailed list of the most downloaded learning objects was documented. This data includes reference, in particular, to generic topics—occupational health and safety, workplace documentation, project management, communication skills—across multiple work sectors. Focus has been on providing resources that may be accessed by multiple industry sectors, with approximately thirty learning objects redeveloped as decontextualized, customisable learning objects. Topics include teamwork, customer service, meetings, presentations, conflict resolution and risk management. These decontextualised learning objects will enable their use in a number of instances with a reduction in the focus on the specific industry context Continued on page 40 ...
Back in the USSR... don’t know how lucky you are, boy... .

A snatch of a song lyric that takes me back to a time and place. Picture this: An enthusiastic secondary school English teacher in the late 1970s, diligently implements journal writing and uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR) in her English classes. At the beginning of each class there would be five minutes of journal writing; she would write too. Once a week there would be a half hour of USSR with books chosen by the students and recorded in their reading logs. A small office space provided an area to withdraw students for some one on one attention reading aloud.

These strategies aimed to develop writing and reading habits and to encourage students to see the connection between learning and sustained concentration. Underpinning these activities was the work of Donald Graves (1983), and the practice of independent reading to enhance concentration and memory.

The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go. (I Can Read With My Eyes Shut! Dr. Seuss)

I read recently of the success of a reading programme at Parkville College at the Parkville Youth Justice Precinct (The Age 23/4). The teacher had worked with the class over several weeks to build up their period of silent reading from seven minutes to twenty-five minutes. The students were working on their stamina, which puts an interesting slant on what is needed to encourage reluctant readers to take on the guise of keen reader. The Parkville College programme draws on research that acknowledges independent reading as ‘the highest indicator for student achievement in terms of English’. The programme is proving successful in lifting the literacy levels for what is a captive audience of learners who previously were disengaged from education. They even voted to turn off the television one Saturday night in favour of reading!

Ya’know why I know stuff, because I read. (Bart Morse)

The development of sustained focus and physical connection to the page could be traced to the visual stimulus and tactile responses to a beautiful book; sadly, research is showing that many children live in homes where there are few, or no books. While we all (young and old) love the functionality of iPhones, email, text and social medias, these communication mediums, which take up our time, work against developing the mind muscles of sustained concentration, deep learning and long term memory. The above advice from Bart Morse, the father of a friend, rings true for me as I hear the cry ‘students do not read anymore’ from teachers in universities and secondary schools. Learning and reading are intrinsically linked and yet there seems in young people a reluctance to develop a habit for reading.

When talking to older people about their reading habits, I hear ‘I wish that I had more time to read’ or ‘I am too tired to read by the end of the day’. So how do we model reading...
behaviours that will ensure reading is as natural a part of life as eating? How do we show that reading sustains us and helps us to grow?

Here are some tips adapted from Andy Griffiths’ advice to parents (The Saturday Age, 25/2/12):

- The presence of books in the home—have books and other reading material accessible and always at hand.
- Don’t censor or judge what is good reading—allow for freedom of choice and encourage engagement: Think of the Harry Potter and Twilight phenomena.
- Enjoy sharing reading aloud or being read to—listening to audio books can be great for commutes or long trips in the car.
- Read widely—take a trip to the local library or make the State Library a part of your day in the city experience.
- Keep a journal of what you read and use as a conversation starter ‘so what are you reading?’
- Turn the television off and often!

So please, oh PLEASE, we beg, we pray,
Go throw your TV set away,
And in its place you can install,
A lovely bookshelf on the wall. (Roald Dahl, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory)

In the last edition of Fine Print, Paul Rawlinson reflected on the joy of observing his young daughter learning to read. At our committee meeting he shared the card she made for her mother with the words:

Dear Mum You are very special I like it best when you help me read books I love you love from Sabine.

We must seek to pass a love of reading on to our children.

Lynne Matheson is the Secretary of VALBEC.

References

Kindled desire
By Pauline Morrow

My sister introduced me to the novel, The Forgotten Waltz, by Anne Enright. She read it obsessively while we travelled around Bavaria and I was jealous of her concentration and the fact that she had a Kindle. It was just like being a kid again: She had something and I wanted it! Every now and then she would allow me to play with it. She recommended The Forgotten Waltz and when I started reading it I couldn’t stop.

I was fascinated by the wistful way the tale was told—I felt the vibe of the thirty-something woman and the domestic detail of the family gatherings including the image of her mother adjusting her perfect make-up while wearing her camel coat, the envy of all her neighbours and her daughters. I was bewitched by the development of the affair and equally disappointed by the ultimate satisfactoriness of the relationship it evolved into.

Why did I enjoy it so much? The tale was told without any real fuss—life continued on for all despite the climaxes and drama, as life does. What started out as brave and exciting, ends in an ordinary relationship with an ordinary man and you are left thinking, ‘All that trouble for this’?

I was sorry when the story ended—the hallmark of a great story. In fact I thought I had deleted some of the pages from the Kindle: Old ladies always blame themselves when there is a glitch with technology.

I loved the Kindle and the novel, in equal amounts.

Pauline Morrow is on the Fine Print editorial committee.
Reading Letters
By Sandra Wolfe

On ANZAC day this year I made a fabulous discovery.

Standing in the cold and dark this morning at the Dawn service I heard the army sergeant reverently read out the list of soldiers from the Bendigo area, who fought in the First World War but did not return. Into the silence he called out, number first, then rank and finally name. I listened for my family name or any of the relatives that I knew of who went to the war, but their names were not mentioned.

Later I went to the local cemetery to pay tribute to my father, a WWII veteran who served in the army in New Guinea. I decided to look for other family members who I knew were located nearby. As I wandered around in the quiet of early morning I easily found four generations of my father’s family. I have often wondered what their lives were like and how both world wars had affected them. Coming home, I decided to see if I could follow this lead on the Australian War Memorial website. I searched for my father’s army records, hoping to understand more of the experiences that he had been reluctant to speak about. The records were there but no details about his experiences—ah, disappointing. However among the records I found my grandfather’s brother Roy—a name I recognised but new little about. Roy’s records were attached to the Red Cross military records and to my surprise there were thirty-one pages. Wow! What had happened? I eagerly peeled away the layers of information to reveal his story.

Roy was just nineteen and three months when he enlisted in 1915 and sent first to Egypt, then later to France. His unit was engaged in conflict near the Somme when he was reported as missing. Later records then reported him as wounded and captured in Pozieres in 1918, before being transferred as a POW to Nurnberg, Germany, where he stayed until the end of the war in 1918. Finally, he was repatriated back to England for a few months before returning to Australia in May 1919.

I went on to read the correspondence between the army and my great grandmother telling her first that her son was missing and then later, that he was a POW. I read her letters back to the army and could sense the desperation in her words as she requested more information about her son. I read on. Imagine my surprise to find a letter from Roy to his mother during the time he was a POW. Typed, short and stilted, he wrote that he was ‘getting on alright’ and asked for basics such as a razor, shaving soap and towel, because everything had been taken from him. He also asked for ‘a pound note please’ and could she mark the parcel with his name and ‘wounded’ because that meant he was sure to get the parcel. Was she getting his army pay? He sounded so young and his letter, although brief, was a poignant insight into the relationship of a mother and son and I realised just how young and alone he was.

Roy was eventually discharged from the Army on medical grounds and awarded a British War medal and a Victory medal. Until today, I had no idea that anyone in my family was connected to the First World War, let alone in one of the important battles. It was never discussed, so it was very touching and heart-warming to make this discovery on ANZAC day.

Today I am, glad, so very glad, I can read.

Sandra Wolfe is co-president of VALBEC and works at Bendigo TAFE as an education development officer.
A novice conference attendee writes...

*By Christina John*

I am a mainstream maths and science teacher with most of my experience coming from overseas. After arriving in Australia I’ve worked in local schools from childcare to high school environments. My teaching in adult education started last year. When I read the advertisement in the VALBEC e-newsletter for the free entry to the VALBEC conference I was keenly interested in it. I wasn’t sure if I would qualify for the free registration, but I tried and got it! It was a rare opportunity to attend the conference with adult educators from all over Australia.

I really enjoyed the way the conference started with exercises and singing as a warm up activity; this gave me a fresh outlook on teaching. The National Year of Reading overview by Karen Ward-Smith gave me a clear picture of the benefits of reading, and of the importance of growing a reading culture in every home. It also informed me about different national programmes taking place to promote adult education. One of the other advantages of attending the conference was being able to become a member of the numeracy network organised by Mr John Radalj.

As a new practitioner I was pleased to be exposed to an understanding of the many different kinds of training in adult education, and how organisations operate.

The knowledge and the ideas I gained from different sessions from the presenters was stimulating and enriched my teaching practice. I wish I could have attended more than the allocated three sessions, as I learned so much from each of them. It was a great opportunity to benefit from the presenters’ expertise. The first session I attended was ‘Reading (and writing and numbers) through the web—new LLN resources’ by Debbie Soccio (See Debbie’s article in the ‘Technology Matters’ section of this issue of *Fine Print*). Without the adult education sector many people wanting to learn with computer technology or to learn to use computer technology, would not have the opportunity, even though that technology is readily accessible. As a literacy and numeracy practitioner this session encouraged me to teach through toolboxes (which are mostly free) and to use the readymade resources available for teachers and trainers working with LLN clients.

The second session I attended was ‘Writing for Others’. Spelling is a struggle for many adults in language and literacy classes. *The Spelling Guide* by Sue Paull & Frida Dean, which I purchased at the conference, is a wonderful resource for the class, and students are experiencing success. I made a personal request to Frida to write a grammar book for adult students since one of my adult students wishes to have their own copy for easy reference.

In conclusion I immensely enjoyed the 2012 VALBEC Conference and gained valuable knowledge and techniques, which I plan to implement as soon as possible.

Christina currently works as a numeracy and literacy teacher at Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre. She has more than two decades of experience teaching physics and maths in high schools. At present her passion is to teach adult learners and expand her adult education network.
The theme of the VALBEC conference this year inspired me, and when I discovered that a free offer was on, I made an attempt to obtain one even though I rarely win anything! I did turn out to be lucky and I enjoyed the day, which began with a note of optimism in spite of the stormy weather, with everyone throwing their arms up in the air, swaying and singing, ‘I wanna celebrate my life and live, singing aay oh, wanna let go…’ Chris Falk ably led and conducted the crowd.

For me, the highlight of the day was being a participant in the session ‘Flyphonics—a moment in rhyme’. The moment I stepped into the classroom, I was flown away with the sound of a loud hip-hop style beat that set our toes a-tapping!

The youthful presenter wore a colourful bandana that held his Bob Marley style locks in place. A very versatile rap artist himself, Pat Marks aka MC Pataphysics displayed his talents in combining rhythm with the mastery of words and guided us through the initial steps of creating our very own rap.

Fourteen of us were encouraged to contribute words and phrases for topics of our choice. During the brainstorming sessions each person who came up with a suitable phrase or rhyming word was rewarded with a Pataphysics sticker!

Marianna Codognotto from Jesuit Social Services, who works with Pat at The Artful Dodgers Studio, introduced the Flyphonics programme that focuses on English language learning through hip-hop. They support young learners between the ages of fifteen and twenty-seven who have been disengaged from mainstream education. Flyphonics aims to build confidence in students and develop their skills in the use of the English language while learning about the hip-hop culture. Students are given the opportunity to record or perform their own rap live, which is what we did at the end of our session!

I tutor a group of literacy students with mild intellectual disabilities and it has always been a dream of mine to engage them in composing their own rap as they love to use rhythm while counting and also enjoy singing together. We find information about favourite singers and use the lyrics of songs to develop the skills of reading and writing. However I did not know how to set about teaching the art of creating rap. Attending this session turned out to be a dream come true and it was amazing that all participants decided to create a rap with the title Dreams. Our combined efforts were recorded and Pat handed us a CD to carry our own dream words with us back to our teaching worlds:

Dreams
Every night I go to bed
dreams are rolling through my head
like waves they come crashing down
thoughts are flying round and round
I dream of a land where people are free
is this a vision you can see?
Every day when I awake
my dreams, my hopes with me I take!

Thank you VALBEC: I returned to work with contentment in my heart having read the worlds of e-works, toolboxes, rap and hip-hop!

Mystica Perera has taught ESL and literacy, initially as a volunteer, at The Neighbourhood Literacy Centre in Springvale and at Dandenong Neighbourhood House, since the year 2000. Mystica migrated from Sri Lanka in November 1999.
Can you describe your career so far?
Meadow Heights Learning Shop is the first place I have been employed. Prior to that I completed a Bachelor in Education (primary); and prior to that I was involved in volunteer based programmes assisting students with disabilities in various education settings. I have put my hand to being an education support person in early intervention, mainstream schools, special education and specialist life–skills based programmes.

This year, as well as Meadow Heights, I am involved with a company that runs courses in neighborhood houses in conjunction with Independent Schools Victoria.

In all of these positions I teach the certificates in education support to people wishing to become, or further develop their practice as, integration/teacher aides.

Why did you choose to work in adult education?
I fell in to adult education. My passion has always been education. After completing my primary education course, many people in the industry expressed concerns about the ability of a blind or vision impaired person to supervise or teach in a primary setting. The job at Meadow Heights came up before I attempted to find employment in primary teaching. Now I love teaching adults, and even better, I am teaching adults who will take on my passion for education in schools.

I might one day move back into primary education, but I’m not in a rush for now as adults are just as much fun.

What are the difficulties with being legally blind in a world geared towards sight? How do you feel when people ask a question like this?
I’m happy for anyone to ask me these questions as long as they are not going to follow it with, ‘I think there is so much you can’t do’, or not allow me to be part of something because of their own concerns.

I would definitely agree that classrooms are traditionally places that are visual or geared towards sight. Luckily I am helped along a bit by the fact that I am a visual learner! It sounds ridiculous to have a blind person/teacher who is a visual learner but I am, so I am fully conscious of having visual aids such as pictures, diagrams, and graphic organisers in my classes. I get my students to use visual formats and they have to be a bit more expressive and descriptive in class discussion: They never get away with just holding it up.

There are definitely other difficulties, however once you explain and educate people about the need to do things a bit differently they are good about it and most difficulties can be overcome.

What can employers do to encourage people with a disability to apply for, and enjoy, a job?
Just being open to disability and having a positive attitude is a start. Also acknowledging that the person with a disability is going to be the person most likely to problem solve. A person with a disability is also more likely to say what they can and can’t do, or how they can or can’t do something.

Enjoyment—well that is just about making things as accessible as possible and allowing them to join in team or workplace activities. Enjoyment for a person with a disability is just the same as for anyone else; make sure there are opportunities to achieve within their position and plenty of social opportunities to engage with colleagues and build relationships. They are definitely the two things that make going to work a pleasure for me.

What has been your favourite teaching moment?
I’ve had a lot of those, but from last week...when I had colleagues walk past my class and ask me where each of my students works. They had heard the class discussion and as it was of such high standard they were convinced that the
students were obviously from industry. If anyone needs a good education support/teacher aide, I know where some well trained, passionate, enthusiastic ones are located!

**What would you say to those forming current policy around literacy and adult education?**

Well, to keep with a disability theme here, I would have to say make sure policy strongly promotes and requires accessibility of all learning materials. This will generally mean that teachers should have materials ready and available in an accessible electronic format, which is editable. Such materials should be available to all teachers and students. My experience has been that every time I order a book, or complete a professional development course for work, I have to ask for accessible documents. These can be incredibly hard to get hold of. It is much easier for me to be a teacher than a learner in many ways, at least in relation to access of resources.

**In your opinion, what has been the biggest change in teaching or adult education since you started your career?**

E-learning is definitely the biggest change. Primary schools and secondary schools are being flooded with computers, software and all range of programmes—adult education needs to keep up.

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some things than others. Mathematics seems to be a particular challenge for many. If we make use of techniques that advertisers use, we can give our learners the best chance to access an important and enjoyable subject.

Dr Rhonda Faragher is a senior lecturer in mathematics education at the Australian Catholic University, Canberra. She is currently researching mathematics learning by primary-school aged children with Down syndrome. Her teenage daughter has Down syndrome.

There are a lot of adult education courses that are e-learning based and are fully online. I’m not a fan of this. However classroom based courses that are strongly supported with e-learning opportunities and engagement are fabulous and I’d like to see more of them.

**How do you become a good teacher?**

You become a good teacher by being a good learner. The best teachers are the ones who are willing to say, ‘I don’t know everything, or have the answer to everything, but we can try and find the answer together’. The best teacher will go away from that situation and research and look for the answers, not necessarily because they want to tell the students, but out of their own curiosity.

**What did you spend the prize money on?**

So far, not much. The plan is to keep the money for education/teaching purposes, so I can continue to engage in professional development opportunities and stay at the top of my game.

Jacinta Agostinelli is the editor of *Fine Print*.

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**References**


At Lalor Living and Learning Centre, to the north of Melbourne, we have tried to communicate sustainable living practices to our students and to members of the community, the majority of whom came from other countries. However, we found that our random teachings were not changing the behaviour of our students.

So two ideas were born: to develop specific sustainability teaching materials for use in the classroom for ESL and low literacy participants; and to extend the understanding around climate change to the wider community, by working with local stakeholders such as the City of Whittlesea Sustainability Unit, Yarra Plenty Regional Library and NMIT Epping.

We successfully sought a grant from Sustainability Victoria to resource the development of teaching materials. The project aimed to make physical transformations to the Lalor Living and Learning Centre building, so that students could see environmental changes happening around them while they were learning about the principles underpinning the changes.

Project background
Sarah Poole, Jessica Jones and Michelle Morgan came together to develop the teaching materials titled, Our Environment. Together, they represent three generations, and therefore three perspectives, on what living more sustainably means to the average person. Working closely with the enthusiastic ESL teachers, the authors gradually turned the research and ideas into ESL teaching materials.

An event was run at Lalor Living and Learning Centre in May 2011 to mark the commencement of the project. The general community were invited to attend mini workshops and celebrate some of the visual additions to the centre: a compost bin, the sustainability notice board, recycle bins in each of the classrooms, posters and photographs visually describing environmental messages, the closure of gaps around doors and windows (provided by the City of Whittlesea), black balloons conveying energy usage and yellow balloons conveying energy savings. This event attracted significant media attention, spreading our message of living more sustainably to the surrounding community. The development and piloting of the teaching materials took place after this event and ended in February 2012.

To introduce the overall theme of living more sustainably, we began by developing materials that explored climate change. We felt we needed to provide a basic understanding of what is happening to the planet and how that is relevant to everyday living. Early feedback from Carmela Garzia, our advising ESL teacher, indicated that while students found the topic of climate change engaging, the vocabulary and concepts were challenging and therefore took two to three weeks to teach. She also discovered that many students had no prior knowledge about this topic in their own countries, but, due to their circumstances, were already adept at living successfully with the smallest of resources.

When working closely with City of Whittlesea sustainability officers, it emerged that there was a significant need to focus the teaching materials on a range of practical topics: energy at home, minimising and sorting waste, being wise with water, and going shopping.

Design
The design of Our Environment was influenced by feedback from teachers as well as by the fact that it had to be downloaded and printed. Activities needed to be easily printed in black and white and double-sided so the units come as unbounded, loose-leaf pages. Each activity can be taught independently of other activities in the unit. Different learning styles are supported by offering information and activities in a range of ways, including diagrams, photographs, Internet
activities, short online videos and word games. The graphics and layout of the units reflect a contemporary style.

ESL, literacy and AMEP teachers from NMIT Epping and RMIT Brunswick helped to pilot the materials and to capture a broader response. These teachers invested many hours ironing out problems and contributing valuable suggestions.

**Image support documents**
Images needed to be Australian examples that are visually stimulating and full colour, as well as being easily displayable, so we developed an image support document that enlarges images to fit an A4 page and enables them to be displayed on a computer screen or on a data projector. This will hopefully eliminate the need to print these images.

**Teacher’s notes**
Each unit, which is in booklet format, is based on the CSWE curriculum. Unit 1, Understanding Climate Change, was developed for levels I to IV as an introductory unit, and units two to six were developed for CSWE II/III. Each booklet has corresponding teacher’s notes, which are designed to support teachers learn more about the topic, equip them with stimulating and up to date computer resources and help them adapt the materials for the specific level and curriculum framework being taught. Of course they include all the answers too!

**Flash cards**
Flash cards were developed as an introduction to each unit, in response to feedback from teachers during the final piloting phase. Several teachers suggested that a fun activity at the beginning of the unit would help students to tackle and understand the new words and new concepts presented.

**The six units**
Unit 1: Understanding Climate Change, for CSWE I–IV
Unit 2: Energy Efficiency at Home, for CSWE II/III
Unit 3: Managing Household Waste, for CSWE II/III
Unit 4: Being Wise with Water, for CSWE II/III
Unit 5: Smarter Shopping, for CSWE II/III
Unit 6: Sustainable Transport, for CSWE II/III

Two units are expanded here as examples of how a teacher might use *Our Environment*:

**Unit 1: Understanding Climate Change**
This unit was developed as an introduction to the other five units, exposing students to the theme of living more sustainably, being aware of how human activity can be harmful to our environment and how this activity is thought to be contributing to climate change. This unit doesn’t try to convince students that climate change exists or that it doesn’t exist. It aims to familiarise students with common vocabulary and equip them with some of the themes currently being debated, enabling them to follow debate within the media and to understand the underlying theme that humans could be doing a better job at managing the planet. Understanding Climate Change briefly presents the First Australians and discusses how they did not seek ownership over the natural environment, but existed with and within it. In the advanced level, students visit the online SBS documentary titled the *First Australians* and follow a discussion provided by Professor Janet McCalman by reading along with the transcript, before considering the issues raised.

**Unit 5: Smarter Shopping**
This unit suggests a variety of ways to reduce the amount of packaging we take home from shopping. It suggests ways to reduce packaging by buying in bulk, using reusable bags or containers and understanding why we use concentrates, refillables and washables. Smarter Shopping presents the premise that it is environmentally beneficial to shop locally and in season rather than travelling a long distance to purchase goods, or to purchase products that have travelled a long distance to get to you. It discusses
farmer’s markets, food co-ops and growing food in your own garden or utilising a community garden. Smarter Shopping discusses the advantages and disadvantages of organic foods and the principles supporting permaculture. We have presented ways to assist students when purchasing energy efficient appliances and Redgum Communications have provided several humorous online videos that employ clever techniques to raise awareness of shopping environmentally for appliances.

Sarah Poole is a secondary teacher, artist and arts manager with experience working on environmental issues and projects.

After the launch of Our Environment it will be free to download from the Lalor Living and Learning Centre website and the Sustainability Victoria website.

For further information contact Sarah Poole, Project Manager, Our Environment, at Lalor Living and Learning Centre on 0407 813 776 or sarahpl@netspace.net.au.

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increasing their use in more generic training programmes. You can also search and download the learning objects from the national collection. Learning objects are free to download and use in your training. They, along with the resources in the toolboxes, can be customised to meet the needs of your individual training programmes.

More information
To preview the collection of toolboxes, go to <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/toolboxes>. Each toolbox can be viewed in its entirety. Toolboxes come at AUD$400 (+ GST) each. One purchase is all you need to use the product across the whole organisation. To order, complete the form online at <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/purchase> and you’re on your way!

For more information or a demonstration, please contact Debbie Soccio on 03 9661 8712 or Debbie.soccio@eworks.edu.au

Debbie Soccio has worked in the vocational education sector, in industry, private registered training organisations, adult literacy and TAFE for seventeen years. Debbie’s current role, at eWorks includes management of nationally funded e-learning content development for the National VET E-learning Strategy.