International Specialised Skills Institute

Language, literacy and numeracy – the foundations of Australia's future

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2012 Higher Education and Skills Group Overseas Fellowship

State Government Victoria
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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i. Executive Summary

Approximately 45 per cent of Australians aged 15 to 74 years have scored at Level 1 or Level 2 on the literacy scale, while on the numeracy scale close to 50 per cent of Australians are at Level 1 or 2, according to the Adult literacy and life skills survey (ALLS) conducted in 2006.[1] The literacy, numeracy and problem solving ability is expressed as a score on a scale ranging from 0 - 500 points. The score is the point at which a person has an 80% chance of successfully performing tasks at that level. The scale is grouped into five levels. To operate successfully in the current job market and yielding success, one should reach at least Level 3 on both the literacy and numeracy scale.[2] In achieving that, an individual may progress faster through the ranks, gain more training and be more successful in any work or education related endeavour. Having that data in mind, and in response to the National Foundation Skills Strategy (2012)[3] and the call by the Australian Industry Group and the Industry Skills Council, the Australian government is looking at finding strategies for up-skilling of the workforce of the future and focusing on increasing literacy and numeracy levels.

While focusing on the Australian and overseas context (Scotland and Ireland), the Fellow planned to investigate, as a practitioner, to what extent our current pedagogy and teaching practices in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Adult Community Education (ACE) sectors influence the outcomes of language, literacy and numeracy programs, either as stand-alone or shared delivery. In addition, the aim was to empower not only the students but also the teachers in their learning/teaching journey, as well as to see what we can learn through better understanding and utilisation of a variety of teaching practices through investing in social capital pedagogy in adult learning. Whilst research that focuses on social capital pedagogy in adult learning is growing, a lot more needs to be done to gain better understanding of the principles that drive social capital theory in adult learning. Balatti and al (2007)[4] looked into pedagogical approaches that draw on and build social capital through strategies that address establishing and maintaining community connections and at the same time establishing chronological continuity of one's learning, which is especially pertinent to two main cohorts of learners I will be focusing on in my research, adult native speakers with limited literacy and numeracy, and adult migrants from non-English speaking background (NESB).

The aims of the research were:

• To establish the best pedagogy practices pertinent to two specific student cohorts: current adult migrants and adult native speakers from a variety of disadvantaged groups with low literacy and numeracy

• To further extend the research into the key drivers of Australian adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) policy in response to the National Foundation Skills Strategy (2012)[5] and the call by the Australian Industry Group and the Industry Skills Council which are looking at finding strategies for up-skilling of the workforce of future and focusing on increasing literacy and numeracy levels

• To investigate benefits of using human and social capital in ACE and VET training, thus meeting Australian Government Skills Reform objectives of up skilling for the 21st Century workforce.

The Fellow has hoped that having an insight into the research and teaching practices will further inform and enhance the understanding of literacy and numeracy in adults. Lifelong learning is one of the approaches taken by practitioners and researchers as the foremost goal in developing and contributing to the increase of literacy and numeracy amongst adults. The learning is also based on a 'social practice' approach which acknowledges that adults will learn more effectively if social, cultural, economic and political contexts are taken into account. If we focus on what role literacy and numeracy plays in the lives of individuals or groups in everyday interactions, we may make significant progress.

1   Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) http://www.
    abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1136.0Main+Features1022009
2   Tout, David 2008, What can the Adult Literacy and Life skills Survey (ALLS) tell us? What's
    ALL the story? http://www.acal.edu.au/conference/08/ALLS_Tout.pdf
3   Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills & Employment 2012, National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, SCOTESE, Australia
4   Balatti, J, Black, S & Falk, I 2007, Teaching for Social Capital Outcomes: The Case of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Courses in
    VET. https://www.ala.asn.au/conf/2006/papers/refereed%20papers/ALA%20paperBalatti,Black%20&Falk_S32_.pdf
5   Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills & Employment 2012, National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, SCOTESE, Australia

i. Executive Summary

To that effect, practitioners in Ireland have been focusing on increased literacy of men, seeing them still traditionally as the main breadwinners, whose literacy and numeracy capabilities in the workplace can be essential to their staying in the job, gaining a promotion or furthering their own learning to gain further qualifications or skills.

In Scotland, the focus of the research is on social inclusion which may come by the way of an increased level of English language proficiency, volunteering and active involvement in the community as some of the main factors that influence one's success in learning either in a formal learning setting or on the job.

In addition to this, countries in the European Union have been encouraged and supported to cooperate and develop plans of action to increase literacy and numeracy levels of the migrant population as well as of native speakers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Further to that, an emphasis has also been put on teacher training which addresses not only how to teach the language, but how to teach it in a sensitive manner, accounting for cultural or other differences, understanding one's background in order to address the background issues or barriers to successful learning, and ultimately successful integration and fulfilling life.

The Fellow has already delivered a presentation at the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Provider Network meeting on 13th September 2013 in Melbourne. In addition, another two presentations have been delivered. At Skills Plus Inc. on 20th November 2013 and MTC on 16th April 2014. Both organisations offer language, literacy and numeracy training to students of non-English speaking backgrounds and native speakers with low literacy and numeracy levels. The findings will also be presented at the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) Conference in September 2014.

The Fellow aims to establish better connections between the two sectors, VET and ACE, not only within one state but also across the states/territories and providers in Australia. It is of paramount importance to be able to share not only the findings of this research but to connect with other practitioners, on a state and national level, to connect those who work tirelessly in educating adults. The more we know about different successful practices, the better our work and its outcomes will be. Sharing resources and ideas freely, means that teachers and educators will reclaim their role of the facilitators of knowledge rather than only being assessors.

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ii. Abbreviations / Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACAL	Australian Council for Adult Literacy
ACE	Adult Community Education
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
ALLS	Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMES	Adult Multicultural Education Services
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
AVETRA	Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association
CAVSS	Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Technology
DIISRTE	Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETB	Education and Training Boards
FAS	Irish National Training Authority
GRAMNet	Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
IBSA	Innovation and Business Skills Australia
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
LLNP	Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program
LOTE	Languages other than English
MIRACLE	Migrants and Refugees a Challenge for Learning in European Schools
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NESB	non-English speaking background
NLS	New Literacy Studies
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
RTO	Registered Training Organisation

ii. Abbreviations / Acronyms

SAL	Survey of Aspects of Literacy
SCOTESE	Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills & Employment
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment
SQA	Scottish Qualification Authority
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VEC	Vocational Education Committees
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy
VELT	Volunteer English Language Tutor
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VicTESOL	Victorian Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
VTG	Victorian Training Guarantee

iii. Definitions

Human Capital

The stock of competencies, knowledge, social and personality attributes, including creativity, cognitive abilities, embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value. It is considered to be a key driver of productivity growth.

Social Capital

Networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or amongst groups.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Learning aims to create a society of individuals who are motivated to continue learning throughout their lives, both formally and informally.

Social inclusion

A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met, so they can live in dignity. It is "about closing physical, social and economic distances separating people, rather than only about eliminating boundaries or barriers between us and them".[1]

Social exclusion

The process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community (Cappo, 2002).[2]

Social Practice Approach

This approach recognises that effective adult learning acknowledges and takes account of its social, cultural, economic and political contexts. The emphasis is on the use of literacy and numeracy made by individuals and groups in everyday lives.

Literacy

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.

Numeracy

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

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1   Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2009, The Origins, Meaning, Definition and
    Economic Implications of the Concept Social Inclusion/Exclusion, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
2   Cappo D 2002, Social inclusion initiative. Social inclusion, participation and empowerment. Address to
    Australian Council of Social Services National Congress 28-29 November, 2002, Hobart.

iii. Definitions

Integrating literacy

As adults we develop literacy best by using it as we take part in activities we find interesting, meaningful or necessary. Integrating literacy means developing literacy as a natural, essential part of those activities.

Spikey profile

"The Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) recognises that an individual may be operating across different levels within a core skill. It is also likely that an individual will not perform at the same ACSF level across all five core skills, i.e. Learning, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication and Numeracy. This can be captured visually in what is called a 'spikey profile'." [3]

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[3] Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education 2012, Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), Commonwealth of Australia.

1. Acknowledgements

Suzana Stapar would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide her throughout the Fellowship program.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc is an independent, national organisation that for over two decades has worked with Australian governments, industry and education institutions to enable individuals to gain enhanced skills and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading-edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our Fellows. Under the **Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program** the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

1. Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions.
2. Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses.
3. Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 200 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 22 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010':

> Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change.
>
> International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills across a range of industries and occupations.

In this context, the ISS Institute works with Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional practice, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see http://www.issinstitute.org.au.

1. Acknowledgements

Fellowship Sponsor

The Victorian Government, Higher Education and Skills Group (HESG) formerly Skills Victoria, is responsible for the administration and the coordination of programs for the provision of training and further education, adult community education and employment services in Victoria, and is a valued sponsor of the ISS Institute. The Fellow would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship..

International Specialised Skills Institute

Government
- » Higher Education and Skills Group, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Industry
- » Innovation & Business Skills Australia (IBSA)

Professional Associations
- » ESL Curriculum Advisory Group
- » Stav Touranakos, Chair, ESL Curriculum Advisory Group
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- » Jane Hall, WELL Trainer, Chisholm Institute
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- » Kath Brewer, Director, Linda Wyse & Associates
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» Paul Sumner, Fellowship Adviser

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» Fiona Xaiz, Industry Adviser

» Vittoria Grossi, Industry Adviser

» Sharon Templeman, Writing Adviser

2. About the Fellow

Suzana Stapar is currently employed as an Independent Verifier with Linda Wyse and Associates. Previously she was employed as a Subject Matter Expert with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Also, she was employed as a Senior Educator/Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) (formerly Language, Literacy and Numeracy) Program Coordinator with Chisholm Institute. She has been teaching in the TAFE sector for the last 15 years, teaching English as a Second language to adult migrants in Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) and Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) English as a Second Language delivery. She has also taught Languages other than English (LOTE) Serbian with the Victorian School of Languages. She produced a series of VCE LOTE Serbian textbooks and for her active involvement in the LOTE area and excellence in teaching was awarded a Teacher of the Year award in 2002. She has also produced a set of bilingual teaching materials targeting migrant cohort from former Yugoslavia. The material was jointly published by Swinburne TAFE and Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES). She was awarded Masters of Applied Linguistics in 2006 by La Trobe University.

3. Aims of the Fellowship Program

- To establish best pedagogy practices pertinent to two specific student cohorts:

  » Current adult migrants who arrived in Australia as refugees or humanitarian migrants, mainly from Sudan and Afghanistan and who participate in education at Chisholm Institute

  » Adults and native speakers from a variety of disadvantaged groups who have the potential to participate in literacy and numeracy programs and in VET training at Chisholm Institute.

- To further extend the research into the key drivers of Australian adult LLN policy in response to the National Foundation Skills Strategy (2012) [1] and the call by Australian Industry Group and Industry Skills Council [2] which are looking at finding strategies for up skilling of the workforce of the future and focusing on increasing literacy and numeracy levels.

- To investigate the benefits of using human and social capital in ACE and VET training, thus meeting Australian Government Skills Reform objectives of up skilling for the 21st Century workforce.

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1   Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills & Employment 2012, National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, SCOTESE, Australia
2   Industry Skills Council (Australia) 2011, No more excuses: an industry response to the language,
    literacy and numeracy challenge, Industry Skills Council, Australia.

4. The Australian Context

It has been nearly 20 years since the last national policy on Australian language and literacy was released. In 2010 the impact of language, literacy and numeracy levels on productivity and social participation started featuring on the federal government's agenda. Consequently the broader political and economic prospects in Australia have started driving policies and changes in the VET sector, emphasising the need for a skills upgrade, especially in the area of language, literacy and numeracy. The Government has also set targets to increase the qualifications of Australians by 2020 (The National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, 2012) [1].

The Australian VET landscape that includes the language, literacy and numeracy component is varied and inconsistent. Each state and territory has a different mode of delivery and uses different jargon to describe it.

There have been several models of delivery in use that tried to incorporate VET delivery with LLN as presented in S. Black and K. Yasukawa's research (2011) [2]:

1. Learner support or tutorial support which involves one to one or small group tutorials, focusing on skill deficiencies that need to be addressed

2. Team teaching with a varied degree of co-delivery between VET teachers and LLN practitioners, such as the shared delivery model used at TAFEs in Victoria, or CAVSS team teaching that focuses on vocational socialisation and has been in practice in Western Australia

3. There is also stand-alone LLN delivery that may lead into pathways to shared delivery classes or VET delivery with language, literacy and numeracy support.

In 2012, the national foundation skills strategy for adults was released with the aim of targeting low level literacy and numeracy skills combined with employability skills, thus answering to the ALLS survey key findings.

Low levels of adult literacy and numeracy skills as measured by the ALLS survey has been a key driver for change and renewed interest in those skills either embedded in training packages or stand-alone delivery, such as via the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Program delivered nationwide.

Kate Perkins (2009), in her research on adult literacy and numeracy, clearly states, "While some Australians are able to live fulfilling lives without well-developed literacy and numeracy skills, research shows a correlation between low levels of literacy and numeracy and social isolation, unemployment, lack of qualifications, low wages and poor health". Furthermore, existing programs have reflected a perception that low literacy and numeracy affects a minority of people on the margins of society. Fragmented responses in the LLN program development and no major investments in adult literacy and numeracy have been an issue in Australia, (Perkins, 2009) [3].

However, a number of researchers believe that when teachers adopt a social capital approach in their literacy and numeracy teaching, the students themselves experience social capital outcomes from participating in courses; that is, participation draws upon and builds social capital (Balatti et al, 2009) [4].

1   Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills & Employment 2012, National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, SCOTESE, Australia
2   Black, S, Yasukawa, K. 2011, Working Together: Integrated language, literacy and
    numeracy support in vocational education and training, UTS, Sydney.
3   Perkins, K 2009, Adult literacy and numeracy, Research and Future Strategy, NCVER.
4   Balatti, J, Black, S & Falk, I 2009, A New Social Capital Paradigm for Adult Literacy: Partnerships, Policy and Pedagogy, NCVER.

4. The Australian Context

Adult literacy and life skills survey description

The Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey (ALLS) was conducted in Australia in 2006 as part of an international literacy study, coordinated by Statistics Canada and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Its predecessor, the Survey of Aspects of Literacy (SAL) was conducted in 1996 as part of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). The IALS, the world's first internationally comparable survey of adult literacy skills, was undertaken with three waves of data collection between 1994 and 1998. The ALLS allows for some comparison of 2006 literacy skill levels to those reported in 1996 and the comparison of Australians' literacy skills with those of other countries.

In 2003, seven countries were involved in the first wave of ALLS: Bermuda, Canada, Italy, Mexico (state of Nuevo Leon), Norway, Switzerland and the United States of America. The second wave of ALLS in 2006 included Australia, Hungary, the Netherlands, New Zealand and South Korea.

The purpose of ALLS was to:

• Assess the skills of adult Australians in prose and document literacy, numeracy and problem solving

• Collect general participant information, including familiarity with information and communications technology

• Determine the relationships of each of the assessed skills to participants' social and economic status.

The ALLS was designed to identify and measure literacy, which can be linked to the social and economic characteristics of people both across and within countries. The ALLS was jointly funded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the former Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Technology (DEST) and the former Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Results have shown that approximately seven million (46 per cent) Australians aged 15 to 74 years had scores at Level 1 or 2 on literacy scales, while on the numeracy scale approximately 7.9 million (53 per cent) Australians were assessed at Level 1 or 2 [5].

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has released the following commentary that presents preliminary data for the 2011-2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) [6]. Respondents to this survey completed tasks designed to assess their skills in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. Scores for each skill were derived on a scale ranging from 0 to 500 points before being grouped into levels.

Approximately 44.4 per cent of Australians aged 15 to 74 years had literacy skills at Levels 1 or 2, a further 39 per cent of Australians are at Level 3 and 16.6 per cent are achieving Level 4/5. For the numeracy scale, 54.6 per cent of Australians were assessed at Level 1 or 2, 32.4 per cent at Level 3 and 13.1 per cent are achieving Level 4/5.

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5   Tout, D 2008, Startling Stats: adult literacy skills in Australia, Fine Print, VALBEC, Vol 31, No 2, pp 6-12.
6   Tout, D 2013, Part 1: Lessons learnt from international assessments, Fine Print, VALBEC, Vol 36, No 2, pp. 17-22.

Level		Literacy		Numeracy	
	Per cent	Millions	Per cent	Millions
1	14.1	2.3	21.7	3.5
2	30.3	5.0	32.9	5.4
3	39.0	6.4	32.4	5.3
4&5	16.6	2.7	13.1	2.1

While the results in Literacy show that Australians performed significantly above the international average, ranked 4th out of 22 countries that participated in the survey and for Numeracy performing at the international average, ranking 13th internationally, the results still leave enough room for improvement and for the policy makers, industry and educators to consider what actions to take in order to improve the nation's literacy and numeracy levels further, ensuring that the workforce of the future is capable of coping with the changes and challenges of our modern, technologically advanced world.

Overall benefit of the Fellowship

A better understanding and utilisation of a variety of teaching practices amongst the ACE and VET sectors by investing in social capital pedagogy in adult learning may lead to improved learning outcomes that will not only be measured through achieved competencies but through an overall improved wellbeing of the participants in training. When comparing the best practices in the countries with similar learner cohorts, we may be able to better utilise current teaching methodologies in the ACE and VET sectors or start the change by aligning not only curricula to the broader LLN skills sets, but also looking into empowering teachers as well as students to participate more actively in training and learning.

Benefits of the Fellowship

- Promote understandings of changes in the pedagogy of teaching in ACE and VET.
- Seek to empower and educate teachers in the ACE and VET sectors.
- Seek to inform policy makers.
- Inform practice within Chisholm Institute as well as cross-institutions, i.e. across a variety of RTO in VET sector.
- Enrich the understanding of the ACE and VET sectors and teaching pedagogy in this ever changing environment that seeks quick solutions for application to relevant work related skills at TAFE.
- Empower students to be pro-active learners, to be responsible for their own success, to be partners in learning with their teachers who are seen not only as holders of all knowledge, but as equals who are ready to share their knowledge of the subject matter, but are also keen to learn from the students they teach.

4. The Australian Context

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- A number of associations such as AVETRA, ACAL, Victorian Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (VicTESOL) or similar are already established.
- Genuine interest among the practitioners for continuous improvement of their teaching practices.
- Academic research into the VET and ACE sectors is well established.
- Practitioners are encouraged to showcase their work and their research at forums and conferences nationwide.

Weaknesses

- Inadequate funding to develop resources to support teachers in the VET and ACE sectors.
- Limited knowledge within Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) of a social inclusion approach to teaching LLN.
- Labour market driven courses that do not always meet individuals' needs.

Opportunities

- To establish collaborative projects with practitioners nationwide and from overseas.
- To encourage more practitioners to invest in research based on their current work practices.
- To create a free data base of teaching and assessment resources under one banner.
- To workshop successful models of delivery, share more success stories with the industry.
- To develop a new platform to promote LLN nationwide.
- To develop stronger bonds between academia and practitioners.
- To develop teacher training courses with the cultural diversity subject as a core subject for teachers from all disciplines, not only EAL.

Threats

- Reluctance of RTOs to share their work and experience in the field of LLN.
- The erosion of the need for specialist LLN teacher qualifications in the VET sector.
- Competitive tender process may alienate and prevent potential sharing of ideas and best practices.
- Low level of knowledge and expertise of teachers involved in LLN training.
- Low level of interest in research and practical approach by the practitioners.
- Funding cuts that may impact on the quality of the programs offered.
- Teaching resources not freely distributed nationwide.
- Changes in policies that may impact further on foundation studies courses and LLN training.
- Insufficient participation of the relevant industry in WELL programs.
- Labour market driven courses that do not always meet individuals' needs.

5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required

There are examples of areas in Australian industries where there are weaknesses in the innovation, skills, knowledge, experience, policies and/or formal organisational structures to support the ongoing successful development and recognition of individuals and the particular sector.

The focus of all ISS Institute Fellowships is on applied research and investigation overseas by Australians. The main objective is to enable enhancement and improvement in skills, knowledge and practice not currently available or implemented in Australia and the subsequent dissemination and sharing of those skills and recommendations throughout the relevant Australian industry, education, government bodies and the community.

This Fellowship research targeted the learning necessary to address the following skills and knowledge enhancement areas:

Skills enhancement area 1: Investigate possible investment in social capital while teaching competency based programs.

- Identify and assess disparity between competency and capability of the adult migrant cohort when it comes to skills based learning and application of knowledge.

Action: *Research and compare competencies to known capabilities and whether one's capabilities can be measured in the same way as competencies to provide a measurable outcome.*

Skills Enhancement area 2: Low levels of literacy and numeracy as reported in ALLS survey and ABS data, which claim that 43.5 per cent of the working age population has literacy skills levels below those required, i.e. ACSF level 3 for effective functioning in the workplace and modern life in general.

- Identify and assess the effectiveness of current teaching practices in stand-alone language, literacy and numeracy delivery.

- Identify and assess the effectiveness of current VET teaching practices and LLN, incorporated in training packages delivery.

Action: *Assess LLN strategies employed in both areas of delivery and inform LLN and VET practitioners on the level of effectiveness of LLN strategies.*

Skills Enhancement Area 3: Low levels of language and numeracy in the current migrant cohort.

- Investigate to what extent lack of social engagement impacts on the quality of life in general and social inclusion in formal settings, such as the adult learning environment at TAFE.

- Investigate to what extent lack of language and numeracy impacts on positive employment outcomes.

Action: *Research and document the findings of both social and work related outcomes – compare in relation to human and social capital theories.*

Skills Enhancement Area 4: Social capital in the pedagogy for adult literacy and numeracy.

- Investigate and assess the impact of social capital in adult literacy and numeracy training – is it a by-product of teacher-student engagement or one of the pillars of the new teaching pedagogy?

- Investigate face to face learning verses online delivery within the social capital paradigm.

Action: Document and develop a proposal of best teaching practices based on social capital and social inclusion.

Skills Enhancement Area 5: Social capital outcomes in curriculum, assessment and teaching strategies.

- Investigate and assess to what extent social capital outcomes impact on overall student performance and how they can be embedded in existing curricula or training packages.

Action: Provide evidence and advice to curriculum designers and policy makers on the social capital outcomes in other countries and its implications for the current trends in the ACE and VET sectors.

6. The International Experience

Visit 1

School of Education, University of Glasgow, UK

Contacts: Professor Andy Furlong, Professor Alison Phipps, Mr Keith Hammond, Dr Evelyn Arizpe, Dr Gareth Mulvey, Dr Marta Moskal, Mr Alan Britton, Dr Julie McAdam

The School of Education [1] offers a dynamic environment for researchers and research students, with a strong network of national and international collaborative links. Across the School there is a strong focus on research relating to the enhancement of teaching and learning and associated issues of access and social justice, with extensive collaboration with government bodies, employers, education authorities, schools, colleges, the voluntary sector and urban and rural regeneration agencies.

Staff within the School belong to one of five Research and Knowledge Transfer Groups:

- Creativity, Culture and Faith
- Interdisciplinary Science Education, Technologies and Learning (ISETL)
- Professional Learning and Leadership
- Pedagogy, Policy and Practice
- Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education.

Their work is also advanced through a number of important research and development centres:

- Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning (CRADALL)
- Centre for Science Education
- Robert Clark Centre for Technological Education
- The PASCAL International Observatory.

In addition, the School and its researchers are actively involved in a number of projects and initiatives under the auspice of the European Union, such as Comenius Regio Partnerships.

The focus of the visit was on discussions with the researchers and lecturers and learning from their research to investigate trends in adult learning in the VET and ACE sectors, social capital outcomes and current research in teaching migrants.

Comenius Regio 2011 – 2013 [2]

Glasgow has been successful in securing £90,000 of funding from the Comenius Regio European funding program. The project sought to enhance teaching practice for migrant, newly arrived young people through the exchange of best practice and expertise within Local Authorities with respect to primary/secondary transition for newly arrived students in Glasgow, Scotland and Marseilles, France. It also sought to devise a new Teacher Education component within the post graduate diploma in education at the University of Glasgow in conjunction with the university of Aix en Provence in France.

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1 http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/aboutus/
2 Comenius Regio Glasgow/Marseille, Power Point Presentation http://www.eis.org.uk/images/
    equality/2013/presentations/pm3 per cent20regio per cent202.pdf

6. The International Experience

The project aim was to utilise and disseminate nationally the experience of second language teachers and Local Authority policies on anti-discrimination to enhance policy and practice with respect to inclusive methodology in schools. The initiative would equip teachers to better meet the needs of pupils within a diverse European school community. The model would be transferable and applicable to various contexts and would include opportunities for student teachers at devised seminars in both Local Authorities. The initiative would introduce pupils to active learning opportunities through which they would gain an understanding of tolerance and respect and the benefits of working in a cooperative way with peers from other cultures. These methods would form a holistic framework, improving classroom practice for migrant, bilingual pupils within diverse European schools.

Visit 2

National Conference: Education for Diversity, Supporting Newly Arrived Young People in Glasgow and Marseille held at School of Education, University of Glasgow

The Glasgow City Council and the Ville de Marseille, through a Comenius Regio Partnership project, worked on devising policies and practice for the support of newly arrived young people to both cities during their transition from primary school to secondary school. A one day conference was held on 14 May, 2013 that showcased research and a number of projects that focused not only on learning but also on the teacher training and the changing nature of a complex school environment with migrant children and young adults with multiple literacies. Even though the focus was on somewhat younger English as Additional Language (EAL) learners (16+), some of the findings from the research conducted could be applied across different age groups and student cohorts.

As well as focusing on the learners, the researchers were interested in teacher training which aims to raise awareness of multiculturalism in classrooms and slightly different needs of the students with multiple literacies.

Another project that focused on the exploration of educators' experience of working with newly arrived young migrants was used to inform the design of 'An Introduction to Education for Diversity: Language across Learning' project conducted by Julie McAdam, Esther Daborn and Hazel Crichton, the researchers from Glasgow University.

The MIRACLE project – Migrants and Refugees a Challenge for Learning in European Schools (MIRACLE) [3] was presented by Meike Jens from the University of Hannover, Germany. The project's long term vision is to enable students with a migrant background to follow and fulfill a more rewarding school career. Even though the research and development behind the Comenius In-Service training course which teachers from Glasgow City Council participated in focused on primary school teachers, the concepts and approaches used can be applied to any learning setting (secondary, VET and ACE) where students of migrant backgrounds are present.

The MIRACLE project aimed at two major areas. First, development of teaching and learning materials for students in which the portrayal of students with a migrant background was not homogenized or limited to stereotypical images; and second, development of a teacher training course, offering various modules of self-reflection, based on the anti-bias approach and containing a special focus on anti-discriminatory civic education. An anti-bias approach doesn't focus only on the individual level of perceived discrimination but also looks into the complex interrelation between the individual, institutional and ideological levels, where discrimination is likely to occur. This approach allows teachers to become aware of their own possible unconscious prejudices.

The researchers have further explained the key aspects of their research, focusing on understanding and evaluating a number of concepts and approaches to teaching and teaching methodology, guided by the 'diversity approach':

1. Diversity – A diversity approach aims at recognising, valuing and managing differences allowing all learners to contribute and realise their full potential.

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3 Migrants and Refugees, a challenge for learning in European schools (MIRACLE) Project
   information, www.adam-europe.eu/prj/7024/project_7024_en.pdf

6. The International Experience

2. Anti-Bias training – This training is experience based and allows the participants to engage in an interactive group process which shows how discrimination may work on a personal, interpersonal and social level. In doing so, it was envisaged that each individual may develop their own work and life situations where non-discriminative behaviour is fostered.

3. Betzavta concept – This educational concept originates from Israel. It aims at training the participant in how to react to and resolve conflicts and dilemmas through a hostility-free democratic communication between citizens who share a joint system of values.

Visit 3

Visual Journeys Project

Contact: Dr Evelyn Arizpe

This project was led by the researchers from the School of Education, University of Glasgow and was conducted simultaneously in Scotland, Spain, the USA and Australia in 2010. The research hoped to address the question of how Scottish educators can meet the needs of the diverse learners that make up the fabric of Scottish society.

The Visual Journeys project focused on how immigrant children and their native counterparts constructed meaning from visual images in contemporary wordless picture books and how their visual literacy skills have helped them in creating communities of critical readers that allowed them to reflect upon the experiences of migration, journeys and foreign worlds. The researchers were also interested in teachers' responses to the learning strategies used in the project.

Two picture books were used in the project: Flotsam by David Wiesner (2006) [4] and The Arrival by Shaun Tan (2007) [5]. Even though the books were used with children, the researchers pointed out that the books are complex visual narratives and that they can be used with any age group. The books are without words to guide the reader, but are highly detailed and require careful examination in order to decode visual signs, construct sequences and generate hypotheses that would be confirmed or redefined as the reading progressed (Arizpe, McAdam, 2011) [6]. The strategies used were: a 'walk-through' of the picture book; the use of annotated spreads; the use of photographs and the use of graphic strips.

- A 'walk-through' of the picture book with questions and discussion time.

- The use of annotated spreads - this involved providing the student with the opportunity to look closely at one particular image and comment on it in their own words, providing a glimpse into their thought processes as they 'read' the picture. The research team selected images that were crucial to understanding the narrative and the students were invited to select images that they were personally interested in. The images were pasted on A3 sheets and the students wrote in the margins, drawing arrows to reference their comments.

- The use of photographs - in Flotsam, the main character finds a camera washed up on the beach; the pictures within the text depict real and imagined photographs taken by the camera as it moves through the sea. Developing this theme the students were invited to imagine that they had found the camera and were asked to take pictures of objects/events that were important in their lives. The students presented these pictures and talked to the group about their significance.

- The use of graphic strips - both picture books made use of strip formats, in particular, The Arrival made use of these to depict sub plots within the main narrative. The students were again invited to pick a graphic strip layout and depict their own short story of a journey that they had been on. Each student was invited to talk through their graphic strip and answer questions about the story and the design features they had used (McAdam & Arizpe, 2011, p 19) [7].

4 Wiesner, D 2006, Flotsam, Clarion Books, New York.
5 Tan, S 2006, The Arrival, Hachette Australia Pty Ltd, Sydney.
6 Arizpe, E & McAdam, J 2011, Crossing Visual Borders and Connecting Cultures: Children's responses to the photographic
   theme in David Wiesner's Flotsam, New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship, Vol 17, No 2, pp. 227-243.
7 McAdam, J & Arizpe, E 2011, Journeys into Culturally Responsive Teaching, Journal of
   Teacher Education and Teachers' Work, Vol 2, No 1, pp. 18-27.

6. The International Experience

Upon examining the project and the discussion with Dr Arizpe, it is evident that such books can be successfully used in adult EAL classrooms with students who have been assessed at an Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) Pre-Level 1 in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Learning and Numeracy, and whose own literacy in their first language is non-existent due to the lack of educational opportunities in their own country of origin. In addition, the methods used in this project would address the needs of those learners better, as they would rely on oral culture and one's ability to construct meaning through images, having the teacher as a facilitator of the knowledge but not as an ultimate knowledge holder. The stories constructed through the meaning making can all be true and the teacher as a facilitator provides vocabulary, grammar and syntax at a pace that suits the learners while the images/pictures form the central part of the students' learning experience.

Visit 4

Glasgow Clyde College 16+ ESOL Programme

Contact: Ms Lyn Ma, Senior Lecturer

Lyn Ma spoke about her experience in teaching young unaccompanied migrants (15 – 21 year olds); the challenges that she and her teachers face, but also successes and the work involved in teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL) at the College.

The College has very well established ESOL courses that cater for international students as well as migrants, refugees and asylum seekers for whom English is an additional language.

The College has about 75 students under the category of unaccompanied minors who have fled their countries of origin, mainly, Somalia, but also from Congo, Burundi, Albania, Guinea, Iran and Iraq, and have reached Glasgow, the city which since 1999 has become one of the cities to which asylum seekers were dispersed.

Specialised English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes have been offered at the College since 2004, but with an influx of young adult learners, it has been noticed that adult ESOL classes were inappropriate. According to Lyn Ma, adults learn differently, they know why they attend classes, thus are more motivated to learn and are more successful in their learning endeavours.

On the other hand, young unaccompanied migrants who study at the College have mostly had no schooling or very fragmented schooling in their country of origin. This means that they are not used to sitting in formal learning settings, don't know how to be organised or interact with others in a classroom situation and have very often other underlying issues such as post-traumatic stress disorders that do impact on their ability to successfully learn and advance further in a new learning environment. To cater for their needs, the College has started the 16+ ESOL program as a direct response to the growing number of young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived in Glasgow and are seeking English language classes. The course is run five mornings or afternoons per week in order to allow students to attend meetings with their legal representatives and medical appointments.

There are three classes organised as follows:

- Literacies - for students who are not literate in their native language
- 16+ Elementary - for students at Beginners/Elementary level of English
- 16+ Pre-Intermediate - for students at Pre-Intermediate/Intermediate level of English.

In addition to ESOL classes, non-ESOL subjects have been offered, thus enhancing the curriculum and allowing young people to obtain as much experience and as many qualifications as possible. To that effect, math, electrical engineering units and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) short courses such as ASDAN Citizenship have been offered. Students also complete Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) assessments during one academic year.

Further to this, it has been noticed that better success is achieved when students are allowed to stay in the program for a longer period of time. Good care is taken that English level is sufficient for students to achieve good outcomes in further training. Individual guidance sessions are included in allocated teaching time which allows teachers or coordinators to work with students on an individual basis and to address not only study issues, but any pastoral care issues that may emerge.

6. The International Experience

Lyn Ma also emphasised that a particular strength of this program is excellent communication and relationships with other agencies such as the Social Work Department and accommodation services. This collaborative practice in looking after young people allows them to be secure that they are receiving a holistic service.

Even though the Programme has been successful, it is not without its challenges - from looking after the young vulnerable adults to finding teaching resources that will fit this particular group of students. Often teachers devise their own resources, thus meeting the individual needs of their students.

Nevertheless, Ma hopes that this program will give young adult learners an opportunity to not only learn the language but also to learn some valuable life skills, employability skills and gain some SQA approved qualifications.

Further to her work at the College, Ma has also worked with the young people and the British Red Cross to provide opportunities to apply for and access volunteering placements. This work has led to the development of a good practice guide and teaching pack that was launched at an international conference in Brussels on 17 September, 2013.

The 16+ Programme at the College has been run by a handpicked group of dedicated ESOL teachers. It has been noted that not all teachers are suited to teach and look after young adult learners (16 – 21 year olds) as this cohort of students is very challenging, hence more needs to be done in the initial teacher training that focuses on the needs of this student cohort. Two short courses were run by the University of Glasgow, School of Education that targeted teachers who teach young adults.

In the discussion about teacher training, it has been deemed that more collaborative projects needed to happen in order to exchange experiences and ideas and to call for a more uniformed platform of TESOL delivery to different migrant cohorts based on their age as well as on their level of literacy in their mother tongue. A partnership project that Ma is going to undertake with Professor Alison Phipps of Glasgow University, will seek to address the pedagogy underpinning teaching separated young asylum seekers and refugees.

Visit 5

Research at the University of Glasgow

Contacts: Mr Keith Hammond, Dr Evelyn Arizpe, Dr Gareth Mulvey, Dr Marta Moskal, Mr Alan Britton

In order to better understand the work undertaken by the lecturers and researchers, a number of interviews were conducted with the lecturers from the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNet). This is an initiative of the University of Glasgow working internationally, and across the UK to build on the extensive expertise relating to migration, refugees and asylum and with a particular interest in aspects of community cohesion and how their work shapes and influences educational policies in the adult education sector in Scotland. [8]

Scottish policy on literacy and numeracy in the last decade has been informed and influenced by the findings of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) which was conducted under the auspice of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The survey aimed at comparing literacy and numeracy levels between participating countries and to lead towards an understanding of the 'demand and supply of skills in the global, knowledge-based economy' (OECD, 2000: iii) [9]. The results of the survey highlighted literacy skills deficiency and it was concluded that one of the major actions should be to develop strategies to build literacy skills. As a direct response, Scotland made it a policy priority to work on developing an Adult Literacy and Numeracy sector that will cater for and raise standards of teaching and learning in the sector. Scotland has adopted the social practice approach in developing its policies that are informed by the New Literacy Studies (NLS) which have been internationally acclaimed for its learner-centred, social practice approach (Scottish Government 2010; 6) [10].

In the last decade, a significant increase in refugees, asylum seekers and migrants has been evident in Scotland. Refugees and asylum seekers come from African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Somalia; from Middle Eastern countries, such as Iraq and Iran, but also as far as from China, Sri Lanka and Pakistan (Mulvey, 2013) [11]. EU migrants are mainly comprised of people from the former Eastern European countries, especially from Poland and Romania, with a significant number of Roma people seeking asylum and refuge in the countries of Western Europe.

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8   http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/
9   OECD & Statistics Canada 2000, Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the
     International Adult Literacy Survey, OECD/Statistics Canada, Paris.
10 Scottish Government 2010, Adult Literacies in Scotland (ALIS) 2020, Strategic guidance.
11 Mulvey, G 2013, In Search of Normality, Refugee Integration in Scotland (Final Report), Scottish Refugee Council, Scotland.

6. The International Experience

Many refugees and migrants who came to the UK and settled in Scotland, have seen the value of education in order to gain employment comparable to the jobs that they had in their countries of origin, or to gain a better paid job and move away from low wage jobs. However, choosing between employment and education has also been seen as a fine balancing act in which many would choose employment due to financial constraints with a hope of returning to education once they can afford it. Another pre-cursor to either employment or further education, according to the Scottish Refugee Council, is participation in ESOL classes. While the ESOL classes fulfil their role in teaching newcomers the language, they also play a very important social role, where people can learn about their new country, learn without inhibitions of being laughed at and where people can make friends and learn in a secure environment that foster their learning and their achievements (Mulvey, 2013) [12].

Volunteering has been seen as a pathway to employment or an option to socially engage and include migrant newcomers into the fabric of the local community. However, it has also been seen as a double-edged sword as many people in the UK are losing their jobs so taking someone on as a volunteer in the job that was cut can be problematic. One of the problems that has been noted was that the skill level of a volunteer and the previous job occupant were not the same, but the less skilled person was hired to do the job.

Nevertheless, 'Volunteering for Social Inclusion', the project established in close partnership with the Danish Red Cross, is set out to explore the benefits of volunteering on social inclusion for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. In attempting to achieve this, the project highlights real challenges faced by vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees in accessing volunteering opportunities. The project will develop a toolkit of good practice for improving volunteering practice, teaching materials for ESOL tutors that promote volunteering and policy recommendations to improve volunteering practice throughout Europe.

There are not many employment opportunities for migrants, refugees or asylum seekers in Scotland in the current economic climate, according to the latest research (Mulvey, 2013) [13], thus many of them end up in lower paid or lower skilled jobs than their qualifications indicate, due to a number of factors:

1. Their qualifications are not recognised

2. Their English skills level is insufficient

3. Perception of the domestic population and a number of employers is such that they should employ migrant workers as a last resort

4. Often, workers with qualifications, e.g. doctors, were steered towards lesser jobs in health rather than encouraged to maintain and upgrade their skills in order to continue their career

5. Any skills upgrade may take longer and people opt out due to time and financial constraints.

Another issue across the board, regardless of occupation, is that the skills people have should be utilised in new jobs. However, the opportunities to use existing skills are limited as skills transfer is not straightforward; to bridge the gap between skills and knowledge one already has and the skills and knowledge that are required takes more time and study.

Refugees were often steered into jobs that would make them under-skilled in comparison to their qualifications and skills obtained in their country of origin or would go into careers that are too generic rather than specialist for which they have more aptitude.

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12 Mulvey, G 2013, In Search of Normality, Refugee Integration in Scotland (Final Report), Scottish Refugee Council, Scotland.
13 Mulvey, G 2013, In Search of Normality, Refugee Integration in Scotland (Final Report), Scottish Refugee Council, Scotland.

Furthermore, if skills were not ratified with recognised qualifications, it was difficult to get into courses. Practical skills were not always taken into consideration, while assumptions were also made that if you speak with an accent, your language skills are not good enough.

There is a strong link between education - obtaining a certificate - and gaining employment. However, some have seen education as a delay to job search and entering the employment market, while others looked for short courses that will equip them with skills for a job.

Overall, though, the effects of language progression have been shown to be multi-dimensional and seen by most refugees as a pre-requisite to any notion of full integration (Mulvey, 2013, p 73) [14].

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14 Mulvey, G 2013, In Search of Normality, Refugee Integration in Scotland (Final Report), Scottish Refugee Council, Scotland.

6. The International Experience

Visit 6

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), Dublin, Ireland

Contacts: Mr Fergus Dolan, Literacies Development Worker

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) [15] is an independent charity that is committed to improving the lives of people with literacy and numeracy difficulties, providing them with access to learning opportunities according to their needs, with the ultimate goal of successfully integrating those individuals into society.

According to the latest OECD survey [16], one in six Irish adults have problems understanding basic written texts, while one in four find it difficult to do simple math calculations. Having these figures in mind, the work that NALA does in campaigning and lobbying on behalf of adults with literacy and numeracy issues is even more significant. NALA's work is widespread and involves tutor training, developing of teaching materials, distance education services, policy making and research.

While visiting NALA, the Fellow spoke with Mr Fergus Dolan, Literacies Development Worker, about the work of NALA and what impact it has on progressing the cause of adult literacy in Ireland.

NALA relies heavily on volunteers who work alongside paid tutors, helping adults along their own very difficult journey of reclaiming their literacy and numeracy skills. As everywhere, it has been acknowledged that those skills always come with a stigma attached, especially for native speakers who have missed out on the opportunity of acquiring and mastering those skills while in the school system as children or teenagers. Coming back into training as adults has been a challenge for many.

In order to promote literacy and numeracy training to adults, to detach from the stigma associated with the literacy programs, NALA and An Post, the state-owned provider of postal services in Republic of Ireland, embarked on a joint venture of advertising the literacy programs as well as offering a free phone support line, as the first steps towards engaging and participating in adult learning. TV and cinema advertisements featuring three individuals - a train driver, a mother and a hairdresser - showcased people with literacy issues who have the courage to break the circle of illiteracy and to engage in learning based on their individual needs. Through their stories, they encouraged others to contact NALA and see for themselves what can be done to address their literacy and numeracy issues. The focus of the campaign was also on the benefits of returning to further education, as well as on the fact that literacy problems are not contained within one class in the society.

The TV and cinema ad campaign was very successful and NALA has seen an increase in adults contacting them, enquiring about the courses and participating in the courses. It has also received calls from people who wanted to volunteer as literacy tutors and help others, thus having the wider community engaged in this project. Further to this, An Post developed a series of radio advertisements called 'words and numbers' to accompany the campaign. Based on the success of its initial campaign that ran from 2007 to 2010, a new campaign started in 2011, for which An Post developed three new TV advertisements while a complementary information website www.takethefirststep.ie was created to aid the campaign and has proven to be a success, showing an increase in male participation in literacy based programs from 20 per cent to 45 per cent.

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15 https://www.nala.ie/what-we-do
16 OECD & Central Statistic Office 2013, Adult Skills Survey, Literacy in Ireland, https://www.nala.ie/literacy

NALA and its researchers are of a belief that the new way of thinking about literacy and numeracy for adults needs to be developed. The three ways of achieving better outcomes can be described as:

- Integrate language, literacy and numeracy development into all publicly funded education and training

- Focus on and work on development of family literacy in order to break inter-generational cycles of disadvantage and under-achievement

- Offer flexible high quality adult education and training provision in a wide range of settings, e.g. workplace, distance and blended learning and intensive options.

NALA is committed to working with the industry, trade unions and government to address literacy and numeracy issues as these have a direct impact on the workplace, effectiveness and productivity, career opportunities, personal finances, progression, family and everyday life. To meet their goals, NALA is prioritising their work and is targeting those adults who hold less than Level 4 qualifications to access literacy learning opportunities. Courses for adults in need of literacy in the workplace is funded through the Workplace Basic Education Fund, while unemployed adults access literacy training through the Vocational Education Committees (VEC) Adult Literacy Service.

While discussing the benefits of improved literacy skills in the workplace, the following was highlighted:

- Higher employee morale

- Better engagement in training and development

- Improved production targets and less wastage

- Better attention to quality and more flexibility from employees.

NALA is a strong supporter and a believer in integrating literacy, whereby they envisage literacy being embedded in everyday situations that adults would find interesting, therefore being more likely to engage and respond to a literacy program.[17] NALA's aim is to work on encouraging all education and training providers to address literacy issues, embed literacy awareness in their program delivery so that people are not excluded from participating in education and training and can participate in those activities if they are tailored around their needs, interests and goals.

While the primary goal of any learning in a vocational setting is to achieve those vocational credentials, for adults with literacy issues, having literacy embedded in vocational training means that:

- Literacy barriers are reduced while learning subject matter

- The specific language, literacy and numeracy is developed and is relevant to the subject and vocational area

- Confidence and skills in literacy and learning are developed.

NALA is also prolific in their publications and research, thus supporting teachers and learners in their attempt to integrate language, literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. [18]

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17 NALA, 2009 Policy Brief on Integrating Literacy, https://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/
   NALA%20Policy%20Brief%20on%20Integrating%20Literacy_1.pdf
18 NALA, Skillwords, http://www.nala.ie/resources/skillwords-integrating-literacy & NALA,
   Teaching and Learning Workbooks, http://www.nala.ie/resources/131

6. The International Experience

Visit 7

Adult Community Education Centres

South West Dublin Adult Learning Centre, Ballyfermot and Inchicore

Contact: Siobhan Condron

Dublin Adult Learning Centre

Contact: Mary Maher

There are close to 60,000 adult learners attending VEC adult literacy courses nationwide and to understand better how the courses are delivered and what type of clients access the courses, the Fellow visited two community-based centres - South West Dublin Adult Learning Centre and Dublin Adult Learning Centre.

Ballyfermot and Dublin Adult Education Centre cater for a disadvantaged population and are operating in the areas with traditionally low socio-economic status. Ballyfermot Civic Centre is located in an outer suburb of Dublin where a large proportion of people are from disadvantaged backgrounds, while Dublin Adult Education Centre is located in the centre of Dublin City and its courses are designed to cater for the needs of both native speakers and migrants in the area.

In terms of the migrant population, the learners are predominantly of Nigerian and Polish backgrounds. Polish migrants often work in lower skilled jobs than what their educational attainment was in their home country, mainly due to poor language skills and employment opportunities at the time of their arrival. They tend not to integrate but live within their own communities, working mainly in the construction industry which prospered in the boom years of the 1990s. However, due to the economic downturn in Europe, they have lost their jobs and now need more English to be up skilled or re-trained. While social inclusion wasn't on their agenda in the boom years, they are now forced to learn the language to gain employment and integrate into the society more successfully.

The Nigerian migrants' English language proficiency is characterised by high oracy, but low reading and writing skills. The challenge faced by the educators was to convince the students once they've accessed the training services at the centres that they need to improve their reading and writing skills. This also has proved a challenge when it comes to organising teaching, due to the spikey profile of the students, and often their unwillingness to commit to the training which incorporates not only further training but honing in on the literacy skills that they need.

When it comes to native speakers, one very distinct group of students is formed by the 'travelling community' of Irish origin who traditionally wouldn't have completed primary school education and often have very low literacy skill levels. They have always been marginalised which has impacted on their social inclusion and success in training. Other native speakers access literacy classes to increase their chances of employment or advancement in the job they already have.

Training in the centres is offered on a part time basis and tends to be organised around student needs, so one on one tutoring and small group work is more common. The standard practice in assessing a literacy student involves a one on one interview, comprising of a literacy assessment, as well as a discussion in regards to one's needs and goals which then form the basis of a learning plan that is then passed on to the relevant tutors. It is not uncommon to have students asking for a specific skill to master, e.g. personal financing, and through the assessment to find out that his or her literacy skills are

also low. In that case alongside a course 'Managing Your Money' an unaccredited course in spelling may be offered while further options for an accredited literacy course are explored and can be offered in the course of training. In the words of one assessor, assigning someone to an accredited literacy program will also have enough latitude to take one's goals, needs and interests into consideration. All of the literacy courses are offered on this basis, thus closely meeting students' needs and in turn ensuring that the students will enjoy and actively participate in the program that will yield results.

Class sizes are not large in literacy courses and range from three to eight people. One to one tuition is also offered to students who either have a very low level of literacy, e.g. they cannot write their own name, or whose needs are very specific and would not be compatible with the needs of a group.

The ESOL classes are structured somewhat differently. Students are assessed in groups. Class sizes tend to be bigger than in literacy and are averaging at about nine per class. Students' spoken language and literacy are assessed before an appropriate class is offered. If students need extra help, they can be offered a VELT (Volunteer English Language Tutor) or a literacy tutor with ESOL training, depending on their needs. Most of the language students come from Eastern Europe, their native languages being Polish, Russian and Bulgarian.

One of the Centre Coordinators thinks that they are lucky to have the freedom to meet individuals' needs and not to be entirely driven by labour-market concerns. It is unfortunate though that due to relatively low funding levels compared to other areas of education, they can only offer people six hours per week. In addition to this, very recent changes to their structure occurred where VEC has been disbanded and merged with the national training body, Irish National Training Authority – FAS, with the change of name to City of Dublin Training and Education Board. Regardless of the changes, the centre is keen to fight hard to keep learners' needs at the heart of what they do. As an organisation, they are determined not to drive people into unsuitable courses to suit the needs of the labour market.

7. Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes

The Fellow has already delivered two presentations in Victoria.

- The first presentation was held in Melbourne at the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Providers Network Meeting in September 2013. The Fellow spoke to a group of managers and program coordinators who deliver the SEE program in Victoria. They were interested in the overseas experience, similarities and differences between the work practices and student cohorts when it comes to language, literacy and numeracy training. They were also interested in new approaches to teaching EAL students, the social practice approach and about the ways to collaborate on projects in Australia, as well as possible resources that may help and enhance teaching in language, literacy and numeracy programs.

- The second presentation was delivered in November 2013 to a group of teachers from a private RTO, SkillsPlus Inc, that delivers language, literacy and numeracy courses as well as vocational courses in Victoria. The focus of the presentation was on highlighting successful teaching methods and practices in an ESOL classroom, as well as on resources and sharing of experience and ideas to enhance their own teaching practices.

- The Fellow has submitted a research paper for two conferences. It has now been confirmed that the Fellow will be presenting at the ACTA Conference that will be held in September 2014. The Fellow will focus on the positive outcomes of the Fellowship for the practitioners in the field of adult literacy education.

- The Fellow has also presented in April 2014 at another private RTO, MTC Australia that delivers vocational and language, literacy and numeracy courses across three states: New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. The presentation was included in the MTC one day conference, 'Teaching and Learning in SEE'. Two one hour sessions were held and the research was presented to the trainers and managers, generating a lot of interest in the topic.

- Further dissemination of the research will involve a mail out of a soft copy and hard copies to the relevant industry bodies.

The Fellow is committed to present the research to a wider audience at state and national levels throughout the year.

8. Findings & Recommendations

8.1 Findings

- Ireland, Scotland and Australia participated in both the ALLS and PIIAC surveys in order to find the level of literacy and numeracy amongst the working age population, to develop policies and measures in order to address literacy and numeracy issues that may impact on economic progress, productivity as well as individual's achievements in the workplace.

- Overall, all three countries are determined to develop plans and strategies that will address literacy and numeracy issues which have shown that a lack of sufficient levels in those core skills significantly impact on one's success in learning and engaging in learning as well as work advancement.

- Similar student cohorts have been identified in all three countries:

  » a) Native speakers who left school early or have been disadvantaged in their schooling due to personal or other issues

  » b) Migrants within the European Union or migrant/refugee or asylum seekers groups from across the globe, with an influx of young asylum seekers who have proved a challenge for both educators and the government due to their needs, their visa requirements and their ability and willingness to integrate and contribute to the host society.

- ACE centres form the backbone of offering learning opportunities to adults in Ireland, while in Scotland, ACE centres and Colleges are equally represented.

- Localising learning experience through the Adult Community Education sector in Ireland has proven very successful in attracting adult learners to participate in life-long learning courses, in acknowledging their literacy and numeracy levels as well as the need for improvement and the opportunities offered.

- Regional cooperation is strong and supported by the European Union and its Lifelong Learning Programme as well as the Comenius Regio Programme funded by the EU, with the aim to provide more opportunities for local authority linking with other regions or countries within the EU and improving education offered to young people.

- Teacher training in EAL is under revision and the School of Education, University of Glasgow is acting as a lead agent in the research and implementation of the revised teacher training that will look into the globalisation of learning and the challenges presented by a more diverse cohort of students, with different language abilities not only in English but in their respective mother tongues. To that effect, a number of workshops have been held to inform and educate teachers about the changed landscape in primary, secondary and adult education.

- NALA in Ireland, as a strong advocate in promoting literacy and numeracy, has yielded success in student participation in its literacy and numeracy classes due to a well organised campaign, via TV and radio advertisements, TV shows and the Internet.

- NALA has also supported and invested in blended learning, using Information Technology as a platform to individualise learning and also give more flexibility to the learners.

- Structured EAL classes and the advancement through levels only when there is sufficient evidence that one has achieved the proficiency level required is essential to the success of 16+ Programme at the Clyde College in Scotland. It is a valuable showcase of good practice not only in regards to the students but also the practitioners who have recognised the difference between teaching adult EAL and teaching EAL to 16 to 21 year olds. This acknowledgement of difference in learning styles and the teaching employed has led to further research that is under way in Scotland.

8. Findings & Recommendations

8.2 Recommendations

Government and Industry

- Teacher training should be revised in order to educate teachers of a variety of learners and learners' cohorts that make up the fabric of both the TAFE and ACE sectors, to ensure that what is taught and how it is taught meet the needs of a variety of learners in the adult EAL setting.

- Similarly to the EU initiative on collaboration, a similar collaborative project between the states in Australia should be established to foster and encourage nationwide cooperation and research.

- Develop new ways of promoting literacy/numeracy programs that will target specific learner cohorts, similar to a very successful promotion of programs that target Indigenous literacy in Australia, or promotional strategies employed by the NALA in Ireland.

- Continue educating employers about the benefits of increased literacy and numeracy, e.g. increased productivity and decreased waste, increased life/work satisfaction of their workers.

- Offer more training allowing people to learn new skills on the job which may lead to their promotion or lead to new job prospects.

- Recognise the changed landscape of EAL. Ten years ago, humanitarian migrants/refugees, mostly from Europe or South America, at least had primary or secondary education in their first language, while current migrant/refugee groups, mostly from Afghanistan, Sudan or Burma, have little or no education in their first language. Whilst high oracy may be developed faster, their reading and writing skills lag behind, resulting in spikey profiles when measured via ACSF indicators. This type of profiling may prove challenging for both learners and educators.

- Provide more funding to the ACE sector that will allow it to promote and support disadvantaged groups to attend classes and attain accreditation or certificates for employment.

- Provide better links and pathways between the ACE sector and TAFE colleges for students who started their education at a small community provider, thus eliminating major trauma that may be caused while transitioning and settling into a new learning environment.

- Encourage volunteering as a way of engaging individuals with the wider community, working on their skills sets, acquiring a better understanding of a particular workplace which may lead to people taking up courses that they are really interested in and leading them into the paid work force.

Professional Associations, VET and ACE providers

- A web of learning through intensive collaboration between the academia and the practitioners should be developed, focusing on how people learn, the ways people learn and economic issues that permeate learning that will form a blue print for further action by the Government, policy makers, businesses and educators in both sectors, the TAFE and ACE.

- A mix of blended learning, where applicable, should be encouraged as it empowers students to take ownership of their learning.

- Use IT as a tool that will enable both the student and the teacher to develop a learning plan that will meet one's individual needs.

- Recognise and establish different teaching/learning settings for different types of learners: a) In the case of a large number of migrant learners in Australia who are illiterate in their mother tongue, a more traditional classroom setting that combines both a student centred and a teacher centred approach may be considered as those learners have a more traditional view of a learning setting and view the teacher as a facilitator and provider of their learning; b) For native speakers, who have long suffered from the stigma attached to their lack of literacy and numeracy, small group training and

one on one tuition, as shown in Ireland, may result in more success as learners firstly work on their confidence to come back to learning and then focus on the learning itself that will result in better outcomes for the learner.

- Use of so called 'silent books' should be encouraged in EAL teaching, especially in low level English language proficiency groups where the existent literature and text books/materials are deemed too high by the practitioners. In developing this new type of teaching material, building a repository of 'silent books' to be available nationwide to enable changes to teaching practice, focus on oral language to teach the written language and connect with the learner through his/her experiences that can be only conveyed through oracy in the initial stages of learning the new language. This, in turn, will enrich the rapport between the students and their teachers, empower them to persevere in learning the new language with the ultimate goal of learning for social inclusion, acceptance and employment.

- Sharing of resources and best teaching practice should happen more often, freely, and at the same time encourage research based in teaching practice.

- Build a repository of free resources for nationwide use by practitioners in both the TAFE and ACE sectors.

- Encourage teachers to research, document their experiences and produce learning resources that are pertinent to their own learner cohort.

- Similarly to the EU initiative on collaboration, a similar collaborative project between the states in Australia should be established to foster and encourage nationwide cooperation and research.

- Focus on developing IT skills as a way to teach LLN and provide the platform for learning that will enhance overall students' readiness to successfully participate in increasingly high-tech learning and working environment.

- Recognise the changed landscape of EAL. Ten years ago, humanitarian migrants/refugees mostly from Europe or South America at least had primary or secondary education in their first language, while current migrant/refugee groups, mostly from Afghanistan, Sudan or Burma, have little or no education in their first language. Whilst high oracy may be developed faster, their reading and writing skills lag behind, resulting in spikey profiles when measured via ACSF indicators. This type of profiling may prove challenging for both learners and educators.

- For EAL learners, a good grounding in the language of the host country is their key to subsequent success in either further study or employment.

- Priorities have to be recognised in terms of obtaining work or obtaining education. An improved language, literacy and numeracy level will lead to better employment outcomes if the students are given time to improve and reach their potential.

- Better screening of one's aptitude towards specific training, even in skills shortage areas such as aged care, child care or similar, as well as their language skills proficiency should form a part of one's assessment prior to the commencement of training. This will ensure that the learners are steered towards professions that will result in a high completion rate, and most importantly, a successful and fulfilling career.

- When possible, encourage teacher exchange between the two sectors, ACE and TAFE, in order to experience different settings and learn about different environments. In doing so, such an experience will enhance one's teaching and add to teachers' professional development.

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