SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE

Through Education and Training

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

KAREN DYMKE & CATE THOMPSON

Table of Contents

i. Executive Summary

> **'Adult Education is like a puzzle. But we need to see the big picture.'**

Dr Sai Vayrynen, Helsinki University, Finland.

> **'Representatives of (disadvantaged learners) are often at serious risk of social exclusion. They may be excluded from the labor market due to lack of adequate language or professional skills or because their qualifications are not recognized.'**

Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMap) European Union Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme.

Karen Dymke and Cate Thompson have been working with vulnerable learners for over 30 years in both community and TAFE provision and have been deeply involved in approaches to support and progress these learners. They have worked together developing programs and support for the VCAL, managed and written curriculum and frameworks such as the A Frame for Adult Learner's in the ACFE sector, and piloted projects in the fields of engaging with disadvantaged learners while implementing hands-on learning programs through social enterprise.

The Fellowship, which took place over three weeks in October 2017, provided an opportunity to identify the approaches Europe has taken to deal with this emerging challenge. The intent of this Fellowship was to research practice overseas to identify effective strategies that assist disadvantaged and disengaged learners to move from unemployment and associated disadvantages into employment and positive life options.

The Fellowship began with attendance at a Conference of Adult Education Researchers in Tallinn, Estonia. Conference attendance was then followed by numerous visits and meetings with practitioners, program managers and policy makers who are addressing these challenges. Cate's focus was on the engagement of learners into programs, while Karen's focus was on the approaches to teaching and learning for these students.

The focus question was; How do we engage vulnerable people to commence a learning journey? Furthermore, having engaged them into programs, how do we ensure through quality teaching and learning that they continue the journey and build confidence and skills, to pathway on to employment and/or, better life opportunities?

Practice has shown that teachers and practitioners in this field are required to meet an increasingly diverse array of learner needs, many of which can be extremely challenging.

The further vision of this Fellowship, which Karen focused on, was to professionalize the practice of educators working in this field with the aim of recognizing the specialist skills required in teaching vulnerable learners. In the words of John Hattie,

> **'We need a deeper representation of excellence in teachers, a greater challenge and commitment to recognizing excellence, and a coherent, integrated, high level of deep understanding about teacher expertise.'[1]**

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1   Hattie, J.A.C. (2003, October). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia, page 16. Retrieved from http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2003/4/

1. Fellowship Background

1.1 Context

There is global recognition that having a job is one of the most powerful determinants of quality of life. How do we assist disadvantaged, disengaged learners to move from unemployment and associated disadvantage into employment and life positive life options? This global challenge is one that the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) sector has been working to address over a number of decades. It is also a challenge that is gaining increased attention within the European community in the context of social change.

In Victoria, ACFE providers play a vital role in assisting members of this cohort to improve learning employment opportunities and, hence, quality of life. ACFE classes provide initial engagement activities and programs offering semi-formal entry level training with vocational content that can lead to pre-accredited, accredited and VET training onto sustainable employment.

While much progress has been made over the past decades, there are still many challenges to achieving strong outcomes in VET completion and employment for this cohort. It is an area for continual improvement, development and research. In Europe, significant work is being undertaken to improve equity of access to training and employment for this group. The European Commission (Education) is working with 32 countries to implement the European Agenda for Adult Education.

The focus of our Fellowship was on two of four effective approaches to re-engagement identified by ACFE for effective intervention that leads to stronger uptake of VET and employment. Our two areas of focus were:

» **Outreach and Engagement:** The importance of effective strategies to engage hard-to-reach learners is vital. Without focused engagement strategies, the foundations of future training and pathways is made more difficult.

» **Teaching and Learning:** At the heart of re-engagement is pedagogy, which in adult learning is termed andragogy. Effective andragogic approaches are vital to engaging learners effectively and taking them on a successful learning journey. The learning journey for vulnerable adult learners requires ongoing and relevant professional development and support for the educators who deliver ACFE pre-accredited, accredited and VET training programs.
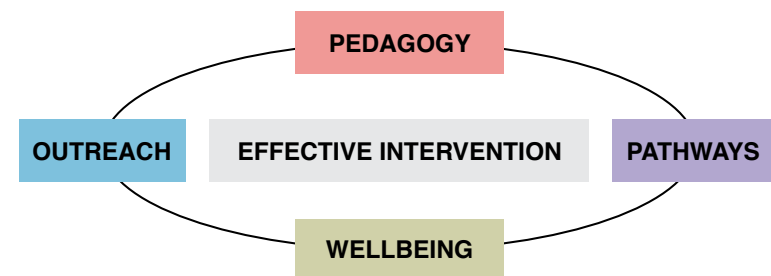

Fig. 1. Strategic Review of Effective Re-Engagement Models for Disengaged Learners Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Two of the four identified strategies are at the core of this research. As identified by ACFE and as the European research supports, the initial challenge is to engage disadvantaged learners.

Once engaged in educational programs, the challenge for organisations is then on how to keep them engaged in learning to ensure targets for completion rates and eventual pathways to employment or further education are met.

This Fellowship identifies European strategies that address these challenges. It takes two separate investigations: (1) initial outreach and engagement and (2) maintaining engagement via teaching and learning.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology for the Fellowship included carrying out visits to a range of organisations such as practice-based education programs, policy and implementation departments and researchers, and attendance at an adult learning conference. Sites visited included Tallinn in Estonia, Bruges and Brussels in Belgium, Helsinki in Finland, The Hague and Amsterdam in The Netherlands. (See Appendix 1 for details.) These different and broad perspectives assisted in gaining an understanding of the challenges faced by European nations, their innovative policy development and practices, and the importance placed on research that will further inform policy and evidence of results to create more effective and sustainable engagement and learning programs for adult learners.

1.3 Period

The Fellowship was conducted in October of 2017 over three weeks. Report writing, synthesis and dissemination of findings then occurred in the following twelve-month post-trip period. The interest and uptake in the outcomes of this Fellowship has had high impact across a range of sectors.

1.4 Fellows' Biographies

Karen and Cate in Europe

Cate Thompson

Cate has spent significant time working in the area of education that focusses on engaging and upskilling some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. After some years in mainstream secondary education Cate began teaching adult literacy on a part-time basis, just at the time when adult education, with a focus on disadvantaged learners, was beginning to emerge as a new sector (as a result of economic changes that saw a decrease in unskilled employment). Cate has seen the sector grow from grass roots ad hoc community responses to a more

professional well-organised sector. Cate has worked in a range of educational roles, from curriculum design, project and program management, and hands-on delivery.

Some of the more significant projects include Project Management of the HEAT (Hospitality Education and Training). Social Enterprise Training Program Development of 'At Risk' Curriculum, Development and Management of the ACFE A Frame. As her career has progressed, she has specialised in developing innovative learning programs specifically to engage hard-to-reach learners. While Cate has been able to successfully achieve good outcomes for learners via the development of innovative and engaging programs for the more vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, she is still challenged as to how to provide wider engagement strategies that provide that vital, initial engagement with 'our invisible learners' - the ones who don't engage with learning centres but desperately need the support to take the opportunity to learn.

Cate's experience has taught her that if we are unable to make that initial engagement with potential learners, no matter how relevant, interesting or engaging a program is, learners will not benefit because they will not have made that initial engagement, and will continue to face the numerous barriers that prevent them from moving into a program that provides access support and pathways to further education, employment or opportunities for better life. Cate became interested in researching which other countries shared this problem and how they met the challenges and began to research their strategies.

Karen Dymke

Karen Dymke is an educator with over thirty years' experience, across a range of sectors, as a teacher, trainer, senior leader, coach and consultant. Karen has a Bachelor of Education, and Master's Degree in Applied Learning; accreditation and training as an Executive Coach with Growth Coaching International; training as an Instructional Teaching and Learning Coaching, the Certificate IV TAE, and Literacy Teaching. She is the Director of Thoughtfulworks, Educational Consulting. Her

work currently includes lecturing at Latrobe University in Alternative Educational Models, including VET and the VCAL, as well as travelling Australia as a teacher educator with TAFEs, ACFE providers, alternative settings and schools. Karen is a lead presenter for the VET Development Centre, presenting on andragogy and effective strategies for engagement in teaching and learning within the context of ACFE and the VET sector.

Karen co-wrote and developed the A-Frame, a curriculum that has been widely used for over 10 years. Karen helped write of the VCAL Oracy and Applied Learning Principles units and has been a lead presenter for VCAL. Prior to this she developed curriculum called 'Risk It!' for youth at risk. For several years, Karen has also been delivering accredited professional development unpacking the research of Professor John Hattie into what works best in education to progress student learning and achievement. Karen has also undertaken a number of research projects including Investigating Trauma in the Yarra Valley and Identifying Success Stories for Disadvantaged Learners.

Karen's work has been acknowledged through the Outstanding Teacher/Trainer of the Year award from the TAFE Development Centre and a Scholarship from the TAFE Directorate, to investigate innovative programs for youth at risk in the UK. Karen has been Vice President and Executive member of ACAL, is a current Executive member of VALBEC, Manager and Executive member of VALA for ten years and a member of the VCAA English Experts Panel representing disadvantaged and low literacy learners.

1.5 Acronyms/Abbreviations

ACAL   Australian Council of Adult Literacy

ACFE   Adult Community and Further Education

AGADE   A Good Adult Educator in Europe

ARALE   Awareness Raising for Adult Learning and Education

EAEA   European Association for the Education of Adults

EDUMAP   Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship

Elm   European Lifelong Learning Magazine

ENAEA   Estonian Non-Formal Adult Education Association

EPALE   Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe

ESREA   European Society for Research on the Education of Adults

LCE   Learner Centred Education

OED   Outreach, Empowerment, Diversity

VALBEC   Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council

VCAL   Victorian Applied Learning Association

VDC   The Vocational Education and Training Development Centre

1.6 Australian and European Context

Initial research lead to Europe and the many nations, countries and regions that operate under the umbrella of the European Commission Education Policy. According to the European Commission, an essential part of engaging the low-skilled is to "bring learning close to learners in their communities".[2] Adult learning is a vital component of the European Commission's lifelong learning policy. The European Commission believe adult learning is essential for employability and competitiveness, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.

The wide range of different providers across Europe are able to plan programs based on the common goals and related policy of the European Commission. The overarching policy allows for programs to be designed not just to reflect policy but, most importantly, to meet the learning needs of people in each region, country, and municipality ensuring learner-centeredness is integral to programs. The policy recognises the different needs of learners, the diversity of disadvantaged groups across the continent, and the need to develop different responses in different contexts to promote engagement. Most importantly, political commitment is reflected and supported by sufficient financial investment, an essential requirement for education provision if barriers are to be effectively addressed.

Similarities between Australia and Europe: Both Australia and Europe recognise the importance of reaching out to disadvantaged groups through approaches tailored to their circumstances and needs. Adult learning provides a means of up-skilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transition, as well as making an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. Building social capital and employability skills is a significant driving factor.

Informal pre-accredited learning began from grass roots approaches more than 40 years ago in response to the growing number of people unable to access unskilled work due to the decrease in manufacturing and related automation of industries. Both Europe and Australia, along with other developed countries, experienced a decrease in unskilled jobs in the early 1970's due to the decrease in manufacturing and reduction in the availability of low skilled jobs. As a consequence, there was significant growth in the number of unskilled unemployed people. These people needed education and training opportunities to up skill; however suitable learning programs were not readily available for delivery. The growth in provision for such vulnerable adult learners was initially somewhat ad hoc yet innovative. Embedded in grassroots provision through organisations such as church and community

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2   European Commission, 2008, p. 71

groups, program design and delivery were often carried out by unpaid and/or poorly-paid volunteers or tutors.

Early provision met students where they were at, with a strong focus on literacy, practical skills such as cooking and computer skills, and social connections provided through playgroups. Little theory underpinned practice, and resources and organisational support were scant. Over time, the delivery of these programs has developed through some government support and structured curriculum frameworks based on organic good practice, to respond to the growing needs of this largely unrecognised but extremely important cohort of learners. However, while there has been significant growth to support delivery and practice for disadvantaged, disengaged adult learners, it has remained very much the 'poor cousin' of other educational sectors, with limited resources, poor pay and conditions for educators, and limited professional learning opportunities.

This is despite the fact that these vulnerable learners are often the hardest to help due to their complex needs. The target groups include asylum seekers, refugees, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, youth-at-risk who have exited mainstream education channels, and older learners. Students often present with limited interest due to having been 'required' to attend by organisations such as Centrelink, or they lack confidence in undertaking study and have a fixed mindset that they are 'dumb'. Sometimes they present with the challenges resulting from trauma or they have specific learning disorders like dyslexia, which have not been addressed previously. Many have experienced failure at school and may have weak language, literacy and numeracy skills. They are often anxious and disengaged from society and/or unemployed. The needs of such learners can therefore be very complex. Yet this complexity is not currently reflected in service provision, professional learning or pay.

2. Identifying the Skills Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition

2.1 Engagement

Area 1: Adult Learning in the European and Australian Context

Adult learning is understood to cover all formal, non-formal and informal learning undertaken by adults after they have left their initial education and training, whether for professional reasons (e.g. re-skilling and up-skilling), or private purposes (e.g. social, cultural, artistic and societal learning).[3]

Within the adult learning sector there is a recognition of specific programs that focus on disadvantaged learners, and it is this relatively new sector on which our Fellowship study focuses. The sector has no universal shared title but is recognised and practised in most developed countries, including Europe and Australia.

Both Australia and Europe view pre-accredited/informal learning programs as providing not just pathways into accredited courses, but also a means of building confidence, resilience and self-worth. This approach enables learners to feel empowered to make decisions about their future and strengthen connections with family and the wider community. In order to support learners to access these outcomes the learners need to be effectively engaged as a first step.

In Australia, the Victorian Adult and Further Education (ACFE) Board funds pre-accredited Adult and Community programs that support the most marginalised and educationally disadvantaged learners into initial engagement programs that will then provide pathways to further education and VET training.

The Effective Re-Engagement Model for Disengaged Leaners informs much of ACFE strategy. The strategy identifies four effective interventions that can assist pre-accredited training organisations and practitioners to understand our most disadvantaged and disengaged learners and to develop programs that initially connect and engage them as learners and then support them to transition, ideally, onto VET and employment. The four effective strategies have been identified as Outreach, Wellbeing, Pedagogy and Pathways, with Outreach (Engagement) and Pedagogy (Teaching and Learning) being the dual focus of this Fellowship.

In Europe there is a similar model/framework designed to assist organisations and practitioners to guide them in planning programs and strategy to provide adult education to those who are disengaged and unable to participate in learning. The OED (Outreach, Empowerment and Diversity) Network brings together 17 European organisations to address the learning needs of marginalised members of the European Community. OED has also identified four concepts that they believe are vital to improving learning opportunities in this sector. The four concepts they have identified are Diversity, Outreach, Empowerment and Active Citizenship.[4] These can be seen as loosely aligning with the four Strategies of Intervention identified by ACFE.

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3   European Commission (2013a)

4   OED Guidelines for Trainers and Management Staff Adult Education, Brussels 2014.

ACFE Effective Intervention Strategies	OECD – Four Concepts
Outreach	Outreach
Wellbeing	Empowerment
Pedagogy	Diversity
Pathways	Active Citizenship

Fig. 2. Alignment of ACFE Effective Intervention Strategies and OECD Four Concepts

Area 2: Engagement

An essential part of engaging the low-skilled is to "bring learning close to learners in their communities".

European Commission, 2008, p. 71.

There is strong agreement, evidenced by best practice in both Europe and Australia that engagement is crucial to assisting disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. In this case study we are defining engagement as the initial steps taken to engage people into the learning journey. Inability to activate initial engagement into a program means that no matter how relevant, interesting or engaging a program is, learners cannot benefit if they do not participate! The first focus is then to identify where the learners are, engage them in accessing programs and then ignite them to see the possibilities to move into other programs, and to access support and take pathways to further education, employment or opportunities for a better life.

The sector aims to meet learners who are at risk of social exclusion and acknowledge the importance of understanding and knowing their learners' needs. This is the importance of outreach; namely, bringing learning to the learner in an environment in which the learner feels safe and secure. It is imperative that there

is an understanding of potential learner barriers and how they can be managed, and that learners are supported to overcome barriers. These are the essential first steps towards the inclusion of marginalised groups.

Two key Swedish strategies for successful engagement rely on the need to identify where these 'invisible' learners are in the community, and then to reach out to them and start where they are at, always with the learner at the centre. Successful outreach programs address and decrease barriers by investigating the nature of issues facing different groups and develop tailored financial, legal and legislative responses to them.

'Red Thread' Kvarnby Folk High School, Sweden

'Red Thread' Sweden is a course at Kvarnby Folk High School and is attended by Roma women with very low education levels. Historically, most Roma people only attend school for a couple of years. Mistrust of educational providers was one of the biggest barriers to engaging these women, so rather than beginning with formal learning classes, the connection began via informal coffee meetings and general discussion sessions about everyday topics such as children and schools. Slowly, over a number of months, women became relaxed and trusting and began to slowly open up about their personal problems. Conversations often then were directed to how education could assist them to overcome and move on from some of their problems. A trainer and counsellor attended all coffee sessions and participated in all of the groups' social activities. Slowly the Roma women became familiar with the groups, built trust with the leaders, met other learners and became comfortable in the adult education setting. They also were able to inform and 'own' their own learning. Many participate further from initial engagement programs into further learning and employment programs.

Sundsvall Folk High School, Sweden

At Sundsvall Folk High School, migrant/refugee Muslim women were invited to join a group to learn about Swedish life, art and society. The aim was to bring

the women together in a safe and supportive environment where their husbands would not be negative about the activity. The invitations were sent to both women and husbands, and the meetings were held in a room with large windows and parking access outside that enabled the husbands to sit in their cars and see into the classroom to be assured that there were only women in the room doing the activities and feeling safe in a place of learning.

Area 3: Policy Informing Practice

Europe is developing a detailed, research-based government policy on adult learning, with an emphasis on supporting what they describe as 'vulnerable' learners. The influx of refugees into Europe, as well as changing economies, has led to a sharp increase in focus and attention on this cohort of the population who are having a significant impact on society. Adult learning is a significant and vital component of the European Commission's lifelong learning policy. Collaboration and communication across European countries facilitated by the cooperation of the European Union was evidenced by large strides in policy development. The policy agenda highlights the need to increase participation in adult learning of all kinds (formal, non-formal and informal learning) whether to acquire new work skills, for active citizenship, or for personal development and fulfilment.

In comparison, government policy around adult learning in Australia is very thin. Researchers, key stakeholders and lead organisations such as Adult Learning Australia (ALA) repeatedly describe the dearth of significant policy direction from department agencies as a limitation for the sector.

There have been two Australian senate inquiries into the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector (1991 and 1997). However, '…while Australia has seen some ad hoc development of strategies to mobilise learning resources in

communities to promote lifelong learning and inclusion, in the absence of policy intervention, this disparity of access is unlikely to change'.[5] Whilst not the focus of this Fellowship, it has become increasingly evident that this is a significant area that needs attention. Government policy informs and supports practice.

Europe 2020 is a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth that 'acknowledges lifelong learning and skills development as key elements in response to the current economic crisis, to demographic ageing and to the broader economic and social strategy of the European Union... [and recognises] the major role which adult learning can play in achieving the Europe 2020 goals, by enabling adults — in particular the low-skilled and older workers — to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society'.[6]

Adult learning provides a means of up-skilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as makes an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.[7]

The European Commission is working with 32 countries to implement the European Agenda for Adult Learning. It supports Member States to promote the acquisition of knowledge and to develop a culture of lifelong learning, notably by implementing gender equal policies designed to make adult education more attractive, more accessible and more effective. They have set a target for adult learning: by 2020, 15% of adults aged 25-64 should be taking part.

2.2 Teaching and Learning

IMPADA: Improving effectiveness of Adult Education provision for disadvantaged groups through Networks and Partnerships

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5   Adult Learning Australia. (2015). Lifelong and Lifewide Learning: A Policy Statement. p. 4.

6   European Commission (2010). Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. COM 2010 - 2020 final.

7   Official Journal of the European Union (2011).

Estonian educators have recently finished a European project titled 'Improving the effectiveness of adult education for disadvantaged groups', labelled IMPADA. As part of this project the partners of IMPADA have created the IMPADA Common Assessment Framework. IMPADA is a framework to evaluate the efficacy of adult learning provision, which includes:

a.   Tools to engage adult learning providers in a self-review process to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision for disadvantaged learners,

b.   Support for national bodies to enhance existing evaluation frameworks,

c.   Developing a network currently reaching 500 providers as well as 60 key individuals in national authorities and educational research institutes.

The network of IMPADA has continued with great success through regular conferences where practitioners have been able to learn from other IMPADA adopters (from the UK and other European countries) about their good practice and work towards improving their inclusive practice. The IMPADA website enables practitioners to access a variety of tools to self-assess and improve inclusivity practice including access to the free IMPADA self-assessment toolkit and new recommendations for adult learning providers to improve the effectiveness of adult education for disadvantaged groups.[8]

The research into disadvantaged learners by Dr Ralf Maslowski from the Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP), The Hague, aims to discuss social impact. His research, which was only in its beginning phase, is looking at research on disadvantaged and 'invisible learners' education from a range of government departments including local policy, welfare, employment, and migration. This cross-sectorial approach promises to move away from a 'silo' mentality to a more expansive and holistic approach to the challenges faced by vulnerable learners.


Meeting with Dr Ralf at The Hague

Not everyone can teach
The reality in Australia is that for many years delivery in the pre-accredited and VET sector has been treated as a delivery system, with a primary focus on compliance rather than pedagogy (or more correctly andragogy). The development of successful programs requires ongoing and relevant professional development and support for those who deliver these programs.

It further echoes our research question of what the criteria are for being an expert adult educator and how can we best address this question. International and

8   More information on this project is available at www.impada.eu

comparative research in adult education still plays a rather small role in adult education research. Research is needed to inform policies for Australian lifelong learning and vocational education.
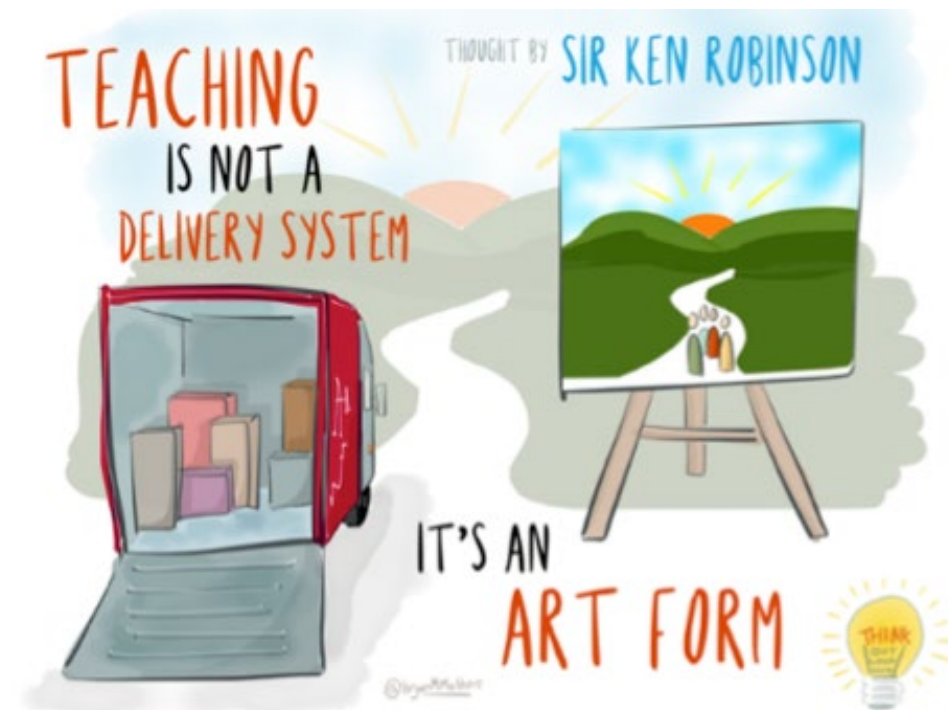
"Teaching is not a delivery system" - Sir Ken Robinson.

2.3 Professionalisation: Improving the effectiveness of adult educators

The Adult Learning sector is a highly specialised sector with significant demands. It has long been regarded as the difficult end of educational need. Yet, as a field it has not always enjoyed the acknowledgement, funding or research capital dealt to other educational sectors.

Through our attendance at the 5th Biennial Conference of the ESREA Research Network for Adult Educators Trainers and their Professional Development (RENADET) at Tallinn University in Estonia, we identified that in many regions of the world the professionalisation in adult and continuing education is emerging as an educational policy focus. Whilst practitioner professionalisation is a complex and diverse area of education, closer analysis of international experience is beginning to reveal some commonalities in practice. This research is also providing worthwhile insights into the opportunities and risks surrounding professionalisation. There currently exists a ground swell of interest in further stimulating international exchange and learning from cross-country approaches and comparative research in this field. An outcome of this Fellowship has been a number of exchanges of documentation, practice and research.

Meeting International Experts in Adult Education at the Tallin Conference

17 Countries Collaborated and Shared Practice at the Conference

Although almost ten years old, the A-Frame, developed through ACFE, was of great interest to many educators who were grateful to share in this resource. Further contributions to the professionalisation of adult educators have included theoretical debate throughout workshops at the ESREA Research Network Conference and the development of (comparative) research, as well as reports on research findings and development activities.

Australian Success Stories and Programs in Adult Education were Shared at Each Site

Professor Georgios K. Zarifis from Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece, and Executive Chair of ESREA, reported that there has been some discussion in Europe regarding the issue of professionalisation of adult educators, but not

much progress. The situation is more or less the same in Australia with some variations between countries. Research reports on adult learning professions and competences for adult learning staff in Europe have been investigated, identifying examples from various countries. These reports are currently the only policy-relevant documents on professionalisation, although they have been reported as being largely 'invisible' to policy makers who funded the projects. Three reports regarding these projects are listed in the Appendix.

Learning: It's about control
The adult learning sector needs to take control back and evaluate relevant data so that research can become the knowledge that informs policy to resource practice. A partnership between academic researchers and adult educators is seen as imperative, shifting from 'what I know', to 'what we know' to develop professional competencies and discipline knowledge. The new era of collaboration is a shift from knowledge and experience as something to preserve and protect to something we can trade. We can no longer live in isolation but must shift to a global and local, or 'glocal' approach. There is much to be learned by being informed by good practice and case study research.

There is a global increase in lifelong learning. Low skilled jobs are being replaced. People are living longer. Thus, there is an imperative to provide all people with equal learning opportunities that are tailored to their needs and capabilities, delivered by an effective and professional work force. It can be a bridge back into people's professional knowledge and communities. Adult education is also a means for social change, evidenced through presentations from Maria Gravani, of Malta.

Generally, there are no defined competencies for Adult Educators. Research projects suggested included the need to explore the professional profile of adult educators, research in the field, workshop with professionals and develop mapped competencies.

Learner Centred Education[9] (LCE) is the most effective vehicle for this to take place. Adult Educators need to be aware of the importance of dialogue, collaboration, learner involvement, flexible and meaningful learning experiences.

A strong focus of the presentations was on Adult Education as a means for active citizenship. Dr George Zarifia, from the University of Thessalonika noted that effective practice in Greece is policy oriented. Growing ethnic and religious diversity, increasing intolerance and social exclusion mean we need to create societies that embrace diversity. Policy focus thus needs to be recalibrated to include both the pressing economic, social and employment challenges. Adult Education policy and resourced practices can be used to foster active participation and a sense of citizenship.

Adult Education Research Conference, Tallin, Estonia

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9   Schweifurth (2013) Education Scotland (LCE 2015), page 14, focuses on this approach as adult learning being Life Long, Life Wide and Learner-Centred.

Tallin

The emerging priority areas for Adult Education need to focus on learning outcomes, a promotion of civic and personal competencies, an awareness of learners' cultural backgrounds and the recognition of skills to enhance labour mobility. These factors make imperative strong support for adult educators and the importance of professionalisation and professional development to manage these challenging and diverse learning environments.

An Adult Educator's skills include having a deep understanding of effective teaching and learning strategies, emotional intelligence, an awareness of professional boundaries, the ability to handle different and sometimes difficult situations, insights into learning difficulties, the need to treat students as partners

in learning, the ability to reconstruct previous negative learning experiences and fragile educational identities, and to create a supportive learning space. It requires expertise and insight.

Meeting with European Colleagues at the European Association for the Education of Adults

3. Personal, Professional and Sectoral Impact

Today, the issue of the level of professionalisation of the Australian Adult Learning Educator field has still not been resolved. Educators practice in a range of three categories of delivery; informal non-accredited provision, formal accredited provision and integrated workplace delivery. This situation complicates the professionalisation process, and this complication is further compounded by the fact that each State and Territory jurisdiction has different qualification requirements.

Currently, in Victoria, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is the only requirement for educators in the VET sector and no specific educational training is required for pre-accredited staff.

Many educators have been granted Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) with some considerable variability in authenticity. Regardless, the common cry is that the Certificate IV requirement is primarily about compliance and has very limited value, if any, in developing relevant skills around teaching and learning for adult learners, and in particular for vulnerable learners who frequently comprise the majority of participants. A Diploma In Adult Education exists but as had limited uptake although increasingly TAFE teachers are required to complete this certificate to be eligible for pay increases.

A number of industry and government initiatives and programs have recently started such as Chisholm's Professional Educator College, and programs are being funded by the Education Department to address the need to up-skill educators in these sectors. Other than that, one day workshops or series of workshops are made available through organisations such as the VET Development Centre or private consultants. Research clearly shows that the provision of one day workshops has limited efficacy. We need more sustainable and strategic professional learning (see Appendix 9/2 for a full article from Fine Print discussing the personal, professional and sectorial impact).

The Fellowship has impacted greatly on a personal and professional level. There are very few educators in this space who have expertise in the area of teaching and learning. As a result, we have been offered a range of opportunities to take a lead in this area, including as a lecturer at Latrobe University in Alternative and Inclusive Educational models, and to work as an Instructional Teaching and Learning Coach across Chisholm campuses as part of their Professional Educator College. Further, as outlined in the section following Dissemination of Fellowship to Date below, we have presented at a range of conferences and professional development forums and written for various practitioner publications. The Fellowship has honed our interest in a niche area which is to recognise our opportunity to build capacity in the field of pre-accredited and VET andragogy.

The impact offered by these emerging opportunities for the sector is exciting. Currently there has been little or randomised support. The lack of structural embedding of professional learning targeted at enhancing teacher capacity has been the basis of weakness and challenges in the sector. These invitations can lead to a structured and sustainable system that will be embedded in practice and strengthen the capacity of educators in this field.

4. Dissemination of Fellowship to Date

Teaching and Learning — Presentations, articles and workshops at the following

1. Victorian TAFE Association; Presentation report on the professionalisation of Adult Education.

2. Article in ELM Magazine; Helsinki, online magazine on lifelong learning and adult education. Continent-wide correspondent network. (see attached)

3. AGM key note Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) on Research Methods and Findings in Adult Education. June 18, 2018

4. Article for Fine Print, Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council, 'Professionalising Our Practice.' 2018, vol: 41 # 2 (Appendix)

5. Thought Leaders Presentation; 'Professionalising Our Practice.' VET Development Centre. May 25, 2018

6. Learn Local Access, Choice and Equity Series, Workshop 1 Outreach and engagement, Workshop 2 Learner support and wellbeing, Workshop 3 Teaching and learning, Workshop 4 Pathways , July – August 2018

7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Theory, Professional Development for Providers of Accredited Trainings Series, June 25, July 6 & 17, 2018.

8. National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) Conference, Sydney, 'Professionalising Our Practice' August 16, 2018

9. Australian Council of Adult Literacy 'Professionalising Our Practice' September 13, 2018

10. Corrections Victorian Government, Community of Practice, Senior TAFE Managers, September 19, 2018

11. World Federation of Colleges Conference, October 9, 2018

5. Recommendations and Considerations

Outreach and Engagement

Area 1: Adult Learning in the European and Australian sector

Recommendations
To continue to develop and share the concepts and strategies that assist organisations and practitioners to understand and know their learners. Invitations to actively participate in the ESREA network of Adult Educators and contribute to research could be taken up, if supported, to continue to build on these relationships and knowledge sharing. With this knowledge, practitioners and organisations in the sector will be better able to develop learner-centred engagement and outreach designed to remove the barriers that often prevent initial engagement program and quality programs that support learners to remain engaged and eventually embark on pathways to further study, employment and/or improved life opportunities.

Area 2: Engagement

Recommendations
Educators must learn why their learners may want to engage and learn, what motivates them and what is keeping them from learning. Then the educators must plan their motivating strategies. A successful strategy includes outreach, whereby barriers are identified, and learners supported to overcome them, and showing adult learners the relationship between training and their desired outcome or "what's in it for them". This can only take place when the educators adopt a learner-centred approach and develop an understanding of who their learners are.

Area 3: Policy Informs Practice

Recommendations
The Australian Government should adopt a similar approach to Europe and develop and implement an Australian Government Policy on Adult Education, with a focus on addressing the challenge of increasing participation in learning for the marginalised and disadvantaged members of our society.

The European Union's Policy sets a long-term strategy for future delivery of Adult Education. This strategy emphasises the transversal nature of adult learning policy, highlights the paramount importance of adult basic skills and related educational provision, and includes a priority for the promotion of learning enhanced by information and communication technologies (ICT), in the field of adult learning. It aims to make their adult learning policies more effective and coherent across policy fields. Coherence through Commonwealth agreement with the States and Territories on skills could further articulate a specific role for locally focused not-for-profit ACE organisations.

Continuing to fund developing approaches that combine action at the level of policy and practice is likely to be essential to ensuring successful outcomes. So too are holistic approaches that recognise the multiple and overlapping barriers that disadvantaged learners face.

Alongside an effective policy response, actions at the level of learning institutions and practitioners are equally important. Several recurring themes and ideas tend to be emphasised in reviews of good practice and approaches around enhancing

participation, particularly the emergence of new priority areas such as citizenship, older learners, changing work landscape, and the disappearance of permanent work roles and positions to contract and part time roles.

Teaching and Learning

The Fellowship highlighted both strengths and weaknesses in the Australian context. Overall, observations were that Australian practice in pre-accredited deliver is innovative and strong. Best practice in the VET space is emerging although inconsistent. However, the depth of research to underpin and inform practice is weak. Australia has lost a lot of opportunities and momentum perhaps because the pre-accredited field assumed that the high level of government support for Adult Literacy and Numeracy present in the 1990s would continue indefinitely. Relying on government support solely can be problematic.

Recommendation 1: Put Adult Learning Back on Political Agenda

Putting adult learning back on the political agenda and, in particular, as was observed in the Hague, developing cross-sectorial partnerships is important. The social and economic outcomes are evident. Piloting partnerships with other government departments to develop a holistic policy approach to life-long learning, including social, economic, education and employment ministries is also critical. A start for this would be to initiate a think tank or project team with an intention for long-term policy and political engagement to develop and support services in a structured way with sufficient financial means.

Recommendation 2: Research What Has the Greatest Effect

It is also important not to keep researching the same situation, as research does not mean change will automatically follow. Research needs to be targeted and action-oriented. A focus on researching what has the greatest effect to progress student learning and achievement in the pre-accredited field and VET sector is needed. Professor John Hattie has made great contributions to this field in school education. If we want good outcomes we need to consider what is important for adults. The research of Malcolm Knowles into andragogy in the 1980's has not developed much further. There is an exciting possibility in this emerging field to research what works and where to next.

Policies and strategies to develop an impact cycle and collecting evidence and data to identify success factors are of key importance. An example of the importance of identifying critical success factors for developing educational pathways for low level students was considered in the 'GOAL' project through the Flemish Ministry of Education. An outcome of this would be to strengthen the progress and achievement of low-level learners by presenting the research and disseminating the most effective strategies to upskill adult educators.

Recommendation 3: Identify the Workforce

The avoidance of accepting or wanting detailed research about this workforce does not help. More regular snapshots such as the McGuirk (2001)[10] investigation is needed to provide insight into who the teachers and trainers are, their qualifications and employment conditions, what helps and hinders them as professionals and volunteers, and their insights and thoughts about improving and supporting this sector.

Recommendation 4: Upskill Educators

As described, teachers in the pre-accredited and VET space are faced with some of the hardest to help students. Teachers, trainers and facilitators therefore need to be up-skilled to know how to manage and best address challenges such as deconstructing learning from complex competency based manuals to dealing with trauma-affected students, anxiety, and students presenting with learning needs.

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10   McGuirk, J. (2001). Adult literacy and numeracy practices 2001: A national snapshot, Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

We need to increase and extend professional development practices and opportunities for Adult Educators in a cohesive and structured way One-day workshops have some effect to front load information, but learning can be embedded in practice by furthering professional learning with action research projects that implement and trial strategies and monitor progress. Action Research, or Impact Cycles, identifying key goals for practice, learning high impact strategies and then collecting data on improvements could be very powerfully employed as a model supported by instructional coaches or mentors.

Educators surveyed are very keen to return to the cost effective and collective efficacy of Professional Learning Communities, to share practice and support each other. Strategically and sustainably aligned professional development matrixes to develop the skills and knowledge of Adult Educators at all levels could be devised, moving at point of need from beginning teacher competency to advanced.   An example of this approach at a beginning level is described in the 'Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century'.[11]

The imperative is to trial, research and confirm the efficacy of a comprehensive and developmental curriculum, certification and accreditation for Adult Educators Professional Development working in the ACFE and VET Sector. A current model being trialled is the Learn Local Access, Choice and Equity Series, delivered through the VET Development Centre. This covers:

» Engagement– education is not simply about providing information but involves equipping people with the skills, capacity and motivation to plan and manage change,

» Wellbeing – education aims to equip people to understand connections between environmental, educational, economic, social and political systems,

» Pedagogy (Andragogy)– education is driven by a broad understanding of education and learning that includes people of all ages and backgrounds and at all stages of life and takes place within all possible learning spaces, formal and informal, in schools, workplaces, homes and communities,

» Pathways – education focuses on the use of genuine partnerships to build networks and relationships and improve communication between different sectors of society.

Options for VET practitioners are also being trialled and researched through the Professional Development for Providers of Accredited Trainings Knowledge and Practice Series, supported by the Department of Education.

Alternatively, and in addition, providers could offer Masterclasses to extend the basics of Certificate IV in Assessment and Training through to an "impact-led co-design" including:

» a series of classes

    » Principles of practice for Adult Learners

    » Addressing challenges, barriers and issues for adult learners

    » Designing engaging classrooms

    » USX Design

    » Effective assessments that progress learning.

» Mentoring and peer coaching/observations with colleagues & students

» Develop a community of practice network

The current pay and conditions of educators of low-level learners mean it is grossly unreasonable to expect dedicated and expensive professional learning outcomes. Therefore, a recommendation is to investigate the Badges accreditation

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11   Ebner, G. (2015). Manifesto for adult learning in the 21st century. Brussels, Belgium: European Association for the Education of Adults. Retrieved from https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/manifesto.pdf

program (See Appendix 1 Helsinki Finland) which is currently being used widely and effectively in Europe, for a manageable way to identify, describe and micro-credential professional learning for Adult Educators. An option could be to build a Badge Platform from a central and monitored repository. There can be issues through different systems and integrate platforms. Chisholm Institute, through the Professional Educator College is developing an internet App that shows great potential for this idea. An organisation such as the VDC could auspice this in partnership with the Victorian TAFE Association as a central Professional Learning Institute.

Recommendation 5: Share Practice

Australian practitioners have some great knowledge, skills and experiences to share including tools, curriculum, resources, and professional expertise. The development and support of professional communities of practice to share has a very high efficacy, is comparatively low cost and has exceptional outcomes for collective teacher effectiveness. Developing networks of practice and encouraging a climate of sharing and common ground has in the past been highly valued to continue to 'Show and Learn' case studies, with effective dissemination of information (e.g. EU Bus trips to visit Adult Education Champions. This model has been run with great effect for VCAL programs in Victoria through VALA e.g. 'Safari to the Sea' visiting VCAL programs on the Great Ocean Road.).

Recommendation 6: Policy Audit

A critical assessment of adult learning policy to identify what policy documents exist currently, and address questions such as:

» What policy documents do we have in Australia?

» How do we define Adult Education?

» How do PIACC results line up with policy, definition and professionalisation in the Adult Education sector?

A great opportunity awaits for initiative and innovation to be injected into the Engagement and Learning Journeys of Vulnerable Learners. Success stories in Pre- Accredited organisations and a renewed taste for TAFE now provides a rich opportunity to again see Australia lead the way in supporting and building pathways into education, employment and enriched lives for those hardest to help. Research, policy and practice must all be developed in partnership. Educators can be change agents. For government and society, it stands as Michael Fullen describes; 'A moral imperative.'

> **'Adult Education makes people happier, healthier and more confident. Learners participate more in society, tend to be more tolerant and better parents.'**

Benefits of Life Long Learning in Europe: Main Results of the BeLL-Project Research Report

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The ISS Institute exists to foster an aspirational, skilled and smart Australia by cultivating the mastery and knowledge of talented Australians through international research Fellowships.

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18. Malcom Jolly, Team Leader, Educator Development, Professional Educator College, Chisholm Institute

19. Martin Powell, Chief Executive Officer, VDC

8. Appendices

8.1 Fellowship Methodology and Period

Schedule of visits

18th October, 2017	Tallin, Estonia	Ms Tiina Jaager: ENAEA Office. At the 'Vabaharidusliit' (Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA) http://www.vabaharidus.ee/index.php?page=3 Meeting, tour of facility, presentation on Australian practice. Discussion with Ms Jaager re. the ENAEA, compromising 67 member organisations providing courses for Adults, funded since 2005, being the biggest network of members in the European Commission. Focus is on developing the skills of teachers and teacher qualifications, particularly regarding working with disadvantaged learners. Ms Jaager identified THE LOWER THE SKILL LEVEL OF THE LEARNER, THE HIGHER THE SKILL REQUIRED BY THE TEACHER. Professional development is however not compulsory. Teacher expertise and experience is highly valued. Teacher qualifications are basic, based on a National framework, with flexible delivery and assessment options. A strong emphasis on international partnerships has strengthened practice.

18th – 20th Oct	Tallin, Estonia	European Research Network on Adult Trainers Conference – 'Journey, Adult Educators and Social Inclusion' Present paper on the Adult Learning in Australia Contact: Prof Larissa Jogi, Tallinn University Workshop presentation – 'It's a Global Challenge: An Australian Perspective. Assisting disadvantaged and disengaged learners to move from unemployment and associated disadvantage into employment and education". This Network was initiated in 2008 and currently 14 different countries are represented, communicating as an 'invisible college' as academics, practitioners and scholars communicate together. The focus is on the Professional Development of Adult Educators. The 'meta-competence' of the Network has enhanced outcomes through reflective practice and active learning to begin the journey of the formation of a professional identity for adult educators. The conference utilized Learning Cafes as a strategy to share research and hold discussions. We presented a workshop at the meeting.
Monday 23rd Oct	Helsinki, Finland	The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation Ms. Pirkko Ruuskanen-Parrukoski (CEO) » Meeting with key stake holders and departments. » Presentation – 'It's a Global Challenge. An Australian Perspective. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences Ms. Terhi Laine, Director of Innovation Marja Katisko » Meeting with key lecturers and researchers. » Presentation – 'It's a Global Challenge. An Australian Perspective.

Tuesday 24TH Oct	Helsinki, Finland	Open Badges – Micro-Credentials
		Nilufer Yadigar Bigun
		Meeting and presentation of success criteria for Badges program.
		Okka Foundation
		Sustainable Development Certification of Educational Establishments
		Mr. Erkka Laininen
		The Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU, Kehys
		-Introduction to Kehys' work
		-Bridge-47 Network
		-Kehys' Thematic working group of Education
		-Nordic-Russian cooperation project "Non-state actors: Partnership and skills for sustainable development"
		» Meeting with key project managers and researchers.
		» Presentation – 'It's a Global Challenge. An Australian Perspective.
		Helsinki University
		Dr. Sai Vayrynen
		» Meeting to discuss the implications for students who learn differently.

Thursday 26th Oct	Brussels, Belgium	European Commission Education Adults Organisation ESERA, OECD Brussels, Belgium Raffaela Kihrer, Policy officer Francesca Operti » Meeting with key project managers and officers. » Presentation – 'It's a Global Challenge. An Australian Perspective.
Friday 27th October	Bruges	Flemish Ministry of Education Leerwinkel Learning Shop The House of Learning Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners Carolina, Kelly, Dana » Meeting with key project managers and officers. » Presentation – 'It's a Global Challenge. An Australian Perspective.

Tuesday 31st October	The Hague	Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) Research into Disadvantaged learners The Hague Dr Ralf Maslowski » Meeting to discuss social impact research on disadvantaged and 'invisible' learners.
Thursday November 2		Hogeschool van Amsterdam University Professor. Mr. H.M. de Jong (Huib) College van Bestuur » Meeting to discuss research on disadvantaged and 'invisible learners'

8.2 Professionalising Our Practice – Article in Fine Print By Karen Dymke

Fine Print, July 2018.

Thirty years ago, I was at home with little kids and feeling like a failure as a 'Kinder Mum'. I had a teaching degree majoring in Chaucer and Shakespeare so when somebody asked if I would be interested in teaching adults I was keen. Anything to get away from Play School for a few hours! Maybe I could get my brain working again. I was surprised when I came for a 'chat' at the neighbourhood house running these short courses to be asked how I would manage a situation if a student had a breakdown in class. Really? I was to be teaching literacy, not psych. I bumbled my way through a response and joyfully looked forward to teaching my first class.

My class of fifteen students was squashed into a converted bedroom in a purple-painted weatherboard called Morrison House. Talk about managing diversity! There was a lovely older lady, a very large and slow man who reminded me of Lenny from Mice and Men, a lady who could hardly speak any English, an angry (but nervous) teenage boy with pink spiky hair and an anxious middle-aged lady who chewed her fingers the whole time. The class started well with introductions, and then it happened: the anxious lady chewed passed her fingernails and collapsed with a screech on the floor. I had no idea what to do. Intuitively we all left the room as 'Lenny' sat by her and cooed sympathetically, calming her with his presence. After this startling start we bonded closely and we even snuck in some Shakespeare.

I started where the learners were at, negotiating the curriculum to topics they were interested in and writing self-published books on topics of their choice such as spiders and fishing. I encouraged the angry young people that they could learn regardless of what they had been told at school, calming their anxieties and identifying what success could look like. As far as I could, I sought to address the points of need in the class. It was a sharing, collaborative and creative culture and these were some of my happiest times teaching. But I was making it up as I went.

From intuitive to intentional

In my practice a lot was left to chance; it was intuitive, and there were successes, but it wasn't intentional. I had no specific training to know how to deal with learning disorders and difficulties like dyslexia, no understanding of how trauma can impact on a learner, or of what strategy to use at what time. Teaching students to be ready for employment and further educational opportunities was a scatter gun approach.

Student centred learning and meeting your students where they were at was the only option for vulnerable learners because otherwise they wouldn't come back. Intuitively we were meeting their needs, but I was acutely aware that we may not be progressing learners as successfully as we might. Students tended to stay on, sometimes for years. It was comfortable and safe.

To build capacity and progress student outcomes in education and employment we need a shift towards targeted and relevant professional development. We need to professionalise our practice.

Researching the research

After many years in the adult and community education sector I returned to 'school' in 2003. I was lucky to land the job as Director of Learning at an independent school after being the manager of a language and literacy program for Donvale Living and Learning Centre and the Eastern Region Language and Literacy Network. When asked if I would be happy with the new salary (which I hadn't even enquired about) I almost stopped breathing. My salary went from $20,000 to $120, 000! Note the difference (or not) in the two jobs. What does this say?

There were other changes too. I went from presenting professional development days to attending them—at up to $2,000 a pop, fancy lunches and interstate travel. Hmm, lucky me. I had not had this opportunity or even invitation before. As if I could have afforded it.

It was here I was introduced to the research of John Hattie, among other educational rock stars, like Michael Fullen, Dylan Wiliam and Jim Knight. Hattie has spent thirty years researching the research, through meta-analysis, on what has the greatest effect in teaching and learning. He has now identified 256 different effects on student progress and achievement from class size to the importance of teacher–student relationships, to how effective project based learning is, and whether homework is a waste of time or not. The research has involved over 300 million students, from preschool to young adults, all over the world (Hattie, 2009). No matter where, with whom or what your age the results are so outstanding they can't be ignored. Granted the results do not specifically measure adult learning, and this is an area that needs to be explored, but I think that they give us much to confirm practice, consolidate it and perhaps challenge it.

Some of the research findings, and they are ongoing, have been encouraging. In fact, I would say, adult and community education has been a shining light in what is now described as 'contemporary learning': student centred learning; the relevance and importance of prior learning; identifying what knowledge students bring with them to class; the importance of teacher expectations and especially the need to address students' expectations of themselves. Why are we not surprised that ensuring there are interventions for learning disorders like dyslexia are vital?

What was challenging and surprising was to learn of the very low and often negative effect of student control over learning and ability grouping. It made me really think seriously about practice in the VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) in particular and why those 'casual' youth classes didn't work well.

Professionalising and professionalism
The expression 'professional development' of adult educators suggests that there is—or might be—a 'profession' of adult education. Is that so? And should we be talking about 'professionalisation' or 'professionalism'? The challenge is as big as the mouthful!

Knowing where we are going is partly dependent on where we have been. Knowing the origins of the journey gives us a place to begin and a context for reflective practice. Knowing where we are at now is important, so we can also know where we are going.

The word 'profession' indicates special knowledge and skills to carry out a job in a specialised field. When we consider the challenges of being an educator in the pre-accredited space, it is clear that specialist knowledge and skills are required. Students in this space are frequently, but not always, disadvantaged in some way. They include people with a disability, indigenous learners, asylum seekers, refugees, students with English as an additional language, long term unemployed, older learners and youth at risk. It is easy to see that this target group certainly requires educators with 'special knowledge and skills.'

As an occupational field, adult education is the sector which is most closely connected with sectors such as health and employment. It is diverse, it frequently involves partnerships and is based in the community. Adult education is education of place. The sector needs further recognition and support to meet the ever-growing demands placed on it to provide equity, access, education and employability options.

The growing importance of adult training and education is a worldwide phenomenon and the imperative is to begin to give coherence to the curriculums of professional training for the sector. The current unregulated domain sees people from various backgrounds involved as educators and trainers but often with no specific training other than a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Pay is extremely low, contracts short and conditions often stressful. The sector currently exists largely on good will.

Frequently, educators enter this professional space after a number of years of other work but not everyone is a natural teacher. Upgrading skills and awareness of the latest methodologies in education is important. The research from Carol Dweck on building growth mindsets to overcome fixed mindsets, Engagement by

design (Fisher, Frey, Quaglia, Smith & Lande, 2017) and the vision described by Bill Lucas, Guy Claxton and Ellen Spencer (2013) in Expansive education all contribute valuably to developing capacity for those learners who are often hardest to help. Dylan Wiliam's (2011) seminal work on embedding formative assessment and Jim Knight's instructional frameworks (2013) which are based on the principles of partnership, influenced strongly by Paulo Freire's foundational Pedagogy of the oppressed (1972), have a huge amount to offer adult educators. However, these resources and research sit largely in the domain of mainstream education and are unknown in the adult learning sector.

Currently a variety of workshop days are available through organisations such as the VDC (Vocational education and training Development Centre), which seek to build the skills teachers need to enable them to assess challenges and teach accordingly. Topics have included managing challenging behaviours, trauma informed practice, specific learning disorders such as dyslexia and engaging learners. We have run effective workshops with very positive feedback and it is always a privilege to learn further from the knowledge in the room. But we all know, and the research tells us, that the one-hit-wonder days of professional development have limited impact long term if there is no follow through or further capacity building. I fear sometimes we are just ticking a box for compliance purposes.

Tutors and trainers have big hearts, and I always think we would have been missionaries in a previous life. But it is time things are done better than that. We need a national lifelong policy now. Discussions at the Adult Learning Australia Lifelong Learning Summit reiterated this point clearly.

International practice
In 2017, Cate Thompson and I were fortunate to be granted an International Vocational Training Practitioners Fellowship with ISSI (the International Specialised Skills Institute) supported by the Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Skills Group. My particular focus was on teaching and learning—that awkward word, andragogy: 'the teaching of adult students in a structured learning process'. I've come to learn that research informs policy which supports practice. But policy in andragogy is very thin. It was exciting to discover that in the European Union there is a current focus on research in adult education and it is very much acknowledged as an emerging field.

In the Hague a policy paper is being developed which is underpinned by research into social issues from the perspective of three different ministries: social affairs and employment, education, and economics. In Brussels we were introduced to ARALE (yes, they are infected with acronyms even worse than we are!) Awareness Raising for Adult Learning and Education, which profiles European case studies, experiences and ideas on how to raise awareness of adult education among the general public and to target groups and policy makers. The European Association for the Education of Adults has published a manifesto for adult learning in the 21st Century (Ebner, 2015) identifying six key challenges and responses. Through concordeurope.org, Finland is developing towards a more effective partnership with civil society. There was a strong emphasis everywhere on developing policy and pursing research to underpin practice.

We found that overall our practice in Victoria is a long way ahead. The A-Frame (State of Victoria, 2006) was of great interest, and although not originally part of our intent, became something of a centrepiece in our visits, even though it is more than ten years old here! We also shared success stories from the research done in Learn Local organisations in Victoria.

What recalibrated my focus on the Fellowship was the focus in Europe on the professionalisation of adult education, which was a very serious and intense discussion point at the conference we attended in Tallinn, Estonia. We were welcomed warmly and invited to participate and present. It was exciting to be part of an energetic and passionate forum of educators, sharing where they are at and where to next in adult education.

So where to next?

Structured and strategic professional support or training that addresses the diverse challenges of working with pre-accredited and post-compulsory learners should be made readily available to teachers and trainers.

However, it is unreasonable to assume educators in the pre-accredited sector can meet expensive or arduous expectations for professional learning. Until conditions change, support for professional learning needs to be flexible, negotiable and, as with any good adult learning practice, practical. In addition, the acknowledgment and recognition of learning and experience is vital.

To further the professionalisation of teaching, a framework for implementing continuing professional development in learning and teaching needs to be designed. The next stage, however, will be effective implementation.

Implementation could acknowledge existing teaching development practices and offer a set of reflective processes for individuals and teams to use to develop teaching and learning in a cycle of evidence-informed practice. It could also offer a map of core development themes to build capacity for educators to progress the student learning experience.

A system of 'badges', now used extensively in Europe, could recognise and acknowledge professional learning. Attendees are awarded a badge for each professional learning attended and completed to satisfaction. These are available for minimal cost and can be contextualised to individual organisations. The University of Melbourne has been investigating this option with recently published findings (Milligan, Kennedy & Israel, 2018).

It is the system's responsibility to provide the opportunity and resources to enable teachers and trainers to be the best educators they can be, so we don't teach by chance but by design, not by intuition only but also by intent.

If we are serious about building a 'knowledge nation' we need to build teachers' sense of efficacy—the belief in their ability to positively impact student learning. Teachers and trainers also need to be open to new ideas; sometimes we don't know what we don't know. To be able to achieve this and to build capacity the sector needs to be well equipped and resourced.

If I had a chance I would turn back time (there is a song in that) to when I started out at that purple-painted community house. I wish I knew then what I know now. I would have a much better idea of how to support the students with learning difficulties, I might have been able to observe the brewing behaviours before they blew out, I would have been much more strategic in how I taught. I want to see this learning shared with practitioners now.

Furthermore, cooperation and collaboration with other domains of knowledge is required to build capacity and outcomes for the students we are addressing. On interviewing a number of experts in the social work field from Melbourne University and The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, I learnt that often social workers saw education as an add-on after primary needs are addressed. As one lecturer described it, 'They can see education as the Gucci handbag'. If social workers were better informed of the power of education as a catalyst for change and promoted it as a priority area, outcomes for students would be greatly enhanced.

Higher education institutions such as universities could contribute to this by providing well trained professionals with theoretical and practical qualifications as part of their initial training. Currently, La Trobe University offers an optional fourth year education subject in alternative education, which serves this purpose. Discussions are underway to investigate a collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health at La Trobe, Save the Children, and the University of Tasmania to implement a pilot program that aims to further address this space.

The establishment of professional associations and networks could help practitioners in the pre-accredited and post-compulsory field in the processes of collective development. Policy- makers at state and national levels could support this initiative and see it further facilitated through an organisation such as the VDC which currently administers a range of funding initiatives aimed at building educators' capacity within organisations funded through Skills First.

Practitioners can also create their own centres of expertise, enabling them to carry out research or share experiences, perhaps using social media as a platform to combat the tyrannies of distance and time. They can participate in projects and activities aimed at developing databases allowing for evidence-based work. Who knows, they may even achieve better pay and conditions!

ACAL (the Australian Council for Adult Literacy) is calling for action in this space also. Although few programs currently mandate higher level qualifications for delivery of literacy and numeracy courses in Australia, maintaining a workforce of experienced practitioners who have knowledge of theoretical underpinnings of literacy and numeracy teaching and learning is essential.

This work we do is hard and it is full of challenges but it is also incredibly rewarding. One of the joys of being part of the ACAL and VALBEC committees is the opportunity it provides us to see the passion and enthusiasm of adult literacy and numeracy proponents across the country. Our role as teachers and trainers is crying out to be recognised as a legitimate stand-alone profession with the provision of resources and professional learning. We need to professionalise our practice through research and shift from the intuitive to the intentional so that we can close the gap for adult learners with specific strategies, great teaching and quality core instruction.

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