Knowing the Demands

Knowing the Learner

Knowing What to Do

A study of New Zealand's coordinated response to foundation skills assessment, teaching and learning for adults

Lindee Conway

Higher Education and Skills Group International Fellowship

An ISS Institute Fellowship sponsored by

Higher Education and Skills Group, Department of Education and Training

Victorian Government

i. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been acknowledged on both sides of the Tasman that less than optimal English-language, literacy and numeracy skills are linked to long term unemployment, disadvantage, poorer health outcomes and lower productivity. Evidence for this is to be found in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development's (OECD's) Survey of Adult Skills, which compares both countries, as well as other participating nations.[1]

As an outcome of participation in the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) in 2011-2012,[2] both Australia and New Zealand produced strategies and policies to ameliorate the issues identified for their respective populations, and to activate change in adult education assessment, teaching and learning.[3]

The Australian National Foundation Skills strategy indicated the need for a nationally consistent assessment tool to ensure adults were placed in the most appropriate learning program.[4] Further to this would be a framework for clear indicators of progress towards attaining Foundation and employability skills. Program design and delivery funding models have become tightly linked to incremental increases in skills, rather than taking a more holistic approach to recording the personal, social and community gains of improved Foundation skills.

In New Zealand the policy direction reflects the importance of building social capital as evidenced in the statement "Strong Adult Literacy and Numeracy is a priority (because) the social benefits can include improved personal well-being, social development of individuals, whānau and community, better health and better parenting".[5]

The Study Tour of New Zealand was designed to provide an opportunity to see first-hand the impact of policies and programs on adult learners and the teachers working with them, as well as witness how educators were using the TEC Assessment Tool.[6]

The Fellow expected the focus of her study to be mainly around formal assessment of Foundation and VET learners, that is, the TEC Assessment Tool. It quickly became evident that the braided rivers of teaching and learning in New Zealand would offer much more than that. A strategic and thoughtful response to adult learners' needs has created a broad range of options and services for adult learners and educators that we can learn from in Victoria.

The Fellow visited Foundation Studies programs and policy-makers in Auckland, Rotorua, Hamilton, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin. 'Strategic', 'Thoughtful', 'Robust', 'Rigorous' and 'Researched' were words that rang true in the Fellow's experience of the New Zealand educators' initial assessment process.

The NZ Literacy and Numeracy Advisor and the Manager of the TEC Assessment Tool systems, informed the Fellow that the 'single' assessment tool is, in fact, multi-layered. Learning about the Tool itself and its original purpose and implementation of new versions was enormously interesting. It was evident to the Fellow that spending more time on planning the 'next step' in a learner's journey, even if not universally relevant, was effective.

1   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2008, *Overview of Policies and Programmes for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) Learners,* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/172281885164>, accessed 17 March 2014.

2   Assessment of Adult Competencies (OECD-PIAAC), 2016, *PIAAC - The International Survey of Adult Skills*, <www.oecd.org/site/piaac/>, accessed 14 April 2016.

3   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2013, *Country Note Survey of Adult Skills First Results*, <www.oecd.org>, accessed 15 November 2015.

4   Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE), 2012, National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

5   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2012, *Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy*, The Crown (NZ), Wellington.

6   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2015, *Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015-2019*, <www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Tertiary-Education-Strategy/Literacy-and-Numeracy-Implementation-Strategy/>, TEC National Office, Wellington.

i. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NZ TEC Assessment Tool confirms information for learners and educators, within a few weeks of commencement. The TEC Assessment Tool, whether paper-based or online is not done in the first week. The teachers worked at building a relationship with the learner first, then the assessment activity can be incorporated more organically to the learning program. NZ educators reported feeling less confident that the post-training assessment is as useful; anxiety levels were an issue for some learners when the next assessment comes up. This was a commonly reported response to the assessment system - that subsequent assessments have less utility than the initial event.

From the rigorous, research-based activities she observed in New Zealand, the Fellow believes that Australia can improve its own understanding of how assessment policy and practices and the integration of learning opportunities can enhance adult leaners' lives. She went to look at assessment, in the main, but was afforded a much broader view of 'whole-of-sector' approach.

The Fellow's findings are that New Zealand has a lot to teach us about how we should and can respond to the needs of adult learners. Central to the conversations that the Fellow will engage in with educators are ideally the questions: "why am I offering this assessment, in this format, to this learner, now?" and "Who is this assessment for?".

The Fellow's Recommendations are:

1. Establish a working group to evaluate the benefits from the creation of Excellence Centres for Adult Foundation Studies and VET learning, such as those in New Zealand (for example NCLNA at Waikato University[7] and AKO-Aotearoa at Massey University[8]). A funded research program and professional development opportunities for educators would greatly assist with meeting the complexities of contracts described in this report. It may also assist with workforce issues for educators by offering support in new ways of LLN teaching and learning.

2. Support the establishment of a data collection environment – using one single framework to ensure that Australia is able to simply capture its gains in adult English-language, Literacy and Numeracy acquisition. Having one framework, with one set of indicators or protocols (for example the ACSF[9]) would simplify reporting for educators and most likely assist learners' understanding of their skills and gaps.

3. Investigate the utility of providing free Foundation Studies learning opportunities for adults with LLN needs, such as online services and free adult community providers (such as Victoria's Learn Local[10]) similar to the Literacy Aotearoa [11] provision.

4. Evaluate the benefits of allowing a longer time for learners to achieve their aspirations according to their entry levels. Trial this at public and not-for-profit Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in order to ensure control over funding and enrolments.

5. Support a change in policy which would enable learners to sit Foundation Studies assessments after enrolment and commencement, not before enrolment. Trial this at public and not-for-profit RTOs. Establish research around this policy change in relation to learner retention and learner success in formal learning.

---

7   New Zealand National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults (NZ-NCLNA), 2016, National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults at The University of Waikato, <www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com>, accessed 28 April 2016.

8   AKO-Aotearoa National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, 2010, Ako Aoterea, <www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz>, accessed 20 February 2015.

9   Skills - Adult Literacy Policy, 2012, *Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)*, Revised (2nd ed.), Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research & Tertiary Education, Canberra.

10   Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), *What is Learn Local,* <www.education.vic.gov.au/training/learners/learnlocal/Pages/whatis.asp>, accessed 14 May 2016.

11   Literacy Aotearoa, 2012, *Literacy Aotearoa*, <www.literacy.org.nz>, accessed 1 March 2016.

Education Providers

It is recommended that Foundation Studies and VET Providers:

1. Support the trial of on-screen, adaptive assessment tools for the placement of Foundation Studies learners. Currently, most Foundation Studies providers use a pen and paper approach to Foundation Studies pre-course assessment activities. These take time and are, all too often about ensuring that evidence is gathered for regulatory reasons, not for ensuring the learner has understood where their skills lie or to identify gaps. If providers used adaptive testing for learners they could, then, spend the one-on-one time, between educator and potential learner to discuss the leaner's aspirations and concerns. The process between educator and learner could then include a plan for each learner's post-Foundation Studies training.

2. Establish learner-centred assessment processes which include explicit information to the learners about why any assessment is being conducted and what they can learn about their skills from completing it.

3. Establish Communities of Practice to translate, or map, assessment requirements for auditing purposes to learner-centred activities. Some education providers do this extremely well already, but it isn't universal. This activity would bring the reasons for enrolment to be the focus of the relationship between learners and educators.

4. Publish and celebrate learners' achievements as much as possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACER	Australian Council of Educational Research
AKO-Aotearoa	National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence - NZ
AUT	Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
CPIT	Christchurch Polytech Institute Technology
DET	Department of Education & Training – Victoria
e-ako	e-ako Maths Support, NZ
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages (NZ term)
FSAT	Foundation Studies Assessment Tool – online tool for adults in Australia, provided by ACER, for Commonwealth Government of Australia
HESG	Higher Education Skills Group, Department of Education & Training, Victoria
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
ISS	International Specialised Skills Institute
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
L&N	Literacy and Numeracy
MIT	Manukau Institute of Technology
NCLNA	National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults - NZ
NZ	New Zealand
NZCER	New Zealand Council of Educational Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development
OP	Otago Polytechnic
PD	Professional Development
PIAAC	Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (also called: The Survey of Adult Skills)
RTO	Registered Training Organisation – VET providers in Australia
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission – NZ
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Australian term)
VET	Vocational Education & Training
WINTEC	Waikato Institute of Technology

Adaptive Assessment

An online assessment which becomes less or more complex, according to the sitter's responses.

Ako

'learning and teaching', 'learning', 'study', - Maori language[1]

Assessment tool

An assessment tool is a method of systematically collecting information about learners' performance or proficiency

Awarua

Criss-crossed river, braided rivers from Maori language.[2]

Awarua is the name of a pattern which is used in rāranga, Māori weaving. In the learning context, Awarua reflects the connections that often occur between literacy and numeracy as they "weave" through programmes and courses to increase the quality of learning engagement and skill levels.[3]

Community of Practice

A form of learning usually established by a professional group, usually purposeful and functioning over time to increase knowledge or trial and evaluate new ideas.

Critical Literacy

An educational practice that emphasises the connections between language, knowledge, power and subjectivities.[4]

Formal Learning

Learning which is intentional and systematic. It usually takes place as part of a class-based or on-line course, or one-to-one between learning and teacher.

Foundation Skills

Skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy –including digital technology - which meet the demands of daily, work and study life.[5]

Foundation Studies

Formal learning for self-affect or for preparation for further VET or Higher Education study.

---

1   Moorfield, J., 2003-2006, 'Te Aka Maori English', *Maori Dictionary*, <www.maoridictionary.co.nz>, accessed 11 February 2016.

2   Ibid.

3   Maths Technology - TEC., 2011, *Pathways Awarua*, (M. Technology, Producer), <www.pathwaysawarua.com>, accessed 29 February 2016.

4   de Souza LMTM, A. V., 2008, *Critical Literacy, theories and practices*, <www.criticalliteracyjournal.org>, accessed 29 December 2015.

5   Windisch, H., 2015, *Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills,* (1 ed.), < doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jrxnjdd3r5k-en>, OECD Publish, Paris.

iii. DEFINITIONS

Learn Local

The Victorian Adult Community Education Sector.[6]

Literacy

The ability to decode (read) text, numbers and images to make sense of the world and to encode (write) for particular purposes.

Literacy Practice

The daily lives of people and how they use literacy and numeracy 'for educational, work, social and personal purposes.

Literacy Aotearoa

A not-for-profit organisation which aims to provide quality literacy and numeracy teaching and learning opportunities to NZ adults, at no cost to the learner.[7]

Macro-skills

Micro-skills In language teaching 'macro-skills' usually refers to the over-arching skills of Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening. A 'micro-skill' is a subset of one of these, skim reading, or pronunciation, for example.

Māori

The indigenous people of New Zealand; their language and culture.[8]

Numeracy

The ability to use numbers in one's daily life and to make sense of the world with numbers and with numerical methods.

NZmaths

Website to support Maths Education in NZ, provided by Maths Technology Ltd on contract to the Ministry of Education. 'The Home of Mathematics in New Zealand'.[9]

Pasifika

People living in New Zealand who have migrated from the Pacific Islands or who identify with the Pacific Islands because of ancestry or heritage.[10]

---

6   Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), *What is Learn Local*, <www.education.vic.gov.au/training/learners/learnlocal/Pages/whatis. asp>, accessed 14 May 2016.

7   Literacy Aotearoa, 2012, *Literacy Aotearoa*, <www.literacy.org.nz>, accessed 1 March 2016.

8   Manatū Taonga., 2005-2016, *Te Ara – The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand is a comprehensive guide to our peoples, natural environment, history, culture, economy and society,* <www.teara.govt.nz>, accessed 2016.

9   New Zealand Maths Co., 2009, *NZ Maths*, <www.nzmaths.co.nz>, accessed 29 February 2016.

10   Otago, 2007, *What is a Pasifika*, <www.otago.az.nz/oil>, accessed 28 April 2016.

Pathways AWARUA

Website to support Adult Literacy & Numeracy learning, provided by TEC- NZ.[11]

Placement Assessment or Initial Assessment

An assessment to gauge the starting point of a learner's study.

Polytechnic

In New Zealand, an Institute which offers Foundation, Technical, Vocational and Professional Education.[12]

In Australia, an Institute which offers Foundation, Vocational and Higher Education.

Screening tool

An assessment which allows or precludes a learner's ability to join a course or class

Summative Assessment

An assessment, often formally administered, which gathers information at the end of a unit or instruction, or course, to measure or summarise knowledge, skills or competence.

te reo Māori

The Māori language.[13]

The Starting Points (NZ)

Levels and descriptors of capability in the skills of listening and reading below the Learning Progressions

The Learning Progressions (NZ)

Levels and descriptors of capability in a range of skills of literacy numeracy and oracy. Described in a range from 1-6.

The Literacy & Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015-2019 (NZ)

The concerted and many-stranded strategy to improve New Zealand adults' skills and access to further training. Defined in Section Six of this report.[14]

The National Foundation Skills Strategy 2012 (Aust)

A ten-year framework which brings a national focus to improving education and employment outcomes for working age Australians with low levels of foundation skills (language, literacy, numeracy and employability skills).[15]

---

11   Maths Technology - TEC., 2011, *Pathways Awarua,* (M. Technology, Producer), <www.pathwaysawarua.com>, accessed 29 February 2016.

12   New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), 2016, *About Education Organisations*, <www.nzqs.govt.nz>, accessed 2016.

13   Moorfield, J., 2003-2006, 'Te Aka Maori English', *Maori Dictionary*, <www.maoridictionary.co.nz>, accessed 11 February 2016.

14   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2015, *Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015-2019*, <www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Tertiary-Education-Strategy/Literacy-and-Numeracy-Implementation-Strategy/>, TEC National Office, Wellington.

15   Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE), 2012, *National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

iii. DEFINITIONS

The Starting Points (NZ)

Levels and descriptors of capability in the skills of listening and reading below the Learning Progressions

The NZ Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 (NZ)

The Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-19 sets out the Government's long-term strategic direction for tertiary education. This strategy incorporates the Literacy & Numeracy Strategies of 2012 and 2015-2019.[16]

The TEC Assessment Tool (NZ)

The online-adaptive Literacy & Numeracy Assessment owned and operated by the TEC- NZ.[17]

Whānau

Whānau is often translated as 'family', but its meaning is more complex. It includes physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions.[18]

Note on terms used in this report:

Over time, courses for adult learners with skills gaps have been described by the terms Foundation Studies, General Education and Language, Literacy & Numeracy (LLN) and less often, Second Chance Education.

As much as possible in this report and for the sake of clarity, 'Foundation Studies' is used to refer to courses for adult learners who require support in literacy, numeracy and/or English language to enable them to participate in further study, find employment or to enhance their daily lives.

Foundation Skills, or 'LLN', refers to the learning content or needs of learners for educational, work, social and personal purposes.

Terms for educators vary within institutes and in different countries. In the Australian context, teacher, tutor and lecturer are all used. The Fellow has used 'educator' as a general term. The staff at the New Zealand institutes visited referred to themselves or colleagues as 'teachers', 'tutors' or 'lecturers' which is reflected in the report.

The Literacy and Numeracy for Adult Assessment Tool, commissioned by the NZ Tertiary Education Commission and administered by the NZ Centre for Educational Research is given a variety of abbreviated titles across New Zealand. In this report, it's called the 'TEC Assessment Tool'.

The 'NZ Tertiary Education Strategy' is the broader policy document of which Adult Foundation Studies policies is one part.

---

16   New Zealand Government, 2014, *Tertiary Education Strategy*, NZ Ministry of Business & Employment, Wellington.

17   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC) Resource Centre, 2016, *Guide to using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool Starting Point Options – April 2016*, (TEC, Ed.), <www.tec.govt.nz>, accessed 6 May 2016.

18   Moorfield, J., Op. cit.

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lindee Conway sincerely thanks the following organisations and individuals who gave their time and energy to assist in the completion of the Fellowship.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) is an independent, national organisation. In 2015 it is celebrating twenty-five (25) years working with Australian governments, industry education institutions and individuals to enable them to gain enhanced skills, knowledge and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our individual 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:

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

Over 300 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 25 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 and knowledge, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills and knowledge 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 and knowledge across a range of industries and occupations.*

In this context, the ISS Institute works with our Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills and knowledge 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 knowledge, 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.

Conway also thanks the former CEO (Bella Irlicht AM), current CEO (Louisa Ellum) and staff (Ken Greenhill, Paul Sumner, Fiona Waugh and Danielle Cull) of ISS Institute for their assistance in planning and development of the Fellowship research and completion of this report.

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Governance and Management:

Patron in Chief:	**Board Chairman:**	**Board Members:**
Lady Primrose Potter AC	John Baker	Professor Amalia Di Iorio
Patrons:	**Board Deputy Chair:**	Bella Irlicht AM
Mr Tony Schiavello AO	Rosemary O'Connor	Jon Onley
Mr James MacKenzie	**Board Treasurer:**	Alisia Romanin
Founder/Board Member:	Jack O'Connell	**CEO:**
Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO	**Board Secretary:**	Louisa Ellum
	David Wittner AO	

---

1   Victorian Adult Literacy & Basic Education Council (VALBEC), 2015, 'Fine Print', *Fine Print - a Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education,* L. Matheson (Ed.), Adult Community Further Education, Department of Education and Training (Vic).

Education and Training

Australia:

The Fellow acknowledges the support and guidance of:

- Verna Kearney, Manager, Participation, Practice & Development, HESG at Department of Education & Training (Victoria)

- Nick Ryan, Victorian Department of Education & Training (Victoria)

- Dave Tout, Manager, Vocational, Adult and Workplace Education Services and Senior Research Fellow in Numeracy and Mathematics, Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

New Zealand:

The Fellow acknowledges the generosity of the following organisations and people:

- Adult Learning Co, Nelson New Zealand and its inspiring manager, Cameron Forbes

- Auckland University of Technology (AUT), in particular Associate-Professor Pat Strauss, Beverley Rozer, Kevin Roach and their colleagues

- Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) and its manager of English programs, Mark Hornby and his colleagues, including Barbara Dixon, Mary Brett-Kohistani and Kerson Dofs

- Literacy Aotearoa (Dunedin) and its manager, Ana Good, and her colleagues

- Literacy Waikato and its generous manager Louise Gaastra and her colleagues

- Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT), in particular Sonia Davidson, Ricki Versteeg, Susan Lotoa, Kate Pattinson and Vanessa Lewis and their colleagues

- National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults (NCLNA) at The University of Waikato (Hamilton NZ) and its Director, Professor Diana Coben

- New Zealand Centre for Educational Research (NCER) and its Manager of Professional services, Ben Gardiner

- New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC) and its dedicated Advisor, Literacy and Numeracy, David Do

- New Zealand Maths Co. and its Managing Director, Dr Gill Thomas

- Otago Polytechnic and its manager of Learning Support, Ms Kirsten Bracy and her gracious colleagues

- Waiariki Institute of Technology, its Director of Learning, Quality and Student Experience, Dr David Gough and his colleagues, including Nancy Groh, Tina Mischewski and Deb Bell, Kevin Dyke

- Whitireia New Zealand and Marty Pilott, Manager of English Language Programmes and his colleagues, including Mary Manderson and Susan Dodds.

Lindee Conway (Head, School of Foundation & Preparation, College of Humanities and Arts, Melbourne Polytechnic)

Memberships

- Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL), Secretary 2010-2012
- VicTESOL
- Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education Council (VALBEC), Executive Committee Member 2012

Biography

Lindee Conway has almost 30 years' experience in the Foundation Studies sector of adult education. She has worked in both the community and VET sectors as a teacher, program coordinator and team leader.

She has been an active member of the ACAL and VALBEC Executive with extensive professional networks. Her fellow educators' responses to their learners' needs has, over time, beguiled and intrigued her.

Her interest in how assessment works successfully for learners and teachers has grown over the last fifteen years. This interest, which is reflected in her formal study, began in the effort to make formal LLN assessment manageable for educators and meaningful for adult learners.

The opportunity to visit New Zealand, through the ISS Fellowship, has allowed her to learn about assessment systems and integration of assessment, teaching, learning, and the use of data to support these cyclical activities. Her learnings will increase her ability to advocate for a more considered approach to adult teaching, learning and, especially assessment in her own workplace, and more broadly in the Community Education and VET sectors.

3. AIM OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The principal aim of the Fellowship was to research the TEC Strategy, the strategic response to Foundation Studies needs among adults in New Zealand. By visiting a range of education providers, the Fellow would be able to observe first-hand the rigorous, research-based activities that have provided positive results in terms of teaching, assessment and learning outcomes.

The broader aims of the Fellowship were to:

1. Consider how the learnings from New Zealand might be applied in the context of adult language, literacy and numeracy programs in Victoria

2. Research the benefits of a single assessment tool linked to this strategy and compare it to assessment tools used in Victoria

3. Observe the differences in the approaches to teaching and assessing adult Foundation Studies in Australia and New Zealand

4. Reflect on the learnings from the Study Tour and report on possible research topics for further learning for the Australian Foundation Studies and VET sectors.

The Fellow's interest in New Zealand's approach was piqued when she attended the ACAL conference in Hobart in 2012.[1] New Zealand educators displayed a poster with the following message: *Knowing the learner, Knowing the demands, Knowing what to do*.[2] This seemed to encapsulate a holistic approach that valued both the learner and the expertise of the teacher. Further, it aligned with the Fellow's interests in finding ways to improve initial assessment practices that place the learner centre stage.

An assessment tool is a method of systematically collecting information about learners' performance or proficiency.[3] Foundation Studies educators on this side of the Tasman use a range of assessment tools. It isn't clear if having multiple tools results in 'fit for purpose' methods or if there are multiple tools by a process of accretion over time. It is also not clear if multiple State and Federal policies and requirements in Australia influence educators' practice for the better.

1   Australian Council of Adult Literacy and Tasmania Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL - TCAL), 2012, *Joining the Pieces*, Hobart.

2   Literacy Numeracy Pro., 2014, *Embedding LN Baseline Knowledge*, G. Smith, (Ed.), <www.thisisgraeme.me>, accessed 10 November 2015.

3   Coombe, C., et al., 2012, *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment,* New York: CUP.

4. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

Australia, Victoria and Adult Foundation Skills Learners

Australia currently has about 5,000 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Victoria has around 1085 RTOs.[1] [2] There are about 16 million adults living in Australia.[3] Australia's space, relative to its population is vast – with fewer than three people per square kilometre, with an increase over time of people living in cities. In Victoria, there are about 24 people for each square kilometre, with 75 per cent of them Melbourne-based. Victoria's total population is estimated at almost six million with almost five million adults. Since 2012, Victoria has experienced an increase in the number of migrant and refugee arrivals. Over 200 languages, including English and indigenous languages, are spoken in Australia.[4]

Issues around adult literacy and numeracy are well documented. The 2011-2012 Literacy Survey shows relatively high literacy but lower numeracy.[5] [6] Lack of ability to increase skills or gain better paid employment, because of relatively low literacy and numeracy and technology abilities, have been reported since the PIAAC survey. This statement of fact is backed by evidence from the education sector, Australian industries and Australian unions and social agencies.[7] [8] [9]

Adults in Victoria who need assistance with their Foundation Skills to gain entry to further study, or to feel better about themselves, have a range of options. Learn Local providers offer a community-based approach to entry level and general education. RTOs, TAFEs and Polytechnics offer pathways from Foundation or General Education into vocational training and further study. Adult learners whose first language is not English comprise a large part of the adult Foundation Studies sector.[10]

Australia and Victoria's Adult Foundation Skills Learning Systems

About two decades ago, Victoria and other states began to move towards formalising and regulating Australia's Foundation Studies delivery. The result of this is accredited training made up of a series of useful curricula which are usually managed by a state-based regulatory authority.[11] These curricula have become subject to centralised governance and look considerably like Training Packages.[12] [13]

It is the Fellow's recollection that the advent of formal curriculum in the 1990s provided educators with a meta-language for discussing teaching and learning. During the Fellowship tour, similar experiences were recounted by New Zealand educators as they spoke of the TEC Strategy.

1   Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), 2015, <www.asqa.gov.au>, accessed 30 April 2016.

2   Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), 2013, *Vocational Education and Training in Victoria*, <www.vrgq.vic.gov.au>, accessed 30 April 2016.

3   Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2015, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, <www.abs.gov.au>, accessed 29 April 2016.

4   Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016, *ABS Stats Languages*, <www.abs.gov.au>, accessed 14 May 2016.

5   Windisch, H., 2015, *Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills*, (1 ed.), < doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jrxnjdd3r5k-en>, OECD Publish, Paris.

6   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2013, *Country Note Survey of Adult Skills First Results*, <www.oecd.org>, accessed 15 November 2015.

7   Tout, D., 2014, *Australian Council of Education Research*, <www.acer.edu.au>, accessed 25 March 2014.

8   Adult Learning Australia - Australian Education Union (ALA-AEU), 2011, *Let's Get Serious About Adult Literacy and Numeracy*, Melbourne

9   Australian Industry Group (AIG), 2012, *When Words Fail- National Workforce Literacy Project*, Melbourne.

10   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2013, *Country Note Survey of Adult Skills First Results,* <www.oecd.org>, accessed 15 November 2015.

11   Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE), 2012, *National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

12   NSW-AMES, 2013, *Certificates of Spoken & Written English (CSWE),* AMES-NSW, Sydney.

13   CMM-VU-ACFE, 2014, *English as an Additional Language Frameworks,* (V. U. Curriculum Maintenance Managers, & A. C. Education, Eds.) Melbourne.

4. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The Victorian Department of Education & Training (DET)[14] and, within that, the Higher Education Skills Group (HESG)[15] are responsible for post-compulsory education in Victoria. HESG staff support practitioners and providers, Learn Local and TAFE, to plan and deliver assessment, learning and teaching.

In Victoria, the number of private RTOs increased dramatically in the last five years. At the time of writing, delivery of Foundation Studies is mostly conducted by publicly owned or not-for-profit organisations. There is a requirement that a potential learner's Language or Literacy and Numeracy skills are assessed for placement 'pre-enrolment' (compare this to the New Zealand system, described in Section 5, below) but a particular type of assessment is not mandated.

Over the last few years, some policy around skills levels and entry assessment has limited access to programs for some adults) in Victoria.[16] There is some evidence that, nationally, Australia (among other countries) has not maintained momentum in regard to Foundation Studies policy and that Foundation Skills gains are linked to social benefits and not necessarily to employment.[17] It is certainly the Fellow's observation, with some evidence to support it, that complexity of State and Federal requirements around assessing, and reporting outcomes results in programs for adult learners which are not overtly learner-centred'.[18] [19]

In addition to variables of program delivery, described above, Australia's adult Foundation Studies learners are assessed using a variety of assessment tools for access to Foundation or VET programs. This includes, but isn't limited to, the following examples:

- A-Frame [20]
- Australian Core Skills Framework [21]
- Core Skills for Work Framework [22]
- Core Skills Profile for Adults [23]
- English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA Kit) [24]
- Foundation Studies Assessment Tool (FSAT) - in development [25]
- International Second Language Proficiency Rating. [26]

14 Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), 2016, <www.education.vic.gov.au>, accessed 2 January 2016.

15 Higher Education Skills Group - Department of Education and Training (Vic.), 2016, *Higher Education Skills Group,* <www.vic.gov.au/contactsandservices/directory/?>, accessed 24 2016.

16 Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), *Victorian Skills Gateway Eligibility Indicator*, <www.skills.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway/Students/Pages/vtg-eligibility-indicator.aspx>, accessed 1 May 2016.

17 Alkema, A. R., 2015, *Adult Literacy and Numeracy: an Overview of the Evidence*, Tertiary Education Commission - Department of Education New Zealand (Wellington), <www.tec.govt.nz>, accessed 15 March 2016.

18 Leith., 2009, *How Learning English Facilitates Integration for Adult Migrants: The Jarrah Language Centre Experience*, National Vocational Education and Training Research (NCVER), Adelaide.

19 ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015, *AMEP REVIEW Final Report to the Department of Education & Training*, Melbourne.

20 Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE), 2006, *A-Frame: A framework for quality pre-accredited teaching and learning*, (DET-VIC, Ed.), Melbourne: State Government of Victoria.

21 Skills - Adult Literacy Policy, 2012, *Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)*, Revised (2nd ed.), Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research & Tertiary Education, Canberra.

22 Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary education (DIISRTE), 2013, *Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework* (CSfW), Canberra.

23 Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), 2016, *Core Skills Profile for Adults,* <www.acer.edu.au>, accessed 22 April 2016.

24 NSW- AMES, 2010, *ELLNA Kit - English Language, Literacy & Numeracy Assessment,* NSW Government, Sydney.

25 Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), 2015, *Foundation Skills Assessment Tool*, <www.acer.edu.au>, accessed 4 November 4 2015.

26 Ingram, D., & Wylie, E., 2012, *International Second Language Proficiency Rating,* <www.islpr.org>, accessed 11 May 2014.

Most Foundation Studies curricula have matrices linking some of these assessment tools to their contents.[27] The range displayed in this sample of assessment tools used in Australia underpinned the Fellow's interest to visit New Zealand and compare what seemed like a simpler system against our own.

The guiding questions in the Fellow's mind as she approached her Study Tour were:

1. Could we have a better understanding of why we use different tools for particular learners, if we look at the single-tool strategy in New Zealand?

2. A key purpose of both Australia's and New Zealand's strategic responses to adult Foundation Studies needs is to increase employability.[28] [29] [30] The Fellow's question here was: Have NZ Foundation Studies educators and VET teachers become aware of an increase in numbers using Foundation Skills as a pathway into VET or skilled employment?

3. A further question developed around NZ Foundation Studies practitioners' reflections on how the strategy and the assessment tool has improved their working lives: Do New Zealand practitioners report an improved work environment and new energy in their sector?

---

27   CMM-VU-ACFE, Op. Cit, p.45

28   Billet, S., et al., 2012, *Continuing education and training models and strategies: an initial appraisal*, National Council of Vocational Educational Research (NCVER), Adelaide.

29   Chesters, J., Ryan, C., & Sinning, M., 2013, *The returns to literacy skills*, National Council of Vocational Educational Research (NCVER), Adelaide.

30   Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE), Op. Cit.

5. IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENTS REQUIRED

The focus of all ISS Fellowships is to travel, observe, learn and return with new insights and skills to enhance practice. The complexity described in Section Four of this report, may assist in ease of identification of the required skill enhancements. The issues at the core of the Fellow's investigations is:

Does it help educators or adult learners in Australia to continue with a multiplicity of approaches and systems?

If the answer is no, then it makes sense to look at our neighbour's efforts in making explicit the needs of Foundation Studies learners and creating a systematic and simplified response. It is a complex issue, with evidence available, globally, that for the typical adult LLN student, 'assessment is generally seen as something done to them by their teachers'.[1]

The commitment of Australian governments to provide dedicated funding to Foundation Studies Programs is a strength. However, this is countered by the constraints then placed on education providers and educators to use assessment tools that are not learner-centred.

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is a service to refugees and migrants with a long and successful history.[2] [3]

The Skills for Education & Employment (SEE) program is a program to improve the English- language, literacy and numeracy of Australian adults seeking work.[4]

Both of these programs have minimum skills gains requirements in their contracts with providers, so education providers agree to improve a quantity of macro-skills before they meet their learners and understand their learners' needs. The impact of testing on learning – known as 'washback' is aggravated by such requirements.[5]

Another example of a threat to the integrity of assessment is evident in the Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG), which limits access to the number of funded places, annually to Victorian learners. This policy decision is sensible financially, as per the above examples, but limits the flexibility of learning arrangements in terms of the LLN support available per learner.[6]

From a purely economic perspective, it is practical to support systems which minimise waste, however using assessment as a means of managing payment for education providers' services does not allow for a learner-centred focus. If Australian and Victorian policy-makers and education providers can obtain an understanding of what works well in New Zealand, this may provide a catalyst for change and simplification of systems.

1   Coombe, C., Troudi, S., & Al-Hamly, M., 2012, 'Foreign and Second Language Teacher Assessment Literacy: Issues, Challenges and Recommendations', *Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment*, C. Coombe (Ed.), New York: CUP, pp. 20 - 27.

2   Department of Education and Training (DET, Aus), 2016, *Adult Migrant English Program*, <www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program>, accessed 14 January 2016.

3   Martin, S., 2008, *New Life, New Language*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University, Sydney.

4   Department of Education and Training (DET, Aus), 2016, *Skills for Education & Employment: About the Programme*, accessed January 2 2016.

5   Cheng, L., & Curtis, A., 2012, 'Test Impact and Washback: Implications for Teaching and Learning', *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment*, C. Coombes (Ed.), New York: CUP, pp. 89-95.

6   Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), *Victorian Skills Gateway Eligibility Indicator,* <www.skills.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway/Students/Pages/vtg-eligibility-indicator.aspx>, accessed 1 May 2016.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

New Zealand's Population and Adult Learners

New Zealand's population is approximately 4.5 million, of which 3.5 million are adults. Data from 2012 estimated almost half a million adult New Zealanders of working age had no formal qualifications.[1] New Zealand's population density is about fifteen people per square kilometre compared with Victoria at 24 per square kilometre. As with Australia, New Zealand has experienced a population drift to the city, but it is not quite as marked as in Victoria. The statistic of 85 per cent of New Zealanders living in urban areas includes small population centres.[2]

English and Māori are the top two languages spoken in New Zealand, with the incidence of other multi-lingual speakers increasing.[3] The respectfully bicultural and bilingual nature of New Zealand's society in general, and in education in particular, were enormously impressive to the Fellow during her Study Tour.

NZCER bilingual EXAMPLE

Australia differs politically from New Zealand in being a Federation with state and national jurisdictions, while New Zealand has one layer of government. Despite differences identified in relation to population, geography and social aspects, comparisons about what happens on either side of the Tasman can be reasonably made in the context of this informal, broadly based Study Tour.

New Zealand's Adult Learning Strategic Systems

New Zealand has responded holistically to improving Foundation Skills in its adult population. There has been a depth of research and planning underpinning the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy. Driving improvements in literacy and numeracy for the adult population and improving Foundation Studies assessment, and teaching and learning practice, are the key priorities of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019.

The NZ Tertiary Education Strategy states:

New Zealand people's employment opportunities, earning potential, health outcomes, financial capability (among other things) can be constrained without sufficient literacy and numeracy skills. This can perpetuate intergenerational disadvantage and limit economic growth and social development. This strategy sets out how (the TEC) will work with the tertiary sector, employers and across government to address this key priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy.[4]

The *braided rivers* of teaching and learning, as part of the New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy offer a strategic and thoughtful response to adult learners' needs. This has in turn created a broad range of integrated options and services for adult learners and educators.

---

1   New Zealand Government, Op. cit, p. 15.

2   Statistics New Zealand, 2016, <www.stats.govt.nz>, accessed 16 April 2016.

3   Statistics New Zealand, 2016, Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/quickstats-about-a-subject/culture-and-identity/languages-spoken, <www.stats.govt.nz>, accessed 14 May 2016.

4   New Zealand Government, 2014, *Tertiary Education Strategy*, NZ Ministry of Business & Employment, Wellington, p.5.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

This integrated approach includes:

- **The Learning Progressions** which provides levels and descriptors of capability in a range of skills of literacy, numeracy and oracy.[5] They provide a common language to describe competencies and shape teaching. The Learning Progressions are formatted in a series of books which provide definitions and level guides. They also contain excellent teaching resources, lesson plans and sample assessment responses. The Learning Progressions also now include the 'Starting Points' which are relevant for adult ESOL learners in New Zealand.[6]

- **The National Online Assessment Tool (TEC Assessment Tool)** provides an adaptive assessment tool for learners and educators to place skills and map progress. The TEC Assessment Tool is a key diagnostic tool of literacy and numeracy competency for adults in New Zealand.[7] There was no nationally recognised diagnostic assessment for literacy and numeracy before the launch of the TEC Assessment Tool in 2010. The TEC Assessment Tool maps learners' needs against literacy and numeracy competencies which are described in the Learning Progressions. Their classroom tutor or teacher receives information on each learner and a class profile. In New Zealand, learners complete this 'post-enrolment'. Learners receive information about their current skills and requirements for their current next step in the learning journey. There is now, a growing body of analyses about the skills of New Zealanders rising from the data becoming available.[8] [9]

- **The National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults** at the University of Waikato. The Centre of Excellence provides research and analysis for the TEC and Professional Development to educators in the sector.[10]

- **Ako Aotearoa, the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence** at Massey University. Another Centre of Excellence which provides support and professional development for educators who work with Māori and Pasifika learners. This organisation creates a broad range of resources for all educators, including inspirational banners. The Fellow was surprised at her own delight in their sensible and profound banners and found them in most educational providers she visited.[11]

- **Literacy Aotearoa** is a grass roots organisation which offers free literacy and numeracy training to New Zealand adults. A review of this longstanding company in 2015 by NZQA validated and celebrated its place as an educational provider.[12] [13]

- **Pathways Awarua** is an online and freely available adult learning website which offers formal or informal learning outcomes for New Zealanders. This self-directed online system provides modules for learners to complete at their own pace, based on the competencies set out in the Learning Progressions. It is provided to New Zealanders at no cost.[14]

---

5   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2009, *Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy,* (1st ed.), The Crown (NZ), Wellington.

6   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC) Resource Centre, 2016, *Guide to using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool Starting Point Options – April 2016*, (TEC, Ed.), <www.tec.govt.nz>, accessed 6 May 2016.

7   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2015, Resource-Centre/Software-tools/Literacy-and-Numeracy-for-Adults-Assessment-Tool/#5, <www.tec.govt.nz>, accessed 3 January 2016.

8   Greyling, W., 2015, *Analysing learners' literacy and numeracy (LN) progress at Waikato Institute of Technology*, Waikato Institute of Technology, Hamilton NZ.

9   Lane, C., 2015, 'Literacy and numeracy assessments of adult English language learners tool- an analysis of data from the Literacy and and Numeracy for Adult Assessment tool', *Tertiary Sector Performance Analysis, New Zealand*, <minedu.gov.nt>, accessed 5 April 2015, Wellington, New Zealand.

10   New Zealand National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults (NZ-NCLNA), 2016, National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults at The University of Waikato, <www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com>, accessed 28 April 2016.

11   AKO-Aotearoa National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, 2010, *Ako Aoterea*, <www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz>, accessed 20 February 2015.

12   Literacy Aotearoa, 2012, *Literacy Aotearoa*, <www.literacy.org.nz>, accessed 1 March 2016.

13   New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), 2015, *Report of External Evaluation and Review - Literacy Aotearoa*, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Wellington.

14   Maths Technology - TEC., 2011, *Pathways Awarua*, (M. Technology, Producer), <www.pathwaysawarua.com>, accessed 29 February 2016.

- **National Certificates of Education Achievement (NCEA)** is the Year 13 exit credential in New Zealand. Adult learners can seek credits towards this in Foundation Studies courses.[15]

In addition, NZ has another element to its National Strategy - Skills Highway. This was not explored by the Fellow during her visit, due to time constraints. This program supports workplace learning to improve the country's workforce capability.[16] A recently published Critical Perspectives Reader on adult literacy and numeracy contains several chapters on the NZ Integrated Strategy. See Yasukawa & Black, 2016.[17]

> *"Out of the Assessment comes the Learning Plan. One learner need, one plan… now our plan begins with a positive: I'm good at …"* (ESOL tutor, MIT)

The Fellow's discussions with her New Zealand counterparts were productive and positive and every visit she made offered her more evidence of Kiwi friendliness. The strategic response to the low LLN levels recorded in PIAAC was held to be a positive in making discussions explicit and adding purpose to learning.

Where negativity was reported by educators it was about volume of paperwork and about learners' anxieties around sitting formal assessments. At one site, numeracy educators reported to the Fellow:

"We felt better when we'd mapped our project materials to the Learning Progressions. It took ages, but then we could get back to saying to the students: "Okay, choose your project topic, it's all aligned". Finally, we are back to the real stuff, the students and their choices. Mapping is important because it means we can cluster numeracy assessments. Clustering means we're not 'offering' 48 different assessments."

Examples of how the integration of New Zealand's system works

A learner's journey to a vocational outcome in New Zealand is

An example of a Progressions Report. Some information about the tool can be found at: http://www.tec.govt.nz/Resource-Centre/ Software-tools/Literacy-and-Numeracy-for-Adults-Assessment-Tool/#5

dependent on their starting point. Imagine two young men who wish to train to become plumbers. Both go to their local Polytechnic Waiariki, in Rotorua, to find out how to get started. One is assessed at level 2, and the other at level 5 on the Learning Progressions.

---

15 New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), 2016, *How NCEA works*, <www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea>, accessed 5 March 2016.

16 New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2015, *Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015-2019*, <www.tec.govt.nz/ Tertiary-Sector/Tertiary-Education-Strategy/Literacy-and-Numeracy-Implementation-Strategy/>, TEC National Office, Wellington, p.17.

17 Yasukawa, K, Black, S: Beyond Economic Interests- Critical Perspectives on Adult Literacy & Numeracy in a Globalised World. vol 14- International Issues in Adult Education, Ed Mayo, P pub 2016. ISSN 1-978-94-6300-442-8

The first young man is not expected to study the plumbing course as an independent learner, something he already knew. This learner's pathway to his ticket will take longer. He may undertake a Foundation Studies course first. He may have a Learning Adviser (LA) who may appear in class as a team-teacher alongside the Plumbing teacher. He may have some appointments with the LA at the Learning Hub or Independent Learning Centre. Or he may never see the LA whose task it is to support him. She may work instead with his course teacher outside of classroom hours. His plumbing tutor may dip into the Learning Progressions Books in his staff room to learn more about his student's skill levels and the challenges they present.

This young man's aspiration for a trade ticket may take longer to achieve, however both young men may graduate with the same plumbing qualification. The TEC Assessment Tool monitors the journey of both learners, but does not limit the learning required for them to graduate equitably.

Imagine a woman in her early thirties, who comes into her local Literacy Aotearoa Centre in Hamilton. She has little confidence in herself as a formal learner but would like to improve her numeracy skills and get a pathways plan to go to WINTEC. She sits the TEC Assessment at the end of her first week of classes and her estimate that her numeracy skills are lower than her literacy abilities is confirmed. After a few weeks of classes and one-on-one sessions with her tutor she shares the following, poignant and heart-warming story:

"So, I got home and my young brother came home from school, really upset. He said, 'They gave me some maths homework and I don't even understand how to start.' After a life of thinking, Well, I can't help, I said to him, 'Okay, let's sit down – together – and have a go at it – together'."

The Literacy Waikato tutor, when communicating this example of literacy practice to her colleagues, reported that her lines had been stolen. This evidence of learning is – in the Fellow's view - pure gold in terms of the journey of an adult learner from lack of confidence to self-awareness and readiness to help others.
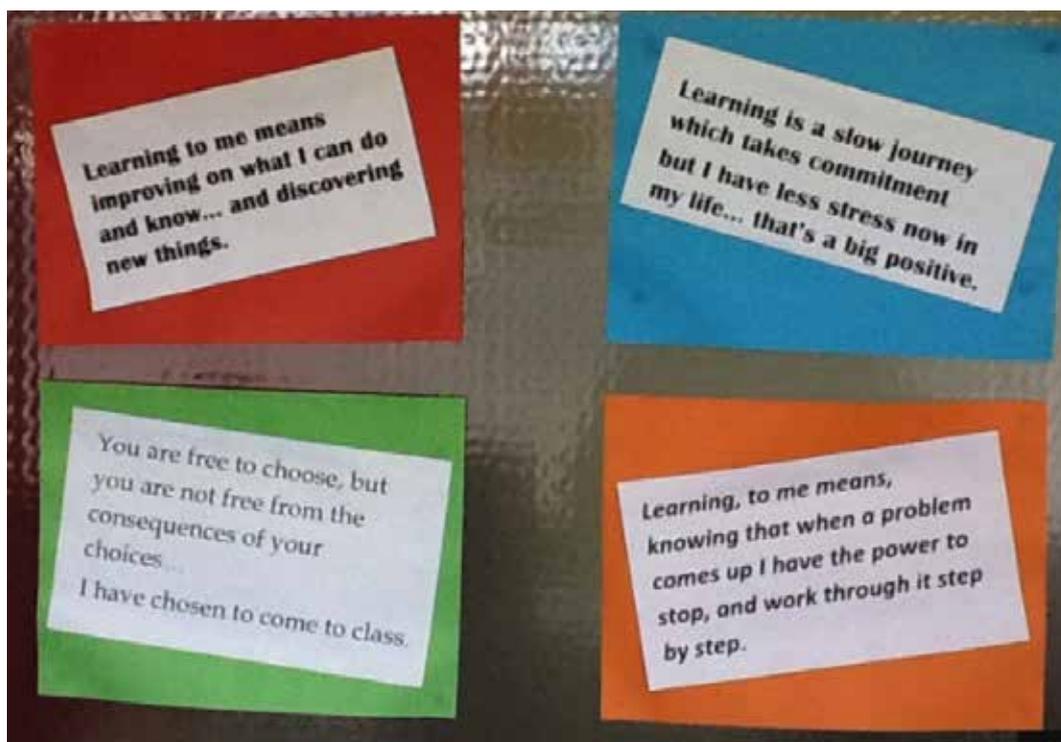
Image of Learning Week Quotes, Literacy Waikato. 'What does learning mean to you?'

Overall Objective of Visits: February – March 2016.

The Fellow hoped to gain insights into how the TEC Assessment Tool was being used and how educators integrated assessment into their classroom activities across each of the sites she visited. The intention was the same in each case, and in line with the aims of the Fellowship, expressed in Section 3.

However, the richness of the experience and openness of the Kiwi people she met along the way ensured that there was much more covered and gained in discussions.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Visit 1: Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT), Auckland (15th and 16th February 2016)

Contacts: Ricki Versteeg, Head of Programs, School of English & Foundation Studies and her colleagues.

Outcomes:

The TEC Assessment Tool was seen as a positive by most of the MIT staff. The TEC Assessment Tool, whether paper-based or online is not done in the first week. The teachers work at building a relationship with the learner first, then the assessment activity can be incorporated more organically to the learning program. In the words of one of the teachers *"it enables positive discussion with the learner"*.

One teacher described how she asks permission to put the class members' responses up on the data projector. She then initiates a discussion around why a choice was made and why it was accurate or otherwise. In so doing, the TEC Assessment Tool becomes a teaching tool. The emphasis is not on whether responses are right or wrong but the process and context for making choices.

Teachers commented on this as a practical strategy, and supportive of the learners, however, a time consuming one. Most educators commented that having the assessment activity as the basis for the beginning of learning helped to make the teaching plan explicit and clear. Many of the educators commented on the gap that exists between adults with ability in 'critical literacy'. Using the answers given and questions contained in the TEC Assessment Tool, assists in addressing these gaps. One educator said *"it's very helpful to get the Police Cadet hopefuls to focus. They know their gaps now"*.

MIT's Foundation Studies Department focuses on supporting learners to enter trades courses or Health Sciences. The success of this is due partly to the inclusion of the discussion of a post-Foundation Studies plan which includes any future vocational course. This is touched on in the initial placement assessment discussion with each learner.

MIT's focus is not wholly about employment readiness. One educator pointed out that teaching and learning about poisons at Foundation Studies level might be discussed in the context of the garden shed and then re-contextualised into entry-preparation for nursing.

> *"Discussion about a learner's further plan begins at the first meeting, between learner and Foundation Studies educator. So the Vocational plan frames the Foundation plan."* **(MIT Foundation Skills Educator)**

Visit 1 (continued): Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

Contacts: Associate Professor Pat Strauss and her colleagues.

Outcomes:

AUT's use of the TEC Assessment Tool has two streams: the university delivers Foundation Studies training to domestic and overseas students and also has a School of Education which delivers post-graduate courses to New Zealand educators. So the Learning Progressions and the TEC strategy are integral to both Foundation Studies and Higher Education students.

AUT was part of the original rollout of the TEC Assessment Tool and the Learning Progressions. Professional Development (PD) for this was conducted over a considerable period and originally included practitioners, program managers and senior academics. The funded PD offered educators practical information on what the TEC Strategy would look like but, more than this, they offered educators a chance to reflect and discuss ideas together. This PD was valued and commented on as a positive at several of the sites visited.

AUT colleagues gave the Fellow the opportunity to 'sit the TEC Assessment Tool' which was an illuminating experience and not one at which she shone particularly highly. Interestingly, performance anxiety kicked in, even though the activity had no stakes beyond the Fellow hoping to show her New Zealand colleagues she was both literate and numerate.

> *"Adults want Numeracy learning for a huge range of things: could be for knitting patterns, could be formulae to pass a trade test."* **(Numeracy Education Lecturer, AUT)**

Concluding Remarks:

The visit to these two Providers provided rich fodder to the Fellow, particularly in relation to two of the guiding questions stated earlier: *Question 2 - Have NZ Foundation Studies educators and VET teachers become aware of an increase in numbers using Foundation Skills as a pathway into VET or skilled employment?*

It was evident to the Fellow that spending more time on planning the 'next step' in a learner's journey, even if not universally relevant, was effective. It also provided insights into the third aim: *to observe differences in approaches to learning and assessment;* particularly with the in-course assessment used as a teaching and learning tool. The Professional Development aspects and time spent talking about teaching and learning at AUT (and later in Christchurch and Nelson) was also insightful.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Visit 2: The National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults (NCLNA) at the University of Waikato, Hamilton (22nd – 24th February 2016)

Contact: Professor Diana Coben

Outcomes:

The NCLNA's key role is to facilitate collaborations between key stakeholders in New Zealand to improve Foundation Skills. They work with the NZ Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to conduct and report on research and to provide tailored professional development for LLN educators and Learning Advisers. Professor Diana Coben describes the strategic system used in New Zealand as "robust and researched".

Because much of what was discussed during this meeting is part of research projects not yet published, it is not possible to detail here the lively topics and ideas that formed part of the conversation. However, it was by talking to Professor Coben that the Fellow refined the question about assessment for adult learners which has absorbed her for some years. This is in line with the fourth aim of the Study Tour, relating to *possible research topics for the Australian Foundation Studies sector.*

> *"What educators should, ideally, be thinking of is: why am I offering this assessment, in this format, to this learner, now? Who is this assessment for?"* **(Professor Diana Coben, NCLNA)**

Visit 2 (continued): Literacy Waikato, Hamilton (24th February 2016)

Contact: Louise Gaastra, Manager.

J is for Jandals, K is for Kiwi

Outcomes:

Literacy Waikato is notably welcoming and has a rich history of creativity. It occupies an old shopfront with residential rooms at the back, now converted to teaching and learning spaces. The walls are treated as learning opportunities with posters, printed and made at the Centre. Learners' stories, comments on their learning journeys and their achievements were proudly displayed on walls throughout the buildings. The learners' reflections on their own progress is celebrated and reinforced.

This place reminded the Fellow of many of the Learn Local community centres and Neighbourhood Houses across Victoria.

"At Literacy Waikato, tutors spoke of the 'hoodie test'. How long does it take for the learners to pull their hood back and reveal their faces? In Nelson, tutors look out for the sunglasses: when new learners remove them from their eyes, they have begun to relax." **(Literacy Tutors, Literacy Aoteorea)**

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Concluding Remarks:

It was clear to the Fellow that the Centre of Excellence at Waikato (NCLNA) is a force for good for New Zealand's general population and for the nation's educators. Having a Centre of Excellence which can provide research and professional development tailored to Education Providers' needs is a valuable resource. The generosity shown by the Literacy Waikato staff and their commitment to their learners was a delight. The Fellow was given a set of readers on a wide range of topics, which have been produced and published from Hamilton.

Visit 3: Waiairiki Institute of Technology, Rotorua (19th February 2016)

Contacts: Dr David Gough, Director Learning Quality and Student Experience and Institute's Learning Adviser team, led by Nancy Groh, the Learning Advisers' Team Coordinator.

The intention of this visit was to find out how integrated delivery was offered to learners with mixed levels on the Learning Progressions.

Outcomes:

It was clear to the Fellow that Waiariki has made a concerted approach to ensuring Foundation Studies learners fit into its VET program. Learning advisers and the TEC Assessment Tool data are integral to this. One educator at Waiariki explained:

"Learning advisers may work with tutors, or learners, each decision depends on the tutors, the learners and the needs. No hard and fast rule applies."

Once the TEC Assessment Tool assessment is completed the learners' Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is begun, an activity which involves the learners and their educators. As in MIT the Fellow observed that the ILP is about current skills gaps and also plans to learn in the future.

> *"We try to build resilience. We say [things like]: Come every day! Participate! Ask questions! Ask for support! Be responsible for your own learning!"* **(Learning Adviser, Waiariki Institute of Technology)**

The information in the Learning Progressions series are enormously interesting to educators. They display depth and breadth of research and contemplation. They are written in a register with the intention of reaching professionals and are, as a result, complex. For example:

Vocabulary for Writing: Knowing a word involves a complex network of connections, including collocations, images and understandings. A writer uses memory, knowledge of the word, knowledge of language and texts and appropriate strategies to activate and connect elements within their own network of word knowledge.[18]

Educators at Waiariki have adapted, and simplified, the information in the Learning Progressions about capabilities for many popular courses at the Institute. For example, information on Job Profiles for a variety of post-vocational training such as Chef, Plumber, and Electrical Workers includes information in plain English:

Writing: 'On a regular basis, electrical workers write brief notes on job sheets' became 'Sometimes, electrical workers write notes to customers to explain what they've done'.[19]

Concluding Remarks:

The scholarly interest in the acquisition of literacy explicitly demonstrated to the Fellow at Waiariki has not stopped the practical translation of skills into plain, readable, achievable tasks.

---

18   New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2008, *Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Background Information,* The Crown (NZ), Wellington.

19   Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC), 2015, *Individual Learning Plan,* Wairaiki Institute of Technology, Rotorua.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Visit 4: Whitireia Institute's English Language Program, Wellington (26th – 29th February 2016)

Located in Wellington's northern suburbs, the institute overlooks the Porirua Harbour and mountains beyond the water. It is a suburb like many in Australia's cities – once city-fringe, now urban and with persistent unemployment among some of its residents. Many refugees, migrant and international English students study at Whitireia. The Fellow was interested in how this centre handled a diverse student cohort and how teachers maintained their learner-based methods.

Contacts: Marty Pilott, Manager of English Language Programs and colleagues, including Mary Manderson and Susan Dodds.

Outcomes:

At Whitireia, the English Language Program staff have become creative to manage small cohorts and deliver learner-based activities and course. So, the domestic and international students mingle in classes on some days, to provide opportunities for conversation practice and sharing information about studying and living in New Zealand.

The TEC Assessment Tool and the Learning Progressions, as part of the Strategic Response, is mostly viewed positively by Whitireia's English Language Program staff. They use the data gathered at the beginning of the course and at the end, to plan cohesive cohorts for each program. This evidence-based planning makes for smoother pathways to other courses at the Polytechnic or to University. It was the Fellow's observation that the culture at this site is notably rich and enabling for the learners.

"At Whitireia, a Financial Adviser works in the Student Services team. She visits classes to talk generally, and also makes appoints to talk privately, about learners' new lives in New Zealand."

Visit 4 (continued): Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), Wellington

Contact: David Do, Adviser, Literacy and Numeracy, Strategy and Priorities Team, Operations Directorate

Outcomes:

David Do coordinates key aspects of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy as part of New Zealand's Tertiary Education Strategy. His work over several years has been to shape the 2015-2019 strategy and build on the TEC's earlier version (2012).

In the discussion with the Fellow Do explained how the TEC Assessment Tool fits in to the broad range of learning and teaching processes. Do also explained that the purpose of the data collected by the New Zealand government is to assist with planning of Professional Development in sites and regions. The Strategies and Priorities Team also work very closely with Hamilton's Centre of Excellence (NCLNA) to shape research and share data.

Do spoke of the TEC's updated strategy to expand its reach of adult Foundation Studies Programs, especially in small population sites. Another key strategy is to ensure that NZ's LLN educators are 'well-provided' with the ability to help their learners.

Visit 4 (continued): Education House, New Zealand Centre for Education Research (NZCER), Wellington (29th February 2016)

Contact: Ben Gardiner, Manager of Professional Services at NZCER.

Outcomes:

NZCER has the contract with TEC to deliver and maintain the TEC Assessment Tool and its systems. As well as supporting educators and education providers, NZCER collects data about its use and learners' steps on the Learning Progressions. The Fellow hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the workings of the tool.

The TEC Assessment Tool has a brief 'to provide reliable information about the reading, writing, numeracy and vocabulary skills of adults'.[20] The Adult Learning Progressions go from 1-6; in addition, the Starting Points describe skills below Step 1. The Starting Points are used for ESOL learners, both those newly arrived in New Zealand and also those with more advanced English.

NCER's team is also exploring if, and how, the online screening tool may assist with diagnosis around dyslexia. Improvements in the current version of the TEC Assessment Tool are being added. So, educators can now choose to set up the assessment for new learners in the following streams:

- Adult – the original TEC Assessment Tool

- Māori – using te reo Māori.

- Youth – with a different range of topics and language use, which was specifically designed to act as a bridge between secondary and tertiary education and to engage young learners

- The Starting Points -for ESOL learning and teaching.

> *"The Starting Points take a while to set up for each learner but then, they become an opportunity for explicit teaching for the whole class."* **(ESOL Educator, MIT)**

> *"The Starting Points have changed how we discuss learning and language with the students: it's very useful."* **(ESOL Educator, CPIT)**

Concluding Remarks:

From the inclusive educators at Whitireia who displayed commitment to providing language and settlement services to learners in any visa category, the Fellow learned that coherence in delivery can come with patience and planning.

The Fellow learned from the NZ Literacy and Numeracy Adviser and the Manager of the TEC Assessment Tool systems that the 'single' assessment tool is, in fact, multi-layered. Learning about the Tool itself and its original purpose and implementation of new versions was enormously interesting. In Australia, it is the Fellow's observation (and her own, earlier and limiting belief) that online adaptive assessment are considered not appropriate for English-language learners. Learning more about the original Assessment Tool and its newer variations, is in line with her second aim to *research the benefits of a single assessment tool and compare it to assessment tools used in Victoria.*

---

20   New Zealand National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults (NZ-NCLNA), 2016, National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults at The University of Waikato, <www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com>, accessed 28 April 2016.

Visit 5: Adult Learning Co., Nelson (2nd March 2016)

The Adult Learning Company in Nelson, NZ (known as 'The Learning Centre') is upstairs in a shopping strip. A sign on the footpath says 'help for work, study or home that won't cost you a cent!' The intention in visiting Literacy Aotearoa centre was to witness the vision for learner-based programs and the innovative programs that could be reported on.

Contacts: Cameron Forbes, Manager, and his colleagues.

Outcomes:

The informal vision statement of the Centre is 'bring in your life and we'll build a literacy and numeracy or English program around it'. Forbes appears to have boundless energy for improving the local people's skills. He is a self-declared risk taker, in the sense of implementing new ideas, running with suggestions from learners, staff and community members. He is confident that the Centre's learners will benefit from the implementation of new ideas and from seeing bravery modelled. To the Fellow this was a beguiling and refreshing attitude. All staff who conversed with the Fellow confirmed the commitment to make the Centre approachable and relevant to local people and their Whānau.

Over the years, the Nelson Adult Learning Co has implemented innovations such as:

- 'Books for Blokes'. Two books of short-stories which grew out of a writing competition. Stories have been written by local literacy learners, by staff at the Centre and by New Zealand published writers[21]

- Parental Literacy and Life Skills (Young Mums) Course. A course developed by the Centre's staff which gives immediate and practical support to local community members. It is friendly and inclusive but has rigorous course content, including: child psychology and child development; planning a family budget that covers income, lifestyle, and entertainment; the legal environment; and, goal-setting.

- Adapting the learning plans and feedback forms to frame feedback on learning in terms of confidence and achievement

- Adapting the ESOL program for a group of Bhutanese refugees living in Nelson, so that five new words are the maximum introduced on any day. A lesson on pushbike maintenance might include this vocabulary list: bike/wheel/screw-driver/hold/grip. A lesson on sustainable fishing is reduced to: Small: NO. Throw it back. Big: Dinner!

Forbes reported that many adult learners come to the Centre specifically, and only, to receive help getting their driving licence. They then stay for much longer and participate in a broad range of Foundation Studies courses. Initial ambivalence on the part of some of the Centre's staff around using the Learning Progressions and Steps and the TEC Assessment Tool has dissipated as the group have adapted the strategic options to benefit learners.

> *"I'm a calmer and more peaceful parent."* **(Feedback from Participant, Parenting & Life-Skills (Young Mums) Course, Nelson adult Learning Co.)**

---

21 Nelson Adult Learning Co., 2016, *Books for Blokes*, <http://stories.adultlearning.co.nz/books-stories-resources/>, accessed 5 March 2016.

Concluding Remarks:

Nelson's Adult Learning Centre is a place that buzzes with learners and with ideas for good teaching. Forbes' comment during discussions was both salutary and refreshing (and one which emboldened the Fellow):

"Risk-taking leads to positive outcomes. Model this as an educational organisation, and the students will see it too."

Small- NO Throw it back! Big- YES, dinner! Learning about sustainable fishing in Nelson

Visit 6: Christchurch Polytech Institute of Technology (CPIT) Adult Literacy Program, Christchurch (4th March 2016)

Contacts: Mark Hornby, Head of the Department of Humanities; Barbara Dixon, Tutor and Programme Leader, Adult Literacy and their Colleagues.

Outcomes:

CPIT has a general literacy and numeracy program and a Higher Education Enabling program. The latter course assists learners to enrol in a range of STEM courses. The general literacy course was described as 'deliberately adult-focused'; learners are encouraged to improve their literacy as an important step, but not the endpoint. Each topic, or milestone is an opportunity for learners to reflect on their gains.

The TEC Assessment Tool and the Progressions – is not currently used by Whitireia's English Language Program staff. They use internal data gathered at the beginning of the course and at the end, to plan cohesive cohorts   This evidence-based planning makes for smoother pathways to other courses at the Polytechnic or to University. It was the Fellow's observation that the culture at this site is notably enabling for its learners. Whitireia staff are waiting for the ESOL version of the Assessment Tool to be fully available.

> *"A lot of (earlier PD about the Progressions and the TEC Assessment Tool) was about good teaching practice. We had so many good conversations with the trades teachers! … Now it's a bit more about compliance."* **(Educator, CPIT)**

It was clear to the Fellow that other aspects of the Strategy are utilised in a positive and learner-centred way. Despite funding policy changes, The Adult Literacy Program has increased delivery to the Christchurch community.

Successful strategies used by CPIT staff to engage and enrol more learners include:

- Advertising the Centre in medical clinics and health centres

- The use of a permanent classroom so that learners have their own desk with drawers for their literacy and numeracy work. Tutors and lecturers are timetabled into the classroom, thus enabling learners to remain centred

- A borrowing library with a broad range of texts which enables learners to begin reading at their own level, on topics of their choosing.

Concluding Remarks:

The CPIT educators had a resolute attitude towards keeping the focus on the positive (as did most people she met in that city, almost exactly five years after the 2011 earthquake). There was a concerted and considered approach to engaging adults with little formal education and little, initial, disposition to study. The Fellow also observed a phlegmatic response to 'making do' with available funding and infrastructure.

## Visit 7: Literacy Dunedin, Dunedin (7th – 9th March 2016)

Contacts: Ana Good, Manager and her colleagues.

Outcomes:

The staff at Dunedin's Literacy Aotearoa demonstrate commitment and passion to their organisational vision *to develop accessible quality literacy services that ensure the peoples of Aotearoa are critically literate.[22]*

They have a practical way of demonstrating their commitment: publish, publish, and publish. When the Fellow visited their site, she saw: learners' poetry on banners and on river rocks; biographies and histories published with old fashioned bookbinding and in spiro-bound editions; and, reflections on life journeys, both good and bad, on posters in classrooms and in yearbooks. It was inspiring to see the variety of ways that the Dunedin Literacy tutors enable their learners to become published writers.

As with many other educators who spoke to the Fellow, the Dunedin Literacy tutors view the Learning Progressions and the TEC Assessment Tool as an opportunity for a discussion with the learner - 'a diagnostic activity for content and planning for the learners and us'.
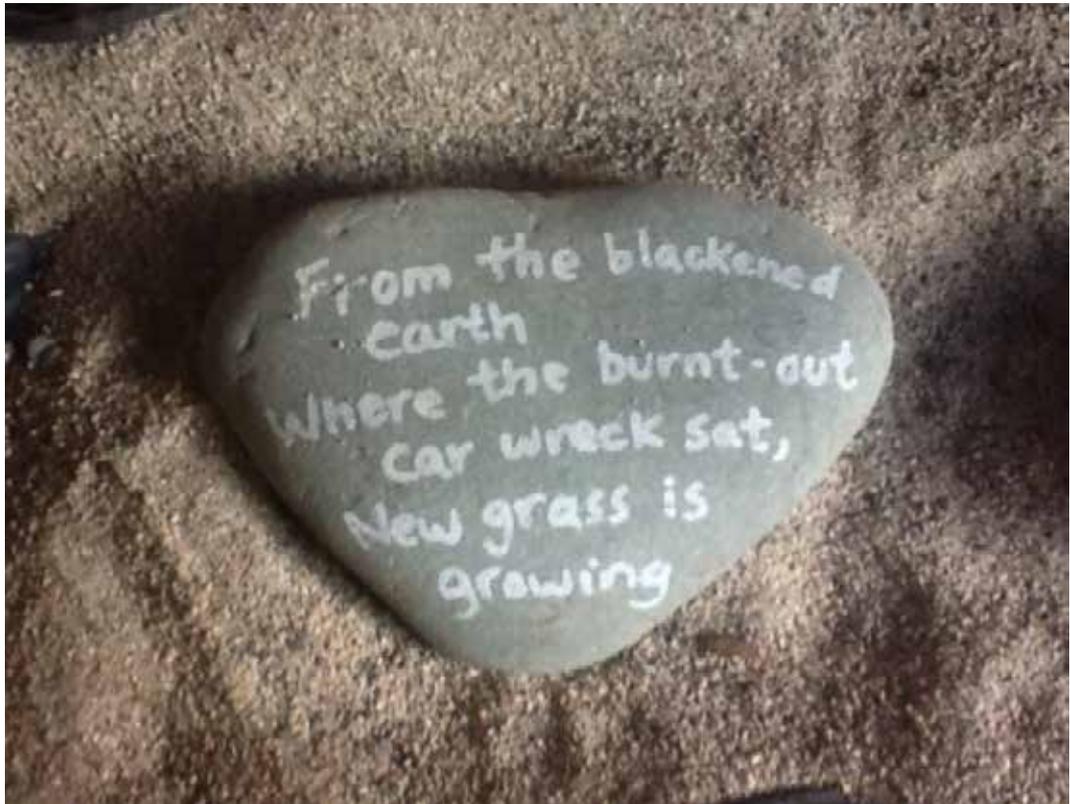
River Rock Haiku Literacy Dunedin

---

22   Literacy Aotearoa, 2012, *Literacy Aotearoa*, <www.literacy.org.nz>, accessed 1 March 2016.

Visit 7 (continued): Otago Polytechnic (OP) Dunedin Campus, Learning Advisers' Hub

Contact: Kristen Bracey, Team Leader & Learning Adviser

Outcomes:

OP has recently benefited from a physical 'renewal'. The Learning Advisers who met with the Fellow spoke from a pleasant, open space area which puts many student-centred services in one place. The learner goes to one office to get information on housing, study support, coursework expectations and information about health and financial services. The Polytechnic's Living Campus policy and practices mean that the outside space is green, practical and inviting. They have, among other things, turned their lawns into apple orchards.[23]

The STEM tutors and Learning Advisers who met with the Fellow discussed the most useful aspects of the TEC Assessment Tool as they see it. They believe that it confirms information for learners and educators, within a few weeks of commencement. They were less confident that the post-training assessment is as useful, reporting that anxiety levels were an issue for some learners when the next assessment comes up. This was a commonly reported response, and one the Fellow heard in many places she visited, to the assessment system - that subsequent assessments have less utility than the initial event.

Otago has an 'open enrolment policy'. This means that, regardless of initial entry levels as demonstrated by the TEC Assessment, all learners are able to enrol in their chosen course. This, in turn, means that staff have to plan for varying capabilities.

One Information Technology (IT) lecturer commented:

"(Students) have different motivations for enrolment. IT is level 3 and 4, and both in theory open entry. Some at level 3 might be better in Foundation Studies, but prefer IT. So they need extra support. So, we just do it. It might take longer but we do it".

OP also offers many community members the chance to enter a pathway into Nursing via Foundation Studies. Again, planning for achievement can be more explicit because of the descriptors on the Learning Progressions and TEC Assessment tool.

> *"Students might find it a bit daunting to see their Learning Progressions 'score' but they usually agree with the information shown about their gaps. So, (the Assessment) might take time, but it's useful."* **(Lecturer, OP)**

> *"OP students are often in agreement with the results, and the gaps displayed especially in reading for meaning and critical literacy."* **(Learning Adviser, OP)**

---

23   Otago Polytech, 2016, *Living Campus,* <www.op.ac.nz/assets/Sustainability/Living-Campus>, accessed 9 March 2016.

Visit 7 (continued): Maths NZ

Contact: Dr Gill Thomas, Director, Maths NZ.

The Fellow was fortunate to be recommended to make contact with Dr Thomas and the contact was suggested during discussions with David Do in Wellington (confirming the advice from the ISS Institute team that one contact would lead to more).

Dr Thomas talked about the variety of learning offered by Pathways Awarua Online Numeracy and Maths tool. Learners can choose to achieve 'mini-certificates' or simply visit and revisit pages on the site. It is a website that has had a steady increase in hits, across New Zealand. It was Dr Thomas who told the Fellow about the meaning of 'Awarua', as a *braided river*, which exemplifies the many ways in which New Zealand's integrated systems enhance adult LLN learning.

The Fellow sat in the Dunedin Library on the morning of her meeting with Dr Thomas and watched a small group of adults ages ranging from mid-teens to mid-60's using the tool (the Fellow is an educator who is always on the lookout for evidence of *'what works'*). This entirely unconscious demonstration was illuminating - it's free, freely available and popular.

7. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: APPLYING THE OUTCOMES

The knowledge acquired on this trip was beyond expectations. Apart from obtaining a better picture about the TEC Strategy's influence on learners and educators, the Fellow observed a wealth of respectful, engaging teaching ideas and practices.

Applying the outcomes of this knowledge in the Fellow's workplace and within her networks may take the form of establishing Communities of Practice around:

• Learner-centred planning for curriculum and teaching and learning practices

• Publishing and celebrating achievements of learners' new skills

• Creating medium to long-term learning and study plans for learners, not only short-term plans regarding Foundation Studies courses

• Mapping project-based learning to Assessment Tools and Curricula so the learning and learners' interests remains paramount.

These ideals could be assisted by members of Government Departments, such as HESG in Victoria, who may seek to evaluate the effects of policy as it supports learner-centred provision of adult education.

Foundation Studies and Vocational Professional Associations could also assist by continuing to invite New Zealand educators to their conferences or holding them across the Tasman in order to learn from their integrated systems.

The Fellow plans to disseminate her learnings in the following way:

• Share ideas about theory, strategy and practice in PD sessions at her workplace, inviting educators from Learn Local Neighbourhood Houses, TAFEs and Polytechnics to attend in Semester 2, 2016

• Offer to speak to members of the Victorian HESG group about her learnings

• Offer to speak at Victorian and Australian conferences, 2016 and 2017

• Write for Fine Print (the VALBEC Journal of LLN educators), end of 2016

• Speak at workshops and forums for LLN educators, 2016 and 2017.

A plan to revise Australia's National Foundation Skills Strategy is beyond the Fellow's scope of influence. Any plans to review the multiplicity and complexity of our systems would benefit from looking at the TEC Strategy's journey from 2011 to now.

The time, effort and paper which would be saved if educators had a streamlined assessment system would enable far greater concentration on teaching and learning. For learners, an explicit assessment system which enabled a learning pathway would ensure better outcomes in terms of further education, life choices, community connection and wellbeing.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Government

It is recommended that the Australian and Victorian Governments:

1. Establish a Working Group to evaluate the benefits from the creation of Excellence Centres for Adult Foundation Studies and VET learning, such as those in New Zealand (for example, NCLNA at Waikato University and AKO-Aotearoa at Massey University). A funded research program and Professional Development opportunities for educators would greatly assist with meeting the complexities of contracts described earlier in this report. It may also assist with workforce issues for educators by offering support in new ways of LLN teaching and learning.

2. Support the establishment of a data collection environment using one single framework, such as New Zealand's Learning Progressions, to ensure that Australia is able to simply capture its gains in adult English-language, Literacy and Numeracy acquisition. Having one framework, with one set of indicators or protocols (for example the ACSF) would certainly simplify reporting for educators and most likely assist learners' understanding of their skills and gaps.

3. Investigate the utility of providing free Foundation Studies learning opportunities for adults with LLN needs, such as online services and free adult community providers (such as Victoria's Learn Local) that are similar to the Literacy Aotearoa provision.

4. Evaluate the benefits of allowing a longer time period for learners to achieve their aspirations that is in accordance with their entry levels. Trial this at public and not-for-profit RTOs in order to ensure control over funding and enrolments.

5. Support a change in policy which would enable learners to sit Foundation Studies assessments after enrolment and commencement, not before enrolment. Trial this at public and not-for-profit RTOs. Establish research around this policy change in relation to learner retention and learner success in formal learning.

Education Providers

It is recommended that Foundation Studies and VET Providers:

1. Support the trial of on-screen, adaptive assessment tools for the placement of Foundation Studies learners. Currently, most Foundation Studies providers use a pen and paper approach to Foundation Studies pre-course assessment activities. These take time and are, all too often, about ensuring that evidence is gathered for regulatory reasons rather than ensuring the learner has understood where their skills lie or to identify gaps. If providers used adaptive testing for learners they could, then, spend the one-on-one time between educator and potential learner to discuss the leaner's aspirations and concerns. The process between educator and learner could then include a plan for each learner's post-Foundation Studies training.

2. Establish learner-centred assessment processes which include explicit information to the learners about why any assessment is being conducted and what they can learn about their skills in completing it.

3. Establish Communities of Practice to translate, or map, assessment requirements for auditing purposes to learner-centred activities. Some education providers do this extremely well already, but it isn't universal. This activity would bring the reasons for enrolment to be the focus of the relationship between learners and educators.

4. Publish and celebrate learners' achievements as much as possible.

9. REFERENCES

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2015, Australian Demographic Statistics, <www.abs.gov.au>, accessed 29 April 2016.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016, ABS Stats Languages, <www.abs.gov.au>, accessed 14 May 2016.

Australian Council of Adult Literacy and Tasmania Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL - TCAL), 2012, Joining the Pieces, Hobart.

Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL), 2016, <www.acal.edu.au>, accessed 14 May 2016

Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), 2015, <www.acer.edu.au>, accessed 2 January 2016.

Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), 2015, Foundation Skills Assessment Tool, <www.acer.edu.au>, accessed 4 November 4 2015.

Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), 2016, Core Skills Profile for Adults, <www.acer.edu.au>, accessed 22 April 2016.

Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE), 2006, A-Frame: A framework for quality pre-accredited teaching and learning, (DET-VIC, Ed.), Melbourne: State Government of Victoria.

ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015, AMEP REVIEW Final Report to the Department of Education & Training, Melbourne.

Australian Industry Group (AIG), 2012, When Words Fail- National Workforce Literacy Project, Melbourne.

AKO-Aotearoa National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, 2010, Ako Aoterea, <www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz>, accessed 20 February 2015.

Adult Learning Australia - Australian Education Union (ALA-AEU), 2011, Let's Get Serious About Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Melbourne.

Alkema, A. R., 2015, Adult Literacy and Numeracy: an Overview of the Evidence, Tertiary Education Commission - Department of Education New Zealand (Wellington), <www.tec.govt.nz>, accessed 15 March 2016.

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), 2015, <www.asqa.gov.au>, accessed 30 April 2016.

Australian Council of Education Research (ACER), 2015, Foundation Skills Assessment Tool, Melbourne: ACER.

Auckland University of Technology (AUT), 2016, <www.aut.ac.nz>, accessed 29 December 2015.

Billet, S., et al., 2012, Continuing education and training models and strategies: an initial appraisal, National Council of Vocational Educational Research (NCVER), Adelaide.

Cheng, L., & Curtis, A., 2012, 'Test Impact and Washback: Implications for Teaching and Learning',The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment, C. Coombes (Ed.), New York: CUP, pp. 89-95.

Chesters, J., Ryan, C., & Sinning, M., 2013, The returns to literacy skills, National Council of Vocational Educational Research (NCVER), Adelaide.

CMM-VU-ACFE, 2014, English as an Additional Language Frameworks, (V. U. Curriculum Maintenance Managers, & A. C. Education, Eds.) Melbourne.

9. REFERENCES

Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary education (DIISRTE), 2013, Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework (CSfW), Canberra.

Coombe, C., et al., 2012, The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment, New York: CUP.

Coombe, C., Troudi, S., & Al-Hamly, M., 2012, 'Foreign and Second Language Teacher Assessment Literacy: Issues, Challenges and Recommendations', Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment, C. Coombe (Ed.), New York: CUP, pp. 20 - 27.

Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT), 2016, <www.ara.ac.nz>, accessed 2 January 2016.

de Souza LMTM, A. V., 2008, Critical Literacy, theories and practices, <www.criticalliteracyjournal. org>, accessed 29 December 2015.

Department of Education and Training (DET, Aus), 2016, Adult Migrant English Program, <www. education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program>, accessed 14 January 2016.

Department of Education and Training (DET, Aus), 2016, Skills for Education & Employment: About the Programme, accessed January 2 2016.

Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), Victorian Skills Gateway Eligibility Indicator, <www. skills.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway/Students/Pages/vtg-eligibility-indicator.aspx>, accessed 1 May 2016.

Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), What is Learn Local, <www.education.vic.gov.au/ training/learners/learnlocal/Pages/whatis.asp>, accessed 14 May 2016.

Department of Education and Training (DET, Vic), 2016, <www.education.vic.gov.au>, accessed 2 January 2016.

Greyling, W., 2015, Analysing learners' literacy and numeracy (LN) progress at Waikato Institute of Technology, Waikato Institute of Technology, Hamilton NZ.

Hagston, J. T., 2013, PIAAC Results, <www.acal.edu.au>, accessed 14 April 2016.

Higher Education Skills Group - Department of Education and Training (Vic.), 2016, Higher Education Skills Group, <www.vic.gov.au/contactsandservices/directory/?>, accessed 24 2016.

Ingram, D., & Wylie, E., 2012, International Second Language Proficiency Rating, <www.islpr.org>, accessed 11 May 2014.

Katz, A., 2012, 'Linking Assessment with Instructions Aims and Learning', D. O. Coombe (Ed.), The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment, New York: CUP, pp. 65-73.

Lane, C., 2015, 'Literacy and numeracy assessments of adult English language learners tool- an analysis of data from the Literacy and and Numeracy for Adult Assessment tool', Tertiary Sector Performance Analysis, New Zealand, <minedu.gov.nt>, accessed 5 April 2015, Wellington, New Zealand.

Leith., 2009, How Learning English Facilitates Integration for Adult Migrants: The Jarrah Language Centre Experience, National Vocational Education and Training Research (NCVER), Adelaide.

Lit15., 2015, Literacy Aotearoa Dunedin, <www.readwellwritewell.org.nz>, accessed 9 September 2015, Literacy Aotearoa Dunedin

Literacy Aotearoa, 2012, Literacy Aotearoa, <www.literacy.org.nz>, accessed 1 March 2016.

Literacy Numeracy Pro., 2014, Embedding LN Baseline Knowledge, G. Smith, (Ed.), <www.thisisgraeme.me>, accessed 10 November 2015.

Literacy Waikato., 2015, Literacy Waikato, <www.literacywaikato.org.nz>, accessed 24 February 2016.

Manatū Taonga., 2005-2016, Te Ara – The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand is a comprehensive guide to our peoples, natural environment, history, culture, economy and society, <www.teara.govt.nz>, accessed 2016.

Martin, S., 2008, New Life, New Language, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University, Sydney.

Maths Technology - TEC., 2011, Pathways Awarua, (M. Technology, Producer), <www.pathwaysawarua.com>, accessed 29 February 2016.

McPhail, G., 2015, 'Conceptual Progression in Innovative Learning Spaces', New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, 12(1), pp. 6-8.

Melbourne Polytechnic, 2016, Melbourne Polytechnic, <www.melbournepolytechnic.edu.au>, accessed 2 January 2016.

MinEd-NZ., 2016, e-ako maths, <www.e-ako.nzmaths.co.nz>, accessed 29 February 2016.

Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT), 2016, Manukau Institute of Technology, <www.manukua.ac.nza>, accessed 1 February 1 2016.

Moorfield, J., 2003-2006, 'Te Aka Maori English', Maori Dictionary, <www.maoridictionary.co.nz>, accessed 11 February 2016.

NEAS, 2016, NEAS, <www.neas.org.au>, accessed 12 May 2016.

Nelson Adult Learning Co., 2016, About Us New Zealand Adult Learning Co., <www.adultlearning.co.nz>, accessed 22 February 2016.

Nelson Adult Learning Co., 2016, Books for Blokes, <http://stories.adultlearning.co.nz/books-stories-resources/>, accessed 5 March 2016.

NSW- AMES, 2010, ELLNA Kit - English Language, Literacy & Numeracy Assessment, NSW Government, Sydney.

NSW-AMES, 2013, Certificates of Spoken & Written English (CSWE), AMES-NSW, Sydney.

New Zealand Government, 2014, Tertiary Education Strategy, NZ Ministry of Business & Employment, Wellington.

New Zealand Maths Co., 2009, NZ Maths, <www.nzmaths.co.nz>, accessed 29 February 2016.

New Zealand Centre for Educational Research (NZCER), 2009, New Zealand Centre for Educational Research, <www.nzcer.co.nz>, accessed 20 February 2016.

New Zealand National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults (NZ-NCLNA), 2016, National Centre of Literacy & Numeracy for Adults at The University of Waikato, <www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com>, accessed 28 April 2016.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), 2015, Report of External Evaluation and Review - Literacy Aotearoa, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Wellington.

9. REFERENCES

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), 2016, About Education Organisations, <www.nzqs.govt.nz>, accessed 2016.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), 2016, How NCEA works, <www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea>, accessed 5 March 2016.

New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2008, Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Background Information, The Crown (NZ), Wellington.

New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2009, Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy, (1st ed.), The Crown (NZ), Wellington.

New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2012, Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy, The Crown (NZ), Wellington.

New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2015, Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015-2019, <www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Tertiary-Education-Strategy/Literacy-and-Numeracy-Implementation-Strategy/>, TEC National Office, Wellington.

New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC), 2015, Resource-Centre/Software-tools/Literacy-and-Numeracy-for-Adults-Assessment-Tool/#5, <www.tec.govt.nz>, accessed 3 January 2016.

New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (NZ-TEC) Resource Centre, 2016, Guide to using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool Starting Point Options – April 2016, (TEC, Ed.), <www.tec.govt.nz>, accessed 6 May 2016.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2008, Overview of Policies and Programmes for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) Learners, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/172281885164>, accessed 17 March 2014.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2013, Country Note Survey of Adult Skills First Results, <www.oecd.org>, accessed 15 November 2015.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2016, Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, <www.oecd.org>, accessed 2 January 2016.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (OECD-PIAAC), 2016, PIAAC - The International Survey of Adult Skills, <www.oecd.org/site/piaac/>, accessed 14 April 2016.

Otago Polytech (OP), 2016, Otago Polytech, <www.op.ac.nz>, accessed 2 January 2016.

Otago, 2007, What is a Pasifika, <www.otago.az.nz/oil>, accessed 28 April 2016.

Otago Polytech, 2016, Living Campus, <www.op.ac.nz/assets/Sustainability/Living-Campus> , accessed 9 March 2016.

Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE), 2012, National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Skills - Adult Literacy Policy, 2012, Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), Revised (2nd ed.), Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research & Tertiary Education, Canberra.

Statistics New Zealand, 2016, Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/quickstats-about-a-subject/culture-and-identity/languages-spoken, <www.stats.govt.nz>, accessed 14 May 2016.

Statistics New Zealand, 2016, <www.stats.govt.nz>, accessed 16 April 2016.

Tout, D., 2014, Australian Council of Education Research, <www.acer.edu.au>, accessed 25 March 2014.

Victorian Adult Literacy & Basic Education Council (VALBEC), 2015, 'Fine Print', Fine Print - a Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education, L. Matheson (Ed.), Adult Community Further Education, Department of Education and Training (Vic).

Victorian Adult Literacy & Basic Education Council (VALBEC), 2015, 'Melbourne Polytechnic: Victorian Adult Literacy & Basic Education Council', Fine Print - a Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education, L. Matheson (Ed.), Adult Community Further Education, Department of Education and Training (Vic).

Victorian Adult Literacy & Basic Education Council (VALBEC), 2016, Victorian Adult Literacy & Basic Council, <www.valbec.org.au>, accessed 22 May 2016.

VicTESOL, 2016, VicTESOL, <https://victesol.vic.edu.au>, accessed 31 May 2016.

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), 2013, Vocational Education and Training in Victoria, <www.vrgq.vic.gov.au>, accessed 30 April 2016.

Waiariki Institute of Technology, 2016, Waiariki Institute of Technology, <www.waiariki.ac.nz>, accessed 9 September 2015.

Whitireia New Zealand, 2016, Whitireia New Zealand, <www.whitireia.ac.nz>, accessed 2 January 2016.

Windisch, H., 2015, Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills, (1 ed.), < doi:http://dx.doi. org/10.1787/5jrxnjdd3r5k-en>, OECD Publish, Paris.

Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC), 2016, WINTEC, <www.wintec.ac.nz>, accessed 23 February 2016.

Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC), 2015, Individual Learning Plan, Wairaiki Institute of Technology, Rotorua.

Yasukawa, K, Black, S: Beyond Economic Interests- Critical Perspectives on Adult Literacy & Numeracy in a Globalised World. vol 14- International Issues in Adult Education, Ed Mayo, P pub 2016. ISSN 1-978-94-6300-442-8