

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

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Fellowship Aims

- ❑ To investigate best pedagogy practices pertinent to two specific student cohorts:
 - Current adult migrant cohort who arrived in Australia as refugees or humanitarian migrants
 - Adult native speakers from a variety of disadvantaged groups who have the potential to participate in literacy and numeracy
- ❑ To further extend the research into the key drivers of Australian adult LLN policy in response to the National Foundation Skills Strategy (DEEWR 2011) and the call by the Australian Industry Group and Industry Skills Council which are looking at finding strategies for up-skilling of the workforce of future and focusing on increasing literacy and numeracy levels
- ❑ To investigate benefits of using human and social capital* in ACE and VET training, thus meeting Australian Government Skills Reform objectives of upskilling for the 21st century workforce

Australian Context

- Since 2010 the impact of language, literacy and numeracy levels on productivity and social participation started featuring on the federal government's agenda
- The Government has set targets to increase the qualifications of Australians by 2020, emphasising the need for skills upgrade, especially in the area of language, literacy and numeracy as a precursor for further training and/or employment .
- The Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey (ALLS, 2006) and Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC, 2011) highlighted literacy and numeracy issues among Australian population.
- Results have shown that approximately 7 million (46%) Australians aged 15 to 74 years had scores at level 1 or 2 on literacy scales, while on the numeracy scale approximately 7.9 million (53%) Australians were assessed at level 1 or 2.

Australian Context

- Australian VET landscape that includes language, literacy and numeracy component is varied and inconsistent.
 1. Learner support or tutorial support which involves one to one or small group tutorials, focusing on skill deficiencies that need to be addressed;
 2. Team teaching with a varied degree of co-delivery between VET teachers and LLN practitioners, such as, the shared delivery model used at TAFEs in Victoria, or CAVSS team teaching that focuses on vocational socialisation and has been in practice in Western Australia; and
 3. Stand-alone LLN delivery that may then lead into pathways to shared delivery classes or VET delivery with language, literacy and numeracy support.



Overseas Program

➤ Places visited:

- University of Glasgow, School of Education
- National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), Dublin
- South West Dublin Adult Learning Centre (Ballyfermot and Inchicore)
- Dublin Adult Learning Centre

➤ Events attended:

- Conference organised by Glasgow City Council/Ville De Marseille – Education for Diversity: Supporting Newly Arrived Young People in Glasgow and Marseille – supported by Regio Comenius Program and EU



Overseas Program



University of Glasgow

- Focus of the visit was on discussions with academics and learning from their research to investigate trends in:
- Adult learning in VET/ACE sector
- Social capital outcomes
- Current research in teaching migrants

NALA and ACE providers in Dublin

- Focus of the visit was to discuss the state of adult literacy and numeracy in Ireland, research and promotion of adult literacy and numeracy as a national agenda
- To meet with practitioners and discuss and compare learner groups and challenges encountered by teachers

Glasgow/Marseille Conference – Education for Diversity (Regio Project)

- Research showcased: Journeys from images to words – using ‘silent books’ to teach English/French - application in adult/EAL education

Findings and Key Issues

- **Key issues in Scotland and Ireland are similar to issues in Australia**
 - Time allowed for language/literacy/numeracy learning is insufficient
 - Good level of English should be a prerequisite for future success in education and employment
 - One on one tuition or allocated one on one time for counselling and guidance adds to the quality of one's learning and targets individual learner's needs
 - Not all teachers, even TESOL qualified are suitable to cope with teaching young adults (16-21 year olds) – initial teacher training should address/focus on the needs of this cohort of students (University of Glasgow ran 2 short courses to address this issue)

Findings and Key Issues



- ‘silent books’ project targeting younger students but also including their parents in the learning journey was piloted in several schools, one in Australia – the method can be applied to adult learners with no L1 proficiency
- **Collaborative projects:** The Lifelong Learning Programme covers the period 2007-2013, and is the successor to the former Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and eLearning programmes. It supports projects and activities that foster interchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the EU. There are 4 main parts to the programme:
 - The [Comenius programme](#) deals with the teaching and learning needs of all those in pre-school and school education up to the end of upper secondary education, and the institutions and organisations providing such education
 - The [Erasmus programme](#) deals with the teaching and learning needs of all those in formal higher education, including trans-national student placements in enterprise, and the institutions and organisations providing or facilitating such education and training
 - The [Leonardo da Vinci programme](#) deals with the teaching and learning needs of all those in vocational education and training, other than in third level including placement in enterprise of people other than students, as well as the institutions and organisations providing or facilitating such education and training
 - The [Grundtvig programme](#) deals with the teaching and learning needs of those in all forms of adult education, as well as the institutions and organisations providing or facilitating such education

Findings and Key Issues

- In Australia, lack of resources that more closely target current migrant cohort (very low L1 literacy or non-existent, higher oracy, very slow development of reading, writing and numeracy)
- Volunteering for social inclusion should be encouraged and promoted
- Employment opportunities for migrants/refugees/asylum seekers – often end up in lower paid jobs and lower skilled jobs due to a number of factors, e.g. qualifications are not recognised, English skills proficiency is insufficient, perception of employers that a migrant worker should be employed only as a last resort, any skills upgrade may take longer than anticipated so people choose job security or financial benefits over their skills and profession
- It is seen as an issue that skills are not that easily transferrable and straightforward, and to bridge the gap between skills and knowledge one already has and skills and knowledge required takes more time and study
- If refugees were skilled, they were still steered towards careers/jobs that underutilise their skills or are going into careers that are too generic for the skills they have aptitude for
- Practical skills were not taken into consideration in a number of cases
- Assumptions were made that if you speak with an accent, your language skills are not good enough

Findings and Key Issues

- There is a strong link between education – obtaining a certificate and employment
- Some have seen education as a delay to job search and are keen to enter the job market even if their language skills are not sufficient
- Short courses are looked at favourably as an entry ticket to employment
- The effect of language progression has been shown to be multi-dimensional and is seen by most refugees as a pre-requisite to any notion of full integration
- In Ireland Vocational Education Committees (VEC) that operate across a number of municipalities under the auspice of NALA are aiming to close the gap and increase literacy/numeracy level of the most disadvantaged members of the society
- Community sector education has been seen as an entry level to engaging in learning and increasing literacy and numeracy skills – issue: how to bridge the gap between courses offered through ACE where students are sheltered and more looked after vs. large institutes/colleges where students should pathway into once they are confident in their literacy/numeracy
- Our education is based on assessment pedagogy – ‘Assessment has replaced learning as the major function of vocational education. As a result, students are “achieving” more but learning less.’
- MIRACLE – Migrants and refugees a challenge for learning in European schools – aims to develop teaching methods and modules as well as learning materials which are based on the ‘diversity approach’



Recommendations

Government and Industry

- Teacher training should be revised
- Collaborative projects between states should be established to foster and encourage nationwide cooperation and research
- Develop new ways of promoting literacy/numeracy programs that will target specific learner cohorts
- Continue educating employers about the benefits of increased literacy and numeracy, e.g. increased productivity and decreased waste
- Recognise the changed landscape of EAL, i.e. low L1 migrants vs. skilled migrants
- Encourage volunteering as a way of engaging individuals with the wider community, working on their skills sets

Professional Associations, VET and ACE providers

- A web of learning through intensive collaboration between the academia and practitioners should be developed
- A mix of blended learning should be encouraged as it empowers students to take ownership of their learning
- Recognise and establish different teaching/learning settings for different types of learners
- Build a repository of free resources for nationwide use

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