Which Literacy Practices and Pedagogies Engage and Empower At Risk Adolescent Students?

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Total Engagement in Education

Today, 10 000 Queenslanders aged 15 to 17 years are not in school, not in work and not in training. This is simply not good enough and we have to try harder.

Peter Beattie
Anna Bligh
Matt Foley
White paper 2002
Build a comprehensive picture of –

- the provision of literacy education
- at three alternative educational sites; with a fourth site serving as a pilot study site, all in Queensland, Australia; and a comparative site in Texas, USA
- focusing on 4 individual at risk students as embedded cases
- taking place over a twelve month period

With an emerging theory of an effective means to engage and empower at risk adolescents through literacy education.
Diversity of Sites & Programs

RURAL FLEXI - Individual teaching & Brisbane School of Distance Education Programs
- literacy and numeracy / functional real life skills booklets
- year 10 core English booklets
- literacy within apprenticeship courses
- obligatory attendance at the centre at least once a week

BRISBANE SUBURBAN TAFE - Certificate I in Workplace Access for Youth At Risk
- literacy and numeracy / functional real life skills
- negotiated content based on student interests / teacher devised activities
- set within a suite of other courses

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING - Individual Programming
- verbal and written literacy
- reading to students

COASTAL TAFE - LLNP [Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program]
- nation wide program for unemployed people
- using national and international standards [NRS & IALS]
### Table 1 – Alternative Education Site Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Education Sites</th>
<th>Organisation Curriculum Materials</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Program sponsored by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PILOT STUDY SITE: <a href="#">Regional TAFE, Qld</a></td>
<td>TAFE – Teacher developed workbooks and worksheets</td>
<td>Coordinator, Teachers, Volunteer Tutors</td>
<td>Teacher marked workbooks, Voc Ed outcome test sheets, NRS test sheets and oral presentations</td>
<td>1) TAFE Certificate 1 Vocational Access outcomes 2) NRS outcomes required by Centrelink 3) TAFE Curriculum outcomes</td>
<td>National - Australia wide Site specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">Regional TAFE, Qld</a> Language, Literacy &amp; Numeracy Program; [large coastal region]</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Flexi School, Qld [Individual Programming &amp; BSDE Material; [small mountain town]</td>
<td>Brisbane School of Distance Education [BSDE] workbooks/online learning and TAFE course materials</td>
<td>Previous Coordinator, Acting Coordinator, Teacher, Para Teacher</td>
<td>Workbooks, assignments &amp; assessment sheets sent to &amp; marked by Brisbane School of Distance Education or TAFE</td>
<td>Outcome based leading to Year 10 Certificate / Yr 12 Post Compulsory Certificate</td>
<td>State – Education Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban TAFE, Qld Certificate I Vocational Access for Youth at Risk; [state capital, Brisbane]</td>
<td>TAFE – Teacher developed materials</td>
<td>Coordinator, Acting Coordinator, Teachers, Tutors &amp; Volunteer Tutors</td>
<td>Teacher marked workbooks, assignments and oral presentations</td>
<td>1) TAFE Certificate I Vocational Access outcomes 2) NRS Level 3 outcomes</td>
<td>Site specific, National - Australia wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="#">Alternative Education Centre, Qld</a> Individual Programming; [rural city]</td>
<td>Teacher developed material based on individual student needs</td>
<td>Coordinators/Teachers (a husband and wife team), TAs, teachers, volunteer tutors</td>
<td>Teacher marked work</td>
<td>Outcomes based – vocational and personal goals achieved</td>
<td>State – Education Queensland [one of 5 trial alternative schools]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPARATIVE SITE: GED Program, Texas [rural city]</td>
<td>Packets of worksheets photocopied from GED textbooks</td>
<td>Education director, 4 teachers, 2 volunteer tutors, 2 part time admin personnel</td>
<td>GED Exam – external exam, marked externally by certified high school teachers</td>
<td>GED diploma, a Yr 12 equivalent diploma – covering 5 subject areas</td>
<td>National – US Federal government initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional TAFE

- Program
  - Language, Literacy & Numeracy Program [LLNP]

- Learning Theories
  - Gaining Employment OR Access to further Training

- Literacy Outcome
  - Achieve NRS LEVEL 3 literacy

- Literacy Focus
  - Oral and written literacy associated with gaining employment and the workplace

- Resources Used
  - TAFE – teacher developed workbooks and worksheets, daily newspapers, computers, internet, note pads.
GED Program Texas

**Program**
- General Education Development exam

**Learning Theories**
- Blooms Taxonomy – hierarchy of cognitive tasks
- Gaining the equivalent of a basic High School education

**Literacy Outcome**
- Literacy proficiency to Pass the Year 12 equivalent exam in 5 subject areas

**Literacy Focus**
- Reading & Written literacy tasks associated with business and traditional literature [GED]
- Oral/power point presentations [CENTRE BASED]

**Resources Used**
- Packets of worksheets photocopied from GED textbooks, computers, power point & graphics software, internet as a research tool.
Context

ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY 1

Theory

Methodology

1ST LENS

All Participants 1st

John, Shaniah 2nd

2nd LENS

Alf, Matt 2nd

IMPLICATIONS & INSIGHTS

Documents 1

Rural Flexi School

● Program
  - Brisbane School of Distance Education

● Learning Theories
  - Gaining a High School Education to Year 10 level [Year 12 available]

● Literacy Outcome
  - Gain Year 10 statement of attainment (NRS 4)

● Literacy Focus
  - Year level Queensland English curriculum, OR
  - Vocational /Daily Life focussed literacy booklets

● Resources Used
  - Brisbane School of Distance Education - workbooks, note pads, online computer learning & research.
  - TAFE course materials.
Suburban TAFE

- **Program**
  - Cert I Vocational Access for Youth at Risk

- **Learning Theories**
  - Gaining Employment OR Access to further Training

- **Literacy Outcome**
  - Achieve NRS LEVEL 3 literacy

- **Literacy Focus**
  - Oral and written assessment tasks based on real life tasks, chosen democratically by students

- **Resources Used**
  - TAFE – Teacher developed materials.
  - Student research in library, on internet, phonebooks, newspapers and community networks.
Alternative Education Centre

- **Program**
  - Individual Programs

- **Learning Theories**
  - Glasser’s Choice Theory & Quality World.
  - Students choosing to include learning and acceptable behaviours in their Quality World.

- **Literacy Outcome**
  - Skills to participate in a mainstream class AND/OR
  - Able to fill out forms, read & understand basic printed material (NRS 1)

- **Literacy Focus**
  - Reading daily to students
  - Activities based on students’ interests, “seizing the moment”

- **Resources Used**
  - Teacher developed material based on individual student needs.
  - Computer programs – typing, maths and spelling
Theoretical Framing

Literacy practices that empower and engage at risk adolescent students across several alternative education sites

**Ontology**

Bhaskar - *Critical Realism*

*Transformational Model of Society/Person Connection*, the ontological basis for discovering whether practices empower students …

- as individual
- as part of society

**Epistemology**

Carspecken - *Critical Symbolic Interactionism*

**Methodology**

Carspecken - *Critical Ethnography - Two Models*

Located within the interpretive paradigm
1. Bhaskar outlines three approaches to studying social phenomenon.

2. Bhaskar offers a fourth variant – society is neither the cause nor the product of human activity.

Figure 2: Bhaska's SOCIETY / PERSON Connection

Weber - social objects (or structures) result from intentional or meaningful human (action) behaviour (Bhaska, 1979, pp.39-40)

SOCIETY
Provides material causes of human action

INDIVIDUAL
Makes meaning of the world

Durkheim - social objects possess their own life external to and coercing the individual (Bhaska, 1979, p.38). Society provides the material causes of human action (ibid., p.43)

Marxism - society does not consist of individuals [or groups] but expresses the sum of the relations within which individuals [and groups] stand (ibid., p.32)

Figure 2 - ONTOLOGY
Bhaskar's Transformational Model
(1979, p.46)

Implications for Power / Empowerment of At Risk Adolescents

socialization
reproduction / transformation
Critical Symbolic Interactionism

- *perception* – structured communicatively
- *self-consciousness* – cultural expectations internalized
- *an interaction* – researcher takes the role of the actors
- *symbolic* – communicating with language and other symbolic tools
- *critical* – power relations illuminated

The symbolic representations of events is never just a matter of symbols corresponding to objective reality, because social relations involving forms of power are always entailed in any representation.

(Carspecken, 1996, p.9)

(Bhaskar, 1979)

Hypotheses about them [Social Sciences] must be expressed in language, and confirmed in dialogue.

Language here stands to the conceptual aspect of social science as geometry stands to physics (p.59).
**Methodological Theory – Carspecken**

**Critical Ethnography**

*Chicago School – Goffman & Hughes*
- Ethno – people, cultural group
- Graphy – writing

*Harvey Sacks*

*Carspecken*
- Ethnographic
- Structured methodology - 2 Models
- Critical
Model 1. Critical Ethnography – Methodological Framework

(adapted from Carspecken, 1996, pp.34-38)

- **Social Sites** – specific spatial and temporal regions within society where people interact. Usually characterized by routine activities.
- **Social Settings** – tacit understandings reached between actors concerning the type of interaction they will engage in . . . when they meet each other face-to-face. Settings are not observable and do not depend on a physical surrounding . . . but are usually conditioned by many factors associated with the physical surrounding.
- **Locales** – geographically wider areas surrounding the [site] and patterned activities taking place . . . influenced by . . . and influencing these sites.
- **Social Systems** – broadly distributed conditions [that] do not originate in any specific geographic location; the economic system . . . the political system . . . the cultural industry.

“System Integration” has to do with the coordination of action between groups of actors separated in space and time.

“Reproduction” By acting in accordance with economic, political or cultural conditions actors ‘reproduce’ system relations . . . The ‘social system’ only exists through continuous reproduction.

Actors are always free, in principle, to act against such conditions – to challenge them or transform them. This is why the concept of social system must not be thought of as something existing outside of human activity.

Model 2. Carspecken’s Five Stages for Critical Qualitative Research

(adapted from Carspecken, 1996, pp. 40-43)

**STAGE 1:** Compiling the Primary Record through the collection of monological data

**STAGE 2:** Preliminary / Ongoing reconstructive analysis

**STAGE 3:** Dialogical data generation

**STAGE 4:** Discovering system relations

**STAGE 5:** System relations as explanations of findings

[see Documents for OBSERVATION / INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2004-05]
Methodology – Stage 1

1. Video taping the physical environment – at each site including:
   - classrooms, available resources
   - the surrounding educational “campus”

2. Journal notes – researcher’s impressions of the case study site and surrounding locale

3. Artefacts collected from each case study site –
   - Participating student work samples
   - Teacher/staff documentation
   - Other artefacts relevant to the study
### Methodology – Stage 2

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Stage 2:</th>
<th>Reconstructive Analysis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary R.A. &amp; Reoccurring R.A.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. **Developed a list of questions** resulted in a cadre of proformas
2. **Pilot Trial** – the above items at one case study site
3. **Preliminary/Reoccurring Reconstructive Analysis**
   - *audio tapes transcribed*
   - *low inference codes or raw codes assigned*
   - *raw codes grouped*
   - *reconstructive meaning analysis*
     - *meaning fields*
     - *set within a pragmatic horizon*
3. Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis cont.

- validity reconstruction
  - claims placed in one of three categories
    [subjective, objective and normative-evaluative]
  - a level of foregrounding or backgrounding assigned [paradigmatic axis]
  - foregrounds or backgrounds meaning interpretations of past and expected future events [temporal axis]

- validity checks
  - peer checks; member checks; strip analysis; negative case check

Purpose of Reconstructive analysis

- winning the consent of others
- for reconstructions of the meaning actors attach
- to establish frequency of patterns
- to answer research questions
Methodology – Stage 3

Data generated from researcher's and actors' communicative interactions

In the interaction

*The Actors* - comprise both teaching staff and at risk adolescent students

*Researcher's roles* - are outsider and insider, unobtrusive bystander and participant observer.

**Means Used**

- Teacher Questionnaire on Literacy Practices
- Student focus group questions
- Staff focus group questions
- *Individual Student Interviews* of 4 students about their literacy engagement
- Individual Teacher interviews about 4 students' literacy engagement
- *Individual Program Coordinator interview*
- Teacher Questionnaire on Quality of Professional Communities
- Staff Questionnaire on Organisational Rating

[see *Documents* for OBSERVATION / INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2004-05]
Discovering System Relations
Between sites and sites, and also between sites and surrounding social locales, systems and their products.

Social locales
- education authorities
- their products
- services organisations or local businesses

Social systems
- worldwide economic, political and educational systems
- national and international bodies & products
- regionalised social systems & products
- statistical information
Stage 5 - Theory & Findings come together

- Systems Relations re-interpreted according to power relations
cultural, economic and political power

- The role of power relations in enabling or constricting the effectiveness of literacy education for at risk adolescents

- Educational theories and constructs comparative template for research findings

- Connect past and emerging social theories with the participating actors’ experiences and perceptions

- Create a new theory of engaging and empowering at risk adolescents in literacy education at alternative sites
**ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY**

**Methodology**

All Participants

- John, Shaniah

**1ST LENS**

**Categories – or “meaning fields” – built from collecting reoccurring words about similar topics into groups**

**2nd LENS**

Theory

- Alf, Matt

**All Participants**

- John, Shaniah

- Alf, Matt

**IMPLICATIONS & INSIGHTS**

Participant Perceptions of the Learning Engagement

- 17 Students and 19 Staff

- at 5 Alternative Ed Sites

Cheryl Livock, QUT: International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane Australia, 2005
### Collective Participant Perceptions (1st Lens)

**Methodology**

**All Participants 1st**

**John, Shaniah 2nd**

**Alf, Matt 2nd**

**IMPLICATIONS & INSIGHTS**

**Documents**

### Coding

**ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY**

**Theory**

**1st LENS**

**2nd LENS**

### Meaning Fields

#### Positive Meaning Fields that have emerged, graded in level of frequency, are:

1. **How the literacy learning experience differs from high school**
   - Students all commented on - *Small class sizes – Individual attention / sitting next to instead of teaching from front of the class.*
   - Teachers all commented on – Importance of building a **Supportive teacher/student Relationship**, & empowerment of students through increased confidence.

2. **Patterns of Attendance**
   - Students – claimed they were not truanting as they did at school.
   - Staff – all listed **Flexibility** as crucial – flexible … days per week / hours per day, for individuals and groups; flexible intakes & exits

3. **At Risk Students Supportive of Each Other’s Learning** – because of …

4. **Direct Teaching / Modelling Social Skills** – resulting in …
   - Students - no longer judgemental of others, learning to take on board others’ opinions, influence each other to attend

5. **Nature of the Literacy Event**
   - Students listed specifics – improved spelling, grammar, paragraph writing, greater confidence to read and make oral presentations
   - Staff listed the following as enabling engagement …
     - **Literacy programs centred on; verbal literacy; students’ interests and needs; choice and attentional lead**
     - **Literacy students are individually assessed** and placed into a graded program matching their skills level
     - **Literacy classes given choices** on structuring and content matter within a set curriculum framework
     - **Literacy lessons taking place in a real life context**

### Negative Meaning Fields, negatively affecting literacy attainment and engagement, are:

1. **Teachers’ burden of increasing administrative requirements**
2. **Students’ continuing lack of motivation**
3. **Students too young, below 14**
4. **Students with too much “chaos in their personal lives”**

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**TABLE 2 - 1st Lens**

**PARTICIPANTS’ PERCEPTIONS grouped into MEANING FIELDS regarding the LEARNING ENGAGEMENT at Alternative Sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Meaning Fields</th>
<th>Graded in Level of Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How the literacy learning experience differs from high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns of Attendance</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Collective Participant Perceptions (1st Lens)

Meaning Field 1

1. HOW THE LITERACY LEARNING EXPERIENCE DIFFERS FROM HIGH SCHOOL

Student’s Perspective – Because of small class sizes the teacher sat down next to them and explained the work.

Staff Perspective – Flexibility that enabled … Building a trusting student/staff relationship, offering a second chance, confidence building, and eventual empowerment.

TABLE 3 - CODING

Key words (or raw codes) used by students and staff alike describing the Learning Experience at Alternative Sites were: “small class”, “different”, “more relaxed”, “friendly”, “flexible”, “negotiate”, “understanding”, “second chance”, “self-discipline”, “easy … easy going … easier work”, “building bridges”, “building relationships”, building “self-esteem”, “confidence” to “have a go”, “empowerment”, “love and belonging”, a teacher who “comes over and helps”, a teacher who “sits down with”, “they teach you”, “individual programs”, programs that offer “choices”, target “student needs”, “student interests” and have “immediacy of application”.

Terms for high school were: “don’t talk, just listen”, “look at it, read it, do it”, “wouldn’t help”, “didn’t fit in”, “judgmental”, “set programs/curriculums”
Meaning Field 1 – Engaged by Different Learning Experience

Students
- Individual attention
- Small class sizes

Staff
- Building a close student / teacher relationship
- Flexibility

Context
- Ethnographic Case Study
- Theory
- Methodology

First Lens
- All Participants

Second Lens
- John, Shaniah
- Alf, Matt

Implications & Insights

Cheryl Livock, QUT: International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane Australia, 2005
TABLE 4 - Coding

**Coding words used by students regarding attendance:** “I never went”, “left school”, “come every day”, “more breaks”, “start”, “finish”, and “arrive”.

**Raw codes allocated to patterns of attendance by staff:** “enrolled”, “rolls”, “flexible hours”, “flexible intake”, “one-on-one”, “separate them”, “night classes”, “day classes”, “adult and adolescent cohorts”, “too young”, “difficult to be here”, “commitment”, “hours per week”, “days per week”.

2. PATTERNS OF ATTENDANCE

**Student’s Perspective** – Regular attendance compared to truanting

**Staff Perspective** – Flexible attendance patterns ...
- days per week / hours per day, for individuals and groups;
- flexible intake and exit.
Students

- Don’t truant

Staff

- Flexible attendance patterns keep students engaged
Unusual Events or Specific Issues – reported & highlighted by participants

Separate Case Study Profiles of Engagement & Literacy Acquisition

2 Students at 2 Alternative Ed Sites

Unusual Events / Issues Arising

2nd Lens

ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

1st Lens

Methodology

All Participants 1st

John, Shaniah 2nd

2nd Lens

Alf, Matt 2nd

IMPLICATIONS & INSIGHTS

Documents 1

Cheryl Livock, QUT: International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane Australia, 2005
TABLE 5 – 2nd Lens

Reported UNUSUAL EVENTS / ISSUES ARISING
Separate Case Study Profiles of Engagement & Literacy Acquisition

CASE STUDY 1: “The Group Developed a Pack Mentality”

SITE: Suburban TAFE, Qld Certificate I Vocational Access for Youth at Risk
STUDENTS: Shaniah, 16 & John, 16 [ALIASES CHOSEN BY STUDENTS]

These two students from “higher” ability class represent …
- the successes and failures of the program
- a unique situation

The program was targeting …
- at risk students at the three lowest levels of disengaged youth
- adolescents with low literacy levels – high NRS 1 to NRS 2

Course requirements
- 2 vocational strands
  - [1. hospitality/office/retail or 2. engineering/horticulture/construction]
- 200 hours of work experience
- personal development course, Skills for the Future
- Literacy and Numeracy classes [exit with a NRS level 3]

1. Housing and Community Support
   a. Shaniah – Homeless for over a year; only just moved in with boyfriend
      - Boyfriend main support person; some contact with father & mother
   b. John – No housing problems; always lived with parents
      - Parents, church, community service organization were his support people

2. Literacy Acquisition

3. Mainstream School Attendance
   a. Shaniah - had not attended school for one year.
   b. John – had only attended intermittently.

4. Alternative School Attendance
   a. Shaniah
      - Sept 04 / Visit 1 … claimed to be a regular attender
      - Teacher records Aug & Sept attendance more and more irregular
      - Dec 04 / Visit 2 … had left the program after Sept holidays
   b. John
      - Sept 04 / Visit 1 … claimed to be a regular attender
      - Teacher records Aug & Sept attendance more and more irregular
      - Dec 04 / Visit 2 … after Sept holidays returned to regular attendance & about to receive Cert I

5. Teacher Intervention
   a. Shaniah – Parents not rung - Not living at home, parents not involved, teacher had no previous contact with them.
   b. John – Parents rung and instrumental in having John return to regular attendance. Teacher had had ongoing contact with his parents.

6. Teacher Explanation
Reported Unusual Events / Issues Arising
(2nd Lens)

**Housing and Community Support**
- **Shaniah**: Homeless previous year
  - Support - boyfriend
- **John**: No housing problems
  - Wide community support

**Literacy Acquisition**
- **Shaniah**: Entry NRS 2 ... Visit 1, NRS 3
- **John**: Entry NRS 2 ... Visit 1, NRS 3

**Mainstream School Attendance**
- **Shaniah**: had not attended school for one year.
- **John**: had only attended intermittently.

**Alternative School Attendance** at Visit 1 [Aug/Sept’04]
- **Shaniah**: claimed to be a regular attender
  - teacher records more and more irregular over Sept’04
  - left the program after Sept holidays
- **John**: claimed to be a regular attender
  - teacher records more and more irregular over Sept’04
  - returned to regular attendance after Sept holidays

**Teacher Intervention**
- **Shaniah**: Parents not rung. No previous parental contact.
- **John**: Parents rung. Instrumental in his re-engagement.

**Teacher Explanation**
Unfortunately, not only Shaniah but all the other girls in her class became very pessimistic about the feasibility of being able to gain their Certificate I. The teacher described the situation:

Yeah the group. It was strange. The group actually developed a pack mentality. And ah, and they actually sabotaged themselves. They thought they were harming us in some way, the teachers. In actual fact by sort of boycotting lessons, or just not turning up or this sort of thing. ... Just this one group ... they thought they were really hardly done by.

None of them returned for the last term.

John and two other boys from the class would be receiving their Certificate I. A fourth boy was trying to get as many “Js” [pass] as possible and would receive a certificate of acknowledgment at the graduation ceremony.
The teacher went on to explain what had **triggered** this reaction,

**One of their teachers was on leave** for a very long time because she was ill. The **replacement teacher didn’t keep them up** to the curriculum work, and as a result they started to fall behind. Well **instead of** getting the mindset round, “**OK, well we’ve got to get in there and do this work**”, when the teacher actually returned they **went into blaming.** ... They blamed both [the old and the new teachers]. And they couldn’t move on. So they refused to do work. They refused to turn up to those classes.
The boys were able to move on ... the girls couldn’t.

I think that’s what ... sent this group particularly into a spin was one of their stable adults got sick and that brought back all those fears that they had before of the abandonment and rejection and all those insecurities that they already had, it brought those back. And the physiological responses to that. And they went back to their old ways of dealing with it.

And these kids hate change. They’ve had so much change in their lives and that was one of the major contributors to this particular group was the changes that occurred within the group and they couldn’t deal with it. And it sent them into a tail spin, because of their life beforehand, the physiological responses were very negative and we couldn’t begin to deal with those.
Reported Unusual Events / Issues Arising (2nd Lens)

TABLE 6 – 2nd Lens
Reported UNUSUAL EVENTS / ISSUES ARISING
Separate Case Study Profiles of Engagement & Literacy Acquisition

CASE STUDY 2: “The Long Term Engagement of two Highly Disengaged Students”

SITE: Alternative Education Centre, Ed Qld. Individual Programming
STUDENTS: Alf, 14 & Matt, 13 [ALIASES CHOSEN BY STUDENTS]

Students enter the program …
• Primary principals had suggested both attend the centre

The program was targeting …
• highly disengaged, traumatised students
• often extremely low literacy levels – below NRS 1
• younger adolescents, aged 10 to 15

Means of Engaging Students – ONE-ON-ONE
• Reading to the student
• Glasser’s Choice theory – “love & belonging” “quality world” “power, freedom & fun”
• Sand tray therapy
• Literacy based on students’ IMMEDIATE interests
• Hands on activities with Literacy component implicit [art, music, woodwork, cooking, radio studio]

1. Housing and Community Support
   a. Alf – No housing problems; now lives with his Nan [daily contact with centre]
   b. Matt – No housing problems; lives with his mother [weekly contact with centre]

2. Literacy Acquisition / Issues
   a. Alf – Entry: Non verbal Dec’04: low NRS 1 – Speech language impairment [Asperger’s or toddler trauma?]
   b. Matt – Entry: NRS 0 Dec’04: low NRS 1 – Refuse to participate in reading and writing activities

3. Mainstream School Attendance
   a. Alf – Excluded from 3 primary schools because of behaviour [age 9].
   b. Matt – Intermittently attended 3 primary schools; moved house; behavioural

4. Alternative School Attendance [Dec, 04; Visit 2]
   a. Alf – Daily from 9am – 1pm; for past 4 years
   b. Matt – 4 days a week, 9am – noon; for past 1 ½ years

5. Teacher Intervention
   a. Alf – Building on students’ existing interests and vocabulary [oral / written]
      - Allowed to draw … Mrs T “Tell me the story” … Mrs T wrote … read back / read back together … Alf wrote vocabulary / vocab blocks
   b. Matt – Building a “connection” through sand tray therapy … language/communication skills
      - “Seizing the moment” “freedom and fun” – scaffolding and enlarging a literacy program based on IMMEDIATE interests

6. Teacher Explanation
Reported Unusual Events / Issues Arising
(2nd Lens)

**Context**

**ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY**

**Theory**

**1ST LENS**

**All Participants 1st**

**2nd LENS**

**John, Shaniah 2nd**

**Alf, Matt 2nd**

**IMPLICATIONS & INSIGHTS**

**Documents 1**

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**Teacher Intervention**

**Teacher Explanation**

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**Housing and Community Support**

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**Literacy Acquisition / Issues**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alf</td>
<td>Entry: Non verbal Dec’04: low NRS 1Speech language impairment [Asperger’s or toddler trauma?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Entry: NRS 0 Dec’04: low NRS 1 Refuse to participate in reading and writing activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Mainstream School Attendance**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alf</td>
<td>Excluded from 3 primary schools because of behaviour [age 9].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Intermittently attended 3 primary schools; moved house; behavioural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alternative School Attendance [Dec, 04; Visit 2]**

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alf</td>
<td>Daily from 9am – 1pm; for past 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>4 days a week, 9am – noon; for past 1 ½ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Cheryl Livock, QUT: International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane Australia, 2005
**TEACHER’S EXPLANATION – FOR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT**

- **Mrs T building their relationship with Alf** had resulted in a marked improvement in his behaviour.

  - **Initially**
    - “There were lots of issues with trust. And lots of negative experiences of learning”
    - “In the old days he would have thrown stuff around and stormed out.”

  - **Recently**
    - He [twice] instead withdrew to the kitchen, where he did do a bit of swearing but after having a chat with Mr T was able to calm down.

- **Glasser’s teaching** – students choose to control their own behaviour
  - Exemplified by Alf’s withdrawing from a frustrating situation and then being able to calm down

- **The Glasser theory** being if teachers sit beside, discuss issues and connect with the emotional needs of the adolescent, then the student will come to experience “love and belonging”; that the teacher cares for him/her and will start to care about himself and modify his behaviours (Glasser, 2000).
"Sand tray therapy" as another means of connecting and building a relationship with the students ... Matt:

- Matt one day made motor bike jumps [in the sand tray]. And he said to me, ‘Do you want to make the jump?’ And that was one of the first times Matt had ever really connected, included me. So you know you’re getting into their quality world, too. And straight away by what they pick, you’re often seeing their quality world. But Matt asked me to do it, yep. And I mean when you do sand tray often you are just sitting back like this and you don’t have to talk. It’s different to the other sort of counselling. You know ‘Tell me how you feel’. These kids won’t and they don’t want to. (Mrs T, 13/9/04)

- She continued on to express the desire to gain more skills in sand tray therapy, which could be beneficial in building a relationship with the students and also building their language skills.
TEACHER’S EXPLANATION – FOR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

“FUN” and “FREEDOM” Mr T related how he had given Matt the “freedom” to choose his learning activity.

- Other students had been doing radio ads [the centre has a radio room] and Matt asked if he could do one too. Although this had not been written into his program, Mr T “seized the moment” allowing Matt the “freedom” to choose this “fun” learning activity.

- Matt made up an imaginary pizza, verbally told Mr T the script for the ad, which Mr T then typed up, coached Matt through reading it [they read it over and over] and then they recorded it several times until they were both happy with the outcome. Matt chose the music to play with the advertisement.

- After this activity had been accomplished Matt was then willing to attempt another learning activity, a documentary on Australian Idol singer, Shannon Noll.

Other evidence of Matt reconnecting back into learning

- Of his own initiative, at home written a one page paragraph on the wedge tailed eagle, copied from an article he had seen in a magazine.

- He had brought this article in to show his teachers and tutors. This form of “public exhibition” is what school reformers believe is important in any learning event (Sizer, 1992;1994)
TEACHER’S EXPLANATION –
FOR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

Mrs T summed up the Alternative Education Centre learning experience and its motivating philosophy this way:

- **The Glasser philosophy** applies to everything – Learning is fun, no matter what they’re doing, they’re going to feel empowered by it, ‘I can do something’, ‘I’m going to have some fun’; The love and belonging – when they do it, it will go up on display, perhaps, or we’ll show someone else; **Quality world** – so it’s the quality world stuff, which goes back to their needs for belonging.

- The result for Matt and Alf, is that Matt in 2005 has now begun attending his local high school part time, while Alf, who had come to the centre as a non verbal child who could only sit in a room by himself, has joined the Army Cadets, is learning to read the cadet manual, and is anticipating participating in work experience.
Implications and Insights

**Collective Perceptions on Engagement**
- Getting the Right Staff – essential
- Building student relationship
- Small class sizes and individual attention

**Core Issues at both Sites**
- Literacy
- Keeping students Engaged in the educational experience
- Importance of parental and community support

**Issue at TAFE Site**
- The emotional maelstrom – loss of significant adult; importance of gaining a Certificate
Implications and Insights

- **Policy**
  - More than an economic agenda?

- **Practice**
  - The necessity for funding for adequate staff and pastoral support at alternative centres!

- **Practitioners**
  - Constrained or enabled by resources and environmental cultures?
  - Sharing of knowledge?

- **Future research implications ...**
Basic Literacy Skills
Australia - functional literacy skills include oral and written literacy

(Asspects of Literacy: Assessed Literacy Skills, 1997)

Australian historical definitions
● 1970s people unable to read well enough to solve everyday problems defined as "functional illiterates" (Huck, 1992).
● 1989 Australia wide study 10% functional illiteracy, in Australian adults (Wickert)

Australian current definitions – functional literacy
**ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY**

**Methodology**

*All Participants*

**1ST LENS**

**Context**

International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

**Theory**

Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential (Carey, Low, & Hansbro, 1997, p. 8).

**Written literacy divided it into three categories:**

1. **Prose literacy** - texts with a typical paragraph structure
2. **Document literacy** - written information found in timetables, graphs, charts and forms
3. **Quantitative literacy** - arithmetic operations embedded in printed materials

**5 levels of literacy proficiency**

- Continuum of literacy practices and knowledge
- 1 at the lowest level to 5 at the highest level.

**Modified IALS Definition**

- Uses the same 5 levels of proficiencies
- BUT non-written forms of literacy are included in the reporting
- Literacy reporting thus covers: reading, writing, oral communication, learning strategies and numeracy (Coates, Fitzpatrick, McKenna & Makin, 1996)

**1ST LENS**

The National Reporting System (NRS) Australia

**2nd LENS**

**All Participants**

**2nd**

John, Shaniah

**Theory**

Australia’s National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

**IMPLICATIONS & INSIGHTS**

**Documents**

**Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking;** it incorporates numeracy. It *includes the cultural knowledge* which enables a speaker, a writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different situations. For an advanced technological society such as Australia, the goal is an active literacy which allows people to use language to enhance their capacity to think, create and question, in order to participate effectively in society (Falk, 2001, p. 10).
Literacy - critical

1. Luke explains how in the North American context critical literacy has been conceived more as “higher order comprehension”.

Listed as: metacognitive reading strategies to reader-response orientation toward inferring endings, authorial intent, bias, or stereotypes

Cervetti and colleagues from Michigan State University list six “higher order comprehension” or “critical Reading” skills:

- investigating sources
- recognizing an author’s purpose
- distinguishing opinion and fact
- making inferences
- forming judgments
- detecting propaganda devices

2. A Critical literacy which finds its roots in Marxism, critical theory, and feminism; a critical literacy which politically contextualises, empowers and transforms literacy practice.

Critical Interrogating Principles (Cervetti, 2001)

- Issues of power
- Attend to differences across race, class, gender & sexual orientation
- Teach differences not isolated but part of systemic inequities/injustices
- Students need to become actors to transform society
### Language & Pedagogical Models

**ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY**

**Methodology**

**1ST LENS**

**All Participants**

**2ND LENS**

**Theory**

**IMPLICATIONS & INSIGHTS**

**Documents**

### TABLE 2 – LANGUAGE & PEDAGOGICAL MODELS

| Language Model: 4 RESOURCES MODEL (Freebody, 2004; Santoro, 2004) |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| **1. Code Breakers** | **2. Text Participants** | **3. Text Users** | **4. Text Analysis** |
| (decoders / functional skills) | (readers, listeners / comprehension skills) | (writers, speakers / discourse & genre skills) | (analysers / critical literacy skills) |
| C | C | C | C |
| i) Grapho phonic decoding | i) Stated / unstated patterns of meanings … | i) Genres’ form / function | i) Cultural & ideological bias |
| ii) Punctuation / formatting conventions | - vocabulary - clauses | ii) Genres’ socio-cultural expectations | |
| | ii) Genres’ conventions & components | | iii) How gaps, silences, missing points of view – constrain & influence reader |

**Pedagogical Model: PRODUCTIVE PEDAGOGIES - 4 Dimensions of Practice (Education Queensland, 2001-2003)**

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<tr>
<td>(depth of knowledge)</td>
<td>(student knowledge to a widening community knowledge)</td>
<td>(student ownership, behaviours, teacher scaffolding)</td>
<td>(belonging and cultural/social inclusivity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Higher Order Thinking</td>
<td>i) Knowledge Integration</td>
<td>i) Student Control</td>
<td>i) Cultural Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Deep Knowledge</td>
<td>ii) Background Knowledge</td>
<td>ii) Social Support</td>
<td>ii) Inclusivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Deep Understanding</td>
<td>iii) Connectedness to the World</td>
<td>iii) Engagement</td>
<td>iii) Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) Knowledge as problematic</td>
<td>v) Self-regulation</td>
<td>v) Citizenship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>vi) Metalanguage</td>
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National Reporting System (Australia)

TABLE 8

NATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM
(hierarchical assessment model)

Level 1
- Write: simple sentence, basic forms
- Read: newspaper difficult

Level 2
- Write: compound sentences
- Read: newspaper / not fully understand

Level 3
- Write: complex sentences, 2-3 paragraphs
- Read & fully understand newspaper

Level 4
- Write: 3+ paragraphs, well constructed, abstract ideas & terminology, genres related to social and cultural contexts
- Read: several sources, distinguish fact from opinion, infer purpose
At Risk Adolescents

Adolescents
- aged generally between 15 and 23
- growing number of younger students aged 10 to 15

At Risk
- Study sites recognize 10 levels of at risk youth
- Study participants levels 1 to 3 [on a scale where level 10 is the most at risk]
- Adolescents disengaged from learning, often disconnected from other people, sometimes homeless
- Majority of participants - at risk of failing to attain basic literacy skills needed to function in the current knowledge based society
Empower

Concepts of Power / Empowerment

Empower - to "give power to"
- some individuals are lacking power and others with power are passing it on, or sharing it.

Empowered to do what?
- citizenship and the ability to fully participate in the liberal democratic process
- to have the same rights and life opportunities as others
- to be effective consumers, to create effective budgets, enhance strategic investment decisions and achieve both short- and long-term financial goals, such as the accumulation of savings
- enabled to think critically and analytically because of acquired higher order literacy skills.
- emboldened to confidently use all forms of literacy, written, oral, visual, in a multiplicity of contexts
**Critical Realism - Power**

- **Possibility for individual agency in the Transformational Model** (Table 2) where “people self-consciously transform their social conditions of existence (the social structure) so as to maximize the possibilities for the development and spontaneous exercise of their natural (species) powers”

- Critical realist conceptualisation is based on the movement between people and social structures.

- **Power** \(^1\) and **Power** \(^2\) where “The former has to do with the 'transformative capacity analytic to the concept of agency', that is, the capacity to get anything done; the latter involves 'structures of domination exploitation, subjugation and control’” (2003, p.172)

- In other words individuals will always have agency but the power of social structures can be changed or abolished.
Related Documents

QLD ED REFORMS

NRS
- Statistics Canada (2003). *International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) - About the survey*. Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Industry. URL: http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-588-XIE/about.htm#1

PRODUCTIVE PEDAGOGIES MODEL

4 RESOURCES MODEL

CHERYL LIVOCK – FURTHER PAPERS
- *What are the literacy practices that empower at risk adolescent students across several alternative education sites?* QUT Education Faculty confirmation document for PhD candidature, 17 June, 2003.

Cheryl Livock, QUT: International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane Australia, 2005