Co-teaching and other forms of collaborative delivery

Collaborative delivery can take the form of co-teaching, working with guest presenters, or teaching with support staff. Co-teaching between teachers with literacy and numeracy expertise and others with expertise in specialist areas can lead to enriched learning experiences. The guide also elaborates forms of delivery represent informal partnerships, which over time may develop into more formal understandings. Benefits to students of co-teaching, many of which constitute the development of bridging ties, include:

- We know they pay more for a specialist field.
- The opportunity for them to get to know professionals they may never have met in their everyday lives or with whom they could feel uncomfortable interacting.
- Through the specialist teacher, familiarity with organisations, systems or professionals that may lead to future contact.
- Observation of interactions between two or more professionals that present a model of varying cultures and collaborative arrangements.

Other kinds of collaboration involve the teacher involving co-presenters into the classroom with whom they bring their resources in terms of life experience, expertise and networks that are valuable to the learners, for example, successful past students, who may also act as a role model or mentor.

Teaching tips using the learners’ existing networks

- Use content that is relevant to everyday living (for example, improving eating practices at home, working with computer algorithms).
- Embed the teaching into other programs participants may be undertaking or into an existing activity.
- Focus on learners’ life experiences.
- Set up the teaching so that other family members can participate, for example, a course for adults and a companion course for children.
- Allow opportunities for family members or friends to be part of this course (for example, side-event/tutorial).

Teaching strategies to promote participation in new networks

- Arrange for learning experiences to occur in out-of-class contexts that will be useful to the learners.
- Get tasks that require learners to interact with networks (organisations, community groups, service providers) they have not yet accessed.
- Get people from potentially useful networks to co-teach or co-participate in the training.
- Set up opportunities to experience the importance of bridging ties (for example, teaching people who work in the area and access tools to help them handle this area of work).

Factors that affect the nature of social capital outcomes are the existing social, cultural and human capital that individuals bring to the learning experience and the resources of the workplace. Furthermore, the most important outcomes can improve individuals’ own socioeconomic wellbeing as well as that of the communities they belong to.

What is a social capital approach and what are social capital outcomes?

A social capital approach to learning in literacy and numeracy teaching the students themselves experience social capital outcomes from their engagement in the project. Through their own active and sustained network building and use of social capital, the students develop greater wellbeing.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines social capital as’ the networks together with the shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation with or among groups. A social capital approach to literacy and numeracy provision, Balatti and colleagues are referring to in this way of teaching literacy and numeracy. This guide is based on research by Jo Balatti, Steven Black and Ian Falk, and it is available from the NCVER website at www.ncver.edu.au/education-research/publications/7200.
What skills and social capital outcomes have been achieved?

Social capital outcomes in learners are indicated by changes in:

1. their personal characteristics, which include trust beliefs and attitudes about their capacity to influence the lives of their peers and others.
2. and to solve problems in their lives and in others', and understanding different people from themselves.
3. the learning and social outcomes of their networks, which include the number and character of their external networks, the way that the learner keeps in touch with others in their network, and the nature of the relationships within their various networks.
4. the teacher negotiates and shares information and skills.
5. types of networks, which include the activities undertaken with the main groups with which the learner interacts, the activities that are different from the learners', and the links that the learners have to different communities.

Key elements for incorporating a social capital approach into the teaching of literacy and numeracy

The research, which focused on literacy and numeracy teaching in the areas of personal financial literacy and the health and well-being of students identified the following elements that can be used to develop a social capital approach:

1. the partnerships involved in the design and delivery of adult literacy and numeracy programs.
2. the polity that influences the kinds of partnerships possible.
3. the pedagogy that teachers use.

These three elements are interrelated, and they are each necessary for the development of teaching literacy and numeracy using a social capital approach.

Bonding, bridging and linking ties in a social capital approach

A social capital approach to building learning communities enables the kinds of bonding, bridging and linking ties that would be beneficial to their learners. Through these ties, learners will use existing knowledge and their identity resources to be more effective in the way they identify with and engage with their community.

Bonding ties are the strong ties that build cohesion and a common purpose within the learning group. They require trust, relationships, a building process which takes place through many interactions between all participants, including the teachers. Building social capital requires encouraging people to get to know others and creating a non-judgmental climate in which people feel safe to share their lives and experiences as they are engaging with the learning. Bonding ties require a sense of belonging in a group. For example, Biday and Fall found in their study that a teacher of Indigenous students aimed to create an atmosphere in the environment in which the students did not experience the same sense of marginalisation as they did in their daily lives.

Bridging ties are usually weak ties and are associated with the learners accessing new networks. Bridging ties require learners to interact with people who are not part of their usual networks but who are important in the learning environment because they are the means of access to new ideas, attitudes, beliefs and other important resources. By developing bridging ties, learners may begin to focus more on the wider community in their study. Daniels and Fall found that bridging ties require knowledge of other networks, which can be achieved when learners interact with people who organize themselves to identify the locations of the gams swimming pool and health clubs in the local area. The teacher then arranged an excursion to enable the students to make contact with the officials of these organizations. Linking ties facilitate connections between individuals and institutions, systems and organizations. The kinds of resources required to make bridging ties often entail knowledge connections and the confidence to actively engage with institutions when the need arises, for example, teaching places which websites to access and how to navigate and read them can increase access to important information and services.

Partnerships in a social capital approach

Creating partnerships among different agencies and organizations and service providers in the delivery of education and training is in itself an act of social capital building—the process draws on existing networks and creates new ones. Effective partnerships develop when there is an important social policy issue or problem that can be addressed by collaboration; when funding—what is needed in the classroom in the developing partnership—is available and ongoing and when through a partnership arrangement, those most in need of support can be reached.

The various configurations of partners that can lead to learning and social capital outcomes from adult literacy and numeracy programs for both individuals and the community require partnerships at all levels. At the micro level partnerships are established between government departments and peak organizations or philanthropic groups. This study for example identified a partnership between Reconciliation Australia and the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs—the National Indigenous Language Management Agency (NILMA) project, whose role is to examine and respond to the financial needs of Indigenous Australians.

At the middle (intermediate) level we see partnerships between service providers and welfare groups—for example, the federally administered Literacy, Language and Numeracy Program (LLNP), where Centrecents and other after care jobs offer job seekers to contracted literacy providers. And at the middle level are the community partnerships that are established at the local level between teachers, learners and community representatives, for example, the research for this study identified a health literacy course in Western Sydney involving a health worker, a literacy teacher and Muslim women from the local Muslim women’s centre, working together in the classroom.

Notwithstanding the importance of these partnerships to link social capital outcomes and literacy and social capital outcomes, robust relationships across the various levels of partnership are also crucial to successful provision. For example, excellent relationships between community members, teachers and learners are meaningless if they are not supported by long-term funding allowing for sustained partnership arrangements. The research demonstrated that government or linked up partnership approaches across government, industry, community groups and philanthropic organizations are the most effective means of keeping the right sort of provision to the people for whom it is intended. Such partnerships are also dependent on effective policy at the various levels.

What makes partnerships work?

Partnerships are more likely to be successful in securing the desired outcomes if they:

1. have common understandings of their joint purpose.
2. have the resources and understanding of how to assess and make towards achieving the common purpose.
3. bring with them the appropriate resources in terms of financial, social and cultural and physical capital to achieve the common purpose.
4. hold compatible philosophical positions with respect to their common purpose, while having respect for each other.
5. communicate well and work as part of a team.

Policy in social capital approaches

Policy is the often invisible but defining underpinning of the partnerships that produces the networks, that is turn on drawing and building social capital by providing the rules by which the practical strategies are put into place. There are indicators that the stronger the link between the partnership base policy across bodies and sectors, the stronger the social capital that is built. This will influence the policy that ‘partnership’ to the grassroots and has the capacity to adapt to local needs will be more effective.

Strategies for teaching from a social capital perspective

Teaching developed from a social capital perspective places the learner as a member of networks. These networks are the: learners’ existing networks and their potential new networks.

The choice of teaching strategies is influenced by two factors relating to the learners these are also connected to the idea of networks. The first is the set of resources that the learners already possess by virtue of their networks. In this context, in applying a social capital approach, teachers need to possess skills to:

1. recognize the capital that learners bring to the group.
2. encourage learners to draw on their resources relevant to the learning experience.

The second is the social capital that learners will acquire through the learning experience and which can enhance the ways they interact in their current networks or enable them to access new useful networks.

The teacher’s objective is to create conditions that maximise the opportunities for building learners’ social capital. Below are teaching strategies that are strategies that a teacher need to possess skills to:

1. Learner group network—or the ‘classroom’

Conceptualising the learner as a member of networks begins with teachers recognising that the group or class in which they are teaching is a network for all participants, including themselves. It is probably the most important network from the teachers’ perspective because it is the one that is most directly influenced in this network. In this network, teachers can draw on in their interactions inside and outside the class. Learning is the common purpose across networks, this can also be described as a learning community.

The learning community provides the safe environment in which learners feel they can make errors, play new roles, new aspects of identity and practice new skills. Increased self-confidence itself—a social capital outcome—is an indicator of learning opportunities successfully being taken up by learners.

Case study: Health-literacy partnership for Muslim women

About the women

A woman with a pedagogy to address the literacy and health challenges faced by Muslim women was established between aMuslim women’s cent, a metropolitan TAFE college and a local health service. The women’s centre uses its networks to recruit the Muslim women. Twenty women enrolled in the course—most spoke Arabic and their proficiency in English was varied, but they were different in terms of age, ethnicity and marital status.

About the course

The course covered healthy eating, exercise and stress relief. It was conducted according to a popular education format, meaning that it was based on what the learners wanted to discuss and involved some degree of self-reflection on the learning process, as well as interaction with the knowledge and stories of the women themselves. The course sought to: gain a literacy and health education.

The role of the literacy teacher was to ensure that the teaching strategies were enabling the learners to learn this included use of suitable vocabulary, group composition and activities.

The course focused on identifying social capital outcomes and their relationship to improving health practices and literacy. The outcomes of the course are:

1. That a literacy and health education.

The research focused on literacy and numeracy teaching in the areas of personal financial literacy and the health and well-being of students.