Two papers come from different educational contexts in Nigeria and Kuwait. **N.S. Okoroma** reviews, from the literature, the implementation of national education policy in Nigeria, and explores the gap that can occur between policy and its implementation. The paper recommends the discontinuation of the National Policy on Education fashioned after the American system and the adoption of the model practised by Asian countries such as Japan, China and India which takes the culture of the people into consideration. **Eissa Alansari** reports on the implementation of cooperative learning in various continuing education courses within Kuwait University. From interviews with 200 university teachers, the author found that three-quarters believed that implementation had been successful. The paper presents a series of recommendations to improve further the educational standard of the Centre in Kuwait University.

This issue contains two short research reports-in-progress, one by **Ann Lawless** on exploring radical wisdom in Australian higher education, and the other by **Tom Short** in New Zealand on unlocking the Da Vinci code of human resource development. Four interesting book reviews follow.

Can I conclude by encouraging anyone who wants to write to do so, who is undertaking a research project to think about developing it into an article for publication (this is particularly worthwhile if you are doing a higher degree), and who wishes to volunteer to review books to contact one of the editorial team of this Journal? You would be significantly contributing to the development of our profession in doing any of these things, and you would be developing your own skills and confidence in writing. We would love to hear from you!

Roger Harris
Editor

Adult, community and public education as primary sites for the development of social capital

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This article reviews current literature and discussion about the policies and sites of Australian adult education and training and their potential impact on the development of social capital in a regional context. The review stems from a current research project examining the impact of participation in adult education by people from diverse cultural backgrounds in a regional town in northern Victoria. There is evidence that adult education can transform individuals via access to new knowledge and skills, but can it impact on the social cohesiveness of groups, communities and regions in Australian society? Access and equity policies and strategies form the centre of adult, community and public education in Australia and it is time for these to be significantly reviewed in the context of a culturally diverse twenty first century society.

International perspectives on adult education

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines adult learning as encompassing general, vocational, enterprise and higher education and training across all types of learning sites. In 2003, the OECD published comparative research on adult education policies and practices in nine countries in Europe and Scandinavia which contends that, despite reform agendas occurring within adult learning policies and practices in most countries, there are persistent inequities in the provision, access and outcomes of adult education and training (OECD 2003).

Similar research in Australia and internationally evaluates adult education and training reforms against established policies and practices targeted at specific groups of individuals within a society, including the unemployed, 'discouraged workers', early (forced) retirees, women returning to work, youth, indigenous communities and people with disabilities (Noonan, Burke & White 2004; Evans 2003; Stevenson 2003; James 2001).

Empirical research of adult education and training in most western democratic countries reveals differing levels and outcomes in educational participation based on social class, gender, (dis)ability and age (Evans 2003). The OECD report provides a policy framework that, it argues, assists governments in addressing these issues. Starting with recognition of a 'rights' based framework, a philosophy that people have the right to access adult education at any time, could encourage individuals to engage with adult learning during their 'whole of life' using incentives that recognise adult education as economic, social and personal development (OECD 2003). Others go further than the OECD in stating that the development of learning environments where the acquisition of knowledge, experience and skills is valued must occur within a framework of major social change (Noonan, Burke & White 2004; Finger & Asun 2001).

Australian adult education systems

The elements of public adult education and training in Australia are three distinct sectors: Adult and Community Education (ACE), Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE). The ACE sector is characterised by the provision of general education courses, vocational education and training programs and recreation/lifestyle courses. Adult and community education sites tend to be publicly owned, community-based and at a neighbourhood level. A recent development is the emergence of larger 'colleges' of adult education which are increasingly delivering VET programs to meet the needs of so-called 'hard to get to' communities and groups.

ACE participants are significantly older than students in other post-secondary education and over eighty per cent (80%) of all participants are enrolled with community providers (Clemans, Hartley & Macrae 2003). A recent account of research strategies for ACE in Victoria reveals 'regional participation rates ... higher than their metropolitan counterparts' and 'the importance of ACE in rural areas, and particularly for country women' (Walstab & Teese 2005: 5). This sector is characterised by a lack of comprehensive research about the activities and outcomes of 'not so' formal adult education programs, including activities offered by Universities of the Third Age (U3As), recreation, leisure and personal enrichment activities (Clemans, Hartley & Macrae 2003).

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in Australia is now characterised by a national framework of Training Packages and qualifications linked specifically to industry needs. Programs are managed and delivered by large multi-campus TAFE providers or a plethora of small to medium-sized private companies and Registered Training Organisations, which train in-house workforces or deliver programs to niche client groups.

The Higher Education (HE) sector has become increasingly 'vocationalised' in recent decades with the most popular courses linked to industries such as information technology and business management/marketing, or to professions such as medicine, law, nursing, teaching and social work. Participation in higher education also reveals a focus on economic outcomes with the most popular courses being Management and Commerce with external and multi-modal courses now making up over 20 percent of all courses (DEST 2004). Table 1 illustrates a comparison of participation in adult education and training in Victoria, reflecting the commonalities and differences between the sectors.

Table 1: Participation rates in the Victorian adult education sectors (ACFE 2003; DEST 2004; NCVER 2005)

	ACE 2002 %	VET 2004 %	HE 2004 %
Women	74	45	46
Men	26	55	54
Indigenous	5	1	1
Non-English speaking background	8	24	22
Non-citizens	n/a	1	28
Employment-related	43	76	n/a
Personal development	57	17	n/a

These data and other information released by governments and research agencies outline the extent of individual participation in adult education, but do not provide any indication of how this participation impacts on broader social and economic processes (ACFE 2003; DEST 2004; NCVER 2005).

The impact of adult education and training reform on regional communities

Reform agendas in adult education and training in Australia since the mid-1980s have concentrated on competency-based vocational education and training and the expansion of higher education into outer-urban and regional areas. In the 1990s, the Federal Labor Government, in partnership with the union movement, understood national competency-based training as not only necessary to reform vocational training and work in Australia but as an integral part of a social justice strategy. The unions believed that a national training system underpinned by acknowledging worker skills and knowledge in a more flexible and user-friendly training environment would have the ability to attract a wider range of participants.

Women, disadvantaged young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and regional and remote communities could be encouraged to participate in this new vocational training system. More importantly, their skills and knowledge and the subsequent qualifications gained would be recognised throughout Australia (ANTA 1994). It was believed by governments that training reform via greater participation in education and training by a wider range of groups could deliver employment flexibility and future economic growth in Australia (ANTA 1994).

Higher education reforms over the past ten to fifteen years have included the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme and fee-for-service places as funding mechanisms for all major program areas and the expansion in the number of higher education institutions servicing populations living within so called 'rust belt' areas of major cities and urban sprawl suburbs. There has also been growth in multi-sector adult education and training institutions and the expansion of Australian higher education programs and services into most Asian countries.

The ACE sector in Australia has been relatively untouched by these reforms because the goals of ACE programs are not recognised as being so closely linked to economic imperatives. In recent years, more ACE organisations have delivered VET programs, usually in situations where there are no other VET providers in the vicinity or where funding is offered for specific rural and remote groups and communities. This lack of policy review and reform means that little research has been conducted into the same issues and factors that impact on the VET and Higher Education sectors of adult education and training. The ACE sector is different from the VET and HE sectors in Australia in that the States and Territories each have different philosophical and funding arrangements, and it has only been since the mid-1990s that participation and outcomes for this sector have been measured by State/Territory and Commonwealth governments. There is a substantial amount of 'other' adult education activities occurring in all sectors that goes unreported (Golding, Davies & Volkoff 2001).

ACE organisations are seen as sites of 'second chance' education, empowering and transforming individuals through community-embedded learning which acts as a social contribution by engaging adult learning with everyday and localised community life (Golding, Davies & Volkoff 2001). Evidence exists that ACE organisations deliver programs that contribute to factors other than economic and employment outcomes, such as community participation, personal wellbeing and quality of life. These programs are aimed at the enrichment of individuals, families and communities where the 'accumulation of social capital through broad participation in ACE is seen as a source of regional regeneration, neighbourhood, town or community development' (Golding, Davies & Volkoff 2001: 11). Clemans *et al.* (2003) reveal in their research of ACE that there is a framework of individual, community and economic outcomes that need to be measured, and Figure 1 outlines these outcomes.

Figure 1: *Outcomes of participation in ACE. This table has been adapted from research by Clemans, Hartley & Macrae (NCVER 2003).*

Personal domain	Public domain	Social & community	Economic
emotional and physical wellbeing	cross-cultural knowledge	social connections	productive enterprises
spiritual peace	organisational capacity	community building	increased small business capacity
maturity	community service	active citizenship	employment advocacy
sense of belonging	employability skills	activism	micro-economic development
cognitive development	self-sufficiency	cultural expression	creation of goods and services
communication skills	expanded pathways	sharing resources	savings in personal and organisational costs due to greater efficiency
enhanced personal relationships	income generation	new community groups	
creative ability	professional development	community identity	
literacy and language		empowerment	
personal choices		appreciation and respect for diversity	
recreation			

A central issue to consider when evaluating the policies and planning of public adult education and training is accepting the existence of a diversity of people and needs within a community or region (Falk 2000). This means that adult education and training programs need to acknowledge and cater for all individuals and sub-groups within communities rather than targeting generic groups of people such as; 'non-English speaking background', 'the unemployed', 'youth at risk' and 'women'.

New research priorities are required to explore all the outcomes of adult education and training that go beyond simple attendance in programs and credentialled outcomes. This new research needs to focus more on the connections between adult education and training processes and the building of human capital via individual transformation, plus the development of social capital in diversified communities and the growing of economic capital through local infrastructure and industries.

Social capital and adult education

Australian adult education rhetoric and reality reveals that 'community' is an important site for adult learning. A good deal of research and theorising continues into the 'institution' and the 'workplace' as sites of learning; however, adults live within several constructs of community. Various research studies (Cervero & Wilson 2001; Falk 2000; ANTA 2002) have found that local communities need to be involved in the planning and provision of adult education and training programs for these services to have meaning:

> … there are significant reasons underlying the need for VET and regional and community development to work closely together and are, in fact, based on the same reasons that underlie the Kangan (1974) reforms: to fill the needs of the society of the day (ANTA: 2002: 11).

Cavaye (2001) points out that governments need to be accountable in new ways to communities about the programs they initiate, including their contribution to community organisation, cooperation and attitudinal change – that is, being accountable for the processes of interaction with communities, not just the programs and their statistical outcomes (Cavaye 2001).

The use of the term 'social capital' is one that grows in currency and alludes to the values, norms and processes within communities, networks and organisations. Coleman (1990) believed social capital

was a by-product of government-funded programs and therefore an unintentional process but one that required recognition and further research. The debate about what is social capital examines the extent to which families, communities, institutions, organisations, regions and nations are able to make commitments to one another to solve problems requiring collective action (Winter 2000: 21).

Schuller (2005) examines three forms of social capital relevant to adult education activities in a community context. Bonding social capital refers to the links within or between homogenous groups, bridging social capital to the links within and between heterogenous groups and linking social capital to the connections between people and groups at different hierarchical levels. Activities and frameworks that facilitate bridging social capital aim to acknowledge the validity of the norms, values and experiences of 'others' without having to share them. Bridging capital then contributes to what Schuller (2005) describes as 'knowledge economies', that is, the transactions that occur to build knowledge, experiences and skills, transactions that occur at adult, community and public education sites.

Measuring these forms of social capital requires agreement on a list of social capital indicators that are empirically measurable. Onyx and Bullen (Winter 2000), in their research of five communities in New South Wales, distilled eight factors associated with social capital, including participation in the local community, pro-activity in a social context, feelings of trust and safety, neighbourhood connections, family and friendship connections, tolerance of diversity and the value of life and work connections. Despite Putman's (2000) tome, *Bowling alone*, and growing literature and discussion about social capital, there is still much debate around how researchers can identify and measure these social processes and outcomes.

Bryson and Mowbray (2005) provide a timely warning about the linking of notions of community, social capital and public policy by exploring specific examples from the current Victorian Government's

social policies on 'Victorian communities'. They conclude that the use of terms such as 'social capital' and 'community' can be flawed unless social researchers and analysts 'scrutinise social policy and the use of evidence' in a manner that produces policy and practice that is informed by the 'best evidence available' (Bryson & Mowbray 2005: 97).

Individual transformation via adult education

The link between adult education and social capital is a new area of exploration in educational evaluation which has traditionally focused on individual transformation via the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The recent, popular use of terms such as 'lifelong learning' and 'learning for life' has attempted to make the link between learning and the various stages of adult development; however, these terms have little meaning if they are not founded in transformative models of adult education. The re-emergence of experiential learning is one example of a transformational adult education process that links the contexts of education, work and personal development. Transformational adult education means different things depending on the specific philosophies, programs and practices in adult education and training (Arnold & Ryan 2003).

Historically, radical educators such as Freire (1973, 1993) and Illich (1976) have argued that contemporary adult education and training systems are primarily agencies of social control that are oppressive and conservative and aim to maintain a capitalist class system. Transformational education and training frameworks can and must acknowledge the familial, community and cultural experiences of individuals. Adult education and training processes can then be designed to instil a critical consciousness which is an active exploration of the personal and experiential meaning of ideas and concepts through dialogue amongst equals.

Boud (1989) described four pedagogical traditions in adult education: training and efficiency (scientific tradition), self-directed learning (andragogy), learner-centred programs (humanistic) and education for social action (critical theory). These pedagogical traditions assume a common notion that we are 'self participants in our own subjugation and domination' (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant & Yates 2003). They also accept the dualism of the 'individual' and 'society' as foundations, pulling in opposite directions. A post-modern critique of Boud's traditions rejects this notion of the self as a unitary, coherent, rational subject and proclaims the 'multi-self', the notion that subjectivity is multiple.

All adult education programs and processes contain explicit or implicit dimensions of personal change, learning that reflects different experiences and roles of the self. Foucault (1988) labelled these as 'technologies of change' where individuals interact with systems of production (work), sign systems (power in society) and with our own bodies, souls, thoughts and behaviours to attain a certain state of happiness, wisdom, acceptance, contentment and so on.

The post-modern way forward examines the self and society as concurrently produced via discursive practices (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant & Yates 2003). Self as subjectivity is multiple, a discourse embedded in the everyday, the multi-contextual, multi-cultural, multi-familial, a collection of experiences, beliefs, interactions, communities, workplaces, partners, children and personal journeys. It is this multiplicity that challenges adult education and training systems in the twenty-first century. Taylor *et al.* (2000) have examined the notion of connecting learning in the varied contexts in which we participate to reveal commonalities. This means that by linking, rather than separating, our learning experiences from varied contexts, we can begin to locate the 'truer' self that has a coherent identity, the integrated person rather than the roles we play as 'worker', 'parent', 'partner' or 'citizen'.

Adult education and training practice, therefore, needs to embrace the politics of self-location, that is, the wholeness of each individual nationality, culture, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality and/or occupation. The current quest for adult education policy-makers relates to the matching of this version of the self with the access and equity philosophies, principles and practices that guide adult education program funding and delivery in Australia.

A discourse of access and equity in adult education

Putman (2004) contends that increased cultural and ethnic diversity via global immigration and differential fertility will continue unabated and that this diversity is an important economic and social asset for any country. He believes that 'to increase social capital and social cohesion, the educational process is the single most important and effective policy lever' (Putman 2004: 6). Globally, adult education and training systems are still struggling with the social and political issues of social segregation versus integration and language and cultural assimilation, all of which have been issues for many societies for decades (Putman 2004).

'Underpinning modern Australian society is a commitment to cultural diversity. Australia accepts and respects the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage...' (DFAT 2005: 1). Shared patterns of cultural meaning are important to all societies and these patterns reflect the development of norms, values, skills, understandings, attributes and characteristics that are resources for individual, communal and social action. The existence of these elements underpins all social exchanges and the development of trust and cooperation within communities and societies, that is, the development of social capital.

Culture is seen as the systems of beliefs, assumptions, sentiments and perspectives which members of a group have in common, embodied in customs, routines, roles and rituals. Cultural diversity relates to all

cultures participating equally in a society to define and shape national identity and citizenship, deriving from the understanding and sharing between different cultures and the positive value of this sharing to society as a whole (UNESCO 2004).

Access and equity strategies have been crucial elements of Commonwealth, State and Territory government policies and programs in Australia since the early 1970s. Access and equity have usually taken the form of policies and programs targeting specific groups in society and have resulted in specific legislation and regulating structures such as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Disability Discrimination (DDA).

The link between access and equity as concepts and government policies and programs supporting cultural diversity can be seen historically in affirmative action programs, mutual agreements with other (mainly European) nations, citizenship programs and cultural festivals. However, these policies have been more a reaction to the waves of immigration to Australia linked to economic growth. Recent skilled population expansion via immigration policies continues to emphasise cultural diversity as an economic imperative rather than building on Australia's diversity as social or population policies.

Hattam and Smyth (1998) explore access and equity within a historical framework of terminology used in Australian society, such as 'a fair chance for all', 'social justice', 'equal opportunity', 'equal outcomes' and 'equality'. It is on this basis that they argue that social justice policy in Australia has tended to reflect a 'victim construction' approach where policies 'present an a-causal view of 'disadvantage' that collapses to 'in-school' strategies rather than take the struggle into the community; 'construct the oppressed as disadvantaged victims' which translates into policies that are 'essentially charitable in orientation' (Hattam & Smyth 1998: 138–139).

For over a decade, Australian adult education and training policies have stressed the need for increased access and participation by

'targeting' women, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, the disabled, Indigenous peoples and regional and remote communities (DEST 2003; DEST 2004). Shore suggests that the policies and programs which target particular groups in society assume there is a stable centre in these policies (Shore 2001). The categories of access and equity in Australian adult education and training policies assume that the stable centre or dominant discourse in Australian adult education and training is Anglo-Saxon, male, physically and mentally able, situated in urban communities and employed on a full-time and fulfilling basis.

Hattam and Smyth (1998) reflect that an understanding of access and equity in adult education requires a sociological reading which is largely absent from policy. Therefore, any evaluation and analysis of Australian adult education and training must acknowledge and indeed confront 'the discourse, practices and institutional structures of society' (Hattam & Smyth 1998: 142). These discourses are many and include nationality, culture, citizenship, inequality, marginality, poverty, worker, unemployed etc., the discourses that locate the individual within society, community and industry.

Using culture and language as definers of equity groups within adult community and public education policies is regarded as consigning these groups to a state of being 'other than' the dominant, privileged Anglo, Christian, English-speaking centre of these policies. Shore (2001) describes this as the invisible binaries of adult education and training policy, where certain outcomes are considered in terms of categories and not in terms of diversity of overall participation. Adult learning principles are framed in most western democratic societies as a liberal education philosophy and practice that is 'trying' to overcome the barriers and structures that deny 'others' access to services and resources. Shore (2001) argues that adult learning theorists, policy-makers and practitioners need to recognise our lack of critique in our own use of language, discourse and practice.

Any evaluation of diversity, social inclusion and social capital as products of adult education and training systems must include an exploration of the responses to a range of heterogenous language and literacy needs, acknowledging barriers to learning such as prior experiences and the negotiation of cross-cultural issues within adult education providers and programs. It has recently been suggested that the future of access and equity in public adult education and training in Australia is the structuring of access and equity to meet the needs of individuals rather than targeted sub-groups or communities – it is only on this individual level that we can negotiate issues such as need, culture, experiences and outcomes (Bowman 2004).

Conclusion

People who are vulnerable in society, who lack social power, tend to have lower levels of social trust and in Australian society this includes people who are unemployed, in poor health, elderly, young or are recent immigrants. The pivotal role of public adult education and training can be seen in recent attempts to measure social capital and in the strong relationship between measures of educational attainment and civic efficacy, civic identity, levels of trust and political knowledge and activity (Putman 2004; Winter 2000).

The role of adult, community and public education as a philosophy and practice leads to adult education sites being prominent in future public interaction. Sites such as neighbourhood-based, adult community education, public libraries, University of the Third Age, community learning circles and other forums can be 'places where people can practise the habits of social trust' (Latham 2000: 216). Adult, community and public education is one area of public policy where research has been limited to individual transformation and achievement. Measuring levels of social trust, social cohesion and inclusiveness as indicators of the development of social capital is the current challenge for researchers and governments in all areas of public policy.

The development of new public policy in adult, community and public education needs to emerge from conversations between political actors engaging in a dialogue with individuals, groups and communities about their values and needs. Conversations between political actors, policy-makers and researchers must be about genuine partnerships and participation in order for these social indicators to come to the fore and be explored.

This means acknowledging and exploring how national, regional and localised social and cultural structures and processes contribute to a discourse on identity, history and sustainability via the exploration of local power relations and processes of exclusion and marginalisation. 'The subversive logic of social capital demands public policy responses that are place and people specific and deeply grounded in local needs and circumstances' (Winter 2000: 291).

The challenge is to evaluate and redesign Australia's adult, community and public education policies and systems so that they facilitate a divergence in style and approach and a high level of local judgement and flexibility – not just as rhetoric, but as a reality that can be measured in terms of the development of social and economic resources that connect people and create all manner of capital formation in localised places. This redesign can commence with further research about adult education and training as sites of social, civic, community **and** educational activities and begin to measure the factors and processes of adult education that impact on and link individuals, groups, communities and regions within the context of a twenty first century, culturally diverse, Australian society.

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About the author

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Challenges in understanding and assisting mature-age students who participate in alternative entry programs

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Mature-age students are a significant group within the Australian sub-degree and undergraduate commencing cohort. Nevertheless, little is known about mature-age student backgrounds or factors that affect their participation at university. This paper draws on a case study that examined the nature and outcomes of Australian alternative entry programs for mature-age students. Specifically, the paper explores the demographic characteristics of mature-age students who participate in these programs. Australian research indicates that mature-age student circumstances influence their university aspirations and awareness of academic study. An understanding of mature-age student characteristics assists program organisers in designing effective alternative entry courses for unmatriculated, return-to-study and equity group mature learners. It is through a shared knowledge of mature learner