Pedagogies for Life and Employability:
How Generic Skills and Attributes are Fostered
in Adult and Community Education

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Teaching for diverse outcomes and generic skills in ACE

Teaching in the Adult and Community Education sector is commonly characterised in terms of broad educational outcomes that combine general cognitive and social capacities with technical skills (for example, Commonwealth of Australia 1997, ACFEB 1998, 2004)). Clemans, Hartley and Macrae (2003) have demonstrated the extent to which such broad sets of proposed outcomes are adopted in ACE programs around Australia. Their analysis produced a matrix that combines Jacques Delors' life skills outcomes ('learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live, together'), with outcomes pertaining to the personal domain, the public domain, the work domain, and the community development and economic development domains (p.39). The core business of ACE is the engagement of educationally disaffected or disadvantaged people (including youth, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and long-term unemployed people) in learning that is referenced to all of these domains and outcomes. In order to engage such learners it is necessary to help them to gain the confidence and the desire to learn and to nurture new identities as learners. Such teaching entails engaging with learners on an affective level, as well as on a cognitive level. This kind of teaching is complex because you are addressing many of the cells of the matrix at once and it is contingent because what happens is so unpredictable.
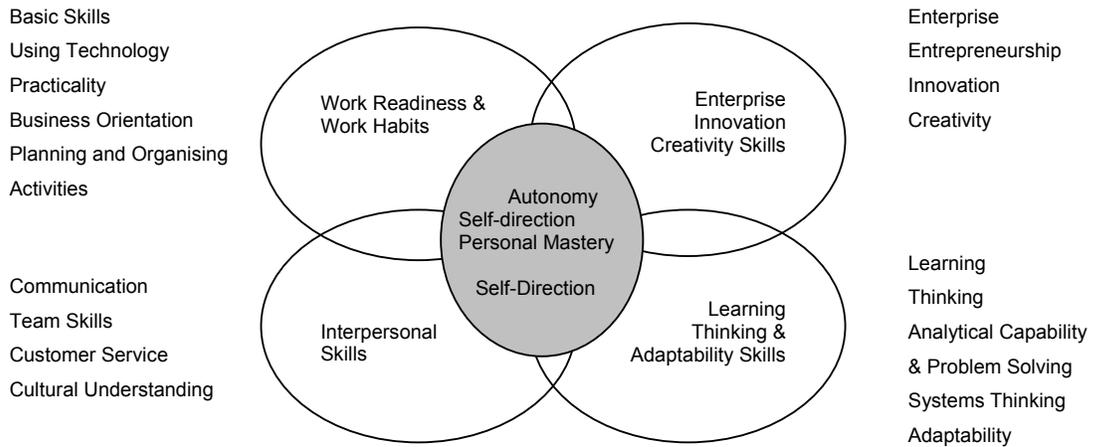
The purpose of this project was to investigate ACE pedagogies in order to gain a better understanding of the connections between the pedagogical practices of the ACE sector and the holistic generic skill outcomes achieved in such programs. We sought to understand how the pedagogical practices, environments, culture and curricula of ACE interact to produce the 'complex tangle of outcomes' (Clemans et al 2003). The project was funded by the Adult Community and Further Education Board of Victoria (part of the State government Department of Education) and Victoria University (Sanguinetti, Waterhouse and Maunders, 2004).

In this paper we describe the research and give a brief description of the 'framework for ACE pedagogy' that emerged from the findings.

Peter Kearns' Generic Skills Framework

The definition of generic skills that we have adopted as most appropriate to ACE is that of Kearns (2003), who writes of generic skills as 'life and employability skills and attributes'. This definition ascribes equal value to both 'life' and 'employability' purposes and recognises that these two dimensions of human learning are ultimately inseparable. It also recognises that personal attributes and values underpin other skills.

Fig. 1 Kearn's Developmental Framework of 'Generic Skills and Attributes'

Basic Skills
Using Technology
Practicality
Business Orientation
Planning and Organising
Activities

Enterprise
Entrepreneurship
Innovation
Creativity

Communication
Team Skills
Customer Service
Cultural Understanding

Learning
Thinking
Analytical Capability
& Problem Solving
Systems Thinking
Adaptability

Work Readiness & Work Habits

Enterprise Innovation Creativity Skills

Autonomy
Self-direction
Personal Mastery

Self-Direction

Interpersonal Skills

Learning Thinking & Adaptability Skills

- The Interpersonal (or social) Clusters with underpinning personal attributes and values

  eg   emotional intelligence self-understanding

- The Cognitive Clusters with underpinning personal attributes

  eg   willingness to learn
        positive attitude to change
        and complexity mastery of mental
        models

From Kearn's Developmental Framework for Generic Skills, Generic Skills For The New Economy – review of research, NCVER, Adelaide, 2001

- 4 -

Kearns' conceptualisation of generic skills and attributes shows the so-called 'clusters' of skills and attributes as interdependent, and as relating to the individual's overall personal and educational development. It follows that pedagogies and approaches that are multi-faceted, holistic, and that have an underlying purpose of supporting the 'self-direction, autonomy and personal mastery' (Kearns 2001 above) of learners would therefore support and feed into the development of the five 'key skill clusters'. Our argument is that effective training, especially for disaffected young people, is primarily about the quality of the teaching-learning relationship, the learning environment, and the values or purposes (the 'hidden agenda') of the teacher. Our experience and learning from this project is that, in ACE, these values and qualities are strongly foregrounded. However, over the past decade, these qualities have been at risk of being discounted within predominantly technical discourses of teaching and learning and a policy focus on competency-based learning, performance criteria, training packages and assessment frameworks.

Understanding pedagogy

'Pedagogy' is a complex notion that takes different meanings within different discourses and theoretical traditions of education. 'Pedagogy' often refers to the intangible aspects and processes of teaching and learning and to the social and political dynamics that are enacted in teaching and learning situations. In this project we used an eclectic definition that takes account of several major pedagogical theories and traditions:

> Pedagogy is about the processes and dynamics of teaching and learning, including the purposes, management, underlying philosophy, relationships, curriculum, instructional methods, environment and social context of learning (Sanguinetti, 1999).

This approach to pedagogy reflects a number of pedagogical discourses or theories that teachers draw on in their daily practice. These include theories of individual personal development (Rogers 1961), learner-centredness (Knowles) experiential and democratic learning (Dewey 1916) politically empowerment (Freire 1971), feminist critiques of patriarchy in education and calls for re-instatement of feminine styles of teaching and learning (Belenky et al 1988, Grumet 1988, hooks 1994) and feminist critiques of progressivist and critical pedagogies on the basis that these often reproduce the very power relations that they are attempting to deconstruct (Elsworth 1989, Walkerdine 1992, Gore 1993).

Methodology

The research had four inter-linked aims:

The first was to investigate teaching and learning practices within Adult and Community Education (ACE) classrooms in order to learn whether and in what ways the pedagogies and the 'pedagogical culture' of teaching in that sector might support or facilitate the development of generic skills amongst learners.

The second was to document and analyse models and cases of 'good practice' pedagogy in order to develop a theoretical framework for ACE pedagogies that are associated with positive 'generic' (attitudinal and developmental) outcomes (Golding and Rogers, 2002).

The third was to make an analysis of the professional development needs of teachers in ACE in relation to the development of learners' generic skills in ACE programs.

The fourth was to model within the sector a form of professional development that empowers practitioners by engaging them directly as participant-researchers in self- and collective reflections on their practice and in taking action to develop a theoretical and policy discourse around ACE pedagogy.

We set out to:

- 'capture' the incidents, interactions and vignettes of key learning moments or activities that relate to the development of generic skills amongst learners;
- document teachers' interventions or approaches that are conducive to the development of particular generic skills;
- analyse the relationship between learning environments and generic skills development; and
- present the project as a model of professional development within the sector.

Participatory action research (Kemmis and McTaggart 1986, Zeichner 2001, McNiff 1996), with its emphasis on cycles of planning, action, reflection and documentation, and on teachers as full partners in the research, provided a framework which built on the norms of collaboration and egality which generally characterise the ACE sector

The participatory action research style of this project facilitated a protracted period of reflection, discussion, and writing on the part of the teachers and the sharing of insights and experiences. Action research had other spin-offs in that the style of this project directly fed into the development of 'communities of practice' (Bourdieu 1992, Lave and Wenger 1996) and contributed significantly to the professional development of the teachers involved.

Method

Staff from ACE affiliated organizations were invited to a forum on generic skills within Adult and Community Education, at which the idea for the project was presented and discussed. A core group of co-researchers was recruited from those present and expanded through network contacts. Twenty-three of the original 26 ACE teachers participated in every stage of the project. These consisted of eighteen female and 4 male teachers, 11 based in rural or semi-rural areas, 8 in regional towns or cities and five in Melbourne. All were in small, locally managed community-based providers, except for four who were in community education departments in a TAFE institute. While we did not record the ages of the participants, it is clear that the majority were over 40 years of age and only 2 or 3 were 'youngish'. All were

committed to community education and, having been self-selected for the project, are likely to represent 'best practice' in ACE pedagogy.

A full day briefing workshop provided the general concepts and basic training in participatory action research. Participants were formed into three groups, one in regional Victoria, one in rural Victoria and one in Melbourne. Over the next 12 weeks, the groups of participants met together with a researcher two or three times to discuss their practice in relation to generic skills and attributes. These meetings were tape-recorded. During the twelve weeks each teacher-researcher kept a journal to document critical incidents, reflections and descriptions of their practice. At the end of the period, participants summarised their observations and insights and submitted a report to the researchers. Each participant was paid $300 for participating in the project; travel costs were also covered.

Data analysis

The data consisted of the 22 written reports submitted by the participants at the end of the period of action and reflection. The written reports included background information on providers, courses offered, and other publications that threw light on programs and pedagogies. The researchers' notes and transcriptions of the small group meetings were also included as data. Notes of the participants' final consultation meeting and follow-up phone calls and email messages have also been included.

A 'grounded analysis' approach (Patton, 1990) was employed. The researchers agreed upon a common coding system after an initial period of analysis. The categories of analysis grouped together the practices and approaches that the teachers reported on. The categories of analysis were then grouped according to four 'dimensions' of ACE pedagogy:

- *The teacher:* the teacher's skills, identity, educational values, the quality of relationships they engender, and personal pedagogy;
- *The teaching:* styles and approaches;
- *The curriculum:* what is actually taught (accredited frameworks and teacher developed curriculum); and
- *The plACE*: ACE centres as communities of practice and the role of centres as environments of learning.

Sub-categories under each of these dimensions were then regarded as 'elements' of pedagogy. A considerable degree of over-lap and duplication was reduced through repeated cycles of reorganization and simplification. The researchers focused on developing an accessible and logical analysis and presentation of the data whilst not losing the complexity and subtlety of the pedagogical elements that were identified.

Constructing a framework of ACE pedagogy

A framework of four *dimensions* of ACE pedagogy emerged from the above process. This framework listed the pedagogical elements under the four dimensions of pedagogy noted above. As the analysis continued it became evident that the elements within each dimension could be arranged so as to create five horizontal axes that were meaningful as *principles* of ACE pedagogy.

These principles were identified as follows:

- Focus on learners and their needs,

- Continuous learning for work and life,

- Building learning on and within real-life contexts,

- Sharing power; empowering people and communities and

- Many roads to learning.

This framework was shared with participants and modified in relation to their responses at a final workshop. The project reports provides full explanation of the framework and the process of its development (Sanguinetti, Waterhouse and Maunders 2004).

Pedagogical elements: the teacher

We identified the characteristics of the ACE teachers which appeared to contribute to positive generic outcomes as:

- personally engaged in their teaching;

- reflective about his/her practice and the wider context;

- able to improvise and take risks;

- aware of power dimensions in their teaching;

- patient, and trusting in the learning process.

Personally engaged

The participant teachers spoke in ways that showed how deeply engaged they are, not only with the practical and intellectual challenges of their work, but with relationships of teaching and learning. The American feminist educator bell hooks writes about the 'engaged pedagogy' of "teachers who really care about teaching in uniquely passionate and caring ways" (hooks, 1994: 117). The teachers in this project have provided many examples of 'engaged pedagogy' as described by hooks. Several have written or spoken about the ways in which teaching in ACE is intrinsically pleasurable and rewarding for them: teaching and learning with and from the learners is part of their own personal journey, their own life project.

'Engaged pedagogy' in ACE is centrally about relationships – relationships within the centre and relationships between teachers and learners. Fundamental to their work is the building of positive relationships and creating environments and classroom cultures in which authentic, relaxed yet respectful and supportive relationships will flourish.

The stories and reflections of ACE teachers and coordinators in this study demonstrate that they engage with students firstly as individuals (as people) and secondly as learners. As one participant said, "it's simple really, it is about caring about people and being oriented to where they are at then moving them on from there."

For many of these teachers, it is the relationship that they build with and amongst learners that is at the heart of their work. Frances said:

> I've always seen the teaching-learning as a really creative process. I remember once, my father being a bit dismissive of some of my issues when I was a young teacher, I said 'Do you realise Dad that you've got to have a meaningful relationship with 30 or 40 young people all at once? You've got to do this creative work with all of these people'. … So it is a creative process. If you've got a whole lot of other stuff, 'shit' as you say, to contend with, you can't focus and you can't do good work as a teacher.

Self-reflective

This project provided an opportunity for the ACE practitioners to become 'reflective practitioners' in the sense put forward by (Schön 1983, Van Manen 1995). Many of the reflections on their practice are also instances of their learning journeys as teachers:

Beverley wrote:

> The other thing I've learned from the class is how little you change from when you were first a student. I've always been an anxious sort, worry too much about it all … I still have to get the homework done instantly. That doesn't mean I do it right. Over the years I've convinced myself I was better at school than I really was. Now I remember, and I have more sympathy for the kids. Real sympathy rather than just the patronising kind that says, 'If only you'd do it my way, you'd be fine.'

The key point here is related to self-knowledge and the willingness to show vulnerability and share the inner dialogue, which inevitably takes place as we learn Time and again our co-researchers in this process spoke of their own continuing development as teachers and the strategies of reflective practice they had adopted.

Able to improvise and take risks

Janine improvised with a bit of inspired madness in order to invigorate a group of disabled students who were bored and becoming restive in a class where the planned content had proved in appropriate:

> We saw that we had totally lost them and they were mucking up, as you do when you are bored stupid, so we started some movement. I was throwing fish at them. We had this wooden fish, and this video about attitude. Seattle fish market. These guys sing and have the best time of their lives, are delighted to go to work, get up at 5 o'clock in the morning, and the message we were trying to relate to the students is attitude at work. That was a generic skill. We were trying to deliver the idea that your attitude affects your learning and affects your relationships, everything. We did not do very well just talking at them, they got a little bit out of the fish thing because there was lots of action, lots of fish flying around, so then I got my fish and was throwing my fish around and people were laughing. We started to break the mood.

This vignette is about teachers moving spontaneously out of their ('appropriate') institutional roles, and in effect joining in the life worlds of the bored learners by throwing the visual aid, the fish, at them, and around the room, in mad way, producing laughter and breaking through the mood and the resistances of the class. The teachers (who were team teaching) were able to quickly sense that the video of happy fish workers in Seattle was going to get them no-where in their proposed aims, and felt free enough to transgress against their own lesson, thus saving the group's morale, their own 'faces' and taking back leadership of the classroom agenda.

Such unplanned interactions and actions are part of any teaching, but perhaps are more so in the informality of ACE contexts in which to continually engage the attention and motivation of disaffected (and in this case, mildly disabled) learners requires the teacher to be constantly 'present' in mind and body and ready to act if things go wrong.

Awareness of power

One key finding in relation to this group of teachers is that they displayed an awareness of the power dimensions of their own teaching. Like all teachers, ACE teachers have institutional power , 'personal power' (the power of their personal standing and personalities) and 'knowledge power' (Foucault 1980) invested in them. It may be that the particular process in this project encouraged and enabled teachers to reflect on power in their classrooms. Some spoke in ways which suggested that they were diffusing their institutional power, but using their 'personal power' and 'knowledge-power' (their expertise in content and as teachers) and developing a model of 'power with' rather than 'power over'. That is, they were facilitating the transformation of institutional classroom settings into less formal but highly engaged learning communities.

One teachers in this project spoke of the way in which the teacher's power in ACE is necessarily curtailed. Most students who attend ACE are there voluntarily and often they are 'only just' there. In other words, those who have low self-esteem and have had negative experiences with schooling in the past will leave if their needs are not being met, or even if their needs are being met and they have other issues impinging in their lives. ACE teachers have to work hard to keep their students, and this equalises power relationships in a way that does not apply in the same way in universities and elsewhere. Len spoke of this as students exercising their 'legitimate option':

> … when people have a choice of what they do they only do things that they want and as you say it's contingent - people come there because it meets their expectation and it meets their circumstances like you go back to tap dancing when it suits your circumstances, you didn't go to tap dancing at a certain stage in your life when it could be the beginning of an alternative career or anything like that, so these things are contingent but at all times students have the option of going somewhere else. …They have as much real power as we have and it does make it an equally powered relationship.

The equalisation of power through open accountability and the need to defer at times to students' opinions and their demands (even if these may seem to be unreasonable) is not always easy. At the same time as creating adult learning environments with a high degree of equality between teacher and learners, the teachers also consciously work to 'empower' learners by building their self-confidence and therefore their capacity to act autonomously and to learn.

Patience and trust in the learning process

Many glimpses of teacher-learner relationships in ACE reveal a high level of patience in assisting, supporting and coaxing their students in the early stages of their learning pathways. The patience that teachers display in adult literacy is something that should be acknowledged and appreciated as a key characteristics of ACE pedagogy. Teaching in ACE entails providing for students who have experienced failure (and rejection), working with people who may have multiple issues which get in the way of their learning, and people with multiple disabilities, including intellectual disabilities.

There are students who never seem to change despite everything. In fact they seem to be unable to change their challenging behaviour or to do any learning at all. Kirsten wrote:

> This student has been difficult from the beginning. He turns up when he feels like it, laughs at other students' attempts to say things (even though his oracy is very poor, too), talks when the teacher is trying to explain something and is generally very uncooperative. He behaves as many young teenage boys do but he is in his thirties. He also acts as if he does not need to be in

> class, although he was only primary educated in Vietnam and is
> low across all macro skills in English. I realise his self-esteem is
> probably low, but it is difficult to help him achieve any
> successes when he will rarely participate with the class in an
> activity without disrupting or interfering with someone else …
> Such attitudes make learning a slow process and are very
> frustrating to the teacher.[1]

The need for teachers to be patient was often spoken about in the discussions as bringing learners to the point of being 'learning ready'. In many cases, assisting students to deal with a whole range of problems is a necessary preliminary before the students become 'learning ready'. In one discussion about the need for students to be learning ready, Len said that it is just as important to make it easy for someone who wants to leave, and to do so, as to try to keep them in the ACE program. In that way teachers are maximising the opportunity for learners to come back on their own terms, when they are ready. Some students come and go several times before their lives are settled enough for them to make a real commitment to study.

It is the nature of ACE, however, that the teachers do continue on with slow and difficult learners. Sharing the occasional step forward or triumphant learning achievement of such students is their reward.

Pedagogical elements: the teaching

We found great variety in the strategies and approaches that the ACE teachers bring to their work. In this section we describe the findings focusing on the teaching approaches and strategies that were commonly reported by our participant researchers about their practices.

Here we describe these approaches to teaching under the following headings:

- Developmental (oriented around processes of development of learners' skills and personal attributes),
- Experiential and contextual (building in as many opportunities as possible for learning from practical experience or by reflection on past experience; based in real-life contexts, including learners' interests and needs),

- Multi-layered and eclectic (attending to different layers or aspects of learning simultaneously (cf. Bradshaw 1997)

- Empowering (encouraging and supporting learners to build self-confidence and to become more personally powerful in relationships, social and civic participation and through learning)

- Fostering critical thinking (modelling a healthy disrespect for received wisdom in the media and elsewhere and teaching skills of critical thinking).

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[1] Kirsten has since reported that this particular student has made a big change in his attitude and later became actively cooperative with other learners in the classroom.

Developmental

Participants were clear that teaching had to start at the learners' level, not at the beginning of a course, with an abstract set of competencies, or with the teacher's starting point. As Terry put it:

> It is about the learning. Finding where they are at and then
> building on that. We might know so much more than them (but)
> there is no point in trying to pump that into them, as they are
> not going to understand. Taking five steps back and building to
> where they are. It might not be what you want to teach anyway
> but you have got to have foundations. Take your eyes off you,
> [and focus] onto their knowledge.

Many of the stories are about how teachers deal with the personal baggage and negative experiences that get in the way of students' learning, at least initially. The ACE teachers spoke of taking on board the students as they are, and engaging with them on a personal level, being flexible and tolerant and supporting them through their problems as part of the educational process.

The responsibility of ACE teachers to engage with students at this level is expressed by Halina:

> It's all this personal stuff that's wound up with learning, and
> that's a huge side of it all. You can talk about a tutor having
> wonderful strategies but one of the huge barriers is what's in
> people's heads and the emotional baggage we carry.

Teaching developmentally is about dealing with 'the huge barriers in peoples heads' and 'the emotional barriers we carry'. The oft contested notion, of teachers 'empowering' learners, is perhaps better framed as teaching 'developmentally', as the latter formulation does not carry the same connotations of patronisation or power as a commodity to be bestowed on learners.

Experiential and contextual

Experiential and contextual teaching is about practical learning and to relating this to the experience of the learners whenever possible. ACE teachers often take specific student needs and build a program of instruction in relation to them. Len told of a student who had fallen into the hands of a loan shark and was being charged 34% interest. As well as steering him towards legal advice, he developed a series of numeracy classes on percentages and interest calculations, to help him and other learners, to gain mastery of this area:

> So the next time we go through, show him a simple interest
> calculation, the next lesson we do paying off a loan 'simple
> interest accumulates at this much, you divide by that many
> months, this is how you work out the monthly repayments'.

> And other people in that class they talk about their loan
> experiences, how things had come about etc, etc, etc.
>
> Now this would have been part of the program, like teaching
> simple interest, teaching effective interest rate is something that
> I do. How you work out what the effective interest rate is, on a
> loan, is something I do. But in this particular case it was all fed
> very strongly by this particular character and it was a real story
> and he wasn't just paying off a loan he was being done over big
> time. And that was just something that came out directly from
> doing a number task.

Other techniques which were identified as supporting this kind of experiential and contextual learning included problem solving and investigation, playing games, role playing and brainstorming, group projects, community service, structured reflection and facilitating self-expression through the arts.

Multi-faceted and eclectic

Participants' accounts of their teaching show that they draw eclectically on a range of different styles and approaches, often from different and apparently contradictory teaching paradigms. 'Eclectic' means that the different styles and work belong to different and possibly conflicting paradigms. One example is the way teachers have been able to marry competency-based assessment with experiential and developmental ways of teaching within relationships that are both personal and professional, as we saw in the previous section.

Ariel's journal listed a diverse range of approaches: Listening and taking notes from a lecture, a survey of the class about what makes them happy, a group problem solving task, a geography listening quiz. She employed group approaches - some groups worked well together and came to consensus answers, even if they disagreed. Other groups worked individually.

Empowerment

Many of the participants talked about 'empowering' (or 'developing') their students by finding ways of getting students to be confident in moving outside their comfort zones, boosting esteem and confidence, creating the conditions in which they feel more empowered, as individuals, and therefore build the potential for success in learning and in their lives.

While the notion of empowerment has been subject to much critique we have included it in our analysis because a discourse of empowerment (in our view, a positive discourse) featured strongly in the teachers' talk and reflections.

Critical thinking

Some of the teachers spoke about their ways of encouraging and challenging students to think critically about social issues and issues that affected them. Kirsten gave an example of getting learners to think critically through studying a series of newspaper articles about speeding:

> After the general discussion I gave them the question sheets to work through. We also looked at the persuasive devices used in the text. This led to a discussion of some of the different ways that information can be presented to colour how it is received. Some of the newer students were surprised at the idea that newspapers and other media had agendas, either hidden or even unconscious, which colour their texts. I said we would find some articles on the same subject from two different papers next week and compare them. This critical thinking and awareness that *anything* people might say is coloured by their beliefs and experiences is new to many students. It is also vital in the employment context as it helps to show them that a person who sounds authoritative does not necessarily have the only truth. Of course, when the person is the boss, this can mean knowing when to challenge and when not to. All these are skills that are very hard to learn.

> After coffee, … I also re-explained how important it is for people to think critically and not accept everything at face value. We talked about the danger of being manipulated by companies, politicians or people if you do so.

The pedagogy of the plACE

We are only able to make brief reference to the last two dimensions of pedagogy within the constraints of this paper. The teachers' texts referred continually to the contexts, the settings and the localised communities within which this work was being done. Time and again the data suggested the significance of what Lave & Wenger (1991), called the 'community of practice'. The participants talked about the importance of the culture of their providers, the significance of attitudes and the educational values which are discussed, demonstrated and enacted within the ACE setting where the learning is happening.

In some stories it was clear that exposure to the place was a significant factor in the learning that was happening. The role of teachers – and their direct interactions with learners - was highly significant. In some cases there was almost a sense of mystique about 'the centre' and its effect on people – what Willis (1998), wrote of as 'building a Utopian space'. There was a perception that the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. Simply spending time at 'the Centre' was seen to be beneficial for many people.

Clearly, holistic pedagogy entails much more than what happens in classrooms, and more than what happens between teachers and students.

We identified five aspects (or elements) of the 'pedagogy of the plACE', which were significant to our participants in terms of pedagogical outcomes and practices. These are:

- collective values: commitment to education, equity and community service
- enabling management
- a networked community of teaching and learning practice
- community ownership and community building
- sense of belonging

Curriculum

The final dimension of ACE pedagogy is the curriculum. There are four aspects of curriculum relevant to ACE pedagogy that became evident in the data. These are:

- Creative interpretation of accredited curriculum guidelines
- Integration of generic skills: for employment, life and further study within curriculum
- Contextualised curriculum
- Negotiated curriculum
- Diverse curriculum: vocational and non-vocational, accredited and informal

Table 1:   Descriptive Framework of ACE Pedagogy

Principals of ACE Pedagogy	Dimensions of ACE Pedagogy			
	The Teacher	**The Teaching**	**The Place**	**The Curriculum**
Focus on people and communities	Is engaged with learners and their learning on a personal level	Is developmental (starting from where learners are at and consciously helping them to progress)	Is led by management committed to enabling and learning processes and staff needs	Prioritises learner needs through creative assessment for accredited curricula
Continuous learning for work and life	Is reflexive and open about her/his own practice and professional learning journey	Is largely (but not exclusively) experiential	Is a strongly networked community of teaching and learning practice	Is oriented towards generic skills for employment, life and further study
Building learning on and within real-life contexts	Is able to improvise and take risks	Is multi-layered and eclectic	Is community-owned and is engaged in community building locally	Is contextualised (in terms of local, community and individual issues, interests and needs)
Sharing power - empowering people & communities	Is committed to education, equity and community service	Utilises various strategies to empower learners	Provides a sense of belonging and purposeful activity	Teaches skills and provides possibilities for discussion and critique of social issues
Many roads to learning	Is patient and able to put trust in the learning process	Develops skills of critical literacy	Is a centre of involvement in local community issues and the defence of ACE	Opens up pathways to work and further study

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This framework of ACE pedagogy is a kind of distillation of the pedagogical beliefs, practices and understandings expressed and reflected in the data provided by the participant researchers. As such, it is a kind of snapshot of ACE pedagogy as it is being practised in these settings at this time. It is not a 'definitive' framework and should be seen as one way of describing a complex and ever-changing field of educational practice. While the notion of a 'framework' can have the discursive effect of 'capturing' (and therefore freezing) a set of understandings, we would hope that this framework will continue to grow and develop as pedagogy in different contexts continues to be researched, described and analysed.

Why 'ACE Pedagogy'?

Are there any essential differences between 'ACE pedagogy' and 'school', 'TAFE' or 'university pedagogies'? Our investigation indicates that there are significant differences, but that these can be explained in terms of the unique context – the policies, traditions, purposes, environments, and resource conditions of ACE, rather than as *essential* differences.

As we have seen, the starting point in ACE pedagogy is the individual learner – his or her purposes, learning needs and issues, impediments to learning, how they can be helped to develop towards employment, active citizenship, their own personal goals or whatever. The actual education programs and learning outcomes are not embraced for their own sake, they are harnessed to this central purpose and are, in a sense, secondary to it.

On the other hand, the main purpose of more institutionalised provision is the delivery of education or training to a class or cohort. The primary focus therefore in institutions is on learning *outcomes* and these are usually thought of as *group* outcomes, rather than individual outcomes. Of course, teachers in other contexts care about and are supportive of individual learners. But in schools and universities, the aim of supporting students is conceived of in institutional terms: that is, in educational programs and goals and the institutional structures and practices that are in place to achieve these goals are the primary focus. Many teachers in larger institutions, dealing with larger groups of students (and usually being on full-time loads) do not have the same opportunities for 'engaged' or 'developmental' pedagogy as do ACE teachers. The infrastructure, purposes, practices and norms of larger institutions or work place training contexts are geared less to individual progress and nurturance and more to processes, procedures, curriculum and group outcomes.

It seems that an orientation to the individual *person* rather than his or her educational program outcomes could be what most distinguishes ACE from other kinds of (larger educational) institutions. The smaller size of classes and frequency of contact enables more 'feedback loops' between teachers and learners, hence more meaningful and informal relationships to develop.

The diverse and sometimes extreme needs of the learners, especially in the youth area calls forth innovative pedagogies and an intensity of relationship as committed teachers struggle to

make a difference or to really engage individual young people in learning. The general lack of resources and flexible arrangements within common curriculum (such as the CGEA) mean that in comparison with other forms of pedagogy, ACE pedagogy is possibly *more* contextualised, *more* improvisational, *more* eclectic, *more* demanding of the teachers' powers of innovation, and *more* relational than other pedagogies.

Another contextual difference that the participants drew to our attention is that the unique situation and purposes of ACE may attract certain kinds of teachers. The community-based location of most ACE provision on the margins of the educational mainstream, affording greater flexibility, and having a more distinct social justice role has an appeal for some teachers but not others.

The dimensions, elements and principles of pedagogy that we describe should therefore be seen as relative to educational contexts and roles. This is to recognise that adult community educators are not necessarily 'better' than school or tertiary teachers as a group but that the particular conditions, context and clients of ACE call for the construction and expression of particular pedagogies.

We are now in an era in which employers (Curtis and MacKenzie 2001) and governments (ANTA 2002, ACFEB 1995, 2004) appear to be moving away from discourses of performativity and competency and drawing on discourses of lifelong learning, social capital and community participation. This shift is manifested in calls to education and training systems to address generic skills and attributes for life and employability. The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and the newly announced 'Essential Learning Frameworks' (DE&T, 2004) are but two examples in which 'generic skills' and the holistic development of learners are a central focus. The ACE sector and ACE teachers are well-placed to assist other sectors in thinking about how this may be done.

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