Aligning partnerships, policy and pedagogy with participants: A social capital perspective

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An NCVER research project

Based on Balatti, J, Black, S & Falk, I (forthcoming) *A new social capital paradigm for adult literacy: Partnerships, policy and pedagogy*

Previous research by the same authors (Balatti, Black & Falk 2006) indicated there were social capital outcomes from adult literacy and numeracy programs.

This project focuses more explicitly on providing guidelines on how to deliver adult literacy and numeracy programs using a social capital approach

There were three key elements to the study:
1. The partnerships involved in the design and delivery of the programs
2. The policies that influence the kinds of partnerships possible
3. The pedagogical practices the teachers use

Research method

Following recommendations for cross-sectoral programs in which literacy is 'integrated' (Wickert & McGuirk 2005), this project focused on three different sectors:

Health in NSW, personal finance in Queensland and justice in the Northern Territory. The phases of the research include:

1. Literature review of literacy provision in those three sectors
2. Environmental scans of programs operating in the three sectors, examining policies, partnerships and program delivery (pedagogy)
3. Three action research models involving exploring how experienced teachers trialled social capital building strategies
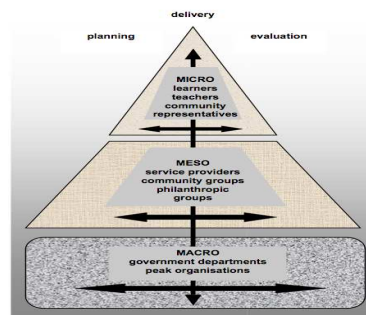

Social capital

☐ Definition: "networks, together with shared norms, va"lues and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or amongst groups" (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, p.4)

☐ Fundamental to social capital theory is the proposition that networks of relationships are a resource that can facilitate access to other resources of value to individuals or groups.

☐ In this research we operationalise social capital as a private good

☐ A social network approach considers the role of networks at every stage of educational delivery. In this study – partnerships, pedagogy and policies.


Partnership characteristics

This study found that effective partnerships share some common characteristics. They include the following:
☐ *sharing a similar value system* as with governments, corporations and community groups valuing the importance of people understanding and making financial choices;
☐ *bringing different sets of needed skills and resources to the partnerships*, which may include financial, cultural and social capital;
☐ *mutual respect* amongst the partners, especially at the local level in team teaching arrangements;
☐ *working as part of a team*;
☐ *good communication* among partners;
☐ *local flexibility*, especially with timetabling and local resourcing;
☐ *sustainable funding* which enables partnerships to endure for the medium to long term.
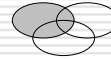

Partnership structures (Balatti, Black & Falk forthcoming)

A social capital perspective – learner networks
(Balatti, Black & Falk forthcoming, NCVER)
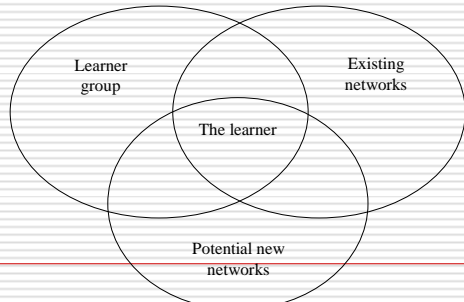
Learner group as the site for social capital outcomes

- ☐ A new network for all participants to acquire new knowledge and identity resources drawn on in their interactions inside and outside the class - to play out new aspects of identity and practise new skills.
- ☐ Teaching strategies that build the group into this new learning community include:
  - ■ Foster relationship building (bonding ties).
  - ■ Negotiate with the students to create a common purpose
  - ■ Devise with the students a set of protocols that encourage an open and respectful environment.
  - ■ Foster a safe and supportive environment where learners feel safe to make errors or to try different ways of being.
  - ■ Provide opportunities for learners to be challenged.

Existing networks for social capital outcomes
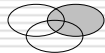
- ☐ Changes in the ways learners interact in the networks of which they are already members e.g. parents being better able to engage with the lives of their school aged children
- ☐ Some teaching strategies that increase the likelihood of social capital outcomes occurring these networks are:
  - ■ Use content that is relevant to everyday living
  - ■ Draw on learners' life experiences
  - ■ Involve the other family members
  - ■ Allow opportunities for family members or friends to be part of the course (e.g. attend celebratory events).

Potential new networks as sites for social capital outcomes

- ☐ Accessing or becoming members of new networks that offer contacts, services, knowledge, and other social, economic and cultural resources that the learners had not previously enjoyed – experiencing new networks leads learners to experiencing new sets of norms, values and beliefs which in turn may result in changes to how they perceive themselves (identity resources) and others.
- ☐ Some teaching strategies by which this can occur are the following:
  - ■ Arrange for learning experiences to occur in out-of-class contexts that will be useful to the learners.
  - ■ Set tasks that require learners to interact with networks (organisations, community groups, service providers) they have not yet accessed.
  - ■ Invite people from potentially useful networks to co-teach or co-participate in the training.
  - ■ Foster the building of bridging and linking ties.