



Newsletter October 2008

Welcome to the SPiL newsletter. The research team, including students, has been working hard through a range of national and territory wide projects in partnership with a range of communities and stakeholders. OctoberVET 2008 was an opportunity to hear from a range of national figures and share the findings of that research to explore a vision for the future of VET and workforce development. Key themes over the forum were the role of partnerships and skills ecosystems underpinned by embedded community engagement models. It was wonderful to have the participation in the audience of representatives of Federal and NT Government, Industry, Training Councils, RTOs and the community.

Noela Eddington discussed the role of skills ecosystems in engaging with regional communities and the implications for VET policy and implementation Cathy Curry outlines DEEWR's move to a place based approach to engagement with Indigenous communities offers a policy framework for working in partnership across government and with industry and community capacity and aspirations. From the Kimberley, Desert regions and NT, Mark Manado, Richard Agar, Alicia Boyle and Stuart Anderson offered a vision of working in partnership with Indigenous communities that lead to community based employment outcomes that support economic and cultural independence while reinforcing social cohesion locally. Lecturers from a range of industry areas across Charles Darwin University outlined the ways they are meeting the challenges of training in regional and remote areas. In particular they focussed on the use of emerging learning technologies and pedagogies, developing and supporting trainers who can work effectively in a range of contexts and meet the range of expectations of learning communities across the NT.

The current edition of the Learning Communities Journal focuses on Community Management of Plant biosecurity in Australia and Indonesia, the contributors discuss many issues that have relevance across community planning and development in a range of diverse communities. The upcoming edition will report on a series of case studies on Indigenous community



Ruth Wallace, Director, SPiL, CDU

engagement through a broad range of programmes, the guest editors Associate Professor Michael Christie and Matthew Campbell have analysed the case studies and have identified some of the key issues for future development and implementation of learning partnerships.

As we head towards the end of the year, the team are focussed on finalising and sharing the valuable work that has been undertaken and developing a strategic vision for the coming year. A series of strategic planning and assessment activities will be undertaken with the team and stakeholders to engage a range of voices in planning our research and associated activities. We are always keen to listen to and involve you so feel free to drop us a line SPiL@cdu.edu.au. Enjoy the wet season.

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AusInd Biocom: Australian Indonesian Biosecurity Community Management Project

In northern Australia and its closed neighbouring country, the eastern regions of Indonesia, local community participation is a key driver in the management of pest and diseases, particularly as awareness and early reporting are important strategies in reducing the time taken to identify an incursion and minimise its impacts.

This project is a research partnership formed by the Australian Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity (CRCNPB) between Australia and Indonesia to establish ways of managing plant pests and diseases at a regional and community level to alleviate poverty through food security. The project team from Australia includes Professor Ian Falk, Ruth Wallace, Paul Royce and Scott Knight from CDU and Dr David Eagling, CRCNPB research leader and deputy CEO. The Indonesian team includes Dr Kaler Surata, Dr Marthen Ndoen, I Wayan Mudita, Petrarca Karetji, Theo Litaay and Eka Martiningsih.



A pilot study was conducted in 2007 which established a draft community participation model which incorporates sound practice in developing sustainable ways for communities in Eastern Indonesia and Australia to identify and manage the pests and diseases affecting the quality and quantity of crops and food supplies. The study also identified a need to strengthen the research training and capacity and accompanying training accreditation for the community management of biosecurity in both countries. Another outcome of the study was a collection of internationally peer reviewed papers published in joint partnership in two international journals, *Kritis: Journal of Interdisciplinary Development Studies*, and *Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts*.



Papuan women farmers sell agriculture product

The new research project extends the successful food security partnership into new areas. The project team will focus on development of systems to produce models of leadership training for those involved at central, regional and community levels to make new decentralization policy work for the poor. It will do this through action research in Greater Papua, West Timor and other regions which in turn will lead to leadership capacity building and implementation of innovative breakthrough activities. The development, trialling, evaluation and refinement of the 2007 pilot project outcomes will be undertaken in three regions of Eastern Indonesia and Australia names the Greater Papua, Nusa Tenggara Timur and remote communities in northern Australia.

Further research will be undertaken across the whole of Eastern Indonesia into the facilitation of policy/regional/community connections, and the role of women in facilitating biosecurity outcomes. This will be further linked to Indonesia's national community empowerment program and local government initiatives.



E-tools for Aboriginal Art Workers: Showing true stories with online RPL and e-portfolios

Significant limiting factors have led to a situation where there are very few Aboriginal people employed in administrative positions in Central Australian Art and Craft Centres. However, a project funded by the Northern Territory Flexible Learning Innovations Program through the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, has been looking at the capacity of e-tools to facilitate change. Alicia Boyle, Education Coordinator, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre based at Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Raewyn Kavanagh, Training Mentor, Desert (Association for Central Australian Aboriginal Arts and Craft Centres), have been creating innovative multi-media Art Worker e-portfolios that can be used for skills recognition.

Skills recognition, easy you might say, but not necessarily so when your students reside three hours from the nearest provider, have studied, sometimes continually, often with different providers, under a range of funding initiatives, frequently not completing full qualifications, never studying beyond a Certificate II, for up to 10 years; where English is not your first language, you have children and often grandchildren, you most probably don't have access to a computer at home, you most probably don't have access to any sort of telephone and you definitely don't have a filing cabinet at home neatly housing all your training programs and academic transcripts. Using the online RPL support tool 'Competency Navigator' and it's related e-portfolio platform



'Skillsbook' the project has been custom designing a range of Certificate III in Arts Administration qualifications for each of the Art Workers that reflects both their job roles and their current skills and knowledge. The e-tools facilitate use of this information to identify skills and knowledge gaps and design individual training plans that Desert can use to source/provide appropriate education and training and simultaneously link to the Art Centre Business Plans. Using e-portfolios allows for centrally locating all the evidence required for assessment – PDF word and document files, MP3 audio files, AVI video files for digital stories, MPEG movie files and JPEG digital image files. The e-portfolios also provide a perfect platform for future computer-based training and communication.

This project will not only provide useful tools for the Aboriginal Art Workers and Desert, but also inform others interested in using similar e-tools in alternative contexts.



Discovering Our SPiL Researchers

Dr John Guenther

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With a history as a vocational training practitioner with a particular interest in information and communication technology, John became involved in a number of adult learning and social capital research projects about ten

years ago. This ultimately led to a more focused PhD project on the role of vocational learning as a tool for capacity building in different kinds of communities across northern Australia. On completion of this project in 2005 he learned that it is often difficult to separate out the value of vocational learning from other elements of community capacity (such as health, social well-being as well as collective and individual identity). Building on a mix of qualitative and quantitative research skills, John has since been involved with a series of evaluations and research projects being conducted through CDU, which consider the outcomes of interventions designed to address domestic and family violence in communities across the Northern Territory. He is also engaged as a local evaluator for several Communities for Children projects in both the Northern Territory and Tasmania. The emphasis of these projects is on formative processes that support good practice and highlight the learnings emerging from innovative initiatives. Ultimately it is John's desire that these research and evaluation projects will inform the development of policies and strategies.

John's interest in adult learning remains strong and he sees an important role for vocational education and training in building capacity of individuals and communities and thereby providing a basis for sustained community development. He continues to be an adult learning practitioner, working with University of Tasmania as a lecturer for a tertiary enabling program

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With an educational background in integrated pest management, Wayan has been for more than 10 years involved in a number of research projects in crop protection, particularly in the semi-arid East Nusa Tenggara where

most farmers still engage in slash-and-burn shifting cultivation. It was during this period that he began to become aware that in this type of agricultural systems to solve crop protection problems requires sound understanding of the social aspect of the existing system. He found out, for example, that an introduced predator failed to establish not because of unfavourable climate or other physical factors but simply because repeated slashing and burning killed most individuals of the released predator. His interest in a multi-disciplinary approach in research has further increased after serving as director of a research centre on environmental research for about 7 years. During this period, he had engaged in various environmental impact management projects and involved in the management of many other research projects dealing with complex environmental issues. His involvement in a research project on community management of biosecurity managed by CDU has introduced him to social capital. His PhD research now deals with biosecurity management of citrus in West Timor. In this research project he wants to understand various factors influencing community awareness, knowledge, and management of citrus biosecurity, particularly the threat of the devastating HLB (huanglongbing) disease to citrus production, within the framework of social capital.

