

## **Refereed Conference Paper**

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### **Title**

A literacy educator's approach to designing a trade professional program for third year apprentices

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### **Abstract**

Adult learning experiences that support the construction of situated and distributed knowledge are favoured by contemporary situative learning theorists. Such experiences are educative rather than miseducative, characterised by continuity and connectedness. Within the VET sector, these are particularly effective when coupled with literacy strategies within a carefully designed curriculum program. Despite strong support for this approach, more attention could be given to curriculum design and pedagogy within the VET context.

This paper reports on a successful program that provided educative experiences for third year apprentices in the power industry. Three elements of the program are examined, these being integration, customisation and the implementation of literacy learning strategies, with regard to supporting theory and examples of learning experiences. It concludes that well designed curriculum programs with embedded literacy strategies can engage these adult learners and support them in accessing formal qualifications.

### **Keywords**

Trade professional program, adult learning, VET sector, curriculum design and pedagogy, integration, customisation and implementation, literacy learning strategies.

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## **Introduction**

The intention of the author in writing this paper was to document for Vocational Education and Training (VET) educators her examination of the reasons for the success of a VET curriculum program written for third year apprentices. The author of the paper is also the curriculum designer and literacy educator who accepted the curriculum project, offered by the Australian Institute of Management (Queensland and Northern Territory), acting as facilitator for Ergon Energy, an organisation distributing power across the state of Queensland, Australia. The brief given to the educator was to design and develop a curriculum program that included three specified VET Certificate IV units.

The dual roles (curriculum designer and literacy educator) are emphasised here by the author, but were not given similar emphasis by the facilitator in initial negotiations. It was not suggested in the discussion of the project brief that the apprentices were lacking in what could be termed basic literacy skills that enabled them to operate effectively in the workplace. However, it was suggested that the apprentices were not familiar with the formal literacy skills and cognitive processes (such as evaluation and synthesis) required for completion of Certificate IV competency units. In this regard, they were similar to any learners stepping up to an unfamiliar level of formal education. Further, competency in the Certificate IV units required demonstration of competency in communication at a level appropriate for frontline managers, as mandated within the national training package. What was acknowledged by both the facilitator and this author in the initial discussion was that formal qualifications, such as a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, or Frontline Management, provide access to promotional positions, such as workgroup leader. It was therefore important that a suitably scaffolded program with embedded literacy strategies be provided, to give the apprentices the opportunity to access these promotional pathways.

What follows is the background to the curriculum design project. This includes the basis for the author's assumption that the program was successful and deserving of examination and documentation. A detailed discussion of the nature of the response to the design brief is then provided.

## **Background**

The scope of the brief given to the consultant by the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) was to develop a four day program for third year apprentices that incorporated three Certificate IV units derived from the Certificate IV in Business (Frontline Management) training package. The program was to be delivered in training rooms in various state-based sites by AIM facilitators. Three days were to be devoted to completion of three units from the national training package and the fourth to revision, resubmission of assessment tasks, and problem-solving. It was acknowledged that the three units constituted neither a curriculum nor pedagogy, but that these should be developed within a coherent program, an approach recommended by Stevenson (2007).

This emphasis was flagged in the title of the program - the Trade Professional Program (TPP). Its first goal was to provide the apprentices with the knowledge and skills to be workgroup leaders with effective relationship skills and commitment to organisational values. Its second goal was to develop an appreciation of workplace teams. These have been defined rather more idealistically by Young and Mitchell (2003) as:

groups of staff bound together by common interests and a passion for a cause, and who continually interact (p.1).

There was also a degree of emphasis placed on organisational commitment and loyalty to the organisation and its values, which was conceptually represented by the author in the visual text (Appendix One) that appeared in the final program.

What the facilitators required from the curriculum writer was a combination of knowledge derived from her previous work in both school contexts and industry contexts, as well as pedagogical knowledge about how to engage the interest and meet the needs of the

apprentices. These represented a diverse group: they were affiliated to different trades; characterised by different levels and types of work experience; and included both males and females of different ages. There was an acknowledgement by both the facilitator (AIM) and the organisation (Ergon Energy) that in utilising contemporary VET training packages:

curriculum development, together with pedagogical expertise, is needed to engage learners in activities that will develop workplace knowledge (Stevenson, 2007, p.22).

At the initial stage, the educator was aware that authentic learning activities would be required if the learners were to make connections between work-based activities and the training room activities (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989). That is, the curriculum had to provide the means of connecting two kinds of knowledge – workplace knowledge and new knowledge, or at least knowledge that often appeared new in the training room context. It was not a simple matter for the apprentices to transfer their knowledge about work-based practices to the classroom, or to make their tacit knowledge explicit. They could not readily engage in the linking process or process of affordance (Eiseman, 2001; Young, dePalma & Garrett, 2002). Both the intention and the skills required for transition of knowledge to and from the training room context and the work site contexts needed to be activated or prompted, and practised. The designer-literacy educator therefore considered in the design of program not only the situatedness of the learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Brown, et al, 1989) but also the need to promote intentionality in the learners so that they consciously connected learning within different environments (Young et al, 2002).

It was clearly stated by the facilitator (AIM) that Certificate IV programs prepared for more senior personnel in the organisation were not suitable and that a more relaxed, informal style would be appropriate for the apprentices. Activities would be required that connected work site knowledge and training room knowledge. This reflected the emphasis placed on distribution of knowledge across sites and across individuals by Putnam and Borko (2000). Because the apprentices were often from the same work site, or certainly the same geographical area, they were already benefiting from a social context, this being the team context in their workplace community with its characteristic practices. Therefore, the communities of practice in work sites and training rooms were relatively familiar to the learners. The challenge was, as the conference theme suggests, to bridge the divides, by ensuring there was “sense making and engagement” (Stevenson, 2007, p.23) in the program. The critical aspect of the brief was that it should be pitched to the level of the apprentices, in the expectation that if it hit the mark, the apprentices would demonstrate the required competencies, be enthusiastic about further learning and improved qualifications, committed to further self-improvement and focused on the challenge of leadership. Ergon Energy’s formal evaluation of the TPP gave evidence that the Trade Professional Program successfully met the design brief. The data, which included feedback from facilitators/trainers, site-based supervisors and the apprentices, were not made available for this report, but communicated to the author in a follow-up meeting of stakeholders. Further evidence of the success of the TPP was that the task of designing and developing a second module was given to the author in her dual role as literacy educator-curriculum designer. The second module was envisaged as a non-competency based module aimed at improvement of communication and leadership skills and has subsequently been completed. On the basis that the TPP was an effective curriculum program that met the design brief, catering for the literacy learning needs of apprentices, it merited examination in this paper. The following section of the paper examines the elements of the Trade Professional Program that contributed to its effectiveness.

### **The trade professional program**

The first step in achieving a fit between the learners and the curriculum program was to look at how the program could reflect the nature of the communities in sites where the apprentices were located. Doing so not only made good sense, but also, is an approach to curriculum design in the contemporary vocational education and training sector that has strong support (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Eiseman, 2001; Young and Mitchell, 2003). The fit and the pitch were achieved through the three core elements of the approach, including:

- Integration of the three units into a coherent curriculum program,

- Customisation of the program to the organisation's values and authentic situations, and
- Implementation of literacy learning strategies to support the construction of knowledge and understanding.

These three elements combine the key factors of an educationally effective VET program, as identified by Brown (1999), namely:

- Integrated training,
- Embedded English language and literacy,
- Authentic learning,
- Situated learning,
- Customised curriculum, and
- Contextualised curriculum (p.4-5).

An analysis follows of each of the three elements – integration, customisation and implementation of literacy learning strategies.

## Integration

A coherent curriculum program was achieved by integrating the content and assessment of three discrete units using a three-topic framework, as illustrated in Table 2: Learning Outcomes (Appendix Two). The wording of each of the three topics in the integration framework reflected the educator's interpretation of both the VET competencies and the design brief. It was accessible to the learners because the language was familiar. There was also a focus on self-management in the topics – *Work the Connections*, *Manage Standards* and *Manage Responsibilities* – that was not evident in the wording of the competency units, which included:

- BSBCMN402A      Develop Work Priorities,
- BSBFLM403B      Implement Effective Workplace Relationships, and
- BSBFLM412A      Promote Team Effectiveness.

The goal of integration was a more efficient and coherent program, one that would support the alignment of assessment and content. Repetitive content in the three units was avoided and individual assessment tasks were developed that focussed on multiple competencies derived from the three units. Participants were supported in giving an optimum performance on assessment tasks because these followed relevant, tightly constructed content in topics, rather than being clustered at the end of each discrete unit. All stakeholders were appreciative of this approach, which resulted in a distinctively Ergon Energy program. Assessment Task No. 10 in the TPP (Appendix Three) provides a very useful example of how integration supported effective learning and assessment. It set up a context for the task, this being the Ergon Energy community, including customers, workgroups, the apprentices and supervisors. Within that context, each learner was asked to present a talk to the Human Resources manager on site, explaining what he/she knew about team relationships after completion of the TPP. The task was prefaced by a table indicating the 12 competencies able to be demonstrated. These challenged the participants to engage in sense making and a higher degree of conceptual understanding of relationships than would have been the case if only one or two competencies had been targeted. Further, each learner shared his/her knowledge and understanding of organisational values with the other apprentices, in what Gee (2004, p. 79) refers to as an "affinity space". This is a context in which individuals not only express their own knowledge (intensive knowledge) but also share that knowledge with

others (extensive knowledge). In this way, knowledge is distributed or dispersed in the community (Gee, 2004).

The discussion so far has presented good reasons why this kind of learning and assessment was successful with the apprentices. However, adults in other contexts learn effectively for the same reasons. Putnam and Borko (2000) developed their situative approach to learning with reference to teachers, but it is applicable to both teachers and apprentices such as those who were participants in the TPP, given that its three themes present learning as being:

- Situated in particular physical and social contexts,
- Social in nature, and
- Distributed across the individual, other persons and tools (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p.4).

Other theorists in the field (Anderson, Greeno, Reder, & Simon, 2000; Cobb & Bowers, 1999; Greeno, 1997) support this situative perspective in proposing that knowledge is constructed and situated in contexts that have distinctive physical and social characteristics. Cornford (1999) notes that this first element of the three listed above is commonly espoused by situated cognition theorists. He emphasizes also, however, that socio-economic and political factors may account for the popularity of the situated approach to learning and cognition. These factors did not influence the curriculum designer in her decision to use the organisation's work contexts as a recurring theme or motif throughout the TPP. Doing so reflected her alignment with Putnam and Borko's (2000) situative approach to learning. Further, it provided a means of integrating the three competency units so that the overall program was coherent, or meaningful, to the apprentices familiar with the organisation's contexts.

A thematic thread of references to the goals and values of the organisation held the three units together. It acted as a motif, a constant reminder that the apprentices were learning within the distinctive physical and social context for learning that was Ergon Energy. Allusions to the organisation's goals were made. (This was illustrated in the assessment task discussed above.) Doing so supported not only the situatedness of learning and the continuity of learning, but also encouraged learners to be more deliberate and intentional both in transferring knowledge and making connections between different ecological sites (Young et al, 2002). The introduction to Topic Two, Managing Standards (Appendix Four), for example, began with the Ergon Energy website statement "We don't just supply electricity". This organisation standard was then linked with the standards of planning and team work expected from employees. Learners were thereby alerted to the commonality of goals as well as the need for connectedness between behaviours at all levels.

The importance of continuity in experiences, particularly learning experiences within this kind of education and training program, is recommended by Dewey (1955). He advocated that the principle of continuity should be applied by ensuring that something is carried over from one experience to another. His statement, below, is very applicable to the TPP and even more meaningful if juxtaposed against situated learning theory, mentioned in earlier discussion with regard to configuration of knowledge and social contexts for learning:

As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world (Dewey, 1955, p.42).

The design of the curriculum in the TPP ensured that there was continuity between values and practices as well as between non-work experiences and work experiences. Appendix Five provides two examples showing how this was done. These illustrate that the connections between experiences were made explicit, to encourage learners to apply familiar principles of behaviour in different contexts. For instance, in one example, understanding that individual expectations are not always the same is illustrated through the description of a family member attempting to make choices about grocery items that would satisfy other family members' expectations. The use of informal language and a direct address to the learner in such activities facilitated connectedness of experiences.

At this point, it is argued that integration, the first element of the literacy educator's response to the brief, was both efficient and supportive of learners. The continuity across topics and

the connectedness of experiences provided a stable framework for learning and thereby also supported understanding of abstract concepts such as standards and values. The language of mission statements and policies was explained through application to familiar situations and contexts. Thus literacy needs were supported. A similar level of success was achieved through customisation of the curriculum content, as further discussion will show.

## **Customisation**

Experience in designing and then delivering an integrated and customised program on a mining site had shown this literacy educator that situated learning in what could be called the primary context has many advantages. Even when participants were in a training room, the everyday routines and behaviours were ever-present and able to be referenced by the assessor. Supporting evidence and examples were readily available. The culture in which the learning took place was more pervasive when the normal routines were happening outside the door: the noise of vehicles, the constant dust and glare, and figures tracking to and from the crib room were always only a step or two away. In contrast, this brief for the Trade Professional Program indicated that learning would take place in a few key sites around the state of Queensland, in centralised training rooms. Also, the designer and writer would not be the facilitator delivering the training program. Given these factors, customising the program to ensure it resonated with Ergon Energy values and policies was very necessary, as was the inclusion of learning experiences that mirrored work activities and helped construct knowledge that was applicable to work contexts.

In the previous discussion of integration, the motif and its contribution to the continuity of the learning were detailed. That tactic also put the organisation's brand on both learning experiences and assessment tasks, as shown in Assessment Task No. 10 (Appendix Three). This is an aspect of customisation. Another is the nature of the learning experiences. These were modelled on workplace situations, or were lifelike. That is, the learning experiences were consistently authentic and engaged the apprentices in social construction of knowledge of the kind that would normally take place in team situations in the workplace.

Despite the apparent influence of situated learning theorists (Anderson et al, 2000; Greeno, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991) on approaches to customisation such as those described, it is interesting to note Bereiter's (2001) belief that the educational ideas of situativity theorists (not specifically those referenced) "have not noticeably advanced beyond those of Dewey" (p.79). This is not the appropriate context for detailed investigation of that argument. However, the learning experiences developed in the TPP do reflect the author's agreement with Dewey's (1955) description of an educative experience:

Continuity and interaction in their active union with each other provide the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience. The immediate and direct concern of an educator is then with the situations in which interaction takes place (p. 43).

An example of a customised learning experience is presented in the body of this paper, rather than in an appendix, to focus attention on the match between Dewey's description and the experience. It appeared in the TPP under the subheading of *You the Communicator* and had three objectives. The first was to promote thinking and discussion about conflict; the second was to challenge learners to think about how a workgroup leader might communicate with his/her team members in the situation given; and the third was to support the construction of explicit knowledge. It presented the learners with a fictional situation, in the form of a narrative, which was very colloquial in style and a little humorous. Most importantly, it included familiar details – behaviours of individuals that were both possible and probable in the work sites of the apprentices.

### **Instructions to Learner:**

The story that follows gives a good example of how conflict can develop in the workplace and cause stress for all concerned.

Read the story. After this, you will develop a role play using the story as a starting point.

### **Story**

*Most new guys cop it a bit. Zach knew enough to take a bit of rubbishing. It was all part of the day's work. Matt had been in the same boat when he was a first year apprentice. In his case, though, he'd been older when he started. Now he was close to finishing his apprenticeship and being a fully fledged system electrician. Zach had a way to go.*

*It was hard for Matt not to see what was going on. Everyone in the workgroup knew. Like not seeing Chris put blackjack in Zach's sneakers. They'd all got a laugh out of watching the kid's face when he saw the thick lubricant oozing over the side of the sneakers. At least it hadn't been in the work boots.*

*There were other things he'd not been bothered by – the missing lunch box week after week, the chilli sauce in the BBQ sauce, the re-sized head bands on the helmet, day after day, the missing toolbox, even the prawns in the tool box. Like the others, he'd grinned to hear Chris say, "Hey, Zach, go get me that left-handed screwdriver, will you". They'd all been given that one.*

*What was bothering him was that Chris had upped things a gear or two. Fooling around in the showers was one thing, but Zach had ended up getting the site nurse to check out his eye after the last little effort. Chris had aimed the soap dispenser right at him.*

*Two days after that, Matt noticed the raised red welts on Zach's forehead. Someone – no guessing who – had greased the headband on the helmet.*

*Yesterday morning the job was held up. A little liquid laxative in the water bottle was a good joke and Chris made sure everyone knew about it. If Matt hadn't pulled Zach back, there would've been a punch-up.*

*Something, or someone, had to give.*

### **Instructions to Learner:**

Role play the situation in a group and develop a conclusion to the story. Allocate a person to each character. For example,

- One person plays Zach.
- One person plays Chris.
- One person plays Matt.
- One person can be another team member.
- One person plays the workgroup leader.

Use the story as a starting point. Decide with your group how the situation can be played out. You could include conversations that might have taken place between team members. Pay particular attention to how the conflict could be resolved by the team leader.

The role play enabled the learners to construct understanding of leadership behaviours through social interaction. Following individual sense making, the group was able to construct meaning that reflected theoretical knowledge, an approach advocated by Stevenson (2007).

The assessment linked with this activity challenged the participants to evaluate the best decisions given by a group leader in role. It provided the needed continuity with the learning experience. It also demanded that the students synthesise and evaluate, thereby engaging in higher order thinking as well as demonstrating the multiple competencies identified in the task.

What this example demonstrates is the continuity and interaction Dewey (1955) would expect of an educative experience, as well as the “important productive interactions” (Brown, 1999, p.19) between formal and informal workplace learning. It achieves this in two ways: first, it challenges the readers of the narrative to empathise with characters in the customised narrative and verbalise tacit knowledge; second, it invites the learners to make judgements based on acquired theoretical knowledge from the units and from collective knowledge. Thus, it provides an example of why customisation of the TPP was such a positive experience for the participants. Further discussion follows about the contribution of the literacy strategies to what an AIM Learning and Development Consultant described in an Email conversation with the author as a “particularly positive” evaluation of the TPP by the organisation.

### **Implementation of literacy learning strategies**

The first two aspects of the response to the brief – integration and customisation – ensured that learners engaged readily with a program that was efficiently organised, supported continuity of learning and connectedness of learning experiences. In addition, these two elements made comprehension less challenging because the language was contextualised and the informal register of the Course Notes accessible to the participants. It was therefore possible for connections to be made between the knowledge of the work sites and the knowledge being constructed and made explicit in the training room. Support for the argument that the two elements of the approach discussed to this point met literacy needs of participants is given in the executive summary of the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research. Here Wicket and McGuirk (2007) note that this approach is the best means of promoting adult literacy. They further support the coupling of vocational skills and literacy skills within the same curriculum, as was the case with the Trade Professional Program. Literacy skills were targeted very deliberately in the TPP by using literacy strategies derived from the ERICA Model (Effective Reading in the Content Areas) developed by Morris and Stewart-Dore (1984) and the revised model (in process) being developed by Stewart-Dore. The purposes for the strategies were clarified for the facilitators prior to implementation of the program, as well as through the detailed Facilitator’s Guide. Particular attention was given to the benefits of the extensive group work and social interaction the strategies supported. Doing this was clear acknowledgement of the belief espoused by Dewey (1989) that knowledge is not singular, but is relative and dependent on the individual’s interaction with others in socially situated experiences. It is a view supported by more contemporary theorists (Anderson et al, 2000; Applefield & Huber, 2001; Crebbin, 2000; Jonassen, 1991; Perkins, 1999; Watson & Kairouz, 2002).

By using the strategies and being engaged in the customised, integrated approach to the overall program, the participants were developing confidence that they could access the more formal and challenging Certificate IV level knowledge. They were engaged in literacy learning experiences that included:

- Using vocabulary in context,
- Sorting concepts hierarchically,
- Justifying interpretations or opinions,
- Identifying meanings in context,
- Constructing graphic texts to collate and sort data, as well as synthesise ideas,
- Interpreting texts at different levels,
- Constructing written and oral responses to tasks in context,
- Acting out roles and practising language usage in context,

- Problem-solving in collaboration with peers,
- Reading, writing and speaking a variety of text types, and
- Using varied mediums to construct representations of thinking.

The strategies that supported these literacy practices, along with the purposes for those strategies, are identified in Table 1.

**Table 1: Strategies and Purposes**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Structured Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To construct graphic text showing elements in hierarchical relationship.</li> </ul>
Guided Writing – explanations, descriptions, lists, narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To focus on purpose, audience and context as well as language features of specific text types or genres.</li> </ul>
Guided Speaking - exposition, opinionative text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To focus on purpose, audience and context well as language features of specific text types or genres.</li> </ul>
Role play in authentic contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To use language and register appropriate for character in authentic or lifelike context.</li> </ul>
Three Level Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To engage readers in close reading of text, and develop an appreciation of different levels of meaning.</li> <li>▪ To provide a context for justification of interpretation and social interaction with group.</li> </ul>
Retrieval Chart with various purposes (e.g. to support Cause-Effect, Comparison)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support processes such as comparing or contrasting.</li> <li>▪ To support organisational structures or top level structures such as Problem-Solution, Cause-Effect.</li> </ul>
Flow Chart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support identification of sequence of events or procedures.</li> </ul>
Cloze Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support comprehension of text through the identification of context clues in given text.</li> <li>▪ To encourage justification of choices to partner or group.</li> </ul>

Strategy	Purpose
Venn Diagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To conceptualise relationships and identify common elements between intersecting sets.</li> <li>▪ To conceptualise relationships and identify disjoint sets.</li> </ul>
Word Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support brainstorming activity and introduce language relevant to topic.</li> <li>▪ To identify concepts and sub-concepts.</li> </ul>
Juxtaposition of verbal and visual texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To deepen or clarify meaning and understanding.</li> </ul>
Scaffolded written responses to problem in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support construction of recognisable written or oral text type.</li> </ul>

These strategies supported effective literacy learning by the apprentices because they were purposeful. Further, they engaged the apprentices in constructing knowledge through both social interaction and graphic texts that scaffolded learning. The interaction, in particular, reflected workplace practices, although it could be argued that graphic texts are familiar to those working in the power industry.

A particularly effective strategy was the Three Level Guide used to support close reading and interpretation of the Perception Story (Appendix Six), implemented in Topic One under the subheading *You as the Communicator*. It was more challenging than other strategies in that it was applied to a written text that did not originate from familiar workplace contexts. Given this, and the level of abstraction required in the activity, it engaged the participants in higher order thinking, evident in the final three statements to be debated in the activity associated with the strategy:

- A leader has to take ultimate responsibility for his team;
- Leaders expect others to recognise their authority;
- An individual mindset is easily changed.

In addition to the benefits noted, the strategy was linked to a practical, authentic assessment task that assessed unit competencies. It is worth noting that the complexity of thinking demanded by the strategy was greater than that demanded by the competency criteria. What it did, however, was to provide an explicit response to the brief - to develop the kind of thinking characteristic of leaders.

Purposeful strategies such as the one illustrated allowed the literacy educator to construct learning experiences characterised by social interaction and discussion. These encouraged language use in context and catered to a variety of abilities, as well as engaging the learners in constructing explicit knowledge that was applicable to workplace behaviours. The strategies provided smooth transition to aligned assessment activities that gave optimum opportunity for demonstration of competencies, as did the elements of integration and customisation.

## Conclusion

So now there is the critical question. So what? Why bother with the examination and documentation of how three VET units were packaged for apprentices? That is best answered by stating that the way a national training package is presented is critical. It needs to be presented as a program, not just a collection of units with content, activities and final assessment. The Trade Professional Program was just that, a program. It had a key positive effect: the learners wanted to continue learning. The decision to write this paper was based

on the knowledge (derived from the organisation's internal evaluation) that it had successfully met the needs of the learners and therefore the approach taken merited examination and promotion. Educators in the VET sector should be trying to design learning experiences that engage adult learners and meet their literacy learning needs. Like children or adolescents, these adult learners benefit from learning that is social in nature, situated in social contexts and distributed across other individuals, and persons (Putnam and Borko, 2000). They also need the scaffolding for learning that purposeful strategies provide. This approach to learning enables apprentices in this VET context to be successful in gaining the formal qualifications necessary for leadership roles in an organisation.

There is a great sense of satisfaction for an educator when she is/he is assured that good curriculum design and pedagogy have been successful in promoting positive attitudes to learning. It is the belief of this educator that literacy learning strategies should be utilised by vocational educators in both the design and delivery stages of a program. It is not necessary to rely on literacy support teachers to make competency units accessible to apprentices such as those described in this program (Mackay, Burgoyne, Warwick & Cipollone, 2006). Because the TPP combined the elements of integration, customisation and literacy strategies it provided the Ergon Energy apprentices with educative experiences rather than miseducative experiences (Dewey, 1955). The nature of these experiences reflected those of the workplace, particularly with regard to the social construction of knowledge by the apprentices. There was continuity of learning within authentic situations. The three competency units from the training package could have been delivered separately, supported by more generic content, rather than customised content and assessment tasks. What has been argued here is that this kind of approach to learning within the VET context is not good enough if the objectives are to engage the learners, make them enthusiastic about further learning, and appreciative of the value of formal learning and qualifications. Educators in the VET sector need to look more closely at pitching programs to the needs of learners, by developing programs that are characterised by carefully designed curriculum and appropriate literacy learning strategies.

## **Acknowledgement**

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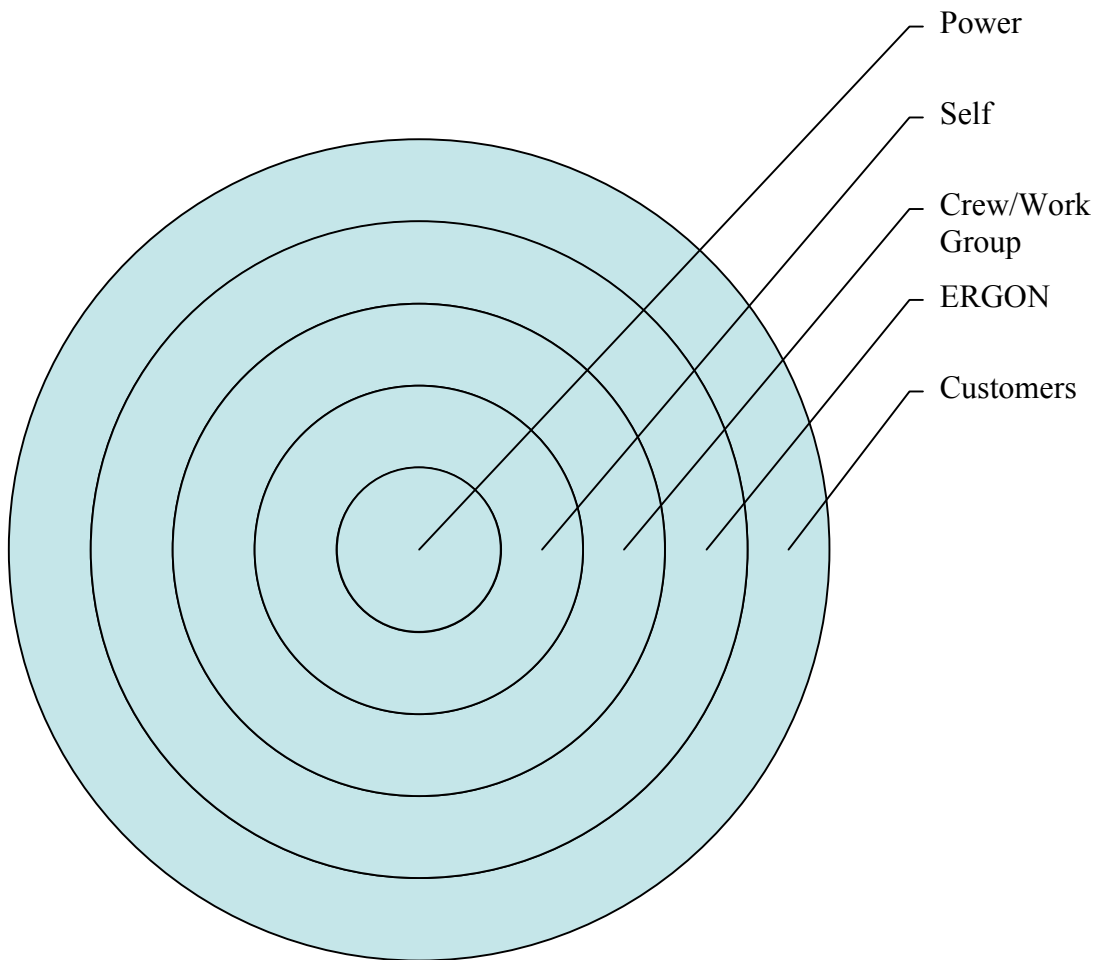
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**APPENDIX**

***Conceptualisation of Ergon Energy's motto, included in the Trade Professional Program "Everything in our Power"***



## APPENDIX TWO

### Learning Outcomes

**Table 2: Learning Outcomes**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>BSBCM402A</b>	<b>BSBFLM403B</b>	<b>BSBFLM412A</b>
Work the Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider others in developing and analysing work plans.</li> <li>▪ Seek feedback in monitoring work performance.</li> <li>▪ Access professional development to facilitate career pathways.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collect, analyse and communicate information, while working with team members.</li> <li>▪ Develop interpersonal relationships based on trust and respect.</li> <li>▪ Liaise with team to resolve issues and difficulties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consult with team to establish outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Operate democratically and responsibly in team.</li> <li>▪ Communicate up and down the line of command.</li> </ul>
Maintain the Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider work-based objectives of self and others in planning.</li> <li>▪ Utilise both self-assessment and feedback from others to monitor work performance.</li> <li>▪ Follow organisational processes and procedures.</li> <li>▪ Evaluate personal professional development needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Respond to cultural and social diversity and needs of others.</li> <li>▪ Investigate resources to support initiative.</li> <li>▪ Develop team relationships that reflect the organisation's values.</li> <li>▪ Analyse and resolve issues or difficulties proactively with relevant personnel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contribute to team outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Participate in team discussion to resolve concerns.</li> <li>▪ Communicate with appropriate personnel when management action is required.</li> </ul>
Manage Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop workgroup plans based on good research, facilitated by technology.</li> <li>▪ Monitor and report quality variations in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communicate openly and promptly with team members or leaders to achieve outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Apply the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborate with team members to achieve goals.</li> <li>▪ Support others in the team.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate that</li> </ul>

	<p>service or products.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Utilise feedback to improve competence.</li> <li>▪ Document professional achievements appropriately.</li> </ul>	<p>organisation's values and standards in developing relationships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commit to policies and procedures that reflect team/organisation values.</li> <li>▪ Deal with difficulties or conflict legally and constructively.</li> </ul>	<p>you share the responsibility for team performance, including that of the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain the flow of communication up and down the lines of control in the workplace so action can be taken when needed.</li> </ul>
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## APPENDIX THREE

### Assessment Task 10

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	C/NYC
BSBCMN402A	2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
BSBFLM412A	2.2, 2.3, 3.1	
BSBFLM403B	1.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2	

#### Context

Look again at the concentric circles representing the Ergon Energy business community. The program started with that diagram and the slogan “Everything in our power”.

#### Your Task

- Take 30 minutes to prepare a written text and palm cards for a presentation to the group of approximately 5 minutes. (If Power Point facilities are available you could use these instead of palm cards. Do not present your full written text on Power Point slides.)
- Your written text will be submitted as part of the assessment. The presentation will be observed by the facilitator and evaluated with the written text.
- Think of the presentation as a rehearsal for what you would say to your HR manager when he asks “Well, what did you learn about relationships?”
- Develop your talk around the 4 elements (self, others, Ergon Energy and clients) of the concentric circle diagram used at the beginning of your course. The major points will be the first two.
- Your oral presentation should take approximately 5 minutes. At the end of the presentation be prepared to take questions and ideas from the group.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of how to manage and maintain the connections, how to develop and manage standards and how to manage responsibilities.

## **APPENDIX FOUR**

### **Extract from Course Notes, showing use of motif.**

“We don’t just supply electricity”. (Ergon Energy website statement)

This statement is very much about setting standards. That approach applies to you in the workgroup. You are not just someone given a job to do. Both as an individual and as a team member you have a commitment to continuous improvement. This topic gives you information about how to “raise the bar” in three sections, including:

- Plan to achieve group objectives,
- Follow workgroup procedures,
- Take the opportunities.

**APPENDIX FIVE:**

***Example No. 1: Assessment task integrated with Topic One: Work the Connections***

The three critical aspects of good communication are knowing why you are sending a message, knowing the time, place or situation where it is happening and knowing who is going to receive the message. If you keep those in mind, you will adjust your communication when necessary.

Work with a partner to role play the way you would speak in each of the following situations. Be critical of the way your partner speaks and revise your tone and language if necessary.

<b>Role Play Situations</b>
You and a friend walk into a local restaurant. You pass by a table where your department manager is sitting with his family.
You meet your Frontline Manager at the State of Origin at Lang Park as you are going through the gate.
You sit down for lunch with your workgroup, including your immediate supervisor.
You have an issue at work and you have a conversation with your mentor, who is not your supervisor.
You have an issue with the way a workgroup member is doing his/her job as tools are not being stored correctly.

With your group, for each of the above scenarios, identify the context, purpose for communication and audience. Your facilitator will make a joint summary of your discussion on the white board. Perhaps one or two pairs could demonstrate role plays to the group.

***Example No. 2: From Course Notes for Topic Two (Maintain the Standards) showing links made between everyday social experiences and work-based learning experiences.***

- A good plan is the means to an end, but individuals have different expectations of the end product. Planning, therefore, is about considering expectations and meeting expectations.

For example: What you put in your shopping trolley by following a shopping list may be very different from what your mother, father or partner puts in the trolley. If you are shopping for yourself, no one cares. If, however, you arrive home with “Homebrand” products when the family member preferred other brands, you may have a problem.

- Expectations have to be taken into account when planning. Go back to the table you developed earlier in this section. Add to it details of the “stakeholders’ expectations”, in discussion with the group.
- “Manage” is a word you hear often, used with different meanings. For example:
  - Parents have to manage their children;
  - “I just can’t manage everything”;
  - “How do you manage?”;
  - Coles or Woolworths appoint people to manage the supermarkets;
  - Talented sports stars pay people to manage them;
  - If you are unhappy, you might not manage a smile.
- What does “manage” mean? For some, saying “I can manage” might mean “I can cope”. You need to learn to do more than just “cope” in the workplace. It might also mean “to deal with”, but is that enough? The purpose of this topic is to give you some information about how to deal effectively with your responsibilities.
- Work with your group to brainstorm other meanings using this approach for the word “manage”. Use a Structured Overview to summarise the discussion. Add examples.

## APPENDIX SIX:

### Perception Story, Three Level Guide and Assessment Task

#### Perceptions

The message given in the communication process is not always what is received, for various reasons. One quite complex reason provided by Stephen Covey (1989), author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, is that each individual has a particular way of seeing things – a map in the head of how things are, if you like. He believes that the way an individual sees the problem is the problem. He calls this a paradigm.

In the workplace, you can develop a mindset or a view of the world that is an obstacle to communication. Sometimes you have to make a shift in your thinking. Perhaps you have to help the other person to make a shift. This could lead to a consensus, to a win-win situation. It could even lead to a complete change of decision.

The following story reported by Covey (1989, p. 33) will explain this. Read the story carefully, and then complete the Three Level Guide that follows.

Note: Your assessment for this section is closely linked with this exercise.

#### Perception Story

*Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on manoeuvres in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.*

*Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported,  
"Light, bearing on the starboard bow."*

*"Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out.*

*Lookout replied, "Steady, captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.*

*The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees."*

*Back came a signal, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees."*

*The captain said, "Send, I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees."*

*"I'm a seaman second class," came the reply. "You had better change course 20 degrees."*

*By that time, the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send, I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees."*

*Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."*

*We changed course.*

*(attributed by Covey (1989) to Frank Koch in Proceedings, the magazine of the Naval Institute)*

#### Three Level Guide based on Perception Story

Instructions to Learners

This strategy is designed to make you read the story below more closely to find information and meaning. There are three levels of reading – Literal, Interpretive and Applied. Complete each of the levels below by following the instructions given with each level. When you are finished, discuss your choices with your partner and then the group. Justify your choices, using only the story or text as evidence. There is not necessarily a correct answer.

**Level One:    *Literal Level***

Tick those statements that can be found in the text. They may not be there in the exact words given.

- .....    The captain was on watch.
- .....    Both lights were steady.
- .....    The captain said he was a battleship.

**Level Two:    *Interpretive Level***

Tick those statements that you inferred from the text. That is, read between the lines for meaning.

- .....    The captain did not trust the seaman narrating the story.
- .....    The navy ship had priority on the sea and always maintained its course.
- .....    The captain was highly committed to the safety of his men and his ship.

**Level Three:    *Applied Level***

Tick those statements that are general ideas or concepts you took from the text.

- .....    A leader has to take ultimate responsibility for his team.
- .....    Leaders expect others to recognize their authority.
- .....    An individual mindset is easily changed.

### Assessment Task following Three Level Guide and the Perception Story

Competency Unit	Performance Criteria	C/NYC
BSBCMN402A	2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
BSBFLM412A	1.2, 2.2, 2.3	
BSBFLM403B	1.4, 3.2, 4.2	

**Context:**

The Three Level Guide you completed in Section Three showed that everyone, even experienced leaders, needs to analyse and evaluate situations to improve performance.

**Your task:**

Your relationships with other group members are a critical aspect of what you do. Sometimes there will be issues in the workgroup due to poor communication. As a group member, you need to reflect on why things went wrong and then put an action plan in place, rather than react negatively.

Work with a partner for this task. In the workplace you would normally talk to a colleague about problems. Your facilitator will be observing your interaction with your colleague.

Use an everyday example of one such issue. E.g. A worker did not follow an instruction about storing tools and you were put at risk. Write specific details in the box given. Then develop a flow chart showing in note form the steps you would take in analysing and evaluating the situation. Include as the last step the action you would take.