

Research Briefing

Using a wellbeing framework to recognise, value and enhance the broad range of outcomes for learners in adult literacy and numeracy programmes: The first year

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Abstract. This two-year Teaching and Learning Research Initiative-funded project is a collaboration between University of Waikato researchers and Literacy Aotearoa leaders and tutors. The project explores how to enhance the usability of a wellbeing outcomes framework called *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga - A model for measuring wellbeing outcomes from literacy programmes*, originally designed for Māori learners by Literacy Aotearoa and NZCER. This project aims to extend its use to diverse learners. The aim is to systematise identification and recording of broad outcomes, beyond the currently assessed skills, to enable a more complete picture of outcomes important in the learners' everyday lives to be recognised, valued and enhanced. Social media was trialled in classrooms with the aim of highlighting connections between literacy and numeracy practices and learning, wellbeing and agency. Year One findings suggested the need to further embed wellbeing awareness and provide alternatives to Facebook for documenting wellbeing narratives. Journalling options aligned to existing reporting systems used by Literacy Aotearoa will be trialled in Year Two.

Keywords: Aotearoa New Zealand, adult literacy and numeracy, wellbeing, broad outcomes, community education

Key findings

- Some broad outcomes beyond literacy and numeracy skills were identified by tutors and learners; for example, enhanced parent-child relationships through the learner's new ability to actively support their child's learning; enhanced confidence in dealing with a government agency because of new understanding of information about their entitlements. Tutors sometimes recorded these outcomes in formal programme documentation but the programme focus was mainly on skills outcomes.
- Broad outcomes were identified from learners' reports such as enhanced parent-child relationships and enhanced confidence in dealing with a government agency. Tutor awareness of learners' holistic needs, interests, aspirations and outcomes appeared to play a key role in recognising, recording and valuing wellbeing outcomes.
- Learner mapping or drawing of "What is important to me in my everyday life" was enjoyed by many of the learners who trialled this activity. It was considered by tutors to have potential as a tool to stimulate learner reflection on wellbeing outcomes, as yet untested.
- While some learners enjoyed using Facebook, it appeared unsuitable as a medium for learner wellbeing narratives in every programme because of risks to learners' privacy and limited access to needed technical support. The use of emails appeared partially efficacious.



Background

The purpose of this research briefing is to share with stakeholders and other interested readers the background, purpose and progress of a two-year research project funded by the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) entitled “Using a wellbeing framework to recognise, value and enhance the broad range of outcomes for learners in adult literacy and numeracy programmes” (the Literacy and Wellbeing Project). The project began in January 2017. Data will be collected through to the end of 2018 and the final report will be completed in March 2019.

The TLRI fund was established to support high quality research that enhances teaching and learning in all parts of the education sector. The Literacy and Wellbeing Project focuses on adult literacy and numeracy education funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), specifically the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Fund and the Adult and Community Education Fund. The project is a collaboration between researchers at the University of Waikato and Literacy Aotearoa leaders and tutors. With over 7000 students, Literacy Aotearoa is New Zealand’s largest adult literacy education provider.

The project explores ways to identify and record broad outcomes of literacy and numeracy programmes, beyond the literacy and numeracy skills that are already assessed via the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (LNAAT). It is the result of discussion between the partners who shared a view that a tool to capture broad outcomes was needed in order to show, and give due recognition to, a more complete picture of literacy and numeracy programme outcomes. Literacy Aotearoa had already developed and trialled *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga* in conjunction with the New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER) (Hutchings, Yates, Isaacs, Whatman, & Taupo, 2013). Developed for Māori learners, this approach enabled learners and their tutors to map – together – the learners’ outcomes narratives against wellbeing concepts reflected in 16 indicator words and whakatauki (proverbs). Both partners were keen to develop this framework further to embed it seamlessly in programmes for all learners.

Current outcomes assessment

Providers of specific TEC-funded adult literacy and numeracy programmes (e.g. the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Fund and the Workplace Literacy and Numeracy Fund) are required to administer the LNAAT before and after programme completion. This assessment measures skills in reading, writing and numeracy. Pre and post programme assessment enables an indication of change in literacy and numeracy skills that might be attributable to the teaching and learning opportunities the programmes offer. In this way, LNAAT provides a measure of literacy and numeracy programme effects. Other effects have been found to accrue from such programmes, and these are often broadly related to learners’ wellbeing (Benseman, 2005; Furness, 2013; Potter, Taupo, Hutchison, McDowall, & Isaacs, 2011). For example, learning how to use the internet may enable a learner to ask specific questions of their case worker about support entitlements as the learner now understands more about them from the information available on the government social service agency’s website.

Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga

Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga is a framework for assessing the impacts on wellbeing of participation in adult literacy and numeracy programmes developed by Literacy Aotearoa in conjunction with NZCER. Drawing on Professor Sir Mason Durie’s Māori wellbeing frameworks, *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga* aims to demonstrate the link between literacy learning and wellbeing for Māori learners. It is also expected to have application for all adult learners, and is intended to complement the LNAAT. The approach involves formative and summative assessments conducted dialogically between the tutor and the learner. Three questions – “How has this programme helped you? How has this programme helped you help your whānau? What has changed for you because of this programme?” – contextualised to the learner’s own goals and circumstances identified in the programme enrolment process are discussed and recorded. The tutor and learner then consider how wellbeing outcomes may be evident in the narrative, mapping their conclusions to the 16 descriptive terms identified in the development

and trialling of *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga* as reflecting wellbeing for Māori learners. Whakatauki are provided as guides to assist tutors and learners to map their conclusions to the appropriate indicators. Learners are also invited to respond to three exit statements which canvas their perceptions of their wellbeing-related growth. The quality of the relationship between learner and tutor underpins the creation of an environment where the learner feels safe and able to reflect on achievements and changes.

A pilot trial with 53 Māori learners in seven Literacy Aotearoa programmes showed that learners became more aware of and were able to articulate broad outcomes from their programme that were important to them in their lives. The current research is exploring time efficiencies and breadth of wellbeing outcomes for diverse learners.

Trialling aspects of a streamlined approach

In Year One of the project, tutors encouraged learners to regularly take photos or draw representations of activities in which they participated outside the programme where literacy and numeracy were involved. The learners uploaded their photos or drawings to a class secret Facebook group. Learners were then invited to talk about the activities shown in the photos or drawings guided by five questions designed to cover and extend those asked in *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga*. The questions encouraged reflection on the social meanings of these activities and consideration of if and how their literacy and numeracy learning had contributed to their personal, family or community wellbeing. Tutors were encouraged to integrate links to wellbeing into classroom conversations in a seamless way, for instance at natural points in the programme such as the start and end of a session. To provide a reference point for reflection about the impacts of literacy and numeracy learning on their wellbeing, learners were invited early in the programme to develop a personal map or drawing of people, places or objects that are important to them in their everyday lives. It was hoped that learners could refer to these when thinking about how literacy and numeracy learning had impacted on their wellbeing.

Year One findings

Valuing wellbeing outcomes: Tutors welcomed the legitimization of paying attention to broad outcomes. They believed outcomes beyond literacy and numeracy skills gains to be important but had no formal way of giving recognition to them. They welcomed the opportunity to explore with the researchers and the learners ways that broad outcomes could be given recognition in formal reporting systems in the future.

Identifying wellbeing outcomes: Some broad outcomes beyond literacy and numeracy skills were identified by tutors and learners; for example, enhanced parent-child relationships through the learner's new ability to actively support their child's school-based learning; enhanced confidence in dealing with a government agency because of new access to entitlements knowledge. Such outcomes were identified in learners' discussions with researchers; tutors' observations of learners' actions, interactions and comments; or dialogue between tutor and learner intended to explore the presence of outcomes related to aspects of the learners' lives that are important to them. Learner mapping or drawing of "What is important to me in my everyday life" was enjoyed by many of the learners who trialled this activity. It was considered by tutors as a potential tool to stimulate learner reflection on wellbeing outcomes.

Recording wellbeing outcomes: Tutors reported that they sometimes recorded wellbeing outcomes that they observed or that were described to them by learners in formal programme documentation. However, the focus of programme outcomes recording was mainly on literacy and numeracy skills gains and school-like activities such as worksheet completion. While some learners enjoyed using Facebook, it appeared unsuitable as a medium for generating learner wellbeing narratives because of risks to learners' privacy and limited access to the level of technical support that was sometimes needed. The use of emails appeared partially efficacious.

Conclusions and next steps

Year One findings showed that breaches in learner privacy can occur and privacy concerns can be significant for some learners. Thus, Facebook is not a suitable medium for generating or recording learners' wellbeing narratives. Other similar platforms that are more trustworthy could potentially be used but the need to be safe may mean that social media of this kind is always avoided by a proportion of learners. Consequently, other sustainable forms of journalling including the use of emails and hard copy or digital journals will be explored more fully in Year Two. Tutors have identified specific actions they will take to regularly invite learner reflection on and recording of wellbeing outcomes through these media. As learner mapping or drawing was seen as potentially valuable by tutors and was enjoyed by learners, we will further explore its usefulness as a dialogic wellbeing reflection tool. We will similarly investigate a new wellbeing focus question in Literacy Aotearoa's organisational form – the Individual Learning Plan. In mapping the recorded wellbeing outcomes to *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga*, we will, in collaboration with the Literacy Aotearoa leaders, help confirm or identify any needed expansion in wellbeing concepts in this framework and propose a more efficacious overall process.

References

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About the study

In Year One of the study, the researchers worked with three tutors and 12 learners in three community-based literacy programmes. Two focus group interviews with learners and three individual interviews with tutors from each programme were conducted to explore their experiences of the processes being trialled. Data was also collected through two classroom observations per programme. As well as the nature of tutor and learner experiences of the processes, data was analysed for the kinds of wellbeing outcomes found and the contribution of the processes and outcomes to learner agency. In Year Two the researchers will work with four programmes which, all together, will have up to 30 learners participating over the research period. Literacy Aotearoa leaders and the researchers share the analysis and development of implications of the findings and have jointly planned, along with the tutors, the process refinements for trialling in Year Two.

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