

# Research Briefing

## Using a wellbeing framework to recognise, value and enhance the broad range of outcomes for learners in adult literacy and numeracy programmes: 18<sup>th</sup> findings

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**Abstract.** This Teaching and Learning Research Initiative-funded project is a two-year collaboration between University of Waikato researchers and Literacy Aotearoa leaders and tutors. The project explores how to enhance the usability of a Māori wellbeing framework called *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga – A model for measuring wellbeing outcomes from literacy programmes* designed for Māori learners by Literacy Aotearoa and NZCER. This project aims to extend its use to diverse learners. It also aims to systematise embedded identification and recording of broad outcomes (e.g. support of whānau learning) beyond the currently assessed skills (e.g. application of grammar rules) to enable a more complete picture of outcomes perceived by the learners to be important in their everyday lives to be recognised, valued and enhanced. In Year One the findings suggested tutors needed to further embed wellbeing awareness in programmes and provide alternatives to documenting wellbeing narratives beyond Facebook that was trialled that year. Interim findings at 18 months suggest that regular classroom conversation and reflection support learner engagement in specific journaling practices that show potential to enable systematic, embedded identification and recording of links between literacy and numeracy learning and enhanced wellbeing.

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

### Key findings

- Tutors valued attention to broad outcomes and having a sense of space and time in their programmes for this to occur. They felt that the broader outcomes beyond skills such as supporting their children's learning and enhanced whānau relationships were some of the most important outcomes for learners and their families.
- Learners explored what was important to them in their lives and how literacy and numeracy learning impacted on what they thought about and how they engaged with their learning that added meaning and purpose. Trusting relationships between tutor and learner and amongst learners, and tutors' careful navigation of their role were central to the efficacy of this process.
- Weekly to monthly reflection and recording opportunities seemed appropriate and manageable, with the frequency settled on, within this range, varying across programmes. Frequency of this order was thought to be often enough for links not to be forgotten but not so often outcomes could not yet be seen.
- Tutors varied in frequency and comfort in making spontaneous links between literacy and numeracy learning and wellbeing outcomes beyond structured reflection times, or looking for incidental opportunities to do so.
- Tutors developed their classroom practices for recording wellbeing outcomes in ways that suited their programmes and learners and increased the recording frequency. Practices included class mapping of wellbeing outcomes, learners' journaling in personal notebooks and recording of the impact of the literacy and numeracy learning on their lives in the Literacy Aotearoa Record of Learning.



## **Briefing purpose**

The purpose of this research briefing is to update stakeholders and other interested readers on the 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. A research briefing on Year One data is available (Furness & Hunter, 2018). Year Two data collection was completed in December this year (2018) and the final report will be completed in March 2019. This second briefing reports in an interim capacity on 18-month data.

## **Background**

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 framework 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 Te Wahanga, New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER) (Hutchings, Yates, Isaacs, Whatman, & Taupo, 2013). Developed for Māori learners, this 2013 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 adult literacy and numeracy 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. Learners who assess below the LNAAT are assessed on the TEC Starting Points aimed at supporting adults who are beginning to learn to read and write. At the same time, Literacy Aotearoa uses its own Initial Interview and Assessment process to gauge learner skills and abilities.

## **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 literacy and numeracy 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 (proverbs) 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.

### **Building on Year One findings in Year Two**

Findings from Year One of the TLRI project highlighted the value tutors place on having legitimatised opportunity to focus attention on identifying and recording broad outcomes, beyond the routinely assessed literacy and numeracy skills. Some broad outcomes were identified through tutor observations and learner-tutor dialogue, and some recording of identified broad outcomes occurred using existing formal programme documentation. While enjoyed by some learners as a medium for identification and recording of wellbeing outcomes, the technology challenges and privacy risks we found in using Facebook for this purpose turned our focus towards other media in 2018. Overall, all stakeholders felt that it was desirable to increase opportunity for attention to broad outcomes. Consequently, in Year Two we asked tutors to focus on creating a classroom atmosphere of valuing what is important in learners' lives and to adopt specific planned actions suitable for their own programme, to intensify their integration of a wellbeing focus. Strategies trialled in Year Two included weekly whole-class reflective conversations, class mapping of wellbeing outcomes, personal notebook journaling and regular recording of wellbeing outcomes in the existing Literacy Aotearoa Record of Learning. The research team will also map the recorded outcomes to *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga Ako* to further explore its efficacy.

### **18-month findings**

**Valuing wellbeing outcomes.** Tutors have reiterated their valuing of paying attention to broad outcomes and having a sense of space and time in the programme for this to occur. They believe that identifying and recording outcomes beyond literacy and numeracy skills gains alone gives a fuller picture of the impacts of literacy and numeracy learning on people's lives. They are of the view that these may include some of the most important outcomes for their wellbeing and that of their families. Learners enthusiastically explored the impacts of their literacy and numeracy learning on aspects of their lives important to them. This exploration appeared to add meaning and purpose to their learning. Frequency of exploration was relevant with weekly to monthly activities being neither so frequent that outcomes were not yet evident nor so infrequent that outcomes were forgotten.

**Identifying wellbeing outcomes.** More examples of broad outcomes from literacy and numeracy learning were identified by learners and tutors, and more depth and detail were articulated, as conversation and reflection on these links occurred more frequently within programmes and became more habitual to participants. Examples of outcomes include increased independent participation in a programme by a learner previously heavily reliant on a family member; choosing to leave a programme to focus on self-care at a time of critical need, having learned about self-care in the programme. Such outcomes were increasingly identified in class-wide reflective conversations in scheduled reflection times or in tutor-learner conversations. Tutors varied in frequency and comfort in making these links spontaneously or looking for incidental opportunities to do so. The importance of trusting relationships between tutor and learner and amongst learners were confirmed in our data. As well, tutors' careful navigation of their role to encourage reflection without being intrusive was vital.

**Recording wellbeing outcomes.** Tutors developed their classroom practices for recording wellbeing outcomes in ways that suited their programmes and learners and increased the recording frequency. Practices included class mapping of wellbeing outcomes, learners' journaling in personal notebooks and recording of the impact of the literacy and numeracy learning on their lives in the Literacy Aotearoa Record of Learning. Challenges for the value of this process for learner agency and for providing evidence for programme reporting purposes may lie in the depth of reflection.

## Conclusions and next steps

Our 18-month findings showed that specific actions for identifying and recording outcome – designed by tutors and learners together – were effective in enhancing the quality and increasing the frequency of these practices. Whole group conversations and personal journaling appear promising for combining reflecting and recording. Regular allocated time appears useful for strengthening reflection capability. Routine embedding of these practices may provide the basis of a system for providing evidence of broad outcomes for learner agency and programme reporting purposes. Further development of spontaneous linking and incidental recording seems desirable.

The last six months' data has been collected and will be analysed from January to March, 2019. The major task ahead – of mapping the recorded outcomes to *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga* – will help confirm or identify any needed expansion of wellbeing concepts in this framework and may propose a more efficacious overall process.

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## About the study

In Year Two of the study, the researchers worked with four tutors and 18 learners in four community-based literacy programmes. Two of these tutors and their programmes had participated in Year One. Three of the Year Two programmes had stable participation of 3-7 learners. In the fourth programme, participation was mainly irregular and short term. Across all programmes, 11 focus groups were conducted with learners and 18 interviews were conducted with tutors to explore their experiences of the processes refined from Year One. Data was also collected through 11 classroom observations. As well as the nature of tutor and learner experiences of the refined processes, data was analysed for the kinds of wellbeing outcomes found and the contribution of the processes and outcomes to learner agency. Literacy Aotearoa leaders and the researchers had shared the analysis of the Year One data and had jointly planned, along with the tutors, the process refinements for trialling in Year Two. Likewise the analysis is being shared in Year Two and the findings jointly developed.

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