

Pushing back at accountability policy: Reframing adult literacy

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TEACHING & LEARNING
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

NĀU I WHATU TE KĀKAHU, HE TĀNIKO TAKU

Adult literacy and the wellbeing study in NZ



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Current context

- Skills, to support business and innovation
- Recognition of wider benefits
- *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga* for Māori learners
(Hutchings, et al, 2013)

Theoretical perspective

- Literacy as a social practice
- Wellbeing: holistic and integrative

The wellbeing study: Research objectives



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- Further develop a wellbeing framework that is meaningful, manageable, and engaging for tutors and learners
- Identify learners' broad wellbeing outcomes from their literacy and numeracy learning
- Understand how a wellbeing framework can help learners assume greater ownership of learning
- Explore the alignment to *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga*
- Unpack and critically respond to the simplified generic cause-effect discourse (eg., confidence)

The wellbeing study: Research design



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Participants (Community literacy programmes)

Year 1: 3 programmes, 3 tutors, 12 learners

Year 2: 4 programmes, 4-5 tutors, 20 learners

Research procedures

- Mapping
- Social media (year 1), journaling (year 2)
- Learner focus groups
- Classroom observations
- Document review
- Tutor interviews

Findings



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- Tutors and learners need support to identify wellbeing-related outcomes
- Need for regular attention over time to wellbeing
- Richest sources of wellbeing information are from talk, in focus groups
- Issues with social media
- Potential value of mapping to shape curriculum

In the classroom

- Valuing, awareness, reflection and recording
- Regular, safe embedding into the classroom discourse
- Reporting: voice vs task

Sector-wide

- Discourses of skills and deficit (Sandlin & Clark, 2009)
- Supremacy of standardised assessment
- Absence of student voices beyond testimonial
- Reductionist corporate language

Outlook and outcomes: What difference can we make?



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- Refinement and extension of *Hei Ara Ako ki te Oranga*
- Contribution to calls for multilateral accountability and assessing what matters to people (Bob Lingard, 2017)
- A call for literacy curriculum that addresses wellbeing not only individually and relationally, but also in the broader community
- Deeper analysis of reductionist outcome descriptors

References



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