

From the Editors' desk

Cheryl Ryan and Piper Rodd

As we write the editorial for this edition, two words come to mind: curiosity and critical thinking. We find ourselves in a world, a space, a time fraught with aporias (perplexities, uncertainties, doubtful matters). In response to this context, we are becoming “curiouser and curiouser” (Carroll, 1865), and we hope and wish you are becoming curious(er) too.

Curiosity is a word we use and often hear. What do we mean by it? How do we enact curiosity? How often do we find ourselves saying, “I’m just curious ...” Why “just”? Do we shy away from sounding “too assertive” (Lewis, 2014, p.88)? Is it to avoid revealing our limited or lack of knowledge? Does it diminish and down-play our questioning of things? It’s okay to be confidently curious; without the “just”. It is essential to our existence as conscious, critical thinking individuals. Especially when we desire or are driven to name and understand experiences that unsettle, disturb, discombobulate our existence. Curiosity is “the engine for the process of knowing” (Freire, 2004, p.87); of becoming cognisant of ourselves and the world in which we live.

We are committed to education, to learning that engenders curiosity, critical questions and never-ending exploration. We encourage you to continue to be curious, to dream and hope and “refuse the negation of dreams and hope ...” (Freire, 2004, p.102). Be informed and agentic as you make your way in life and this world.

This edition features five research articles, one practice piece and a book review. We have a mix of international and Australian research papers. All seven of these papers touch on interrelated themes of adult learners in different work and learning contexts, Communities of Practice (CoP), and the interconnectedness of practice with context.

Our practice piece is by Piper Rodd. A timely and aptly piece entitled **The practice of critical, public pedagogy in times of war**. Piper shares an unedited speech she gave at a rally in March 2026 at the State Library of Victoria. The rally was organised by the anti-war activist group Students for Palestine. Piper references the work of two critical thinkers and critical pedagogues Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire.

The book review is by Weiping Wu and Qun Fu. They review the 2024 publication **Creating a place for adult learners in higher education: Challenges and opportunities** by Rose, Ross-Gordon and Kasworm. The work provides readers with “extensive and multifaceted” insights to the post-secondary education structures for and responses to adult learners. Across 12 chapters, Rose et al present the “realities and obstacles” for adult learners in higher education, giving insights to their motivation, life circumstances and preferred ways of learning. This perspective is balanced by insights to institutional structures and responses to adult learners.

Leadership programs and pedagogies that support and enhance knowledge transfer feature in our first research paper titled **Facilitating knowledge transfer agency: Pedagogic interventions in a leadership development program**. This case study by Jon Ohlsson and Erica Wright is concerned with a range of pedagogic interventions designed to increase the participants’ “ability and subjectivity” to facilitate knowledge transfer. Significant to effective leadership and knowledge transfer are contextual considerations and adjustments, emphasising the interconnectedness of practice with context.

The second research paper – **Adult Numeracy in rural Australian vocational education: From autonomous to ideological models** – is by Richard Voss. Richard employs a mix of qualitative methods – document analysis, classroom observations and interviews – to examine the interplay of curriculum on adult learning within a foundational numeracy program at a TAFE in rural Australia. The results reveal

learners' positive responses to an ideological and student-centred model as opposed to a behaviorist approach.

The third of our research papers is from Sweden. It centres on foreign-born students at a Swedish Folk high school. The authors of this paper Therese Uppman, Cecillia Bjursell and Joel Hedegaard – **Adult education as a Community of Practice – Foreign-born students navigating participation in education at a Swedish Folk High School** – investigated how adults who migrate to Sweden navigate their participation in learning. They draw on the theory of Communities of Practice to examine how “language, norms, and values influence” – hinder or support – the migrant adult learners' opportunities for learning.

Higher education and student recruitment in Thailand are the focus of our fourth research paper **Exploring early university class exposure: Impact on academic self-efficacy and study intentions**. The authors Amonrat Thoumrungroje and Olimpia C. Racela conducted an exploratory study using pre-test post-test data from 138 high school students who attended mock classes during the annual Open House on the campus of a comprehensive higher education institution where all courses are conducted in English. The research examined the impact of mock classes on academic self-efficacy and the intentions of participants to pursue higher education.

Our fifth and apposite research paper by Erica Smith and Arlene Walker is juxtaposed with the bushfire context in Australia and centres on **Training for bushfires: Qualification-based training for volunteer firefighters**. The mixed method research was conducted in three phases over the period from 2013 to 2025 with New South Wales Rural Fire Services. It focused on the nationally recognised qualifications for training volunteers. The authors provide a comprehensive account of the management of training, the evolution of the training regime over a 12-year period, the benefits and challenges of nationally recognised training, and implications for other similar volunteer-focused organisations using qualifications-based training.

Dr Cheryl Ryan and Dr Piper Rodd

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References

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