

HOW FAR CAN WE STRETCH?

Flexible learning for community service workers in Far West NSW

A report from the Centre for Community Welfare Training for Adult Learning Australia



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
RATIONALE	2
WHY DID WE UNDERTAKE THE RESEARCH?	2
WHAT DID WE DO?	3
WHO WAS INVOLVED?.....	3
WHERE DID WE CONDUCT THE RESEARCH?.....	3
WHEN DID WE CONDUCT THE RESEARCH?.....	4
METHODOLOGY	4
OVERVIEW.....	4
CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH:	5
KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS:.....	5
THE STRATEGY:	6
THE FINDINGS	9
THE LEARNERS EXPERIENCE	9
CCWT’S EXPERIENCE.....	16
CONCLUSION	28
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31
APPENDIX 1	35

The Action Research Project was conducted by the Centre for Community Welfare Training, a not-for-profit training provider in NSW. The Project Team included Mhairi Barnes, Jessie Williams, Michelle Grice, Linda Watson and Mirna Tarabay. Special thanks go to Adult Learning Australia who provided a research grant to support the project, Harvey Feldstein for generously sharing his time, his coaching expertise and educational support, Jacqui O’Loughlin for design assistance and Centra Services for their support in providing the virtual classroom technology for the pilot. The project could not have been undertaken without the interest and enthusiasm of community service workers in the Broken Hill area. Thank you.

Introduction

The ALA grant was applied to the piloting of a flexible learning program for community service workers in the far west of NSW involving a combination of face-to-face, self directed and virtual classroom learning components. The pilot program sought to introduce these flexible learning approaches in order to test the efficacy of the components and to see how effectively the online component in particular could be used to teach complex human relationship skills to this target group.

The pilot program formed a key part of a broader action research strategy conducted by The Centre for Community Welfare Training (CCWT) into the feasibility of delivering flexible learning approaches to meet the professional development needs of community service staff in NSW. CCWT is the largest non-government not-for-profit training provider to the community services sector in NSW.

Rationale

Why did we undertake the research?

Our decision to undertake this action research project was prompted by a number of factors.

1. We recognised the growing interest in flexible learning occurring within the educational field, broader society and in all workforce sectors.
2. Evidence from a number of sources informed us that community service workers in regional NSW have less access to relevant training due to geographic isolation, the added costs of time and travel involved in attending training in major centres and reduced availability of a broad range of affordable training.
3. We were also aware that part of the impetus for the growth of flexible delivery is the reported time constraints of workers in general that may form a substantial barrier to attendance at face-to-face training events. We were interested in a broad application of flexible learning options.
4. Expanding options for flexible delivery would have resource implications for CCWT. We wanted to examine these through a 'real life' pilot experience in order to assess where and how we could realistically grow our capacity.

Through this action research project CCWT sought to explore the concepts, underlying assumptions and practice of flexible learning with reference to our particular target group of learners.

Through this action research project CCWT sought to explore the concepts, underlying assumptions and practice of flexible learning with reference to our particular target group of learners. We also wanted to understand what it

would mean for us as a not for profit provider and as a team of adult educators to expand our methods of delivery to include on line technology.

What did we do?

We designed and delivered a blended training and assessment program focussing on communication skill development for community service workers in Broken Hill and environs. The blended program focussed on the delivery of a course entitled the *Accidental Counsellor*, normally delivered through 21 hours of face-to-face training and out of class assessment tasks. The blended program aimed to reduce the face-to-face component by 30% to 14 hours and introduce learners to other flexible delivery options including 3 one-hour virtual classroom sessions and written self paced materials to complete the training and assessment.

At the completion of the project we invited and received comprehensive feedback from CCWT staff and learners involved in the pilot. This information is collated in this report.

Who was involved?

- **The Project Team**

This team consisted of five staff within CCWT and was convened by the Director of CCWT and included two training service coordinators and two educators. The project team had a mix of staff attitudes to flexible delivery ranging from sceptical through to enthusiastic.

- **Other Stakeholders**

Other stakeholders directly or indirectly affected by the project include the Board of ACWA/CCWT¹(the Board), the organisational management team, broader staff, community service workers in Far West NSW, CCWT contract trainers, community service staff and organisations in NSW, educational software providers, Adult Learning Australia (ALA) who provided a funding contribution to the project and Department of Community Services who make a recurrent annual contribution to CCWT costs.

- **Stakeholders in the pilot training program were:**

CCWT management and staff, community service organisations in the Far West, Centra Services, and ALA.

Where did we conduct the research?

This research sought to focus on a target group of learners *and* on the implications for us as a training provider. So there were two 'places' where our research activity focussed.

¹ Please note that the Centre for Community Welfare Training (CCWT) is the training arm of a NSW peak body the Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies representing child and family welfare agencies in NSW. The project was conducted as part of CCWT activity but had implications for the wider organisation's work and structure.

1. Far West NSW

We selected Broken Hill and environs as the geographical location for recruiting the target learners. CCWT had received calls for training from this area over the last 4 years and had been able to respond only in a limited way. We felt that targeting Broken Hill gave us the opportunity to respond to an expressed need, explore the delivery of flexible learning to a regional area unfamiliar to CCWT, test the technological capacity available to regional and remote learners, build important relationships in this region for the future, and provide CCWT with a group of learners who experience a range of barriers to accessing face-to-face training, including time, geographic isolation, and limited training opportunities for complex skill development. The research focus here was on the learner and their workplace. We sought to understand:

- The motivations, experiences and capacity of learners to take up a range of flexible options to address skill development.
- The capacity of community service organisations to support workers undertaking flexible approaches.

2. CCWT

Throughout the project we documented and evaluated the implications for our systems, job roles, staff development, training infrastructure and organisational culture of introducing a broader range of flexible delivery options. The focus of the research here was on identifying:

- The infrastructure changes CCWT will need to implement in order to deliver a greater range of flexible learning opportunities relevant to the needs of the community services sector.

When did we conduct the research?

The idea and preparation for the research project began in October 2003. The project took shape in earnest in December 2003 and was formally conducted from January to June 2004.

Methodology

Overview

Our application to ALA sought to use the research grant to support an action research project to be implemented from January to June 2004.

The initial strategy proposed to pilot three separate flexible approaches and compare them with each other in terms of learning effectiveness. However this was seen to be too ambitious requiring a much larger group of participants and coordination effort than we could manage in the time available.

We had also identified through consultation with community service staff in the Far West and a review of relevant literature, that combining a number of approaches was likely to produce the best outcomes and satisfaction for learners. So the pilot project was modified to deliver and evaluate a blended

approach consisting of face-to-face training, self-directed support materials and virtual classroom sessions to a group of community service staff in Far West NSW. This blended approach to training was designed to deliver 3 units of competence from the Community Services Training Package (CHC02).

Piloting a blended program also recognised the need to integrate a developmental approach as part of our research. The community services sector has limited or patchy experience of e-learning and self paced learning.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the learning experience for this target group we decided that learners would need to have a real, not just theoretical, experience of each component for their feedback to be meaningful. The blended approach enabled the learners to experience within the one training course, the three different components and to give feedback on their experience of learning in new ways – its challenges, benefits and difficulties as well as feedback on the effectiveness of the various approaches for them as learners.

We were interested in an action research model² rather than a more abstracted research process so that we could explore these issues within ‘real life learning experiences’.

We were interested in an action research model² rather than a more abstracted research process so that we could explore these issues within ‘real life learning experiences’. The approach formed the basis for increasing our understanding of the sector’s learning preferences and the challenges for CCWT if we were to embark on a more deliberate flexible delivery strategy. This research is qualitative and the sample small. However we sought a ‘thick’³ description of learner and facilitator experience within a specific application of flexible learning as a key contributor to the development of our educational practice as a training provider.

Conduct of the research:

Key research questions:

1. What characteristics of community service workers should be considered in shaping a meaningful and relevant flexible learning strategy to be delivered by CCWT over the next 3 years?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities for developing a broader range of flexible delivery options to meet the professional development needs of community service staff?
3. How can computer technology be used to offer high quality professional skills training to this particular group of learners?
4. How will CCWT have to change in order to offer flexibility to learners whilst preserving meaningful and relevant professional development opportunities.

² Footnote – Wordsworth, Y (1997) Do it Yourself Social Research, Allen & Unwin, Sydney

³ Footnote – Foley G. 2001 Strategic Learning: Understanding & Facilitating Organisational Change, CPE, Sydney. Pp 161-164

Some of the pre-pilot research identified as many barriers & frustrations in flexible delivery as it did success or effectiveness from the learner's point of view.

The strategy:

Stage 1: Understanding flexible learning - establishing a Learning Circle (October 2003-December 2003)

We established a CCWT Learning Circle of staff to gain as much information about the experiences of other adult learning organisations via literature searches, discussion and networking contacts. From this we developed the research questions as above. We also developed a critical consciousness in relation to flexible learning. Some of the pre-pilot research identified as many barriers and frustrations in flexible delivery as it did success or effectiveness from the learner's point of view. We began to position flexible delivery in a broader frame of political economy and to ask the question: "Who benefits from flexible delivery? Learners? Employers? Marketplace?"

Through networking, reading and discussion we identified that flexible learning was not well understood nor widely available to community service staff for professional development outside the tertiary sector. Within the tertiary sector distance learning is often reduced to written packages, on line asynchronous forums, and live chats.

Participant feedback from face-to-face training over many years identified the importance for many community service staff of the opportunity to interact with other staff from different contexts, have time out of busy and demanding work roles, and learning time quarantined which is provided by offsite and face-to-face delivery. While time and distance constraints are identified for regional workers we also wanted to look for a flexible delivery method that supported genuinely collaborative learning and allowed a mechanism that provided a boundary to support reflective time. "Learning on the job" appeared to be often misunderstood or misused by employees and employers alike where staff were expected to 'learn' in the midst of the work, not allowing for the 'reflection on work' to occur. For this reason we sought an approach that captured some of the best aspects of the face-to-face experience but delivered more efficiently.

Stage 2: Identifying possible delivery options to be piloted. (November 2003 – March 2004)

Through networking, reading and discussion we identified that flexible learning was not well understood nor widely available to community service staff for professional development outside the tertiary sector.

1. e learning

As a result of our initial research we began to experiment in-house with virtual classroom technology and discussed with software providers their range of educational packages. We wanted to try to use an on line delivery method that was as interactive as possible and decided to use Centra's virtual classroom. We were able to negotiate a workable fee structure for the pilot process.

Virtual Classroom is a synchronous e-learning program that attempts to simulate a training room environment with additional communication tools that compensate for the lack of visual contact. These tools consist of symbols on the screen template that enable participants and facilitator to give feedback to each other throughout the event – e.g. clapping, frowning, signalling when they want to talk etc.

Participants log into 'an event' through the Internet, after a pre-event warm up session. During the event they 'meet' their training colleagues and facilitator through an audio link and onscreen 'classroom'. The technology allows participants to receive training content, discuss issues via text or voice connection, and work in small groups using virtual 'whiteboards' and 'break out' rooms. There is capacity to show video clips and do on line role-plays for skills practice. It can be used for assessing candidates' knowledge, attitudes. Because it mirrors the experiences people already have of training in a face- to- face environment, the virtual classroom program offers a bridge for participants into flexible learning.

2. Self paced materials

We already had some expertise but wanted to build on this. We began to workshop ideas and gather good examples of other materials that would augment the learning in the other components.

3. Face-to-face component

Face-to-face training is CCWT's forte. It is also synonymous for 'training' for many prospective participants. We were reluctant at this stage to relinquish this method of training completely but sought instead to find ways to use it as a secure base from which other approaches could be tested. We felt that this respected where participants and the Centre were coming from and allowed us to introduce new experiences of flexible learning in a measured way.

Stage 3: Conducting the pilot as an action research project (March - June 2004)

The pilot involved the following task areas under the coordination of members from the project team:

- Consultation and training needs analysis with community service staff/organisations in Broken Hill and environs.
- Scaffolding requirements for successful recruitment of learners and delivery of training.
- Curriculum design and delivery strategy for face-to-face and virtual classroom sessions.
- Development and design of self paced support materials
- Delivering the training and assessment pilot program
- Evaluation and Feedback process.

The pilot process involved the following additional task activities that informed the above key areas:

- a. Engaging a learning consultant to support trainer and scaffolding skill development.
- b. Engaging a *virtual classroom* provider.
- c. Managing organisational issues
- d. Debrief and Review with support team, facilitator and learning consultant.
- e. Analysis of findings.
- f. Writing up the report for ALA and the organisation.

'Learning on the job' appeared to be often misunderstood or misused by employees and employers alike - staff were expected to 'learn' in the midst of the work, not allowing for the 'reflection on work' to occur.

The Findings

The Learners Experience

1. Pre pilot consultation

The purpose of the pre pilot consultation was to:

- Forge relationships
- Scope existing training opportunities utilised by community service workers in Broken Hill region
- Present CCWT proposal for a flexible delivery pilot for comment and to gauge interest.
- Identify a priority training need not available to potential participants to inform the training content for the pilot.

Very few workers had experienced training delivery beyond face-to-face training and the desire for CCWT-type training “in any form” appeared to overcome expected resistance to the idea of flexible delivery. The reality of lack of access to a broad range of training specific to the needs of community service workers, proved to be a strong motivator for these learners to try a different approach to learning.

A two-day consultation was undertaken with workers within Broken Hill and a 200 km radius. The consultation involved 2 focus groups with Youth and HACC Interagencies, and visits to a range of services including Indigenous services, Local and State government providers and non-government community organisations. (A List of Agencies consulted appears in Appendix 1). A total of 40 service providers were spoken with during the consultation and a further number were provided with written information.

Overall the consultation provided CCWT with the mandate to go ahead with the pilot. Counselling/communication skill development was identified as the most relevant unmet training need across most work areas. Workers indicated their excitement with CCWT’s interest in their region and gave a strong message of support for the provision of training. Very few workers had experienced training delivery beyond face-to-face training and the desire for CCWT-type training “in any form” appeared to overcome expected resistance to the idea of flexible delivery. The reality of lack of access to a broad range of training specific to the needs of community service workers, proved to be a strong motivator for these learners to try a different approach to learning.

Special considerations:

Training for Indigenous Workers

The Indigenous services indicated less interest in CCWT's training due to the fact that they receive "free training" through a government assistance program administered through TAFE. They did however acknowledge that the breadth of skills based training offered by CCWT was of interest but the cost remained a significant constraint. This reduced the diversity of potential participants we had hoped to recruit for the pilot.

Technology

Many services/workers had insufficient technological capacity and skills to participate in the blended program that involved Virtual Classroom. This reflects a general feature of the sector and is not peculiar to Broken Hill area. It poses a significant barrier to some learners and therefore presents a new 'lack of access' issue to address.

Local support

Three people from Broken Hill volunteered to support the promotion and coordination of the Pilot & assisted CCWT with local promotion. Having these local contacts to support the process added credibility and connection for CCWT with this region.

2. Participant feedback

i. Overall response

CCWT received 25 written expressions of interest from community service staff in the far west to attend the proposed training. Of these, 11 participants proceeded to registration and full participation in the pilot. Reasons for not proceeding included conflicting work commitments, slow management approval resulting in missed deadlines for registration, and personal circumstances.

Ten pilot participants gave detailed feedback on their experience of the training. The results indicated an overall high level of satisfaction with the preparation and delivery of the training and a positive introduction to flexible learning components.

Comments from participants included:

Instructions [for VC] were clear and user friendly
Staff support from CCWT was great –easy to contact.
It was useful to have background information and tools to complete [self-paced materials]
I feel VC is beneficial [for regional learners] but needs to be backed up by support materials
Really enjoyed the course, learnt new things and refreshed on others
All aspects of the course were relevant and valuable
I felt privileged to be part of the pilot. Despite computer problems I learnt a huge amount that I have started to put into practice.

ii. Face-to-face component

100% of participants rated the face-to-face training as excellent or above average.

It was clear from the trainers point of view and participant feedback that the face-to-face training was crucial in enabling participants to express and deal with considerable anxiety associated with the up and coming virtual classroom (VC) component.

The trainer tells the following tale of her experience of facilitating the face-to-face (F2F) workshops prior to VC:

The first morning of the F2F workshop started out like any other, with introductions and an overview. I asked the group why each individual had registered for the course, ten said that they wanted to learn about how to manage the role of counsellor on the job, one said they wanted to experience Virtual Classroom.

From the moment I welcomed the group into the room, I sensed a cautiousness, bordering on suspiciousness. I wasn't sure if the 'steely vibe' I was picking up was because I was a 'blow in' from the city, or because they

had had a previous negative experience in training. I invited them to plot their level of anxiety on a continuum line. When we explored these feelings further, I discovered that there was a high level of nervousness about using Virtual Classroom. I realised I needed to retain authority and gain their trust over the next two days.

The blended approach allowed the participants to move from the familiar experience of face-to-face training to other flexible delivery components. CCWT's decision to use this approach was based on the importance of relationships within community service culture and the benefits of 'getting together' out of the workplace.

Many participants echoed the following comment:

Participation in face-to-face training before the VC sessions enabled rapport and comfort to be established with the trainer and participants.

iii. The virtual classroom component

There was diversity within the feedback concerning the satisfaction with the VC component in particular. Some participants indicated that frustration was introduced to the learning when they experienced computer problems that could not be easily rectified. Others indicated that scheduling VC sessions into their working week proved more difficult to negotiate than expected. Although in theory VC reduces the actual time involved in training, it appeared to complicate some participant's weekly schedule, disrupt office routines and workplace colleagues. Some participants obviously 'took' more to the VC component than others, indicating they would be very satisfied with training being entirely conducted via VC. Others felt strongly that VC would be taken up as a 'second best option' if it was the only one offered but that preference continued for face-to-face training or blended approach.

Comments included:

Due to computer issues I sometimes missed out on information 'Drop outs' were frustrating at times with network connections. I found this to be very frustrating.

I had some computer problems when using VC but enjoyed the sessions – I had considerable time lag.

I enjoyed the VC more than the face-to-face.

In a busy office it was [in hindsight] unrealistic to think there would be no interruptions.[VC]

Sometimes the office was noisy and distracting. [VC]

Maybe more testing for PC conflicts with online set up. I know this is difficult but technology is an absolute pain when it doesn't work..

It was a learning experience using VC for the first time. There were a few hiccups but its use in regional areas is a must if we are to keep up with training options that we would otherwise not be able to access.

VC will get easier to use with experience.

The feedback clearly indicated satisfaction and appreciation with the way the program had been organised and the level of support offered by CCWT staff.

The issues experienced by participants were in relation to technological difficulties experienced in the VC.

Despite the difficulties the majority of participants felt their first experience with VC had been satisfactory and that it would get easier to use the technology as a learning tool with practice.

The results of feedback on virtual classroom aspects of the pilot are featured in diagrams 1 & 2.

1. Do you think you will learn more easily 'next time' now that you have had a taste of VC?
2. Would you attend a training event that was conducted entirely using VC?

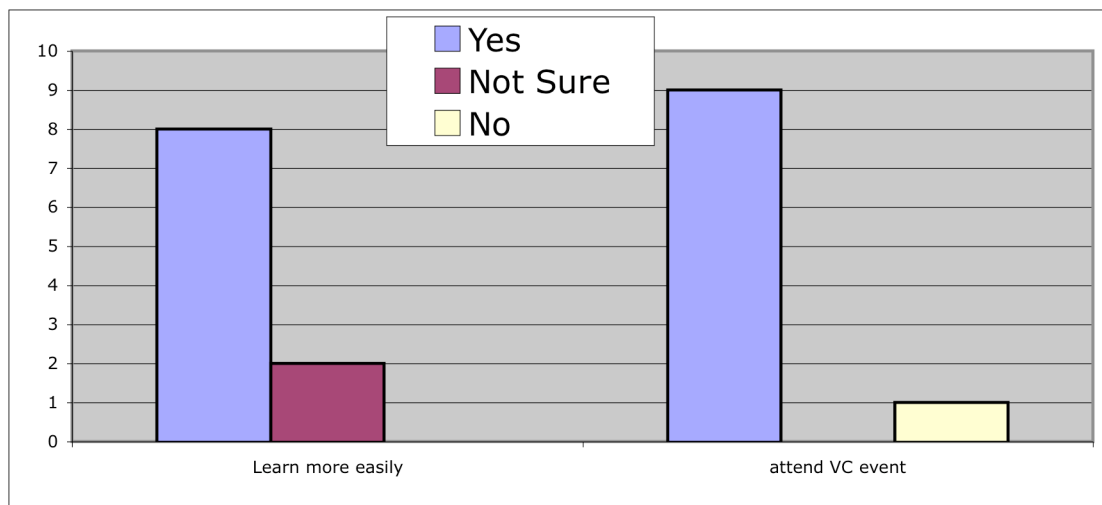


Diagram 1

3. Combination of approaches

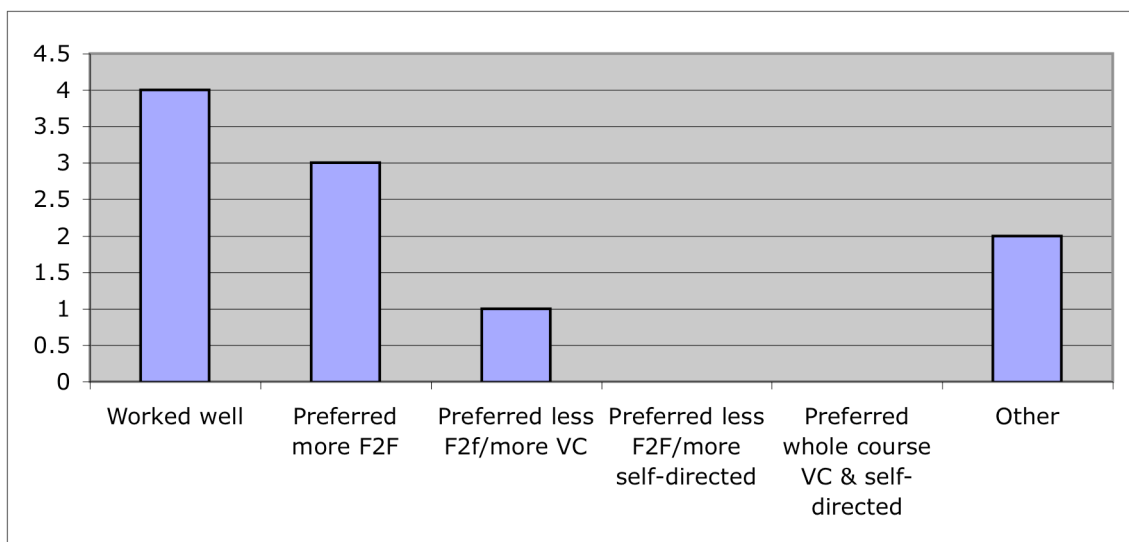


Diagram 2

NB: Other = "I enjoyed the combination but the VC did interrupt others in the office and ate into a lot of work hours"; "One day F2F would possibly be enough, 60 minutes not long enough for VC"

iv. Self paced Component

Feedback from students was very positive in relation to the appropriateness and usefulness of the self-paced support material. Some participants indicated that they provided a means by which they could transfer some of their learning to other staff about useful ideas for their practice. In relation to presentation and useability participants echoed the following comment:

The materials were professionally presented - colour & graphics were great. Presented in a non-threatening manner with fun user friendly activities Excellently presented, nice and bright.

Feedback from participants showed general enthusiasm for the self paced kit and impressive completion rates, which were higher than expected. 100% respondents reported that they read 75% or more of the materials. 90% participants said that they completed 75% or more of the activities.

The results of feedback on self-paced aspects of the pilot are featured in diagrams 3-6.

1. Did the self-directed activities complement the other aspects of the course?

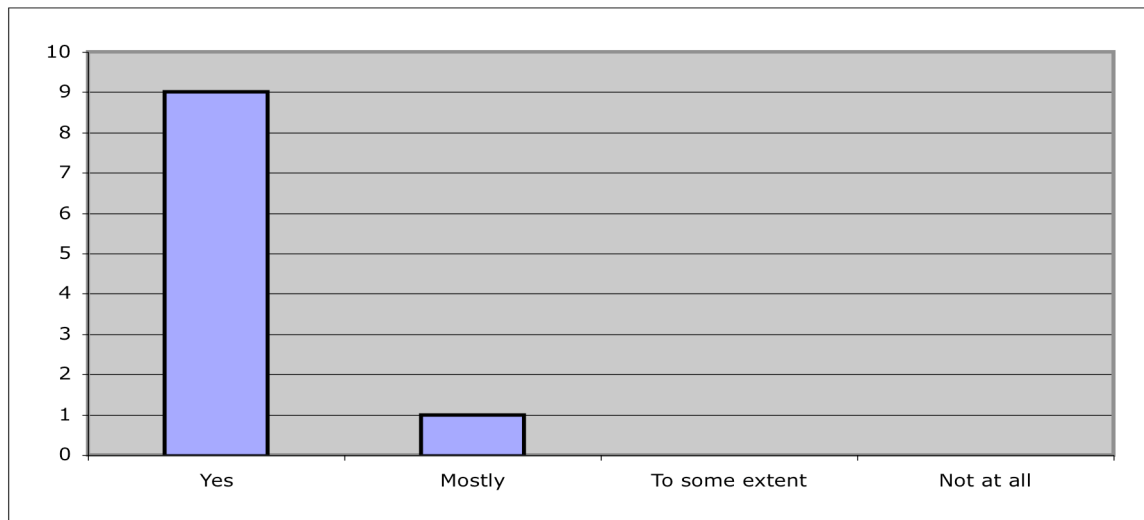


Diagram 3

2. Did you complete any of the exercises in the self-directed package?

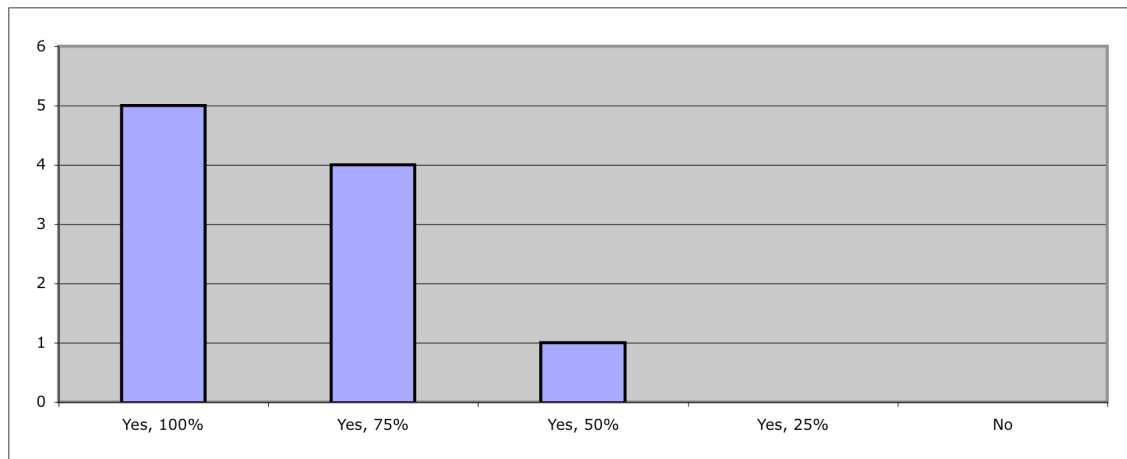


Diagram 4

3. Of the exercises you completed, what made you choose these particular sections?

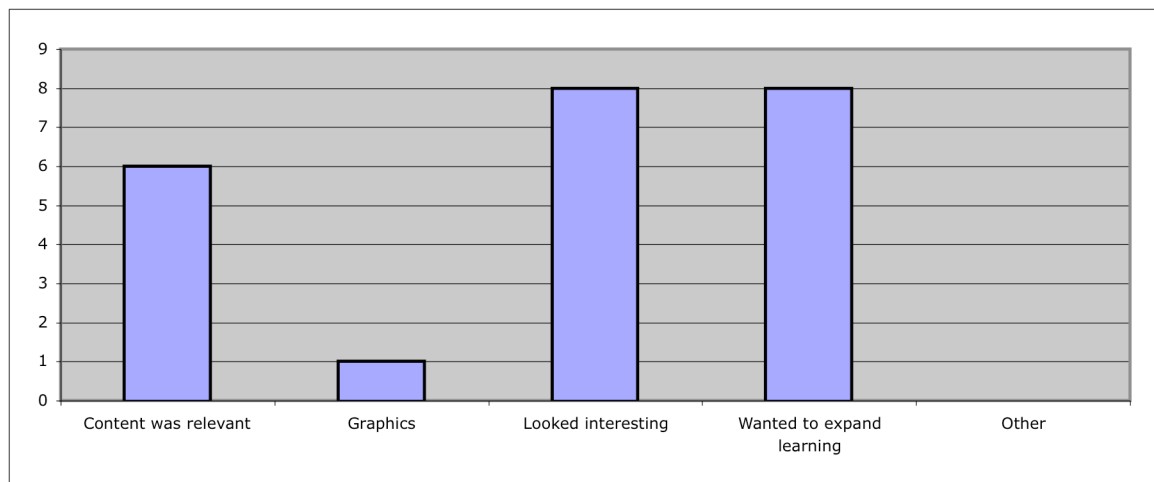


Diagram 5

4. Of the exercises you did not complete, what made you leave these out?

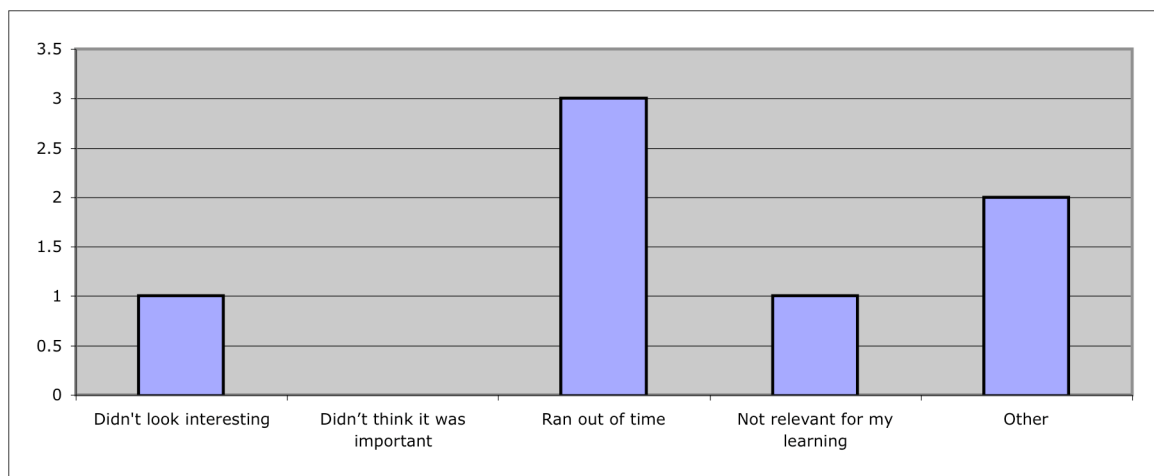


Diagram 6

CCWT's Experience

1. Pre-pilot consultation

See previous section (page 8)

2. Team members' feedback

i. Overall response

The level of team preparation, staff development support, systems coordination, participant support, problem solving and evaluation of the project made the pilot a very intense, at times stressful and ultimately rewarding experience for CCWT staff. A huge amount of learning took place in a range of areas by different staff and the evaluation has sought to synthesise this to determine the next step for CCWT.

The action research has given CCWT important information about the effective use of VC and self paced learning for our particular target group. It has also highlighted the difficulties that will need to be addressed both technologically with the software provider and within the organisation.

Learning how to learn through virtual classroom involved CCWT in unpacking the developmental and preparation process that was required to enable participants to 'arrive' ready to participate in VC.

The level of team preparation, staff development support, systems coordination, participant support, problem solving and evaluation of the project made the pilot a very intense, at times stressful and ultimately rewarding experience for CCWT staff.

Overall the experience offered a rich learning process for us to gain considerable insight into the complex array of factors that impact on the decision to address access issues through flexible delivery. These factors are discussed below by looking more closely at the experiences of staff in delivering the VC, self paced components and developing the necessary scaffolding. We recognise that CCWT tested one possible approach to flexible learning. Other types of "blended programs" and use of a range of untested approaches remain to be explored and "tested".

ii. Scaffolding Component – preparing participants for the VC sessions

CCWT needed to set up a whole new set of structures to support the delivery of the blended program. This involved information being clearly communicated to participants at various stages prior to the training because

they needed to be technologically ready for the VC sessions in advance. They also needed an induction session to VC prior to the training so that they were ready to participate as fully as possible from VC session 1. This scaffolding is not required for participants attending face-to-face training. Due to the familiarity of this medium participants 'know' how it works – all they need to do is arrive at the venue on time. Learning how to learn through virtual classroom involved CCWT in unpacking the developmental and preparation process that was required to enable participants to 'arrive' ready to participate in VC.

One staff person took on the role of Scaffolding Coordinator. Her comments on the process and her learning are detailed below.

- Creating the appropriate scaffolding to support flexible delivery

The Pilot gave an excellent 'trial and error' opportunity, as there were no previous experiences to draw on. I found this particularly with scaffolding as our current systems are designed for face-to-face workshops, so everything I designed and developed was a bit of a 'shot in the dark'. But this meant that I wasn't relying on current systems – I was able to test new ways of supporting learners to participate. I would have liked more time to 'test' various aspects and evaluate them as we went. However the Project team 'problem posed' and "problem solved" throughout the various stages of the Pilot and this was invaluable. The action research method embodied an action-reflection learning model that was very important in progressing our knowledge and skills so quickly.

- Experience of preparing students for VC

I had to learn what scaffolding meant in this context. This was difficult at first as the software and language used is so different to any other I've used. Once I understood the framework of it, it was a lot easier to navigate.

Learning the facilitation skills was fun and not an onerous task, although it did take some practice in talking at the right speed and being able to talk and operate the VC learning tools at the same time. This got easier with practice,

In the new flexible learning environment the challenge is to create models that support 'time out' for reflective learning rather than have this collapsed into an unbounded haphazard approach... This is where the managerialist and economic rationalist influences within flexible learning discourse need to be challenged. Efficient learning still requires time out of work to enable the reflection- on-action and foundations for skill development to be laid down. Otherwise frustration increases and learning efficiency decreases

although I am still uneasy with ‘silences’, which seem much longer than in face-to-face training. I was surprised at the sense of connection in VC, despite not seeing faces and only occasionally hearing voices. Although it seems like such a minor thing, I think having everyone’s names listed down the side and seeing those “names” respond to questions, etc really gave a sense of there being a real person present.

If there had been no technical glitches, I think the learning process would have been just as good as F2F. Participants were often distracted by technical problems, but when everything was working well, it was evident that they were engaged due to the timeliness and quality of their responses.

I struggled at first with having to be so much more in control as a facilitator – that is, the VC session needed to be highly structured to be effective. At first I thought that this went against some of my values as an educator in terms of giving the learner choices. But as I observed the process, I saw that while the session is structured, there is still plenty of opportunity for participants to contribute. We are all still learning how best to use the VC space.

The results of participant feedback on coordination and scaffolding aspects of the pilot are featured in diagrams 7 & 8.

1. Rating of Pilot Timeline & Virtual Classroom Instructions

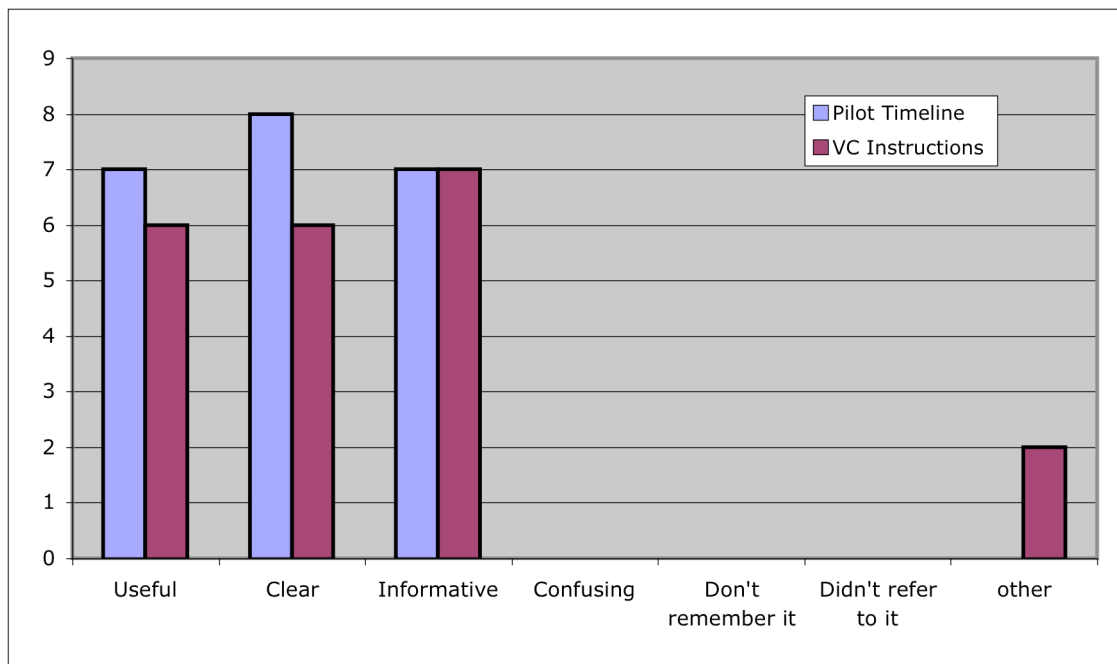


Diagram 7

2. What technical support was most useful to you?

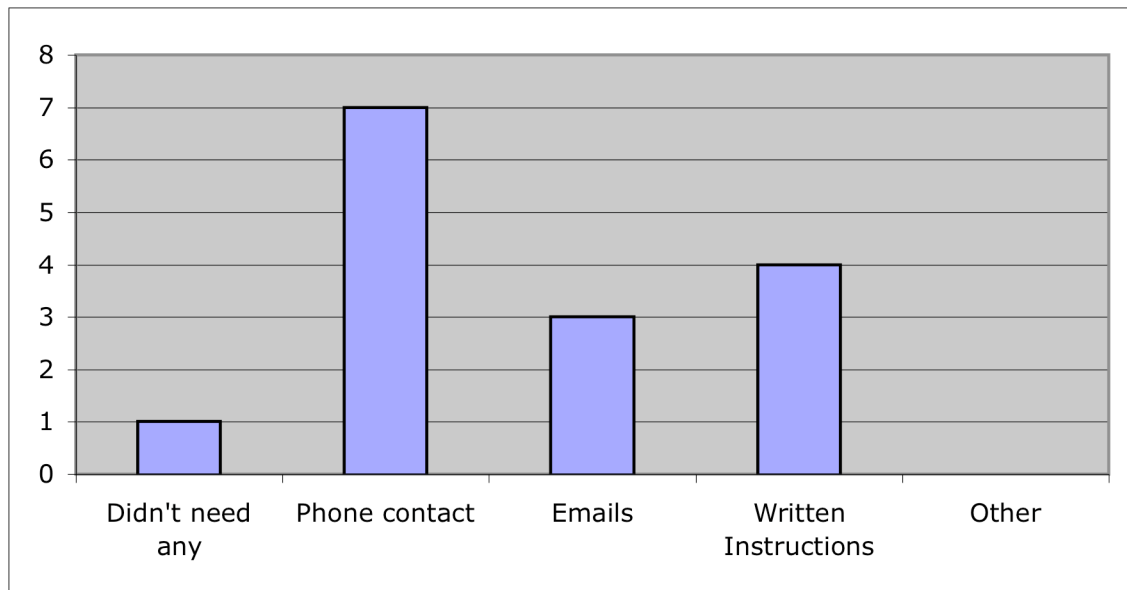


Diagram 8

*“At the conclusion of the face to face training
There were jokes about whether we would really
be meeting, as it is in Virtual Land and our
goodbye was the kind of goodbye you say to
someone when you know you will see them in
another country.”*

iii. Face-to-face component

The trainer's experience reflected that of participants – the face-to-face training appeared to reduce some of the anxiety associated with the up and coming VC experience. All but one participant expressed concern and fear about the VC component and this was addressed on day one of the training. (see page 11).

The trainer recalled:

Day two began on a high note.

In the foreseeable future it would appear that a blended approach is necessary until learner familiarity with VC ensures that participation is not hampered by undue anxiety and uncertainty associated with the new medium.

There was little or no mention of Virtual Classroom after the first morning overview and discussion. In hindsight this was helpful - with new technology, I think an activist approach is quite useful. Too much reflection can increase anxiety without gaining satisfaction of having achieved something new.

At the end of the F2F workshop there was an excitement in the group. Next we would be meeting in Virtual Classroom! There were jokes about whether we would really be meeting, as it is in Virtual Land and our goodbye was the kind of goodbye you say to someone when you know you will see them in another country. So with a satisfying experience of F2F group learning, we went back to our jobs with a few days to reflect on the things we had learned before meeting again to take on a new way of learning.

While VC technology offers an exciting opportunity to learn differently it is offered in an environment where the overload of change creates a resistance to "newness".

In the foreseeable future it would appear that a blended approach is necessary until learner familiarity with VC is such that their participation is not hampered by undue anxiety and uncertainty associated with the new medium. Like many workforce sectors staff are constantly dealing with a changing environment. The complexity of community service work is increasing not only due to a growing compliance environment but also due to the complexity of individual and social problems being addressed. However unlike some sectors community service staff undertake their roles with limited financial, technological and professional resources to assist them. While VC technology offers an exciting opportunity to learn differently it is offered in an environment where the overload of change creates a resistance to "newness". The opportunity is experienced by many as yet one more area where they have to adapt and change. The technology support is limited for many community service organisations and this is a serious barrier to the take up of flexible options involving online components. For CCWT to deliver VC successfully we have to take the realities of the resource and learning culture seriously and see our role in capacity building as much as in training delivery.

iv. The Virtual Classroom component

The skills required to design curriculum and facilitate learning through VC constitute a steep learning curve and considerable organisational resources are required to bring staff skills to the level required. Through the pilot one staff person was 'released' to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver the VC sessions in the pilot. This involved on the job time away from normal duties, access to additional hardware, the provision of a coach on a contractual basis and support around problem solving structural barriers. The personal commitment of this staff person to the pilot was considerable delivering close to 200 hours of voluntary time. The total cost to the organisation of skilling up this staff person was approx \$14000.

Her experiences are captured in the following comments:

- Learning the skills

When I began the process of learning, I was careful not to make any assumptions about the transferability of my skills from face-to-face training to virtual classroom. This proved to be true. My experience of learning the skills required in VC facilitation can best be described as 'a whole lot of falling down'.

When 'going live' in VC, the success largely relies on the ability of the facilitator to have the learner feel engaged and connected. This is very difficult when nerves take over. In the practice sessions, I was either not connecting with my students, I spoke too fast, I moved the slides at the wrong speed, I sounded bored, I sounded bossy, or I sounded scared.

By the time the first Pilot VC session came, I was ready. I had fallen down a lot and through that, I had received specific feedback on my weak points from my coach and I had reflected on my own style

For CCWT to deliver training through VC successfully, we have to take seriously the resource and learning culture in community services & see our role as capacity builder.

- Facilitating the VC sessions

I felt a very strong connection with the training group. I don't think the strength of connection though can be measured as more or less compared with a face-to-face environment. There are too many variable factors. In VC when a participant spoke, they commanded attention from the group. As our sensory perceptions were limited, there seemed to be a stronger connection between us. The words I chose and the tone of my voice took on far more importance as did theirs. There was one participant who sounded particularly scared whilst doing a role play and I found myself feeling a heightened sense of concern for her.

My overall sense of the strength of this learning process for the learner is that they were able to focus

more on the content in VC. It was the content that drove the process, rather than the group dynamic. They were each able to assert their individuality more strongly than in a face-to-face situation where at least in the beginning some people often are reluctant to contribute ideas of contrary ideas to the group. I need more knowledge and experience in VC to comment on how group dynamics work in the virtual group, but it certainly seemed that the individual learners were able to learn simultaneously without some of the barriers felt when people get together physically.

- Critical differences for learners in comparing the learning process in VC and face-to-face training

Comparing VC and face-to-face in some ways is like comparing apples with oranges. They are similar in that they facilitate learning, but the issues and complexities which a facilitator has to address are not better or worse- just different. These include the attention that needs to be made to potential causes of anxiety and frustration for learners. In face-to-face training it can involve more spontaneous rearranging of material or discussion to address confusion or group tensions. It also involves engaging learners in a variety of activities, which hold interest and allow for a lessening of stress related to group dynamics and non-preferred learning styles. In virtual classroom the process is more scripted and harder to vary. There is an awareness of the heightened stress that all participants and facilitator have that the technology may fail. Is it going to be consistent and dependable or will the learner be left alone, floundering in cyberspace? This anxiety is real and palpable and impacts strongly on the sense of responsibility the facilitator carries.

VC appears to suit some learners better than others – those that learn visually and aurally would have found enough stimulation to engage in the process. Kinaesthetic learners need also to get in and ‘do things’ and the VC sessions have a lot of hands on work for participants to do. However kinaesthetic learners may find themselves side tracked by the technology wanting all the time to experiment with what it can do rather than following the sequence of the session. However on the whole, I think that the VC does allow for the preferences of all three groups. Reflective learners however who prefer to watch and learn may unnerve the VC group more than in a face-to-face session. Reflective learners show their engagement through body language not by doing lots of speaking. Silences from VC participants can be misinterpreted and the environment may be too scripted for a reflective learner. There are no ‘breaks’ that allow for private or informal chats for VC participants which may need us to think more carefully about how we conduct this.

The skills required to design curriculum and facilitate learning through VC constitute a steep learning curve, & considerable organisational resources are required to bring staff skills to the level required.

Another thing that was missing in my experience was a sense of closure at the end of the last VC. It's difficult to say 'goodbye' in VC. It's almost like an awkward telephone conversation where you don't know who should hang up first. In face-to-face training there are 'packing up rituals' to assist with the leaving process. It is not yet clear to me how to do this but will be good to explore as we continue to work with this medium.

"My experience of having a coach for VC facilitation was very positive. I can't imagine how else I would have learned so much in such little time."

- Role of community services culture in driving flexible delivery

Community services culture has the potential to support new ways of learning as workers are looking for more cost effective ways to engage in training. Conversely, community services culture has the potential to undermine new ways of learning as workers view traditional F2F as the only 'real' training. There may be some resistance to technology-based learning, as the sector as a whole is not particularly technology .

Workers also value getting away from the workplace for the informal networking that occurs. VC might be able to offer some opportunities for informal networking (ie allowing some 'free' time at the beginning and end of sessions) but self-paced involves no interaction with other participants. A new understanding of community and relationships is required to support the taking up of new learning technology such as virtual classroom. The fact that the sector values this aspect positions it positively as a driver for maintaining the 'human touch' in flexible learning.

I think Broken Hill participants were always going to appreciate the training no matter what happened due to their experience of restricted access. They had a vested interest in making it work for them, hence it may have been a little smoother. A Sydney group for example might be more critical or less patient with the process as they have more choices of training delivery. They may choose to give up on VC more easily and opt for face-to-face training. However the blended approach still appears to offer the best of all worlds for learners as they grow their experience and understanding of learning differently.

- Impact of technological glitches on facilitator and participants

In the first VC session, there were two participants who spent 80% of the lesson experiencing problems in maintaining their Internet connection. I had to decide whether to go ahead with out them or wait for them to re-join the group. Luckily they were two participants who felt most comfort with the medium so they chose to keep trying to solve the technological problems. But I did feel as though they were let down as they missed out on the first VC session.

On another occasion I tried to show a video to the participants and only one third could view the footage. It turned out that the end user needed to have a

piece of software on their hard drive to view the film. I did anticipate this however, so I was able to bring up a script of the dialogue and talk it through.

- Critical support for learning the skills of VC

My experience of having a coach for VC facilitation was very positive. I can't imagine how else I would have learned so much in such little time. I ran three practice sessions on line and each time Harvey⁴ gave me specific feedback on what I needed to improve. He was very honest which helped me to take up the new skills in a short amount of time. For much of this time I felt stressed and unsure of myself, but Harvey insisted that I jump in a try it out before I felt comfortable. The advice worked. I discovered that the medium of VC is only effective if the facilitator trusts that the technology won't get in the way of getting a sense of connection with the learners. To trust the technology, you have to give something over to it – but then you must bend it to your will. It has to work for you, you must make it work for the group. It was only after I embraced it that I was able to shape it to fit my group and me.

“Team collaboration, such as meetings and learning circles were important.”

The support of my colleagues was also critical. This involved practical as well as emotional support. Often it meant an opportunity to vent my frustrations, get someone to do a mock session with me, troubleshoot on my behalf on an organisational problem or get me a coffee!

⁴ Harvey Feldstein from Learning Innovations provided coaching expertise and support throughout the project.

v. Self paced component

- Adult education concerns addressed in the development of self paced materials.

In developing the self paced materials we tried to step into the shoes of the learners and design materials that both complimented and enhanced the learning available through the VC and face-to-face components. The principles used to guide the development of the self paced materials were:

- We needed to present the material in a way that encouraged people to participate and complete activities.
- The material needed to flow and be linked to the VC sessions.
- We needed to provide enough activities to adequately cover the topics, without overwhelming the participants, or giving the impression that there was just too much to do.
- The material needed to be presented in an attractive way.

CCWT's choice of a blended approach to flexible delivery did not automatically ensure an integrated process. The focus was very much on getting the VC component up to scratch and this took the most resources both financial and organisational. Those of the project team working on the self paced materials and scaffolding had to manage at times feelings of marginalisation that was an unintended consequence of the VC focus. Project team members commented:

At times we felt like the "poor man" in the team – most of the attention was given over to the VC as this was new and exciting. We had a real desire to experiment with designing attractive and engaging support materials and using technology to develop CD Roms with graphics, movie clips etc. However time coralled some of this creative energy and we focused on designing primarily hard copy materials in a way that would have maximum impact and usefulness in supporting the VC , face-to-face and assessment processes.

We would have liked more contact with students during the time that the course was running in order to evaluate more clearly the effectiveness of the particular exercises and the overall effect of the material and would like to see more use of visual technologies in future, including video, CD Rom and exercises online that are linked to the website.

The most important supports for the development of the self paced resources were identified as follows:

- Having an educational coach!

Harvey was useful as part of the overall process as he provided insight into the educational aspects of developing the materials. He also had great

The action research project changed our expectations of what is possible in training delivery and set a new vision for CCWT's work over the next few years.

knowledge in areas such as how many exercises are enough, what helps encourage participants to actually do the activities. He was able to provide guidance and give us a sense of the direction to go in. He helped us to be realistic about what could be achieved in the time frame and kept us focussed.

- Team feedback and learning support

This was crucial and when timely given, was invaluable to our part of the work. As time progressed and we all worked to very tight deadlines this tended to become less available. Team collaboration, such as meetings and learning circles were important. We felt that this process of collaboration broke down a bit towards the end of the project and the loss of it may have impacted on how some things were completed.

- Technological support

We were very aware that there were more things we could have done with technology if we had been able to access good technology coaching. Having access to desktop design was invaluable but there are still things we are dying to experiment with that were not possible within the pilot timeframe.

The Learning Circle was great for opening our minds to possibilities, keeping us focussed and getting us started as a team. These discussions created an enthusiasm for the project in the midst of all the other work that we had to do. They also allowed us to gain insight into the way that each of us communicates.

vi. Internal communication and change management issues for CCWT

The Pilot served to highlight some unanticipated organisational resistance to change and the lack of clear communication channels when problems arose.

The Pilot served to highlight some unanticipated organisational resistance to change and the lack of clear communication channels when problems arose. This tended to increase anxiety and needed to be managed in order for the task at hand, rather than the frustrations, to remain the focus.

Much of this was resolved in time to deliver the pilot training due to both management and team intervention but took more problem solving 'energy' than was anticipated. It highlighted the need for effective, open and transparent communication and the capacity to manage competing interests and conflict as part of the any change process.

As we had underestimated this we learnt how to do this as we went and at times felt a little bruised. However we are now a lot clearer about the need to position flexible learning as a whole organisation approach. The pilot was inevitably seen as a significant but marginal project activity. The organisation is now more realistically aware of its importance to the future direction of CCWT.

The Pilot team also experienced some internal communication issues as we progressed the project. As the workload mounted, the staff driving each of the components of the pilot (VC and face-to-face training, self-paced, scaffolding, coordination and evaluation) tended to work to their own deadlines. Understanding of the other components was not always accurate. As a result, the self-directed materials seemed to be a little more 'stand alone' than they were intended to be.

While all staff in the project team identified the Learning Circle approach as being invaluable to the process its importance decreased over time due in part for the need more hands on skill development. The pace of the project also meant that the frequency of meetings and recording of decisions declined. This was unfortunate and may have contributed to some miscommunication that occurred in the latter stages of the project. Continuing to meet regularly may have enabled a fairer division of labour, a more inclusive approach throughout and more effective communication to occur. Despite these issues, the project remained a highly collaborative and cooperative project through to its conclusion.

...Community Services is in a transitional period- there is a tension between the need to access training and the capacity of workers/ organisations to embrace new technologies and ways of learning in a more flexible way.

Conclusion

Just as our consumers are learning, so are we as educators.

The action research project enabled CCWT to test the educational effectiveness of a range of flexible approaches to training and to identify the change issues that we will have to address organisationally in order to increase access to training for workers in the community services sector.

- The research questions:
 1. What characteristics of community service workers should be considered in shaping a meaningful and relevant flexible learning strategy to be delivered by CCWT over the next 3 years?

Learning with others in similar roles, rather than in isolation, is a strong factor in reducing anxiety and therefore a strong extrinsic motivator for taking up and completing training. Through the action research pilot, CCWT was able to experiment with an approach that respected these realities for workers. The blended program provided a bridging process that preserved the relational support for learning whilst also providing participants with a new experience of learning through self directed and virtual classroom processes.

The project confirmed and extended our assumptions about the characteristics of the sector highlighting that we are in an transitional period where there is a tension between the need to access relevant training and the capacity of workers and their organisations to embrace new technologies and ways of learning in a more flexible way.

The rate of change, the high expectations placed on community service staff, the growing complexity of their job roles and the culturally and educationally diverse nature of the workforce contribute to both a high demand for training and high anxiety in relation to learning.

2. What are the barriers and opportunities for developing a broader range of flexible delivery options to meet the professional development needs of community service staff?
 - *Learning how to learn* is an opportunity and a challenge

It is clear to CCWT that introducing flexible learning effectively, involves not only delivering the opportunity for workers. In many instances workers *are learning how to learn* all over again. Ignoring the understandable anxiety that

The rate of change, the high expectations placed on community service staff, the growing complexity of their job roles and the culturally and educationally diverse nature of the workforce, contribute to both a high demand for training and high anxiety in relation to learning.

this generates, places flexible learning approaches in jeopardy and does little to increase access and effectiveness of learning. As CCWT staff discovered, the technologies we use in training whether they be in face-to-face or virtual environments are tools, not ends in themselves. Learning how to use the tools effectively is part of a holistic approach to learning. Just as our consumers are learning so are we as educators. The action research project enabled us to keep embracing this reality.

- New understandings of workplace support are needed

There is a perception in the minds of learners and managers that *flexible learning* means *learning in the midst of work* with no adjustments necessary. It is as though the commitment to reflective time is being eroded. Attendance at face-to-face training means the boundaries are already established. The biggest challenge for facilitators and learners in face-to-face training is getting participants to turn off mobile phones for the day! In the new flexible learning environment the challenge is to create models that support 'time out' for reflective learning rather than have this collapsed into an unbounded haphazard approach and learning grabs. This is where the managerialist and economic rationalist influences within flexible learning discourse need to be challenged. Efficient learning still requires time out of work to enable the reflection- on-action and foundations for skills development to be laid down. Otherwise frustration increases and learning efficiency decreases. Workers therefore need:

- Time out from other work
 - Technical support and minimum hardware, software and network speed facilities.
 - Time out to complete self paced activities
 - General support for participation in a 'different' type of training
 - Appropriate re- routing of work during the VC sessions
 - Appropriate computer station for the task that will not unduly disrupt the rest of the workplace
 - Strong management support for learning and the willingness of managers to institute workplace support structures
- Keeping the relational nature of learning in flexible delivery

Human services are traditionally based on person-to-person contact and the introduction of technology could be seen as displacing the significance of relationships in learning. The notion of 'community' is challenged. Traditional concepts of 'community' include public meeting places, local landmarks, and ethnic groupings. In the face-to-face learning environment, this sense of community can be shared and strengthened. There may be fear of losing this in the virtual environment. A new understanding of community is called for with VC and CCWT is in an important position to offer support and leadership with this in a sector that strongly values the relational nature of learning.

3. How can computer technology be used to offer high quality professional skills training to this particular group of learners?

Our action research used virtual classroom and email to support learning in soft skills development. We wanted to see how far we could stretch the technology to deliver quality training in practice areas of high demand. These include a whole range of ‘people’ skills training and the pilot confirmed that VC is capable of augmenting current more traditional delivery methods. We have yet to experiment with other e-learning approaches but feel we have successfully tackled the implementation of a more challenging technology by piloting VC. With time and experience we expect that VC technology could be used as a stand-alone vehicle for learning and development particularly to workers in more remote locations.

However there are still significant technological “failures” in the use of VC, due to unreliable internet connections for many consumers. Managing this becomes part of the provider’s responsibility and a ‘cost’ to both provider and consumer.

4. How will CCWT have to change in order to offer flexibility to learners whilst preserving meaningful and relevant professional development opportunities?
 - Flexible delivery requires resourcing – it is not always a cheaper alternative for the provider!

The action research project changed our expectations of what is possible in training delivery and set a new vision for CCWT’s work over the next few years. However we were also sobered by the resource implications of introducing a greater range of flexible approaches that include the use of virtual classroom. It would be acceptable and understandable as a not-for-profit provider to make a decision to proceed only with self paced learning kits and asynchronous on-line forums or chat rooms.

CCWT is a centralised coordinator of training. Flexible delivery begins to decentre training making the locus of coordination much more the individual learner rather than a calendar of prearranged events. Over time this requires a massive shift in operational focus from managing events to managing individual learning pathways. CCWT is not ready for this shift but will progress incrementally to try to improve access for remote learners and increase options for others. However the fact that relationships are important drivers of learning in the sector, flexible delivery in this sector may continue to be shaped by more collective rather than individual factors.

However we believe through the experience of delivering the pilot, that the virtual classroom offers a valuable experience of collective learning that will become easier and more effective with practice both for CCWT as a provider and as the sector becomes more experienced with e-technologies. As a result, ACWA has committed organisational resources to fund a new high-level position to drive our flexible learning into the future. This injection of resources is a tribute to the success of the pilot, the work of the project team, the invaluable contribution of training participants in the far west, and organisational recognition and support for CCWT ‘s work.

Bibliography

General Sites:

<http://www.Flexiblelearning.net.au/community>

Online community based in NY: www.learningtimes.net

<http://www.reframingthefuture.net/>

<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/learnscope>

Community Technology Centres: <http://www.ctc.nsw.gov.au/contacts/>

Australian Remote and Rural Training Systems: <http://www.arrts.com.au/cgi-bin/WebObjects/arrts.woa/-2609/wa/Home>

Life Education (example of online learning) <http://www.life-educationaustralia.com.au/>

LearnScope:

<http://learnscope.flexiblelearning.net.au/LearnScope/projects.asp?Category=89&Parent=5>

Assessment Tools: <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/assessing/>

Resources that helped us with our thinking on theoretical perspectives:

ALA Inc, Quest, Issue 1 (Winter 2003) ISSN: 1448-4390

ANTA, 'Fresh Thinking about learning and learners: A Blue Sky Project' April 2003, NCVER, www.ncver.edu.au

Action research model for the Management of Change in Continuing Professional Distance Education
www.ics.ltsn.ac.uk/pub/italics/issue1/nunes/008.html

Archee R & Saunders S 2001, Converging Modalities for Distance Education in Professional Communication: Implications from Flexible Delivery, Journal of Distance Learning, vol 6, no 1, pp 5-17

Brabazon, T. 'Digital Hemlock: Internet Education and the poisoning of education' *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, vol. 43, no. 2, July 2003

Chan Bobbie., A Study of the Relationship Between a Tutor's Personality and Teaching Effectiveness: Does Culture Make A Difference? *International Review of Research in Open and distance learning* (October 2002) ISSN: 1492-3831
<http://www.irrodl.org/content/v3.2/chan.html>

Dearnley C 2003, Student Support in open Learning: Sustaining the Process, *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, viewed 16 September 2003, <http://www.irrodl.org/content/v4.1/dearnley.html>

Downes, S. 'Learning Objects: Resources for Distance Education Worldwide'. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* July 2001 ISSN: 1492-3831 www.irrodl.org/content/v2.1/downes.html

Fermen, T. & O'Brien, A. 'Lecturers' experiences in using online discussions: a case study' *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* vol. 43, No. 3, November 2003

Foley G. 2001 Strategic Learning: Understanding & Facilitating Organisational Change, CPE, Sydney. Pp 161-164

Friedlander, J. 2004. 'Teachers struggling to go with technology's flow' SMH, 16 April 2004, p.9
<http://www.aesharenet.com.au/>

Grepperud G, Stokken A.M. & Toska JA 2002, Out of the Shadow and Into the Spotlight - the Development of Distance Teaching in Norwegian Higher Education, *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, viewed 16 September 2003, <http://www.irrodl.org/content/v2.2/toska.html>

Kilpatrick, S. & Bound, H. 'Learning Online Benefits and Barriers in Regional Australia' vol. 2, NCVER, www.ncver.edu.au

Ludwig-Harman, S. & Dunlap, J. 'Learner Support Services for Online Students: Scaffolding for Success'. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*. April 2003. ISSN: 1492-3831
www.irrodl.org/content/v2.1/dunlap.html

Mackay, H. 'Australia at a Turning Point' ALIA 2002 Conference papers; <http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2002/papers/mondayspapers.html>

National Centre for Vocational Educational Research www.ncver.edu.au

Nunan, Ted. "Flexible Delivery – What is it and Why is it a part of current educational debate?" July 1996 "Different Approaches: Theory and Practice in Higher Education" Conference papers.
http://www.lgu.ac.uk/deliberations/flex.learning/nunan_content.html

Oren A, Mioduser D & Nachmias R 2002, The Development of Social Climate in Virtual Learning Discussion Groups, *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, viewed 16 September 2003, <http://www.irrodl.org/content/v3.1/mioduser.html>

Rigmore, George. "The critical place of information literacy in the trend towards flexible delivery in higher education contexts". 1995 Learning for Life Conference papers
http://www.lgu.ac.uk/deliberations/flex.learning/rigmore_content.html

Rovai, A.P. 2002, Building Dense of Community at a Distance, International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, viewed 16 September 2003, <http://www.irrodl.org/content/v3.1/rovai.html>

Trindale. A .R, Carmo . H, and Bidarra. J., Current Developments and Best Practice in Open and Distance Learning. International Journal of Research in Open and Distance Learning. ISSN: 1492-3831 Vol 1, No 1 (June 2000)

Wilson, E. 2003 'E-Learning's simplest quality control test is whether it engages students' SMH, 21 September, p.8

Wordsworth, Y (1997) Do it Yourself Social Research, Allen & Unwin, Sydney

Exploring alternative VC software/Authoring Tools/Learning Management Systems

Centra: www.centra.com

WebCT: www.webCT.com/products

Fablusi (Role play) <http://www3.fablusi.com/>

Easy Generator – LMS: <http://www.learningfutures.co.uk/index.cfm?PID=26>

Hewlett Packard – LMS

Toolbox Champions: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox/champions/>

WBEx <http://www.webex.com/webex/company-overview.html>

WebTeach <http://www.webteach.com.au/Demonstration.html>

Other software we explored to resource instructional design:

Yahoo Messenger

MSN Messenger

Voice Chat Rooms

Wimba Voice Board

Funding sources:

www.grantslink.gov.au

www.ausindustry.gov.au

www.regionalsolutions.gov.au

www.apecef.org

www.dcita.gov.au

www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

<http://www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au/docs/guidelines.aspx>

<http://www.tafefrontiers.com.au/>

Books

Burns, S. *'The Emotional Experience of the Adult Learner'*, PHD Thesis, University of South Australia, 1998

Langer, E. *'The Power of Mindful Learning'* Perseus Publishing, Cambridge, 1997

We went to Net*Working 2003 Conference

Appendix 1

List of Broken Hill agencies we consulted with:

- Nyampa Aboriginal Housing Corporation (Menindee) - Cheryl Johnstone, Jan Fennell
- Silverlea Employment & Training Services (Broken Hill – disability service) - Angela Hartnup
- Youth Interagency (focus group) - approx 15 people including John Armstrong (FarWest ReConnect) & Trevor Paul (BH Youth Accommodation Services)
- Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation (Jamie Love & other staff member)
- Robinson College (RTO) - John Harris
- DoCS - Mark Kickett (Manager) and 6 other staff
- HACC Focus Group (approx 10 people inc Broken Hill Council, Carer Respite Centre)