



Call for Papers

Special Edition: Australian Journal of Adult Learning

Power, policies, and practices in adult literacies

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The term “literacy” has shifted to “literacies” in recent years as critical educational discourses recognise the multiplicity of learning experiences encompassed in the fields of critical literacy, New Literacy Studies, multiliteracies, and sociocultural approaches to additional language learning. The plurality of literacies speaks to the pressing need to find relevant ways to communicate about increasingly complex issues in a fast-paced world.

Traditionally, literacy has been narrowly defined as the technical ability to read and write. This definition still holds great currency amongst policy makers and the public in many countries, who also often believe in the premise of Human Capital Theory that perceives education as an investment for fast economic growth and a quick solution to workforce skill shortages. In the field of adult education, Paulo Freire’s (1970/2005) seminal work on critical literacy and its focus on problem posing resulted in the empowerment of adults through language,

dialogical engagement, and recognition of adults' abilities to change the oppressive status quo, as seen through many successful popular education literacy campaigns across the globe (Finnegan, 2021). This focus on how power shapes learning continues to resonate in societies shaped by mass migration, evolving technologies, and a neoliberal climate, to reflect on what it means for adults to be considered literate. What has shifted is a focus on language as a socially situated practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) – meaning that everyday communications such as sending a text, creating a playlist, or asking directions in another language, contribute to how meaning is made and interpreted.

This Special Issue of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning (AJAL) will explore various trends developing at the forefront of literacies in adult education, to consider ways that literacies are being defined and enacted in current times in research and practice. We encourage submissions from around the globe about literacies that relate to these four fields:

- Critical literacy
- New literacy studies
- Multiliteracies
- Sociocultural approaches to additional language learning in adult education

Each of these four areas of literacies draw attention to ways in which power continues to shape and impact adult learning experiences. Critical literacy may draw upon a Freirian analysis or the Frankfurt school of critical theory, which examines power relations through concepts such as ideological critique, that question the underlying assumptions of power structures often embedded in dominant discourses. Critical literacies may also consider a range of access and inclusion issues, looking at factors such as gender, Indigeneity, ability, age, race, culture, and/or social class. In this ongoing epistemological shift, New Literacy Studies has significantly advanced our understanding of the larger societal implications of Web 2.0 technologies: “In a world where electronically produced text carries meaning, exclusion from digital technologies can have disempowering consequences – especially for life in the home, community and workplace” (Hamilton, Tett, & Crowther, 2012, p. 4). Multiliteracies, like New Literacy Studies,

acknowledge the power dynamics of literacies to shape identities and technological advances. Multiliteracies focus on deepening and expanding forms of communication through multimodality and cultural diversity (Kalantzis et al., 2016). The broader concept of literacies also undergirds sociocultural approaches to additional language learning, which recognise the need to affirm multilingual students' identities in the face of coercive societal power relations that devalue Culturally and Linguistically Diverse learners' home cultures and languages (Cummins, 2021).

Proposals for the following types of papers that address literacies in adult learning will be considered

- Advancing theoretical discourses on literacy
- Disseminating new research on literacy
- Critiquing Human Capital Theory approaches to literacy policies
- Reporting on literacy programs or stories of practice teaching literacy (from practitioners in the field)

Types of contributions welcome

Abstracts should be 300-500 words (excluding references) to be sent directly to the Guest Editors to their email address (please see email addresses below).

Academic papers of 6000 to 6,500 words in length including references, tables, data and figures will be blind double, external peer reviewed to be submitted via the *AJAL* portal.

Stories of practice of up to 3,000 words in length including references, tables, data and figures will be reviewed by editors to be submitted via the *AJAL* portal.

AJAL submission and author guidelines

<https://www.ajal.net.au/peerreview/index.php/ajal/about/submissions>

Timeline

- Abstracts due on February 27, 2024.
- Outcomes of Guest Editors' decisions on accepted abstracts communicated by March 1, 2024.
- Papers due on May 15, 2024.
- Review period and feedback is from May – August 2024.
- Finalisation of Paper in September 2024.
- Final Papers for copy editing due on October 1, 2024.
- Publication for November 2024.

Inquiries can be submitted to the Special Edition Guest Editors via email

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