

# Research Background

for the Partner-Assisted Learning System

**Judy Buckingham**

Community Learning Partners  
Project Officer  
School of Health Sciences  
Deakin University



# Partner-Assisted Learning System: The Research Background

The importance of learning to work co-operatively ... is like motherhood and democracy, difficult to criticise ... Yet true collaboration is rare. (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999)

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide some of the academic background to the development of the Partner-Assisted Learning System (PALS), which is the product of a three-year project – Community Learning Partners; learning and relationships for adults with an intellectual disability.

The research involved both:

- an extensive literature review of collaborative, emancipatory and adult learning theory and practice, and relationship theories; and
- field work investigation into how people with an intellectual disability learned, formed relationships in their learning and the barriers to all of these within the contexts of adult community education, recreation and workplaces.

Firstly, the paper provides a brief history of the project before detailing some of the theoretical understandings underpinning the research. Secondly, the paper outlines the methods of investigation, followed by an overview of the fieldwork findings.

## History

Interest in the concept of learning partnerships started when Open University in conjunction with Mencap and People First (London Borough) developed a learning package Learning Disability: Working as Equal People (usually referred to as Equal People) which encouraged people with and without an intellectual disability to work and learn together (Fairchild & Walmsley, 1996). The package is emancipatory in intention in that it has a strong self advocacy component, and was written for people with disabilities to work either independently, in a paired arrangement with a person without a disability or in a group of people with and without disabilities. Following this, the Community Learning Partners project – managed by Gawith Villa Inc and Deakin University in association with a number of community organisations – was funded through ANZ Trustees to develop a learning package based on Equal People. The package would be appropriate for the Australian community and would retain the partnership component.

# Theoretical Frameworks

## **What is participatory learning?**

Participatory learning, that is, learning whereby two or more people learn together, stretches along a continuum from peer tutoring to participatory action research (PAR), and can also include informal and supported learning. The following gives a brief description of some of the more frequently used and discussed techniques. For clarity this description has been divided into two broad sections: collaborative and emancipatory learning. This is not to suggest that they are necessarily mutually exclusive but, as the discussion argues, techniques used for emancipatory learning may mitigate against collaborative learning in some circumstances.

## **Collaborative learning**

This is the broad term used to cover most learning whereby two or more learn together within a structured curriculum. Emphasis is placed on social and goal interdependence (that is participants have an interest in the social development and the achievement of the learning goal both by themselves as individuals but also for each of the other members of the team) and reciprocity between peers. Progress in both skills/knowledge acquisition and collaboration is monitored and assessed by a facilitator or teacher. It has been successfully used with groups and pairs of primary-school-aged children, including those in which one member has an intellectual disability (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975; R. T. Johnson & Johnson, 1994; J. Putnam, Rynders, Johnson, & Johnson, 1989; Sapon-Shevin, Ayres, & Duncan, 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1994) and with adults (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).

One student, Kris, whose goals for math included writing numbers from 1 – 50 and using a calculator was given the role of writer/checker within her group. The other students in the group determined what mathematical function to use for the problem, helped Kris write down the problem on the worksheet by dictating the numbers, solved the problem, and dictated to Kris the numbers for her to write down for the answer. Kris was then responsible for checking the group's response on her calculator. (Sapon-Shevin et al., 1994)

Collaborative learning is based on a combination of the Cognitive Development theories of Piaget and Vygotsky; Social Interdependence theories (SIT) as expounded by Johnson and Johnson (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975) and the Behavioural Learning Theories of Skinner (cited in D.W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975).

Piaget's interests lay in the progressive development of logic in children as an evolutionary process (McNally, 1973). His thought was that interpersonal interaction and the confrontation by a learner of another's point of view makes a significant difference to intellectual development (McNally, 1973; Murray, 1994).

Vygotsky proposed that knowledge is social and that mental accomplishments originate in social relationships. His theory of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) asserted that when a learner collaborates with a more capable peer, his/her development is greater than that which he/she can achieve on his or her own. That is, a 3- to 5-year-old can do what a 5- to 7-year-old can do if it is done collaboratively (Vygotsky, 1978).

**Social interdependence theory** posits that the way social interdependence is structured determines how individuals interact and this in turn determines outcomes. Positive interdependence (that is co-operation) results in individuals encouraging and facilitating each other's efforts to learn. Negative interdependence (that is competition) typically results in individuals discouraging and obstructing each other's efforts to achieve. In the absence of interdependence (that is individualistic efforts) there is no interaction with each other. Positive interaction leads to increased efforts to achieve positive interpersonal relationships, and psychological health. Oppositional and no interaction leads to decreased efforts to achieve, negative interpersonal relationships and psychological maladjustment (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975).

**Behavioural theory** states that offering rewards results in positive outcomes.

Johnson and Johnson are keen however to point out that simply putting people together does not result in interdependence. This has to be structured into the curriculum and reinforced with rewards.

Collaborative teaching practice is generally characterised by an understanding of the teacher as monitor. There are clear rules which have to be followed and which are an integral part of the curriculum. These include:

- rules of interdependence and reciprocity: "We sink or swim together";
- process rules: task allocation, division of information, turn taking, role allocation; and
- motivational rules: feedback and rewards. (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1975; J. Putnam et al., 1989).

...“On one day the following collaborative skills were identified: a) sharing materials; b) encouraging everyone to participate; c) saying at least one nice thing to everyone in your group and d) checking to see if everyone understands and agrees with the answers. Students were told that the teacher would be watching to see if these particular behaviours occurred in the groups and would record such instances on an observation sheet...” (J. Putnam et al., 1989).

Collaboration succeeds because it is structured to succeed and the process becomes part of the curriculum. Variations based on the concept of collaborative learning include:

**Peer tutoring** normally takes place in pairs and usually assumes that there is a more competent member of the pair (Cole & Chan, 1990; Laplant & Zane, 1994). It has also been used successfully, however, in classrooms where children with a cognitive disability have taken the part of the tutor (Cook, Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Casto, 1986; Osguthorpe & Scruggs, 1986). Techniques used include modelling, testing, corrective feedback and positive reinforcement.

Everyday, Kaitlyn, a fifth grade student, worked with Tyler, a second grade student, in the area of reading. Kaitlyn read story books to Tyler, questioning him about story elements such as characters, plot, and setting. She kept a daily record of the stories she read to Tyler and logged his responses to questions. Kaitlyn and the special educator met periodically to analyze Kaitlyn's records and logs to determine if changes were needed in the objectives or methods of instruction (Laplant & Zane, 1994)

Peer tutoring normally requires monitoring by a teacher within a structured environment, but can also be more informal.

A student without speech at the Royal Albert Hospital, Lancaster, taught his friend how to operate a tape recorder by means of gesture and facial expression. The tutor concerned showed skill in standing back to let this learning take place without intervention (Sutcliffe, 1991)

Brufee (Brufee, 1993) also makes a distinction between "monitor" type peer education and "collaborative" type peer education, the distinction being in the degree of peership of the partnership, that is how equal the peers are in age, class, and standing. The more unequal, the more the tutor is likely to become a "de facto" teacher. Monitor type tutoring can have academic benefits, but will not further interdependence or empowerment.

**Mentoring** is a tool used in adult education and within the world of work and refers to the practice of peer or supervisory teaching "on the job"(Cohen, 1995; Galbraith & Zelenak, 1991). It assumes that one partner is more competent and will in effect be "teaching" the other. Emphasis is placed on partnership, trust and nurturing alongside challenging the mentoree. Mentoring has been used successfully where the mentoree has an intellectual disability (Hagner, 1992; Hagner, Cotton, Goodall, & Nisbet, 1992; Lutfiyya, 1995).

Mentors taught the job and the tricks of the trade they had learned from experience, and they also socialized new employees into the culture of the setting. For example, one employee who was returning hospital carts back where he obtained them was told by his mentor, "You don't have to put them back. Nobody else does." Mentors helped employees pace their work, counselling a new employee to "take your time" if a job was being completed too quickly (Hagner, 1992).

**Supported learning** can come from paid and trained support workers or trained volunteers assisting within a mainstream learning environment . An example can be drawn from part of a program at a Further Education College in the UK in which R., who has an intellectual disability, is assisted by a paid support worker in his woodwork class:

Her job has been to negotiate with the tutor on the syllabus and then to do a task analysis, breaking down each competency into small achievable tasks which she can then help R. learn, and having a direct input only where literacy or numeracy become an issue (Buckingham, 1999).

Trained and supported volunteers may become co-learners who support a person with a disability to attend a learning activity (usually a leisure pursuit) such as in a UK adult education program in which volunteers are given a free course in return for “befriending” a person with a disability. They learn together as class members with the befriender acting as a link between student, teacher and other members of the class (Buckingham, 1999).

**Transactional process** is collaboration of a different kind in as much as the partnership is between student and teacher. In this process students are expected to determine their own learning needs and methods and set their own learning objectives. The teacher’s role is to guide, motivate and challenge the student (Galbraith, 1991).

### **Emancipatory learning**

Emancipatory education is concerned with political change, with learner control of the curriculum and elision of the teacher/student roles. Characteristic techniques include learning as a group (pairs are unusual) and dialogue between participants. It is motivated by a political stand against social history and oppression and as a struggle against constraining forces. Its aim is to alter social structures. Any educators and researchers can be seen as invasive (M. Newman, 2000). Examples of emancipatory research and learning include feminist consciousness raising groups, and environmentalist groups. Another example of emancipatory education is the work done at the Highlander School in raising consciousness of workers such as those in the local mining, textile and tobacco industries, and in the Civil Rights movement in the USA (Horton, Kohl, & Kohl, 1998).

Along with becoming literate, they learned to organise, they learned to protest, they learned to demand their rights, because they learned that you couldn’t just read and write yourself into freedom. You had to fight for that and you had to do it as part of a group not as an individual (Horton et al., 1998).

Emancipatory learning has emerged predominately through the work of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1972, 1974). It is worth noting however that Freire’s theories of education were not designed to allow people to function better within a given system (and in that way are the antithesis of competency-based education). He was interested in making people aware of injustice and through that awareness helping them to take their development into their own hands. A major part of this awareness is through rejection of the language of the oppressors and the development of language which is meaningful to the learners. His theory of education starts with the concept that students are already knowledgeable about their world and that the teacher’s role is to assist in the drawing out of that knowledge. In this way the teacher is also learning and education begins when both partners are simultaneously both teacher and learner. Education however does not stop at reflection about the world, it must lead to action.

Emancipatory teaching is practised through groups of people investigating their world, language and culture in order to understand their cultural universe; identifying the root causes of oppression; regenerating their language and conducting on-going dialogue to establish meaningful language. Basically the questions to be asked are: what is an oppressive situation and how can we influence or change this (Finger & Asun, 2001)?

We began our sessions together in groups of six or seven students for one hour a week. These meetings were informal, involving conversations about what it means to be labelled “learning disabled”. Students in this phase shared experiences that revealed longings, frustrations, beliefs and hopes about their lives...(Peters, 1999).

### **Participatory action research (PAR)**

PAR is based on emancipatory theories. PAR takes place when all participants have control over the means of knowledge production and the educative process results in a radical transformation of social reality (McTaggart, 1991). For PAR to take place, everyone concerned must be involved in critical examination of ideology and the role “teacher” is only to facilitate decisions made by the group (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). In PAR, “teaching” is kept to a minimum and the teacher role is simply as facilitator to a group of people who for one reason or another see themselves as oppressed. It requires the active involvement of the whole group in a reflection-action spiral (McTaggart, 1991).

### **Adult learning theories**

Most adult learning today has been moving – and some would say is being politically driven (Preece, 2001; Thompson, 1997) – towards competency-based learning: that is, the acquisition of skills or competencies. This is what Thompson has condemned as “individual self fulfilment” (Thompson, 1997) and Freire as “banking” education (Freire, 1972) in that skills are “deposited” in the learner but do not encourage the learner to think critically either about themselves, their world or how they learn. In competency-based education outcomes are paramount, process is incidental. Education which depends on competency continues to be examined (Chappell, Gonczi, & Hager, 2000; Foley, 1995; M Newman, 2000), but in many ways the debate is over: it has been accepted as standard throughout the Western world.

In Australia it forms the backbone of the training reforms initiated in 1994, accumulating in the National Training Framework of 1996. Most commentators agree that most government funded post-secondary education is now directed towards a vocational and training agenda (Foley, Crombie, Hawke, & Morris, 2000; Mason & Randell, 1995; McIntyre, 2001; M Newman, 2000). This agenda includes foundation education in literacy and numeracy, but is focused on competency-based education: that is, education based on the acquisition of predetermined competencies and skills that can be assessed and will lead to qualifications and work. These predetermined skills are underpinned by the findings of the Mayer Report (1992) which identified seven generic competencies as being essential for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work, and are further identified by the National Centre for Vocational and Education Research (NCVER) as essential for effective participation in further education and adult life more generally (2003).

A reasoning behind the emphasis on generic competencies is the development of a workforce that is able to move across jobs to meet the demands of a competitive market economy (Foley et al., 2000) and is in line with the concept of human capital acquisition described by Becker (1993) – that is, a model of individual investment in learning in order to better one's own economic status and that of the state by providing a flexibly trained workforce able to adapt to changing economic conditions.

Even so, as Knowles points out, with the rate of change increasing, knowledge gained at any one point in time will be obsolete in fewer than ten years (or less as the rate of change inexorably speeds up). It is therefore necessary for learners also to know how to learn (Knowles, 1978).

As far back as the 1920s and '30s progressive education theorists (eg. John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky) recognised the contribution of cognitive thinking in education – that is, the learner's ability to understand how they learn and how to use what they learn as well as what they learn. Learners do not passively absorb information, but process it in individual ways which involve spirals of experience, observation, reflection, experimentation (Foley, 1995).

**Transformative theories** (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Mezirow, 1991; Perry, 1968) are concerned with the processes of learning, but also with the ability of that process to transform or change meaning for the learner, leading to altered attitudes and perspectives through reflection, or sometimes a life-changing experience followed by reflection.

**Critical learning theory**, which flourished in the radical movements in the 1960s and '70s, places learning within social contexts. Its emphasis is on challenging dominant ideologies; on reflection, action and change.

### **Learning and adults with an intellectual disability**

Literature specifically regarding adults with an intellectual disability is not prolific. While there have been attempts to address issues at a practical level (Buckingham, 1998; Nawrocki, 2004; Sutcliffe, 1991, 1992; Sutcliffe & Jacobsen, 1998) as Riddell et al claim, adult education has yet to develop theoretical frameworks which can inform practice by articulating an understanding of the status "adult with learning difficulties" (Riddell, Baron, & Wilson, 1999).

Preece's reading of this situation is that with the current assumptions that educational participation is for economic and competitive advancement, the educational needs of those who cannot be employed are ignored (Preece, 2001) – a view echoed by Riddell et al (Riddell, Baron, & Wilson, 2001). Another interpretation is that adults with an intellectual disability have been excluded because of an assumption that they are past the age (that is, childhood) when it would have been useful for them to be provided with instruction (Laghi, 1999).

Nevertheless, there is a growing body of work being produced by the Schonell Institute which supports the concepts that adults with an intellectual disability are capable of learning (Moni & Jobling, 2000, 2001; Van Kraayenoord, Elkins, Palmer, & Rickards, 2001; Van

Kraayenoord, Moni, & Jobling, 2001; Ziebarth & Van Kraayenoord, 2000), particularly when it is practiced through the socio-cognitive models based on Vygotskian theories (Moni & Jobling, 2001).

### **Relationship theories**

This section covers literature on relationships: friendship, partnership and also workplace mentoring and workplace relationships.

Although some literature suggests that for people with an intellectual disability, close relationships may be difficult to achieve (Bayley, 1997b; Knox & Hickson, 2001; McLeod, Stewart, & Robertson, 2001; Ouvrey, 1998; Reiter & Levi, 1980; Richardson & Ritchie, 1989), there have also been several accounts of successful personal relationships between people with and without an intellectual disability (Andrews, 1995; Bayley, 1997b; Harris, 1994; Lutfiyya, 1991; McLeod et al., 2001).

Although Knox and Hickson maintain that individual friendship should only be defined from the perspective of those involved in the relationship, it is nevertheless easier to work with an understanding of what is commonly meant by the relationship we call "friendship". Lutfiyya for instance defines friendship as having mutuality (that is, reciprocity although not always equality); being of a voluntary nature; and having rights, such as the right to call on one another for support; responsibilities and obligations, such as being responsible for the maintenance of the relationship. Bayley (Bayley, 1997a, 1997b) however draws on the work of Weiss (Weiss, 1974) and the typology of relationships he developed based on people's emotional and cognitive needs, all of which need to be met to achieve spiritual, social and psychological health (Bayley, 1997a). These are attachment and intimacy, social integration, opportunities for nurturance, reassurance of worth, reliable assistance and obtaining guidance. Bayley adapted this by substituting "belonging" for "intimacy" (a) to reflect the emotional content more powerfully and (b) because although intimacy was important it was not, in his view, essential. However Bayley seems to imply here that "intimacy" is associated with a sexual or physical relationship, which as he says few people with intellectual disability realise. Richardson and Ritchie however define "intimacy" as having two forms: that of "special friend" characterised by notions of trust, sharing, warmth, help, continuity, a general sense of belonging and fun; and "partnership" which covers more sexually based relationships (Richardson & Ritchie, 1989).

For Weiss "The relationship that provides attachment may in consequence be of central importance in the establishment of a life organisation" (p. 25). Yet it is also the area which Bayley's and other studies (Richardson & Ritchie, 1989) have shown that people with an intellectual disability have the least access to.

Knox and Hickson's investigation into friendship between people who both had an intellectual disability suggests that those who are "good mates" have in common the following: their relationship is pivotal, it was not restricted to a single setting, it was long term, there was a commonality of interests and there was an assumption of mutual responsibility (Knox & Hickson, 2001).

Writing of friendship in general (that is where disability is not considered), Allan also considers there to be an expectation of reciprocity within a friendship (although the time frame and measurement of equivalence of exchange may vary), and a sense of equality between those involved (Allan, 1998). This concept of reciprocity is also considered by others as a major contribution to a close relationship (Duck, 1999; Taylor & Bogdan, 1989), although Duck also accepts that “complementarity” may be a feature: that is where the behaviour of one partner complements the other.

Later work by Weiss includes a taxonomy of adult relationships which divides relationships into “attachments” and “affiliations” (Weiss, 1998). Attachments are those which include security as a factor such as pair bonds (sexual partnerships, best friends), parental (where one partner seeks to protect the security of the other), and guidance obtaining (where one partner relies on the other for guidance). Affiliation includes friendships, work relationships and kin ties. In attachment, the relationship tends to be exclusive and the people involved are not interchangeable, whereas affiliations tend to be group orientated and allow for the interchangeability of individuals within, say, a friendship network. This reflects Duck’s definition of a close personal relationship as being one between two people who could not be exchanged without changing the nature of the relationship (Duck, 1999). For emotional wellbeing, a person needs both attachment and affiliations, lack of the former resulting in emotional loneliness, and of the latter in social loneliness. Empirical work by DiTommaso and Spinner has confirmed the critical role claimed by Weiss of attachment in emotional loneliness, and of social integration in social loneliness (DiTommaso & Spinner, 1997). One implication of this study was that closer friends may in fact be more relevant to reduced levels of social loneliness (as well as emotional loneliness) than are casual acquaintances – in addition to the social integration that both friends and acquaintances provide, close friends who provide feelings of attachment and who can be turned to for advice are also associated with less social loneliness.

This distinction between affiliation and attachment can also be related to the analysis by Riddell et al. of Putnam’s social capital theories (R. Putnam, 2000) which distinguish between “bonding”(that is, inward looking tending to reinforce exclusive identities) and “bridging”(that is, outward looking and encompassing people across society) social capital. Riddell et al. suggest that bonding networks can fix people with an intellectual disability in powerless and independent relationships, where as bridging networks are more inclusive since they “open up the possibility of reciprocal relationships essential to a more independent life” (Riddell et al., 2001, p. 205).

Also of interest in looking at the nature of close relationships, is the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1988). This states that satisfaction in a relationship depends on rewards, costs and a person’s comparison level; commitment in a relationship depends on satisfaction, available alternatives and investments (such as: time, emotional energy, self disclosures, shared friends and memories); the continuity of a relationship depends directly on a person’s level of commitment.

There is also literature which is concerned with partnership rather than friendship (Fabian, Luecking, & Tilson, 1994; Lendrum, 2000; Sullivan, 2001) yet here also key words and phrases emerge: mutual trust, long-term relationships, shared decision making, shared

goals, risks and benefits, which align with some of the above definitions of friendship – mutuality, of a voluntary nature, having rights and responsibilities and obligations.

There is considerable literature on adult mentoring in the workplace for people with a disability (Hagner, 1992; Hagner et al., 1992; Lutfiyya, 1995; Nisbet & Hagner, 1988) and studies of people with a disability and their co-workers and on the relationships between them (Chadsey- Rusch, Gonzalez, Tines, & Johnson, 1989; Gaylord-Ross & Park, 1995; Hood, Test, Spooner, & Steele, 1996; Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 1999; Reitman, Drabman, Speaks, Burkley, & Rhode, 1999; Rusch, Hughes, Johnson, & K.E., 1991; Rusch & Wilson, 1995; Rusch, Wilson, Hughes, & Heal, 1994; Shafer, Rice, Metzler, & Haring, 1989). Some of these (Hood et al., 1996; Mank et al., 1999) are concerned mainly with work efficiency, but a number, which are more concerned with social interaction in the workplace, found that although there was acceptance of people with a disability by co-workers, they tended to be physically integrated rather than socially and that interactions did not extend to a great degree into breaks and beyond actual work (Chadsey- Rusch et al., 1989; Rusch et al., 1991; Rusch & Wilson, 1995; Rusch et al., 1994). Hagner et al. note that supervisors and co-workers occupy different roles and support and that supervisors cannot be relied on for social interaction (Hagner, 1992). This is reflected also in the work of Desforges et al. (Desforges et al., 1991) who indicate that stereotyping of “out” groups can be reduced by collaborative activity provided the participants collaborate as equals.

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## Method

Within each of the three contexts of work, recreation and adult community education, research took place at three levels:

- Experts in the field
- Existing partnerships where one partner has an intellectual disability
- Organisational study around the existing partnerships.

The key areas of investigation covered:

- What do people (with or without a disability) need/want to learn either to be able to take part or to connect with others?
- What do employers/coordinators/teachers need to learn to help people with disabilities to take part or connect?
- How do people learn to take part or connect?
- What are the barriers to either learning or inclusion within this context?

Semi-structured interviews would be the primary form of data collection. However, because of the limited communication skills of some of the participants with disabilities, data was also collected through observation where possible.

## Adult community education

- Experts in the field:  
These involved interviews with six practising adult educators/co-ordinators who had extensive experience of teaching and/or co-ordinating people with an intellectual disability and inclusion. One of these was based solely in the disability sector; four within the community sector, and one from the TAFE sector.
- Practising partnerships:  
These have involved seven partnerships. Four partnerships had been formed as part of a literacy class instigated by a disability organisation which used non-disabled volunteers on a one-to-one basis within a group structure; the other three partnerships were in community adult education centres. One of these was a mixed ability classroom from which members were removed for individual tuition for part of the lesson with a non-disabled volunteer thus creating one of the partnerships. Also within the class structure, participants worked together from time to time in pairs and one of these couples (one member of which was also one half of the previously mentioned partnership) were also interviewed. The final partnership in a community setting is a volunteer tutor and learner working alone.
- Organisational study:  
Teachers, co-ordinators and/or managers of three centres where people with an intellectual disability learned with someone without a disability were interviewed – a total of seven people.

## Employment

- Experts in the field  
A semi-structured group interview was conducted with three workplace trainers (Individual Support Workers) from one agency. Interviews also took place with eight personnel from employment agencies specialising in the placement of people with disabilities, these were managers and/or workplace trainers. One manager of a supermarket employing people

with disabilities was interviewed.

- Practising partners:

Four partners have been researched using both observation and interviews. Partners without a disability were co-workers, three of whom were also in a supervisory position. Of these only one person with a disability was receiving full award wages, one was receiving a supported wage and the other two were not waged at all.

- Organisational study:

Interviews took place with managers and co-ordinators (where there was one) of four organisations who employed people with disabilities working in pairs with someone without a disability – five people in total.

### **Recreation/leisure**

- Experts in the field:

Interviews have been conducted with seven co-ordinators/facilitators of recreation for people with disabilities into mainstream activities, including two Access All Ability workers, the co-ordinator of VicNord.; two workers from Leisure Action, the City of Port Philip recreation access officer and a “Leisure Buddies” co-ordinator. Two other unstructured interviews also took place with a further co-ordinator of recreation in a community setting, and a provider of recreation for people with intellectual disabilities who also works in a residential facility.

- Partners:

Two of the pairs researched were “leisure buddies” and one pair was attending a craft class together.

- Organisational study:

The manager/co-ordinator of the neighbourhood house interviewed as part of the adult education section also has responsibility for the recreational activities of the organisation and the interview also covered this aspect of her job. Also interviewed was the co-ordinator of the craft class.

Table 1. Data collection

	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Total experts</b>	25
<b>Total partners</b>	13 (25 people)
<b>Total Organisational</b>	10 (14 people)

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

This is an overview of conclusions suggested by the research. It looks first at general conclusions across all environments in the initial research phase and then at the development of the package.

### 1. The results

The main findings are shown according to the key questions asked.

#### a) What do people need or want to learn in order to take part or connect?

(i) Non-disabled people who were working or learning with someone with an intellectual disability:

- Consistently, over all three contexts, the two most important skills thought to be needed were the ability to communicate with people with a disability and the ability to form a relationship with them.
- The next most important, across all contexts, was the ability to be a social catalyst.
- Within the adult education sector, the most important skills after these were the ability to assess an individual's learning style, followed by the use of humour, positive reinforcement, listening skills and flexibility.
- Within the workplace, the next most important skills were seen to be consistency and patience. Two people also thought that non-disabled people needed to know about safety.
- The recreation sector was the only one in which it was thought that disability awareness training was important.

(ii) People with disabilities

- Again, consistent across all contexts, social skills and knowing how to make friends were considered far and away the most important skills thought to be needed.
- In the adult education sector, learning to learn was the next most important.
- In the workplace, the next most important was the ability to fit in to an organisation's culture.
- Advocacy and understanding place culture were the next two most important skills in the recreation sector.

#### b) How do people learn to take part and connect?

Again, this was overwhelmingly seen to be through relationship- and friendship-building. Trust was seen to be an essential element of this, as was time and humour.

Within the adult education sector the pairing of people in tutor/learner pairs was viewed favourably by most teachers and by all students. This was also used in one recreation setting and also with the Leisure Buddies program. Workplace pairs observed were all of a supervisor/worker nature, but workplace trainers (with one exception) used co-workers as natural supports.

#### c) What are the barriers to learning or inclusion?

- In adult education, the barriers were seen almost equally to be lack of confidence in ability to learn, lack of appropriate curricula and lack of time in which to learn.
- In recreation, the most important barrier to inclusion was seen to be the gatekeepers in the disability sector, after that, equally: the funding structures; lack of training by

disability workers in how to help people be included; and lack of disability awareness. Community attitudes came after this.

- In the workplace, lack of knowledge of relationship boundaries on the part of people with a disability came first, but almost equally were lack of social skills and time needed for someone to learn a job. Close behind this was lack of knowledge of a workplace culture and inability to fit in. Poor pay was also mentioned twice, as were a perception of lack of productivity, and an inability to adapt to change and being distracted.

## **2. The package**

The package, now renamed as Partner-Assisted Learning, was developed using two modalities: learning modules and tool kits. The initial module topics are: Making Friends; Learning Together; Looking Out for Each Other; Fitting In; Meeting Together; Being Safe; and Getting Out and Joining In.

The process involves:

- (i) reflection and allocation of equal responsibilities (through start and finish sheets to be completed before and after each session);
- (ii) dialogue, in that most exercises require the partners to talk together about the topic; and
- (iii) limited reading and writing, although one partner must have basic literacy.

## **3. Package development process**

- All modules were developed first with four small focus groups of pairs of people, one of whom had an intellectual disability, using action research.
- These were then reconsidered by the Reference Group.
- Tool kits were written and then workshopped with the Reference Group.
- They were then submitted to outside experts in the three contexts for comment.
- Complete packages were then given to five outside organisations to trial. Subsequently, modifications were made.

## References

- Allan, G. (1998). Friendship, sociology and social structure. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15(5), 685 - 702.
- Andrews, S. S. (1995). Life in Mendicino: A young man with Down Syndrome in a small town in Northern California. In S. Taylor, R. Bogdan & Z. M. Lutfiyya (Eds.), *The variety of community experience* (pp. 101 -116). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.
- Bayley, M. (1997a). Empowering and relationships. In P. Ramcharan, G. Roberts, G. Grant & J. Borland (Eds.), *Empowerment in everyday life: Learning disability* (pp. 15-34). London. UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Bayley, M. (1997b). *What price friendship? Encouraging the relationships of people with learning difficulties*. Minehead, England: Hexagon Publishing.
- Becker, G. S. (1993). Human capital revisited. In *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education* (3rd ed., pp. 15-26). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice and mind*. USA: Basic Books Inc.
- Brookfield, S. D., & Preskill, S. (1999). *Discussion as a way of teaching: Tools and techniques for democratic classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Brufee, K. A. (1993). *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence and the authority of knowledge*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Buckingham, J. (1998). *Inclusive communities manual of good practice*. Melbourne: Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres.
- Buckingham, J. (1999). *The practice of inclusion: Observations of inclusive learning practice in adult and further education in the United Kingdom*. Melbourne, Australia: Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres.
- Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1983). *Becoming critical: Knowing through action research*. Melbourne, Australia: Deakin University.
- Chadsey-Rusch, J., Gonzalez, P., Tines, J., & Johnson, J. R. (1989). Social ecology of the workplace: Contextual variables affecting social interactions of employees with and without mental retardation. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 94(2), 141 -151.
- Chappell, C., Gonczi, A., & Hager, P. (2000). Competency-based education. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Understanding adult education and training* (pp. 191 -205). Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Cohen, N. H. (1995). *Mentoring adult learners: a guide for educators and trainers*. Malabar, Florida: Kreiger Publishing Company.
- Cole, P., & Chan, L. (1990). *Methods and strategies for special education*. Sydney, Australia: Prentice Hall of Australia Pty Ltd.
- Cook, S. B., Scruggs, T. E., Mastropieri, M. A., & Casto, C. C. (1986). Handicapped students as tutors. *Journal of Special Education*, 19(4), 483 - 492.
- Desforges, D. M., Lord, C. G., Ramsey, S. L., Mason, J. A., Van Leeuwen, M. D., & West, S. C. (1991). Effects of structured co-operative contact on changing negative attitudes towards stigmatized social groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(4), 531 -544.
- DiTommaso, E., & Spinner, B. (1997). Social and emotional loneliness: A re-examination and Weiss' typology of loneliness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 22(3), 417 - 427.
- Duck, S. (1999). *Relating to others*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

- Fabian, E. S., Luecking, R. G., & Tilson, G. P. (1994). Preparing for effective partnerships. In *A working relationship: The job development specialist's guide to successful partnerships with business* (pp. 25-35). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing.
- Fairchild, B., & Walmsley, J. (1996). *Using "Equal People"*. Milton Keynes, England: Open University.
- Finger, M., & Asun, J. M. (2001). *Adult education at the crossroads*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Foley, G. (1995). Teaching adults. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Understanding adult education and training* (pp. 31-54). St Leonards, England: Allen and Unwin.
- Foley, G., Crombie, A., Hawke, G., & Morris, R. (2000). Policy formation in adult education and training. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Understanding adult education and training*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Freire, P. (1974). *Education for critical consciousness* (C. f. t. S. o. D. a. S. Change, Trans.). New York: The Seabury Press.
- Galbraith, M. W. (1991). The adult learning transactional process. In M. W. Galbraith (Ed.), *Facilitating adult learning: A transactional process* (pp. 216). Malabar, FL: Kreiger Publishing Company.
- Galbraith, M. W., & Zelenak, B. S. (1991). Adult learning methods and techniques. In M. W. Galbraith (Ed.), *Facilitating adult learning: A transactional process* (pp. 103 -134). Malabar, FL: Kreiger Publishing Company.
- Gaylord-Ross, R., & Park, H.-S. (1995). Individual social skills training and co-worker training for supported employees with dual sensory impairment. *Behavior Modification*, 19(1), 78 -95.
- Hagner, D. (1992). The social interaction and job supports of supported employees. In J. Nisbet (Ed.), *Natural supports in school, at work and in the community for people with severe disabilities* (pp. 217-240). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.
- Hagner, D., Cotton, P., Goodall, S., & Nisbet, J. (1992). The perspectives of supportive coworkers: Nothing special. In J. Nisbet (Ed.), *Natural supports in school, at work and in the community for people with severe disabilities* (pp. 241-256). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.
- Harris, T. (1994). Christine's inclusion: An example of peers supporting one another. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaboration* (pp. 293-304). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.
- Hood, E. L., Test, D. W., Spooner, F., & Steele, R. (1996). Paid coworker support for individuals with severe and multiple disabilities. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 36, 280 -292.
- Horton, M., Kohl, J., & Kohl, H. (1998). *The long haul*. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1975). *Learning together and alone* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Johnson, R. T., & Johnson, D. W. (1994). An overview of cooperative learning. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning* (pp. 31-43). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.
- Knowles, M. (1978). What is androgogy? In *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to androgogy* (pp. 40-61). New York: Cambridge.

- Knox, M., & Hickson, F. (2001). The meanings of close friendship: The views of four people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 14, 276 - 291.
- Laghi, C. (1999). A review of the salient issues pertaining to literacy and people who have an intellectual disability (Unpublished paper). Melbourne.
- Laplant, L., & Zane, N. (1994). Partner learning systems. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning*. Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Ltd.
- Lendrum, T. (2000). *The strategic partnering handbook; The practioners' guide to partnerships and alliances* (3rd ed.). Roseville, Australia: McGraw Hill Book Company of Australia.
- Lutfiyya, Z. M. (1991). A feeling of being connected: Friendships between people with and without learning difficulties. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 6(3), 233 - 244.
- Lutfiyya, Z. M. (1995). Baking bread together: A study of membership and inclusion. In *The variety of community experience* (pp. 117-126). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.
- Mank, D., Cioffi, A., & Yovanoff, P. (1999). Impact of coworker involvement with supported employees on wage and integration outcomes. *Mental Retardation*, 37(5), 383 -394.
- Mason, R., & Randell, S. (1995). Adult education: Politics, rights and privilege. *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*, 35(3), 211 - 217.
- Mayer, E. (1992). *Putting education to work: The key competencies report*. Melbourne: Australian Education Council and Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training.
- McIntyre, J. (2001). The discursive construction of ACE in national policy. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 41(1), 56 - 71.
- McLeod, J., Stewart, G., & Robertson, M. (2001). *Community inclusion - Enhancing friendship networks among people with a cognitive impairment*. Melbourne: DisAbility Services Branch, Department of Human Services.
- McNally, D. W. (1973). *Piaget, education and teaching*. Hornsby, Australia: Angus and Robertson.
- McTaggart, R. (1991). Principles for participatory action research. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(3), 168 - 187.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Moni, K. B., & Jobling, A. (2000). Ignoring the frontiers: Poetry and young adults with Down syndrome. *Social Alternatives*, 19(3), 36 - 39.
- Moni, K. B., & Jobling, A. (2001). Reading-related literacy learning of young adults with Down syndrome: Findings from a three year teaching and research program. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 48(4), 377 - 394.
- Murray, F. B. (1994). Why understanding the theoretical basis of cooperative learning enhances teaching success. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning* (pp. 3-11). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. (2003). *Generic skills*. Retrieved Sept 2003, 2003, from <http://www.ncver.edu.au/generic.htm>
- Nawrocki, N. (2004). *Innovative strategies for low-level literacy students*. Melbourne: Olympic Adult Education.

- Newman, M. (2000). Learning, education and social action. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Understanding adult education and training* (2nd Edition ed., pp. 267 -281). St Leonards, England: Allen and Unwin.
- Newman, M. (2000). Program development in adult education and training. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Understanding adult education* (pp. 59-80). Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Nisbet, J., & Hagner, D. (1988). Natural supports in the workplace: A reexamination of supported employment. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 13(4), 260 - 267.
- Osguthorpe, R. T., & Scruggs, T. E. (1986). Special education students as tutors: A review and analysis. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7(4), 15 - 26.
- Ouvrey, C. (1998). Making relationships. In C. Ouvrey (Ed.), *People with profound and multiple learning disabilities: A collaborative approach to meeting complex needs* (pp. 66-75). London, UK: David Fulton Publishers Ltd.
- Perry, W. (1968). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- Peters, S. (1999). Transforming disability identity through critical literacy and the cultural politics of language. In M. Corker & S. French (Eds.), *Disability discourse* (pp. 103 -115). Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Preece, J. (2001). Challenging the discourse of inclusion and exclusion with off limits curricula. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 33(2), 201 - 217.
- Putnam, J., Rynders, J. E., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989). Collaborative skill instruction for promoting positive interactions between mentally handicapped and non mentally handicapped children. *Exceptional Children*, 55(6), 550 - 558.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Reiter, S., & Levi, A. M. (1980). Factors affecting social integration of non institutionalized mentally retarded adults. *American Journal on Mental Deficiency*, 85(1), 25 - 30.
- Reitman, D., Drabman, R. S., Speaks, L. V., Burkley, S., & Rhode, P. (1999). Problem social behaviour in the workplace: An analysis of social behaviour problems in a supported employment setting. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 20(3), 215-228.
- Richardson, A., & Ritchie, J. (1989). *Developing friendships: Enabling people with learning difficulties to make and maintain friends*. London, UK: Policy Studies Institute.
- Riddell, S., Baron, S., & Wilson, A. (1999). Social capital and people with learning difficulties. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 31(1), 49 - 66.
- Riddell, S., Baron, S., & Wilson, A. (2001). The significance of the learning society for women and men with learning difficulties. *Gender and Education*, 13(1), 57 - 73.
- Rusbult, C. E. (1988). Commitment in close relationships: The investment model. In L. A. Peplau, D. O. Sears, S. E. Taylor & J. L. Freedman (Eds.), *Readings in social psychology: Classic and contemporary contributions*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rusch, F. R., Hughes, C., Johnson, J. R., & K.E., M. (1991). Descriptive analysis of interaction between co-workers and supported employees. *Mental Retardation*, 29(4), 207 - 212.
- Rusch, F. R., & Wilson, P. G. (1995). Interaction of persons with severe mental retardation and their non-disabled co-workers in integrated work settings. *Behavior Modification*, 19(1).

- Rusch, F. R., Wilson, P. G., Hughes, C., & Heal, L. (1994). Matched-pairs analysis of co-worker interactions in relation to opportunity, type of job, and placement approach. *Mental Retardation*, 32(2), 113 - 122.
- Sapon-Shevin, M., Ayres, B. J., & Duncan, J. (1994). Cooperative learning and inclusion. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning* (pp. 45-58). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.
- Shafer, M. S., Rice, M. L., Metzler, H. M. D., & Haring, M. (1989). A survey of non-disabled employees' attitudes toward supported employees with mental retardation. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 14(2), 137 -146.
- Stainback, W. C., & Stainback, S. B. (1994). Introduction. In J. S. Thousand, R. A. Villa & A. I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative Learning* (pp. xxiii -xxvii). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.
- Sullivan, M. (2001). Disabled people and the politics of partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand. In L. Barton (Ed.), *Disability, politics and the struggle for change* (pp. 93-109). London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Sutcliffe, J. (1991). *Adults with learning difficulties: Education for choice and empowerment*. Leicester, England: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.
- Sutcliffe, J. (1992). *Integration for adults with learning difficulties*. Leicester, England: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.
- Sutcliffe, J., & Jacobsen, Y. (1998). *All things being equal? A practical guide to widening participation for adults with learning difficulties in continuing education*. Leicester, UK: NIACE.
- Taylor, S., & Bogdan, R. (1989). On accepting relationships between people with mental retardation and non-disabled people: Towards an understanding of acceptance. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 4(1), 21 - 36.
- Thompson, J. (1997). *Words in edgeways: Radical learning for social change*. Leicester, England: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.
- Van Kraayenoord, C., Elkins, J., Palmer, C., & Rickards, F. W. (2001). Literacy for all: Findings from an Australian study. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 48(4), 445 - 456.
- Van Kraayenoord, C., Moni, K. B., & Jobling, A. (2001). Putting it all together; Building a community of practice for learners with special needs. Retrieved 7/07/2003, 2003, from [www.readingonline.org/articles/vankraayenoord/index.html](http://www.readingonline.org/articles/vankraayenoord/index.html)
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weiss, R. S. (1974). The provisions of social relationships. In Z. Rubin (Ed.), *Doing unto others* (pp. 17-26). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Weiss, R. S. (1998). A taxonomy of relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15(5), 671 - 683.
- Ziebarth, K., & Van Kraayenoord, C. (2000). Literacy and students with intellectual disabilities. In C. Van Kraayenoord, J. Elkins, C. Palmer & F. W. Rickards (Eds.), *Literacy, numeracy and students with disabilities: Volume 2 - the literature reviews* (Vol. 2, pp. 201-250). Nathan, Queensland: Centre for Literacy and Language Education Research.