Breaching the Standardised Assessment Boundary:
Assessment For Learning as a Field of Exchange.

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Abstract

The introduction of the Australian curriculum, the use of standardised testing (e.g. NAPLAN) and the My School website are couched in a context of accountability. This circumstance has stimulated and in some cases renewed a range of boundaries in Australian Education. The consequences that arise from standardised testing have accentuated the boundaries produced by social reproduction in education which has led to an increase in the numbers of students disengaging from mainstream education and applying for enrolment at the Edmund Rice Education Australia Flexible Learning Centre Network (EREAFLCN). Boundaries are created for many young people who are denied access to credentials and certification as a result of being excluded from or in some way disengaging from standardised education and testing. Young people who participate at the EREAFLCN arrive with a variety of forms of cultural capital that are not valued in current education and employment fields. This is not to say that these young people's different forms of cultural capital have no value, but rather that such funds of knowledge, repertoires and cultural capital are not valued by the majority of powerful agents in educational and employment fields. How then can the qualitative value of traditionally unorthodox - yet often intricate, ingenious, and astute - versions of cultural capital evident in the habitus of many young people be made to count, be recognised, be valuated? Can a process of educational assessment be a field of capital exchange and a space which breaches boundaries through a valuating process? This paper reports on the development of an innovative approach to assessment in an alternative education institution designed for the re-engagement of 'at risk' youth who have left formal schooling. A case study approach has been used to document the engagement of six young people, with an educational approach described as assessment for learning as a field of exchange *across two sites in the EREAFLCN. In order to capture the broad range of students' cultural and social capital, an electronic portfolio system (EPS) is under trial. The model draws on categories from sociological models of capital and reconceptualises the eportfolio as a sociocultural zone of learning and development. Results from the trial show a general tendency towards engagement with the EPS and potential for the attainment of socially valued cultural capital in the form of school credentials. In this way restrictive boundaries can be breached and a more equitable outcome achieved for many young Australians.*

Key Words

Assessment
Assessment For Learning
Cultural capital
Educationally disengaged youth
Exchange
Field of exchange
Flexible learning

Paper

Introduction

As an approach to breaching boundaries for the marginalised youth who attend Edmund Rice Education Australia Flexible Learning Centre Network (EREAFLCN) schools, the research discussed in this paper is developing and trialling a hybridised social networking webpage and Electronic Portfolio System (EPS) as a means of acquiring accreditation for those youth. This paper reports on research findings taken from two schools within the EREAFLC Network.

How do we assess the capacities, skills and resources of 'at risk' youth who have not succeeded in conventional schooling? By definition, a high proportion of adolescents who have *dropped out* of school have already been judged as underperforming according to conventional educational assessments (e.g., standardised tests, grades and examinations).
Many have experienced homelessness, disrupted family life, and disenfranchisement from basic social services and community institutions. These circumstances create a number of boundaries for these young people and can curtail life trajectories in severe and discriminatory ways. Yet many of these young people have developed demonstrable "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992; Murphy, & Hall, 2008), skills and abilities

or repertoires (Tilly, 1995; Rogoff et al. 2007) which, although often ingenious and astute, are not recognised as a contribution towards certification, and are not 'counted as knowledge'.

The EREAFLC Network is engaged in the endeavour of breaching discriminatory boundaries for young people and incorporates and manages flexi-schools (registered non-state schools) in the pursuit of this undertaking. At present there are five Flexible Learning Centres (FLCs) and seven outreach programs in Queensland, Australia. Recently the organisation has been approved to expand nationally. The EREAFLCN maintains an ethos of social and learning environments which enable the emancipation of young people who have been disenfranchised from education. The research described in this paper takes place at the EREAFLCN school (FLC) in Deception Bay (an outer northern suburb of Brisbane) and the Edmund Rice Centre Education Program (CEP) in Kingston (an outer southern suburb of Brisbane).

The young people who attend these centres have become disengaged from mainstream or regular schooling for a variety of reasons. Some have dropped out due to family or social pressures and some have *been expelled* for disciplinary reasons. These young people arrive with identifiable forms of cultural capital which have not been recognised in previous educational settings. Some have musical abilities, some are involved with Hip-hop culture (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002), or Goth culture (Hodkinson, 2002), some have computer gaming abilities; some are members of sub-cultural groups such as BMX, Skate and Surf cultures. All of these young people however, have some kind of cultural capital, forms of repertoires or funds of knowledge other than the curriculum prescribed versions of cultural capital. The recognition of unique forms of cultural capital is not currently incorporated in mainstream educational institutions that rely on standardised testing regimes or the "universal features of schooling, including classification, grading, curriculum, surveillance and credentialing" (Olson, 2003, p. xi) which produce the forms of cultural capital that are valued by societies.

In this research, funds of knowledge, skills, abilities and repertoires are seen to be the products of social and cultural practices and experiences that are constitutive in the identities of young people from different social backgrounds with varied socio-political histories and are salient, valuable, negotiable forms of cultural capital. It is argued that these cultural capitals can be exchanged for forms of cultural capital that are usually produced through mandatory curriculum and that in this way the young people at EREAFLCN can re-engage with education and/or employers. This research argues that when a young person has a knowledge, a skill or an interest in a subject area, no matter what that subject area is, then that interest can be tapped and become a catalyst for engagement. It is argued that this engagement can then call forward funds of knowledge and repertoires, a student's embodied cultural capital. Such capital can then be recognised and valuated by powerful agents in the field, a notion which incorporates the idea of teachers as learners, and through assessment for learning approaches to teaching these forms of capital can be incorporated, utilised, processed and exchanged for forms of cultural capital that are transferable, for example, credentials. The ability to acquire credentials is seen as integral tool in the process of breaching boundaries that restrict the future lives of young people enrolled in the EREAFLCN.

Objectives

The study aims to observe and analyse the implementation of a digital assessment for learning model that documents forms of cultural capital including particular funds of knowledge that young people bring to flexible learning. Assessment for learning is conceptualised as a field of exchange. Teachers are seen as integral participants in the exchange process, acting as reflexive agents with power to value, or valuate, a process that requires knowledge and learning, thus teachers are also seen as learners. The intention is to record and document instances of students converting their funds of knowledge into the forms of cultural capital valued by Australian society such as credentials, that is, recorded grades, assessment results and certificates.

The research problem is to enable youth to use this new model to document their capital in ways that can be assessed and converted, or exchanged in the fields of education and employment. The problem calls for a new and original means, a new community of learning, a new method of assessment, a new culture. Tobin and Llena (2009) recognise the notion of teachers as learners and describe research in an educational field where teachers and students are "culturally other" (p. 1). Their research identified "improvements in the quality of learning environments and outcomes such as coming to school, staying engaged, and collaborating

with the teacher and peers to focus on the learning of science" (p. 2). These outcomes were largely attributed to the use of conversations and meetings between a collective of participants in a field which they called a "cogenerative dialogue" or "cogens" (p. 3). The cogens in turn were seen to produce various forms of culture and were described as "seedbeds" (p. 3) for the growth of new culture: "In essence, the cogen field was a place where students and teachers could learn to interact successfully and, in so doing, produce a range of culture that would support successful interactions in similar circumstances in the future" (p. 3). Like cogens, the field described in this research will provide an arena for "producing new culture, expanding the agency of participants, and changing identities" (p. 3). Unlike Tobin and Llena's (2009) cogens the field in this research will exist electronically as well as culturally. It will be largely enacted in online processes using the internet as a tool and a site. While there are parallels with the Tobin and Llena (2009) concept of creating a "new culture" (p. 3) the emphasis in this research however is on creating a new field of exchange. The term *efield* has been coined to refer to this particular field of exchange.

As a means of hosting an online community, or a third space, a website has been developed based on assessment for learning approaches (Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004; QCDA, 2009) and social networking. This is a hybridised electronic portfolio and Content Management System (CMS) and Social Networking System operating together as one. An integrated section or area of the program functions as an eportfolio and this incorporates several important eportfolio design features described in Jafari & Kaufman (2006). The aim is to provide a dynamic work space for students and staff at the FLCs. Students' work is uploaded, negotiated, re-worked, recorded, transferred for both restricted and public access. The tool provides the context and space for the creation of culture and negotiation and modification of identities through a field of exchange. By observing, interacting and recording transactions in this space a record of staff and student engagement with assessment for learning opportunities is being documented. The EPS website has been named *Sustainable Selves: Workspace* and the URL is: http://workspace.edu.au/home. In the FLCs it is most commonly referred to as *(the) Workspace*.

Perspectives

The *Sustainable Selves: Workspace*, Electronic Portfolio System (EPS) and assessment for learning more generally are conceptualised as social fields for the exchange of capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). The research maintains the conception that students and teachers at the FLC develop and learn in a sociocultural sense, within the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978). The model incorporates sociocultural development and learning theory into an educational programme of development, learning, and assessment in the EREAFLCN. A sociocultural approach entails the recognition and inclusion of the concepts of social-historical and cultural-historical context related to the individual in interpreting and enacting assessment for learning theory and practice. Students' funds of knowledge are exchanged for cultural capital in the form of credentials as an outcome of the process.

Assessment for learning refers to formative and interactive assessment used to improve learning. It incorporates negotiation and analysis of students' work in classroom practices. Black and Wiliam's (1998) found that, assessment for learning is effective in virtually all educational settings that endeavour to teach content, knowledge and skills. The important elements of assessment for learning include "feedback focused on helping students to improve [and] sharing criteria of quality" (James & Pedder, 2006, p. 110); and a conception of assessment as an interactional exchange. Incorporating sociocultural theory into assessment for learning approaches recognizes and realizes historical, social and cultural factors in activities that aim to improve learning for the students at the FLC.

Methods

This multiple case study (Yin, 2009) will involve an in-depth exploration of six students' forms of cultural capital and the ways in which this capital can be utilised in a digital assessment for learning process. Data from interview transcripts, observation notes and school documents are being analysed and categorised in relation to the main research questions. A set of analysis questions have been adapted from a model of *Critical Sociocultural Analysis* (Moje and Lewis, 2007). To analyse and evaluate data in this study, however a sociocultural approach which incorporates Bourdieu's theories of structuralist sociology has been incorporated into the Moje and Lewis (2007) model. Bourdieu's (1993) concept of *field* describes a space where habitus negotiate reflexively to obtain capital and this process can be seen as a form of capital

exchange. In this study the field of exchange is conceptualised as taking place in an assessment for learning context and data analysis questions reflect this theoretical aspect.

Data sources

The data consists of interviews, observations and document examination. For the purposes of analysing transcript texts, a method described by Moje and Lewis (2007) as a "hybrid" discourse analytic perspective and refer to as "Critical Sociocultural Analysis" (pp. 15-24) has been adapted and is used in this research.

Observational data is being collected by the researcher in classrooms or computer rooms at the Deception Bay and Kingston sites. The field-note format developed by Gutierrez and Vossoughi (2010) provides a useful basis for the development of a field-note outline for this research.

Documents from the EREAFLCN are being analysed primarily for descriptive information about students. Information such as gender, age, address, parents/guardians names occupations, and so on, are available, but also information about previous schools attended by students and academic achievement can be obtained. Some of these categories will be used in the NVivo research program to evaluate data.

Results

The research is underway at the time of writing this paper. Preliminary analysis of interviews and observations has shown a willingness by a significant number of students to engage in the field with other students and staff at the FLCs. A total of 148 user accounts have been created and approximately 578 comments, many of which qualify as instances of negotiation around students' productions and artefacts have been recorded to date, but as was anticipated, many of these instances are part of an ongoing discussion and form an evolving narrative. Students have uploaded items such as songs or music recordings, photographs, artwork, writing, PowerPoint files, and video recordings. Early indications show students' cultural and social capital can be documented and 'presented' in the efield. Several students have aspirations to attain specific certificates or credentials and are concentrating their efforts towards those goals. Other students are simply presenting their artefacts with no pre-determined goal in mind.

Some resistance towards participation in the efield has also been encountered. Participation by students has been hindered by factors such as a perception of additional workload being undesirable, low levels of general and/or IT literacy skills, a reluctance to make public personal information and artefacts on an intranet system and a general lack of enthusiasm for a *"new gadget"* that is not fully understood. Interestingly, participation by staff, particularly at the Deception Bay site, has also been hampered by many of these same factors. Some staff have mentioned time constraints, lack of IT skills, perceived additional workload and lack of training or assistance as integral considerations in their hesitancy to engage with the efield. There has been however a group of teachers at the Kingston site who have been very enthusiastic about engaging with the system. They have referred to the ideas of students' willing engagement and desire to "get onto the *imacs*" and the notion that students' see these learning sessions as times when they are "in control" or "doing all the talking". Teachers view these responses as important factors in literacy learning and they have shown a great deal of interest in students' productions in the *imovie* program and other texts (field notes, February 2011).

The results observed to date from the establishment of the efield at the FLCs have been of sufficient quantity and quality to create some insightful analysis. As mentioned earlier a significant number of students and staff have created user accounts and most of these participants have engaged in regular, or at least irregular, communication and activities performed in the efield. This engagement in the efield is seen to be the initial process in the development of discourses that will progress towards breaching the consequential boundaries of disengagement from standardised schooling through the attainment of school credentials for young people at the centres.

The exchange process we utilise in the assessment model has been described as *assessment for learning as a field of exchange.* As this term suggests the process is a form of assessment for learning and has at its heart many of the formative assessment features that could be recognised in traditionally constructivist approaches to teaching such as theories developed by Dewey, Piaget, Bloom, Bruner, Gardiner and Vygotsky. These theorists generally position learning as a process of personal and social construction. Assessment for learning

is seen as one such process. It is formative and interactive assessment used to improve learning. It incorporates negotiation and analysis of students' work in classroom practices. Black and Wiliam's (1998) found that, assessment for learning is effective in virtually all educational settings that endeavour to teach content, knowledge and skills. The important elements of assessment for learning include "feedback focused on helping students to improve [and] sharing criteria of quality" (James & Pedder, 2006, p. 110) and a conception of assessment as an interactional exchange. Incorporating sociocultural theory into assessment for learning approaches recognizes and realizes historical, social and cultural factors in activities that aim to improve learning for the students at the EREAFLCN.

There is however a fundamental difference between teaching approaches developed from post-structuralist theories and the model developed in the Sustainable Selves concept. When approaches that utilise post Vygotskian inquiry learning models, for example *active learning* (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), a rather broad concept which encompasses approaches such as, *Guided Inquiry* (Khulthau et al., 2007), *Assisted Performance* (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) and *Guided Participation* (Rogoff, 1993), are enacted in school contexts they invariably take a predetermined goal from curriculum as a starting point. A task is selected for students and they may then be motivated and engaged through making connections with prior knowledge and experiences. Students are then assessed on the relevance or quality of their explicit connection to curriculum. Most of the students at EREAFLCN however, have become disengaged from standardised curriculum. They frequently report huge gaps between themselves and school curriculum, often to the extent where making a connection with such curriculum is no longer a feasible endeavour.

The Sustainable Selves model uses a differentiated approach where students' prior knowledge and experiences are the starting point and are used to create tasks which can be assessed in terms of officially recognised credentials. Curriculum is not the starting point and the process of fulfilling assessment requirements is reached via paths not prescribed by curriculum. The idea here is to breach boundaries created by previous experiences of disengagement and provide access to credentials through pathways other than the historically entrenched discourses of schools which are inaccessible for educationally disengaged and marginalised young people.

The exchange process is realised where students have articulated unique forms of shared experiences and incorporate complex socio-cultural expressions, often related to group membership, and these artefacts or products are able to be valuated by staff and peers in ways that satisfy criteria used in standardised institutional assessment. In this way students' embodied cultural capital can be exchanged for socially valuable cultural capital in the form of credentials. In an assessment for learning context however these exchanges can happen in various degrees and circumstances. For example, a simple comment, piece of writing, poem, tune, or handicraft can be valuated in class room exchanges as classes proceed and exchanged for institutional cultural capital, even if this is only a verbal recognition or a brief note in a teacher's journal. Such exchanges can even take place outside classes, in social group situations where an utterance, articulation, action or artefact can be recognised, valuated and recorded. Assessment for learning as field of exchange can operate at these micro-levels as well as at more substantial levels such as the issuing of official credentials in exchange for unique artefacts.

As an attempt to illustrate this concept in action an extract from a case study conducted at one of the EREAFLCN schools follows. A student was interviewed and then asked to engage with the efield. This event was negotiated, instigated and recorded. The raw data was analysed using an inductive process of breaking down data into sets which were then categorised, ordered and examined for connections, patterns and propositions that seek to explain the data in relation to a set of data questions (Simons, 2009). In this way the following narrative analysis is explained in terms of theoretical concepts outlined in the preceding sections.

An example case from the study

Allison was born in Arizona USA and now lives in [suburb, North Brisbane] with her mother, step-father and older sister and has an Australian Resident Visa. She moved to Australia when she was about 3 years old and has attended [Suburban] State Primary School since 2002 where she completed years 1 – 7. Her mother was born in Mexico, her biological father was born in the USA, and her step-father is an Australian, born in Brisbane. Allison is currently 13 years old (DOB 18/06/1997) and came to DBFLC from [high school name]

where she was enrolled in Year 8. She had been bullied and assaulted at [Suburban] State Primary School and the abuse continued in Year 8 high school, so she applied to DBFLC and after a three month wait was accepted. Her parents have stated that the bullying and harassment she was subjected to at her previous school was so intense that it caused her to "suffer mentally" and that a doctor's medical certificate to exempt her from continuing in term two of 2010 at [high school name] had been sought from her doctor. At this time Allison was being privately tutored for one hour per week in maths. She has no history of learning difficulties, but has been diagnosed by her General Practitioner (GP) as suffering from depression and is receiving counselling and medication. She also sees a counsellor two or three times per month. Her parents have reported that Allison was assaulted and threatened by one student in particular at [high school name] and that their attempts to have Allison placed in a separate class from this student were unsuccessful. Allison has had no reported contact with the police or government/non-government social agencies (such as, Centrelink or the Criminal Justice System).

Allison is a big girl for her age and suffers from obesity. She is approx 182 cm (6 ft) tall and weighs about 95 kg (210 lbs) and her size was a primary reason for her targeted abuse and harassment. She is described as sometimes being sullen and withdrawn, she is said to "shut down and won't talk to any one", but conversely has episodes of temper display when she can become loud and abusive. Her demeanour around the Centre however is for the most part calm, quiet, friendly and cooperative. She has been seen to be somewhat withdrawn at times, but this behaviour was attributable to her having been enrolled at the Centre in June 2010 and was thus unfamiliar in mid 2010. She had become more communicative and seemed to have found a few companions over the ensuing months.

Allison maintains that her main interests in life are animals and art. She claims to be able to *talk* with dogs and describes her interest in art as being mainly "animal centred", that is, she likes art subjects which involve nature and animals. Several excerpts from her interview transcription are illustrative of her habitus in this field:

> SC: So, what do you do in your leisure time? Like, when you're not here what sort of things do you like to do?
> A: I do art and play with animals and look after animals and I clean the house. My house is very tidy, especially my room.
> …
> A: Um, I like drawing animals. My favourite art is animals. I don't like drawing humans or anything. I just like drawing nature and the habitats of animals and stuff. That's all I really like drawing in art.

When Allison spoke about her passion for art, eventually the subject of animals and nature became integral in that field:

> Ok so what do you think your favourite interest would be? Art is it? Drawing stuff?
> A: Mmm hmm. Yep
> SC: and looking at other art too? You like that huh?
> …
> SC: Ok. That's sounds good, yeah. So, are you interested in pursuing art as a kind of pastime? I mean, you probably always do it. Do you think there is any way of making a living from your art?
> A: I think there is a way but my dream for the past 3 years has been to be a wildlife warrior and help animals and get them new homes and safe or a vet or a zoo keeper even. I just want to be with animals.
> SC: Ok.
> A: I do sell my artwork. I draw turtles, butterflies, dragonflies. I've only drawn one whale and one kangaroo and the kangaroo sold for $5 and 3 turtles all together sold for $25.

Allison stated her other interests to be music, sport; volleyball, basketball, netball and a rudimentary interest in online activities, mainly games concerned with animals:

> SC: Do you play computer games or anything?

> A: I only play Facebook but I only play about 5 games. Birdland, Fishland, Happy Pets, it's about dogs, cats, birds and guineapigs and rabbits, pigs and hamsters. I also play Happy Island, it's about taking care of an island with buildings and stuff. I don't really like that game.
> …
> A: I've got about 10 games I play. Um, I've got country life. It's about a farm life. Frontier village, it's about, like a cowboy game. I've got Farmville which is a nature game as well. I've got Happy Pet, that's about a little pet. You create your own virtual pet and you have to look after it every single day and make sure it's got food and water every single day and you get gifts and stuff. I've got one more called Pet Society, it's also where you create your own virtual pet but this one is much harder to keep and it's very cool, yep.

During this interview with Allison it became apparent that her main interests were indeed activities that were centred on the topic of animals, pets, wildlife, nature and art, but primarily art which was focussed on animals. She said that she was interested in music; Country and Western and Hard Rock styles mostly, and she said she liked volleyball, but she didn't mention any other interests with nearly as much enthusiasm as she spoke about her love for animals and nature. It also became apparent that her interest in art was mainly as a means to express her love of nature and animals.

Allison had disengaged from education, not because she was not interested in school work, but because her habitus in the field at her previous school had become unsustainable. She had become powerless in the field and had no voice with the school student cohort. This made her even more vulnerable and she was not only an outcast from peer/cultural groups at the school, but also a target of abuse for those students who held power within the field. She had very little social capital, by her own admission:

> A: And I don't really talk to people on there 'cause I'm not really good at making friends. I absolutely suck.
> SC: I wouldn't say that. You don't know until you try.
> A: I have tried. Last time I tried I nearly passed out and fell down.
> SC: Why?
> A: I don't know. I just get scared around humans.
> …
> A: …I'm only good with dogs. My next door neighbour's dog *Morky* died, they found him in the yard, just dead in the yard and it wasn't my dog but I cried for two days 'cause I just can't see animals dying 'cause it just breaks my heart.
> SC: So, on your *Facebook* do you have any friends on your *Facebook* at all?
> A: I've got about 40 but I never talk to them. I only talk to the five people that went to my old school and they met up, they dragged me into their club.

She claimed to be disliked by the majority of students at her previous school and said she rarely spoke to any other students. The primary form of interaction with other students had been bullying directed against her or abusive or derogatory language directed towards her from other students. She was mainly distinguished at this school by deficit views of her appearance and habitus.

Allison had attained very little socially-valued cultural capital by the time she enrolled at DBFLC. She had no *institutionalised* cultural capital, that is, certified competencies and skills through issued credentials, in this case, in the form of school or other institutional certificates. She possessed very little *embodied* cultural capital, that is, skills and repertoires for social interaction, abilities to perform and manage in social cultural situations, as well as body skills such as learned sports actions, dance abilities, or exercise repertoires.

Allison signed into the Workspace EPS system in June 2010 and was asked to contribute and share some of her work by uploading to the Workspace site. She stated that she couldn't do this because she didn't know how and her computer skills "sucked" (observation notes, June 2010). She was then given guided instruction on the operation of the *Workspace* webpage and the use of computers and digital cameras for basic photo and document handling. She showed a tentative interest in the site and gradually became engaged with processes of uploading, *blogging* on the site and *surfing* the site for other students' work. At this stage she was hesitant and reluctant to experiment or discover. She seemed to be concerned about doing something wrong and expressed fears about how she wouldn't be able to correct her mistakes. The Following Table 1 lists the

history of her work uploaded in chronological order between 10th June and 27th July 2010. The Content name is a label chosen by the student, the Student's Description is also written by the student, the View Count shows number of times the work was viewed on the website.

Table 1

Student upload history

Content Name	Student's Description	Content Type	Content Category	Create Date	View Count
sunset	gorgeous reds, pinks, oranges and yellows	Image	Design	10/06/2010 14:14	2
winter	blues, light blue, dark blue	Image	Design	10/06/2010 14:23	3
my dog	a black and brown pretty dog with a big and smart brain.	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 18:11	7
sweet and cool	purple and blck rules	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 18:13	3
alice	cool	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 18:14	6
freackie	awesome	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 18:18	4
freackie	black and white	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 18:18	5
flower	purple and blue	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 18:22	1
blue hills	bluie	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 19:05	3
water lillies	cool and prity	Image	Photo	16/06/2010 19:07	4
my baby	my baby	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 18:21	3
my baby	i love her	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 18:22	4
bat	black and pritty	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 18:30	2
leaves	cool	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 18:32	2
flowers	pritty	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 19:07	0
flowers	pritty	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 19:08	1
waterfalls	pritty water	Image	Design	27/06/2010 19:10	2
turtle	cool	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 19:15	2
whale	waterie	Image	Photo	27/06/2010 19:16	2
my turtle art	sweet,pritty,gorgeous and colourfull and also the way i see the turtle in my eyes	Image	Original art	27/06/2010 19:23	82
my turtle art	sweet, pritty, gorgeuos and colourfull and i paint with my heart and eyes to what i see in the turtle	Image	Original art	27/06/2010 19:28	67
my turtle art	This turtle is painted on canvas with normal paint. The turtle represents how I feel using facial expressions and lines, and also using the texture of the shell to show how I feel inside.	Image	Original art	27/06/2010 19:34	90
car	blue	Image	Photo	8/07/2010 15:24	12
my	these are just some art from my sketch book	Written	Fiction	27/07/2010	92

sketch book				13:31	

In supporting Allison's first attempts at using the website an assessment for learning approach was used. This approach entailed diagnostic questions in order to ascertain the areas where she needed most support. What became apparent was that Allison's literacy level was considerably lower than the standard for her age group. For this reason the teacher explained to Allison the tasks she was being asked to perform and the standard of performance that was expected in these tasks. Although she was somewhat sceptical of her abilities to achieve such goals she was encouraged and reassured that she could mange with a little help. During this questioning and supporting process the barriers that had prevented her previous engagement with IT on a deeper level were revealed and processes of dissolving these barriers, or breaking down personal boundaries that she viewed as unbreakable had begun. These were simple exercises in which she received guidance in the use of the computer and website. She was shown how to find and download an artefact, usually a piece of clip art or an image from *Google Images*, and how to file data and upload to a website, in this case the Workspace site. She was helped with reading, spelling and word meanings as well as some visual literacy approaches during which she was told what different symbols and icons in *IT language* mean. She was engaged with discourse specific language in relating details of IT use and further questioning revealed an existing reluctance, embodied in her habitus, to engage with IT due to her lack of confidence in the area. This reluctance was also seen to stem from her relatively poor literacy abilities which in turn could be seen to hinder her keyboard skills. As Allison ventured into more complex tasks using IT she was given regular feedback which focussed on the topic at hand and was informative and supportive. Positive feedback and diagnostic questioning to initiate self reflection was employed in strategies to help Allison in gradual steps to overcome her reluctance. Her first upload to the Workspace website was a *Microsoft* sample photo taken from the *Microsoft Office Picture Manager* library. She selected pictures of natural scenery or wilderness which she deemed to be "pretty". She went on to upload several pictures as shown in Figure 1below (all of which had a nature and wildlife theme).
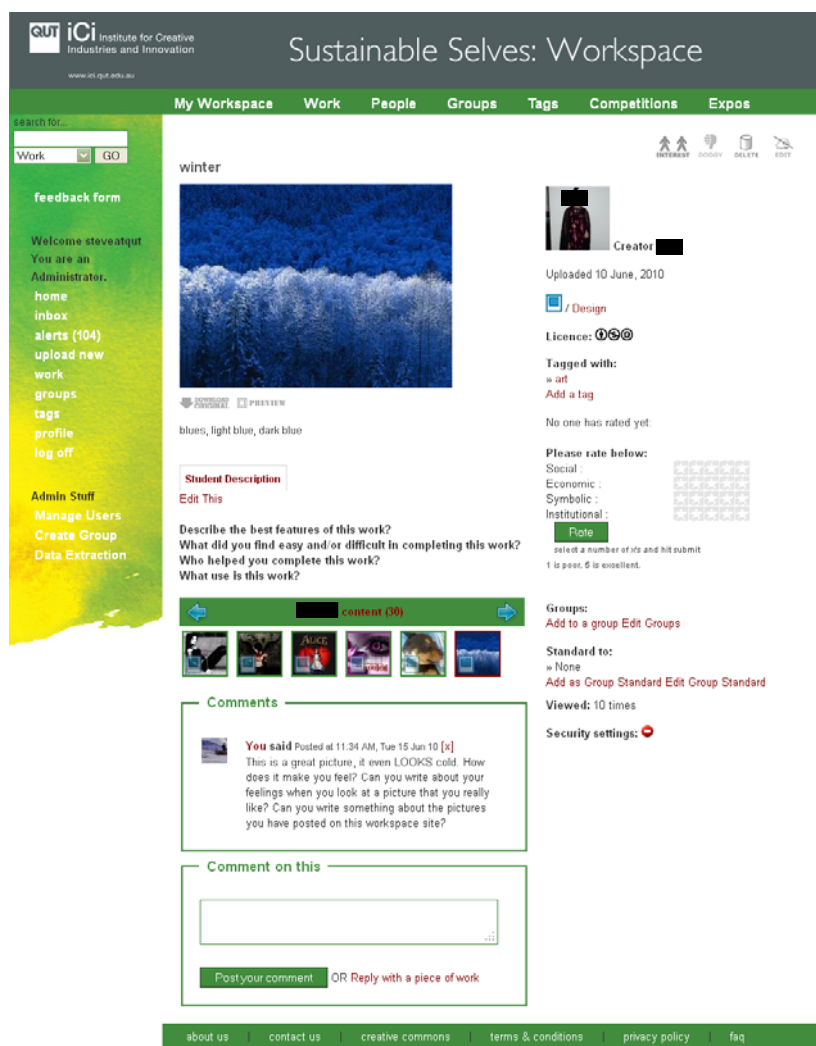
Figure 1. View of Workspace webpage showing one of Allison's initial uploads.

At this stage the she was simply trying to use the system and after some practice with using Workspace the student brought her sketchbook to the Centre to try to upload more pictures from her book. She was shown how to use a digital camera to record each page in her book and to save in *MS Office Picture Manager*. She was then given guidance in editing the pictures in *Picture Manager*. This involved cropping to eliminate excess background and re-sizing for transfer to *MS PowerPoint*. The student was then shown how to transfer each photo file into *PowerPoint* and how to add text to individual slides. She was shown how to edit page styles and to make one file that could present all her work in an easy to use format. The student then uploaded the *PowerPoint* file to her Workspace account and submitted a written description of the work and processes involved in recording and displaying her sketchbook. When students are engaged in the efield system EREAFLCN staff are expected to view and comment on students' work so that as Allison uploaded work several staff members and researchers commented on her work. This is an integrated assessment for learning feature of the Workspace website where other students and staff can communicate with a student via an online *blog* feature of the system. These feedback procedures are also instances where powerful agents (expert teachers) in the field reflexively (Bourdieu, 1993) valuate capital utilising exchange processes. The table below shows a list of comments made by staff and researchers on Allison's Workspace webpage. The comments in Table 2 below can be correlated to the Student's Comments listed in Table 1 through the Content Names. In some cases there are several days between the posted comments and Allison's responses.

Table 1

Comments made by staff and researchers on Allison's Workspace webpage

Content	Comment	Comment	Comment

Name		Date	By
winter	This is a great picture, it even LOOKS cold. How does it make you feel? Can you write about your feelings when you look at a picture that you really like? Can you write something about the pictures you have posted on this workspace site?	15/06/2010 11:34	steveatqut
sunset	This is really nice too. What can you write about it? What can you write about your relationship with this art? Yes, relationship. Think about it. What about your relationship with other pieces of art?	15/06/2010 11:36	steveatqut
water lillies	thanks for uploading [Allison]. now you know how to do it, you can try some of your own photos.	17/06/2010 17:36	awkwardb
blue hills	thanks for uploading [Allison]. but this isnt your own work is it? you can try some of your own photos.	17/06/2010 17:36	awkwardb
alice	same with this one, it isnt your own work so so have to give credit to the people who own the work, lets see some of your photos hey	17/06/2010 17:38	awkwardb
my dog	thanks for uploading [Allison]. you should enter this in the compeition, i can do it for you if you have any problems	17/06/2010 17:45	awkwardb
my dog	oops i meant competition	17/06/2010 17:45	awkwardb
car	tell us more? where, who, how, ? im intrigued	10/07/2010 5:02	awkwardb
car	where: in clontarf somewhere i do not remember but the guy toke off with our money without doing the job who:it is my dads car it is holden eh 64 and it is awesome how:i have no clue	13/07/2010 19:36	[Allison]
my turtle art	Hi [Allison], this is really nice artwork - good work.	14/07/2010 13:55	adibqut
my turtle art	Hey [Allison]! You've obviously got a passion for art and nature. Love it!	18/07/2010 21:29	davec
car	that's great, nice colour. How's the car going now? Is it progressing? You should keep us posted on the work that happens to it. Great model the 64 EH.	21/07/2010 22:08	steveatqut
my turtle art	yeah...it's a very cool turtle. So how does it make you feel inside?	21/07/2010 22:10	steveatqut
my turtle art	yeah, great colours	21/07/2010 22:11	steveatqut
my dog	nice pooch, is he/she yours?	21/07/2010 22:17	steveatqut
alice	Nice cover art, have you read the book, it's cool.	21/07/2010 22:19	steveatqut
freackie	That's a bit dark....	21/07/2010 22:19	steveatqut
freackie	Spelling is "freaky"	21/07/2010 22:21	steveatqut
my sketch book	These are really impressive, well done. Next time i see you i can show you how to use a photocopy scanner. This method gets a better result than using a camera because there is not chance of accidentally catching a shadow. I also like the font you used. Coolio	27/07/2010 17:46	awkwardb
car	i just gave this a 5 star for economic value. Why? i hear you ask, well its not the photo that impressed me, but the skills you listed in the description. These skills are valuable, people will pay you for them if you keep learning more about this	27/07/2010 18:00	awkwardb
my sketch book	Great work Eilythia, this came out really well. Do some more painting and I can show how to upload it. Also see if you can write something about your art.	28/07/2010 21:37	steveatqut
my sketch book	Also, I will show you how to put your work into groups	28/07/2010 21:39	steveatqut
my sketch	Dear student, thank you for entering your work into the competition. Your entry is currently on the front of the website in	17/08/2010 10:56	adibqut

book	public view. To keep your valuable work in the public showcase we require that you edit your description. This is a reminder to let you know you have 1 week to edit your description. Thank you		
my turtle art	Dear student, thank you for entering your work into the competition. Your entry is currently on the front of the website in public view. To keep your valuable work in the public showcase we require that you edit your description. This is a reminder to let you know you have 1 week to edit your description. Thank you	17/08/2010 10:58	adibqut
my sketch book	this description is much better, well done. Still a couple of typos though, ask a teacher for one last look over it, and i will make it public again. andy	8/09/2010 7:10	john

The table above represents a log of feedback comments posted on Allison's page over a 12 week period and can be seen as the beginning of a discourse in the context of literacy, IT literacy and assessment for learning. As Allison's knowledge and skills were developing so too was her confidence. Boundaries that had constrained her engagement with IT and the internet were being dissolved and she was seen to exhibit some confidence in this field and satisfaction in her newly acquired skills. She wanted to upload more of her work and wanted people to see and rate, or valuate her work. Her intentions for doing this became more adventurous and eventually she decided to upload all, or most of, her drawings in her sketchbook. Figure 2 below shows a higher level of engagement and competency with photography, IT and the Workspace website than she could have produced at the time of her initial engagement with the site.

Figure 2. View of Allison's sketchbook upload showing feedback comments.

By the time Allison had uploaded the work shown above she had become much more competent with the use of the Workspace system, but also with the use of technology in general. She stated that she was much more interested in computers now and had demonstrated a significant increase in technological skills as well as an increased enthusiasm about her use of technology. She also demonstrated an increase in self confidence with

the use of technology and appreciation of her own work that had not been previously evident (field observation notes, September, 2010).

She had developed her embodied cultural capital that she brought with her to the Centre from a focus on art and nature; in particular animals. She was mostly interested in domestic pets and her habitus can be seen to develop from an intense appreciation of her own pet dogs and other pets, but also a strong disposition towards art and in particular drawing and painting sea turtles. She repeatedly painted one picture of a sea turtle using very similar colours and style each time. Her habitus also included social structures which could be identified as part of the social field(s) at her home. Following the descriptions of her mother she offered it is likely that the fields she encountered at home were constructed with dispositions towards alternative and *hippie* lifestyles. Her own habitus could be seen to reflect certain ideologies and behaviours she had described in her mother and the discourses in her home context.

She produced instances of reflexivity, a process whereby an agent can draw on habitus and funds of knowledge in an attempt to enhance his or her position in the field, when she painted some editions of her sea turtle art. Each time she painted these versions of a similar picture it was very well received by staff and peers and was discussed in terms of admiration within the Centre community. At least two versions of her painting were on display at the Centre on a notice/display board and in a staffroom window. This could be seen as one of Allison's most significant and earliest exchanges of cultural capital at the Centre. In this instance Allison gained recognition of her habitus and established a position in the field of art within the Centre where she actually had attained a certain amount of power and a *hierarchical* position that allowed her some power and agency that she had not experienced in a school setting before. She also uploaded three versions of her *Turtle Art* to Workspace where it was commented on by staff and researchers. Through demonstrating her competence in producing an artefact that was valued (object cultural capital) and offering the art for general display, and thereby assessment by peers (students) and power-brokers within the field (staff), she obtained a habitus in the field that could be recognised as having value. This is a rudimentary example of assessment as a field of exchange and this event can be seen as the beginning of Allison's progression towards further exchanges and engagement in the efield where assessment for learning events could support exchanges of cultural capital. That is, where students might exchange embodied cultural capital, by way of artefact production, for socially significant cultural capital in the form of recognition of quality of the learning and ultimately credentials.

Another example of an exchange occurred at the Centre when a competition was organised using Workspace as the competition site and administration device. The contest was named *FLC Showcase $50 prize* and was described in at least three separate morning meetings, to the entire student cohort (present), as an opportunity to upload one or more pieces of their own original work to Workspace for the opportunity to win $50 first prize, or one of several digital cameras as merit prizes. The contest was open for three weeks and ten students uploaded 13 pieces of work. The work was in the form of ten *PowerPoint* presentations of students' projects, one photo of original art (Allison's *Turtle Art*), one presentation of a series of original art (Allison's sketchbook) and one original-music recording. The contest entries were commented on by staff and researchers through Workspace and opportunity was afforded to students to make some changes to their work based on feedback. The contest was finally judged by researchers using the criteria; *Educational Value, Quality of Description, Quality of Work*. Allison received a digital camera prize for her entry.

In this instance several students created exchanges and Allison is seen as reflexively presenting artefacts that were developed from her intrinsic funds of knowledge and repertoires comprising her habitus in the field at the Centre. She was able to achieve this after several assessment for learning episodes had imbued her habitus with embodied cultural capital, in the form of IT skills and literacy, enabling her to *table* or *market* her capital and exchange it for cultural capital in the form of an object of value. It is this type of exchange that is recognised in this research as *assessment for learning as a field of exchange*, albeit a seemingly insignificant event in the life trajectory of one student, it is the quality of the event that is most pertinent to this research. It is argued that the same paradigm, model, or field, that sustained Allison's exchange described above, could also sustain much more significant exchanges for many students. It is envisaged, for example, that a student utilising the same types of embodied cultural capital that Allison has developed could eventually exchange, through the efield paradigm described above, capital for certification such as the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Queensland, Certificate II in Information Technology (ICA20105), Certificate II in Visual Arts and Contemporary Craft (CUV20103) or, Certificate III in Printing and Graphic

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Arts (Print Finishing) (ICP30705). These certificates are obtainable for students enrolled in the EREAFLCN and would provide students with sufficient credentials to obtain a job or engage with further study. This kind of certification can be seen as tools which can be used to breach boundaries created by the repercussions of a standardised assessment and accountability model of schooling.

This idea has salient value for young people who have become disengaged from education and find insurmountable barriers or boundaries along their life pathways. Many of these young people are seeking to re-engage with education, and to acquire a job, but to make a reconnection with mainstream schooling is not feasible for them. In current global contexts where credentials are issued in concert with measurement based on a pre-determined set of knowledge young people who disengage from socially valued education also preclude access to socially valued credentials. This study has significant implications in this context by providing an opening for marginalised young people to acquire the skills and knowledge required to obtain socially valuable cultural capital in the form of credentials.

Significance

The study is the first study in Australia to develop the concept of *assessment for learning as a field of exchange* in education, or educational re-entry settings. It is unique in the utilisation of Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and post-Vygotskian sociocultural principles in the development and evaluation of an assessment model.

The system developed in this study will be able to track student achievement and provide data for reports that are required in funding budget allocation. The incorporation of sociocultural theories in the design of an assessment model will provide a new and unique approach to the evaluation of student outcomes and provide educational and work pathways for marginalised, educationally disengaged young people who would otherwise have exited educational programmes with no significant benefit or positive outlook. To obtain preferred study or employment options students require credentials (Lois & Dimitriadis, 2008) and the research in this project will provide a system that can produce highly relevant credentials. This is pioneering work in the field of flexible education in Australia, however the need for the attainment of socially valued cultural capital in the form of school credentials is an international quest to which this research can contribute.

The model produced in this research will be aimed at delivering visibility and recognition through an engaging instrument that will enhance the prospects of marginalised young people and produce a new method of assessment for these students. Re-entry and flexible education programmes have been made necessary through government education policies, yet rely heavily on government funding. These programmes are however, often unable to account for successful student outcomes in reporting requirements and systems. The paper calls to policy makers and researchers to engage in a cross-national discourse around practical systems for equity in assessment and the elimination of boundaries that confine young peoples' life trajectories in discriminatory ways.

Acknowledgements

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