

EDITORIAL

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This issue of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies* takes up three topical areas in adult education policy and practice: health education, program efficacy and apprenticeship learning.

Although this journal has featured several articles on health literacy, including two articles in the last issue (Hunter and Franken 2012, Black, Ndaba, Kerr and Doyle 2012), we have not featured articles focused specifically on health numeracy. Hong Huang, Yiu Ming Chan and Dong Feng provide us with our first article on this subject in 'Health Numeracy Confidence among Racial/ Ethnic Minorities in HINTS 2007: Sociodemographic, attitudinal and knowledge correlates'. Their US based research focuses on examining differences in health numeracy confidence of white, black and Hispanic Americans. As health policies in many OECD countries increasingly focus on effective health education and prevention and reduce the load on hospitalization, confidence in accessing, interpreting and taking action on health related information becomes critical. Health numeracy, as the authors explain, is linked to making decisions about risks associated with illnesses as well as various forms of interventions for treating the illnesses, thus deserving much greater attention. Based on their research findings, the authors make recommendations about approaches to improving health numeracy for specific social and ethnic minority groups.

The measurement and assessment of literacy continues to be a major focus of discussion in international bodies such as the OECD and in national policies. In the second article of this issue, James Bebko, Thomas Rhee, Carly McMorris and Magali Segers report on their research examining the factors that impact on outcomes and retention of literacy skills. They work from the hypothesis that 'automatization' – that is, automatic recognition of words, is a significant factor impacting on outcomes and retention, and discuss the implications of their findings for practitioners as well as researchers.

In policy discourses in New Zealand as well as in Australia and other English speaking countries, successes and failures in vocational training, including apprenticeships, are often attributed to learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Chris Holland's article 'Cultural/ Community Mentoring with Maori and Pacific Electrical Apprentices', the third article in this issue, reminds us that there are some more fundamental issues that need addressing to support learners facing multiple barriers to formal training, such as those related to institutional, financial, and social capital factors. The author presents her research on a pilot project establishing culturally appropriate mentors for Maori and Pacific electrical apprentices. There are

important recommendations for the design of apprenticeship programs from the findings that would apply in many programs where there are participants from minority ethnic and cultural groups.

Finally, in this issue, Rosie Wickert farewells, on behalf of all of us associated with the journal, one of the members of the original editorial team of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*. Alison Lee passed away in September this year after a brave struggle with cancer. Many readers of the journal will know that Alison's interests and influence extended to academic fields beyond literacy education in recent years. But her dedication and support for this journal continued until her illness prevented her from contributing further. We are greatly saddened and will miss our colleague, co-editor and friend Alison.

References

- Black, Stephen, Ndaba, Anne, Kerr, Christine and Doyle, Brian (2012) Methadone, Counselling and Literacy: A health literacy partnership for Aboriginal clients, *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, vol 20, no 1, pp 45-62.
- Hunter, Judy & Franken, Margaret (2012) Health Literacy as a Complex Practice, *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, vol 20, no 1, pp 25-44.