



Reclaiming Adult Basic Education?

What has been lost in translation from the 1970s to the 1990s+?

What do we need to reclaim?

Is *reclaiming* enough or possible?

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What has changed in ABE?

- From a socially progressive era to a neoliberal era
- Using cultural-historical activity theory to analyse the changes (Engeström, 2001)

What is it we need to reclaim?

- Teacher professionalism
- The learners
- Education

Has everything really been lost?

- What are signs of teacher resistance?
- Is reclaiming the past enough?

Presentation outline

ABE across two contrasting eras

1970s

Progressive social movements

Lifelong *education* underpinned by a strong humanistic ideal

The Faure Report and Delors' 4 pillars of learning:

- learning to know,
- learning to do,
- learning to live,
- learning to be

The Kangan Report: commitment to technical *and* further education

Late 1980s+

Neoliberalism

Lifelong *learning* as an individual responsibility

Marketisation of education: contestable funding

Increases in insecure work: rise of the 'gig' economy

Loss of jobs in traditional industries

Learning to be: the world of education today and tomorrow (Faure 1972)

Does this discourse reflect the principles that drive:

- a) your practice? b) Australia's policy discourse in our field

The second belief is in democracy, conceived of as implying each man's [sic] right to realise his own potential and to share in the building of his own future. The keystone of democracy ... is education.

The third assumption is that the aim of development is the complete fulfilment of man ... as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer.

Our last assumption is that only an over-all lifelong education can produce the kind of complete man the need for whom is increasing with the continually more stringent constraints tearing the individual asunder. We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually-evolving body of knowledge all through life – 'learn to be'.

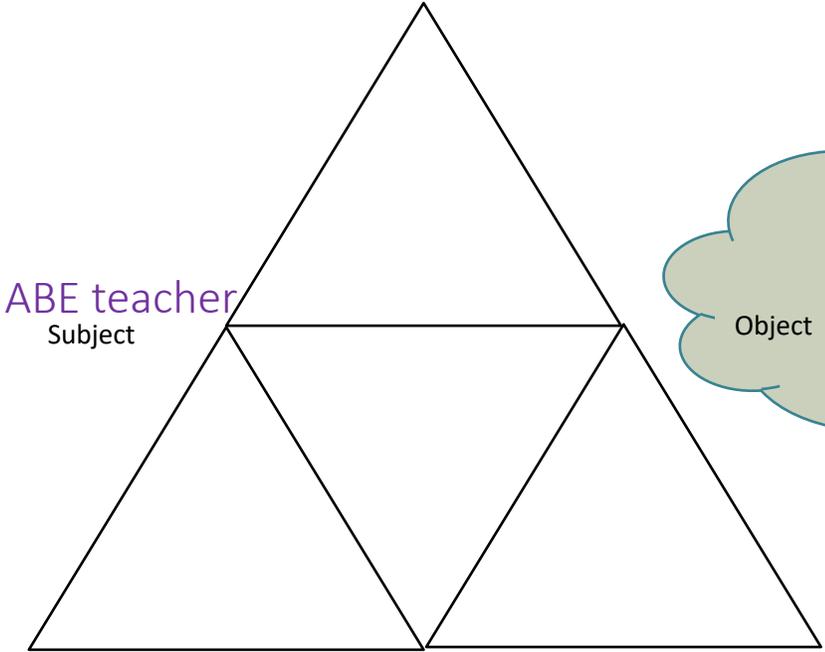
(Faure 1972, p. vi).

The early years

ABE teachers' activity system

Locally produced curriculum, learners' funds of knowledge

Tools & instruments



Rules

Learner-centred pedagogy

Community

Teachers' community of practice, ALIO (NSW), ACAL, NSWALNC

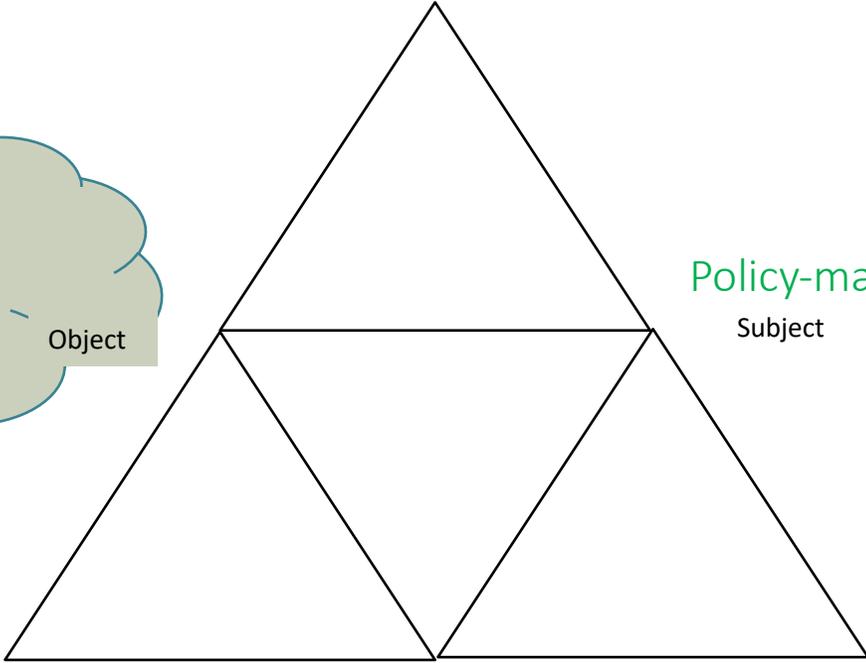
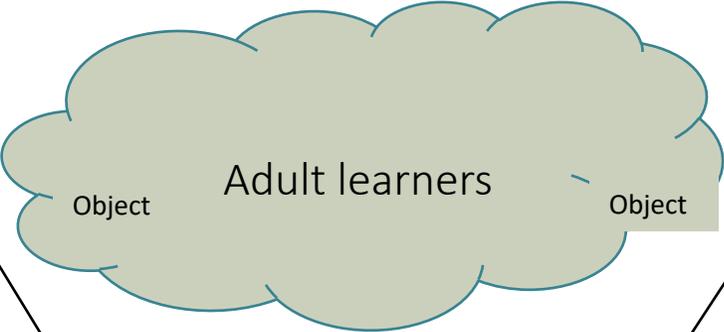
Division of labour

VET teachers
Disabilities teachers
Outreach, ESOL

Government policy makers' activity system

Public policy process

Tools & instruments



Policy-makers
Subject

Division of labour

States vs Federal

Community

Adult literacy section in DET, ANTA

Rules

Equity & access

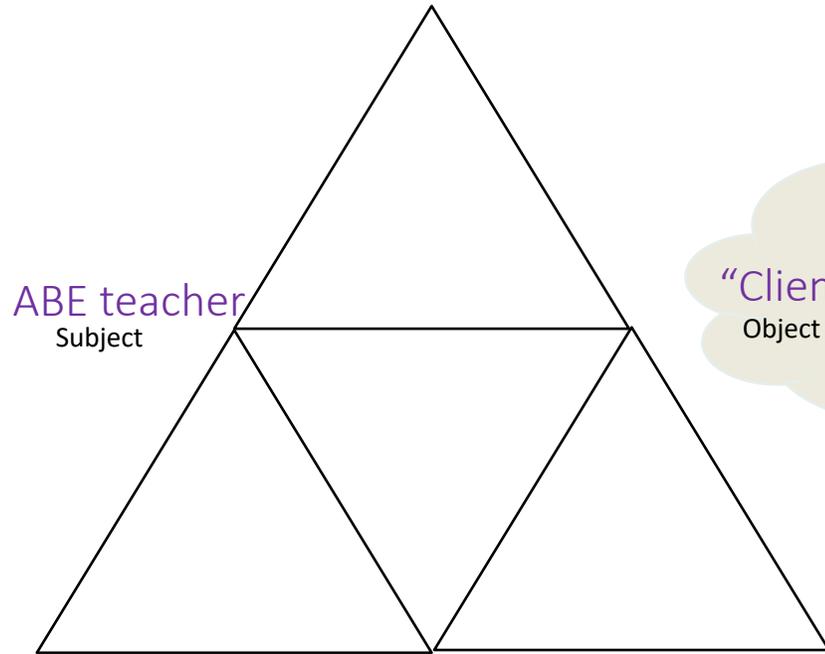
From the late 1990s

ABE teachers' activity system

Accredited training package

ACSF

Tools & instruments



Rules

Programme contracts,
CBT

Community

Teachers' community
of practice
ACAL, NSWALNC

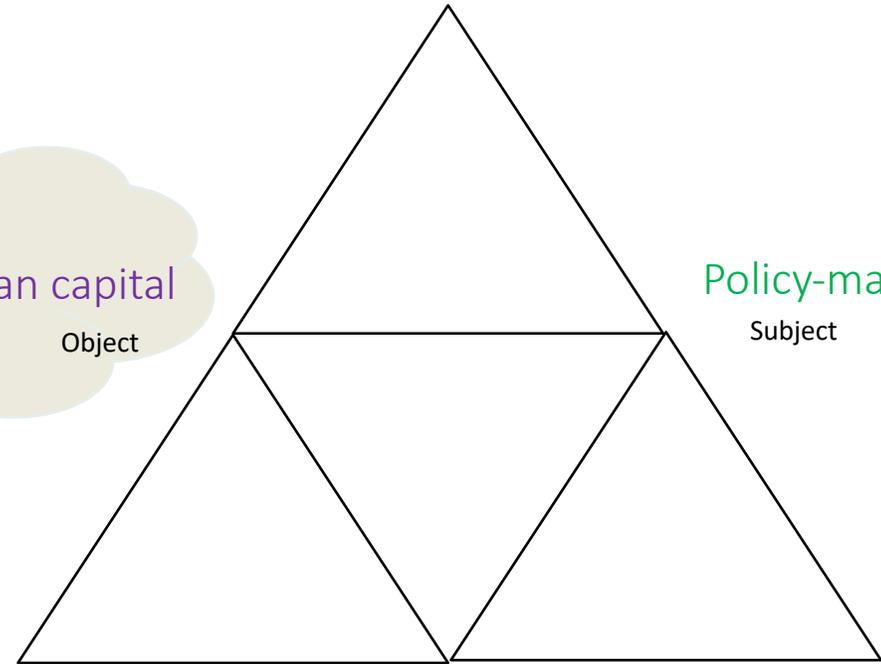
Division of
labour

Job services
network

Government policy makers' activity system

Public policy process

Tools & instruments



Division of
labour

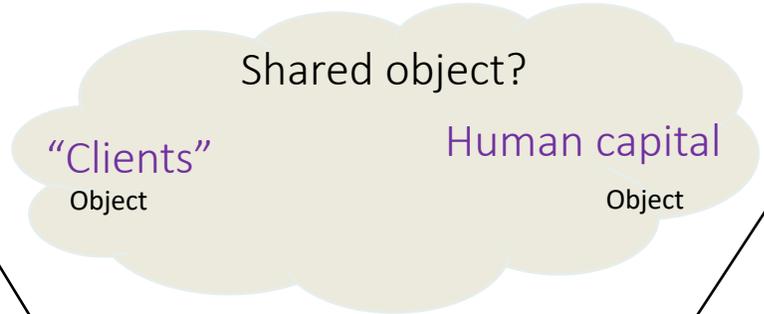
States vs Federal

Community

AiGroup
OECD
ACER

Rules

Marketisation
Contestable funding



Shared object?

"Clients"
Object

Human capital
Object

What has remained the same, what has changed?

The Learners: diversification

- Demand for a 'second chance' in education among English as L1 adults
- Increased number of multilingual learners in literacy/ numeracy classes

The teachers: professionalism without trust and autonomy

- Loss of professional autonomy and agency
- Increased compliance requirements
- More precarious employment conditions
- Legacies of local communities of practice

Education: loss of diversity and accessibility

- Increased focus on skills for work
- Less diverse provision

Reimagining adult basic education

The de facto philosophy of education we do have is a strictly economic one. This is dangerous for without a civic and moral core it could easily lead to a snazzy twenty-first-century version of an old and shameful pattern in American education: working class people get a functional education geared only toward the world of work. (Rose, 2012 p. 141).

Fluidity and instability of the environment

- Erosion of the social safety net (Olney & Gallet, 2019)
- Fragmentation of social services (Cahill & Toner, 2018)
- Increased transfer of lifecycle risks to the individual
- The rise of the gig economy and insecure work (Farrell & Corbel, 2017)
- New digital technologies and 'Big data' (O'Neil, 2016)
- Climate change

Implications for the education of adults

Skills, knowledge and social capital to navigate an insecure – fluid and unstable - world (Jackson, Rogers & Yasukawa, 2018)

Critical education to question the status quo and the way they are positioned in the dominant discourses (Jacobson, 2016)

Connections to contemporary progressive social movements – eg school students' global climate strike

Integration of critical social issues into the curriculum as essential skills (and knowledge) for work in the 21st century

Need to focus not only on individual learner needs, but the demands, opportunities, barriers and supports for literacy and numeracy in the environment (Yasukawa & Evans, forthcoming)

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