

Contextualisation As a Pathway to Inclusive and Relevant Adult Education

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Abstract

This presentation examines the power of contextualisation in creating inclusive and safe adult education, drawing on innovative projects delivered in Leadership and Entrepreneurship by the College of Vocational Education, RMIT University. The initiatives focused on adapting curriculum and assessment to elevate learning experiences for cohorts of indigenous students, while also offering insights for broader application across adult education.

Through collaboration with Indigenous Learning and Teaching specialists, existing pedagogy was reviewed and redesigned to reflect culturally relevant business contexts and case studies. This included adopting a strengths-based approach to embed indigenous perspectives and knowledges in the courses, apply national standards and endorsed frameworks for evaluating educational resources and designing culturally appropriate curriculum and resources to teach truthfully, respectfully, and utilise credible sources of historical facts. Importantly, the process extended beyond modifying assessment tasks to reshaping learning and assessment holistically, aligning pedagogy with evolving culturally safe teaching practices and strengthening student engagement.

The outcomes highlight practical strategies for educators seeking to embed inclusivity, including co-design with cultural experts, critical evaluation of resources, and iterative curriculum development. While centered on two case studies, the presentation highlights broader applicability for making adult and vocational education programs more relevant, equitable, and future-focused.

As adult education continues to evolve in an era of digital transformation, contextualisation offers a powerful tool to ensure that innovation is paired with cultural responsiveness. This project illustrates how embedding learners lived experiences into curriculum and assessment can advance both educational equity and the long-term relevance of adult education.

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