

Provider:

Kimberly Training Institute

Industry:

Cultural Industries

Qualification:

Certificate III in Arts Administration



Australian Government

Department of Education and Training



About the provider

The Kimberly Training Institute is spread across a number of centres in northern Western Australia, including Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham.

The Broome campus is situated within easy reach of the town centre and the iconic Cable Beach. The campus boasts state of the art facilities including art and trades workshop, music room and recording studio, a practice firm for business students and a horticulture shed and growing compound.

About the program and participants

Jacky Cheng was the 2013 VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year. Jacky came to Australia from Malaysia and was working as a lecturer in architecture in Sydney when she visited Broome and ended up staying there. Today, Jacky delivers VET courses in visual arts, contemporary craft and arts administration at the Kimberly Training Institute in Broome.

Her work took her to the Bidadanga community, which is located about 200k from Broome. Jacky drove out there 4 days a week to help with their arts program some seven years ago, providing Certificates I to III in Visual Arts.

Both the community and Jacky soon realised that more was required than making art. As the community put it, "When we completed Cert III in Visual Arts, we thought, what is the outcome of this training and how can we establish ourselves like the other working artists in other well-known and established art centres?"

They were creating their artwork, but needed it to be sustainable. They needed to know how to market their art, how to make it available to an audience on a seasonal basis and at the same time protect their work, their creative rights. As Jacky explains, "15% of the work is in the making of the art; the rest is putting it out there – to be sustainable. It's about their business skills more than exhibition. In the wet season, there are no tourists. During that time, you produce your artwork. In the dry season, it's talking to people, networking".

That's when Jacky had the idea to provide a Certificate III in Arts Administration, as this covered the skills required to market and manage art products.



"Skills are paramount, not the qualification as such. The qualification is a means to skill acquisition".

Jacky Cheng, 2013 VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year

About 15 people participate in the program. Bidadanga is a transient community. There are five different language groups living in the community, with complex kinship and family relationships. Training delivery is on site, in the community. They now have a semi-permanent space to meet.

Jacky realised that the program had to have a practical outcome – the community was not interested in a piece of paper – a qualification – but real practical skills. Says Jacky, "For them, it's 'what can we do with a piece of paper?' Their attitude to competency training is very different from ours. What they want is far beyond simply acquiring a Cert III. They want training to have a practical outcome."

Jacky also realised that in this context, formal training and assessment was not going to work – instead she would have to build the program around real events, and use these in which to teach and assess the students.

"Here you cannot plan around specific times; other real world situations arise – bereavements, flooding, etc. It may take longer to achieve the qualification, but it will better attend to their needs."

Part of the exercise was to build a sustainable Art Centre at Bidadanga. This meant building up and managing the art centre with help from their community, preserving their cultural identity for a wider audience and for the younger generation.

The arts centre is now a self-funded centre providing a sustainable income and jobs for the community.

Assessment

There are three events that the trainees work in, which become assessment opportunities. The program assessment is linked directly to the training.

The first is held in the Bidyadanga community itself, where the doors of the gallery and arts centre are opened to the outside world – on site teachers, doctors, etc. The second event is held in Broome, where trainees bring their work to local Broome community exhibitions and art competitions to be exhibited and sold. The third event is state-wide, such as the “Revealed” project, which encompasses emerging art from Indigenous art centres across Western Australia organised by the Gallery of WA.

In all cases, the trainees set up their own stalls, curate and exhibit their work, talk to people and network. Jacky explains: “Their skills are building through each event – practice makes perfect.”

At each event, the trainees are provided with a task list of what is expected of them. Jacky goes through the list carefully with them so that they fully understand what to do. For example, at a customer service level, one requirement is that they obtain customer details. The trainees tick off the job list as they go. In addition to this, there is observation: Jacky takes notes and reports on what each trainee is doing in that context.

At the same time, the trainees are asked questions about what they are doing. These have to be orally framed, as writing it down is too difficult at times. For people in the Bidyadanga community, English is a third or fourth language. Communication is often through gesture. For the first 3 months, Jacky recalls, no one understood the jargon she was using, and so had to use more and more of their language. “I’ve started to learn their language so that I can make the learning more interesting for them. I say, ‘When in Rome, do what the Romans do.’”

Sustainable communities

Part of the exercise was to build a sustainable Art Centre at Bidyadanga. This meant building up and managing the art centre with help from their community, preserving their cultural identity for a wider audience and for the younger generation.

Lesson learned

Contextualise the training and assessment

In the context of Indigenous training, for Jacky “skills are paramount, not the qualification as such. The qualification is a means to skill acquisition”.

In this context, the competency is used as a framework, and training is tailored to meet the community’s requirements. Jacky believes this is totally different from an institutional experience, where her training environment may not have a whiteboard, air conditioning, chairs and tables. It affects what a trainer can do. “We have to tailor the course and contextualise the units with very practical outcomes.”

In addition to this, the program’s competencies have to be selected and tailored for the individual and the role they will adopt, whether it’s arts administration or arts liaison officer or cultural liaison officer. The units must be chosen that are relevant to each role. For Jacky, it doesn’t matter whether one group is working with a different set of units to another. This is why Jacky favours Skills Sets over Qualifications, to meet this community’s training and cultural needs.

Be adaptable and apply reasonable adjustment

The trainer/assessor has to be very adaptable and to fully understand the culture of the people that they are training, in a real sense. This may mean learning some of the language of the people being addressed and understanding their cultural protocols. It means moving from a written to an oral form of communication. It means understanding their training needs and the needs of the community – and assess accordingly. For Jacky, these are not abstract concerns, but work that can be of real benefit to the community’s future. “Trust underlies success. It’s a partnership.”

Structure assessment around real-world activities

In Jacky’s context, training and assessment has to be conducted in real world events – and these are not manufactured, but are ones that are already run in the broad community. These events have real meaning and benefits.

For Jacky, this approach is vindicated by the success of the program and the cultural centre. When she began working with the community, they were doing some art, but they did not have management skills. The art centre had a \$15,000 turnover, and it’s now \$120,000/year. But, according to Jacky, “it’s not just the money. It’s building the cultural centre, their reputation, their career. They now value themselves and what is being demanded of them”.

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