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Editorial

The Australian tutoring market seems to be changing. There has been an entry into the market of offshore businesses that have an established global presence. Onshore, there has been a rationalisation of the industry. However, new opportunities continually arise and established businesses report that enrolments are strong. Moreover, the move towards an integration of online technologies continues to present both challenges and opportunities for existing businesses and those new to the industry. What is clear is that there is no single solution that will radically alter the industry and the diversity that has characterised the market for decades shall continue to be a feature.

Significant events – Vote for Constitutional change

Members will be aware that on 5th July at a Special General Meeting of the ATA Board a resolution was passed in favour of holding a Special General Meeting on 6th August at the ATA Head Office in Croydon NSW. The purpose of the meeting is to hold a vote in favour of Constitutional change. Such change will allow the ATA to make an application to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for Donor Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

If DGR status is granted we shall then set up a charitable fund for the purposes of allocating donor funds to children in need (or at risk) as identified on national literacy and numeracy tests. This fund shall be called the Private Enterprise Tutoring Scholarship (PETS) fund.

Significant events – Vote for Constitutional change

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Details

ATA Special General Meeting (SGM)
Wednesday 6th August 2014

10.30 – 11AM
6 College Street, Croydon, NSW 2132

Note: Refreshments served after the conclusion of proceedings

The vision

There is an estimated 800,000 Australian children who currently do not achieve basic benchmarks in literacy or numeracy or both. The private tutoring sector could remediate this through providing one-to-one tutoring support to children identifies as not meeting basic benchmarks. The tutors will need to be prepared to work closely with the mainstream school sector. This will mean that intervention will be targeted and also in context.

Accountability is crucial and it is envisaged that all children who will be tutored under the scheme will be subject to a psychometric test such as the Weschler Intelligence Scales for Children (WISC). In this way intervention will be properly informed rather than based on anecdote.

If DGR status is achieved then the ATA will seek donations from private enterprise.

We hope that at the August 6th meeting the membership will vote in favour of the change, so that an application can be made to the ATO as soon as practical.

BMRI – Dyslexia support

The Brain and Mind Research Institute (BMRI) at the University of Sydney is offering free dyslexia assessment and support for children, as part of a study in neurophysiological intervention (see attached advertising and page 3 article for further details).

Accreditation and the ATA

The ATA Board has decided to align the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) with Accredited Tutor (AT). This is important for several reasons:

- There is confusion about the role of each organisation
- AT is a National CrimTrak agent and therefore has the ability to conduct background checks on tutors this unifies the approach to child protection nationally when the governments lag and allow bureaucracy to limit protection
- The preferred standard for the industry should be higher than lower as this adds credibility and professionalism to the sector

The alignment of the ATA and AT shall not lead to increased membership fees. The ATA will include accreditation for TWO people with each membership. In essence the ATA is giving accreditation for free. This supports the idea that higher standards are preferred. The listing on the ATA website shall remain unchanged. Accreditation is at an individual level not a business level.

As we move to charitable status it is crucial that our standards rise commensurate with the need for increased accountability. The alignment of the ATA and Accredited Tutor should boost national standards and even further distinguish ATA members in the national (and even international) market. From a governance perspective, should the ATA should attract scholarship funds then ATA membership and Accreditation will be two of the criteria that must be fulfilled.

You are invited to participate in a research clinical trial

At the Brain and Mind Research Institute (BMRI) we have developed novel experimental procedures based on strict scientific principles. At the core of the project is a random controlled design that provides a robust, unbiased method to evaluate the efficacy of an intervention procedure. Our study is designed to look at objective neurophysiological measures in response to the intervention, rather than subjective measures such as family diaries and personal observations which are often employed in less rigorous studies.

To begin with, we will be looking at assessing children 6-11-years-old with and without difficulties in reading and spelling. All children will be tested for reading difficulties at baseline (approx. 2 hours of collecting neurophysiological, linguistic and cognitive measures), and accordingly will form our two groups:

- A. Children **with reading difficulties**: will be given the opportunity to participate in the 10 week intervention/ or placebo stage (20 sessions, approx. 30 mns per session) of our trial -please refer to information below. Following intervention/ placebo, the linguistic and neurophysiological test will be repeated (approx. 90 mns)
- B. Children **without reading difficulties**: will form our control group and will only be involved in the assessment stage at baseline (approx. 2 hours) and 10 weeks following baseline testing (approx. 90 mns).

Our objective outcome measures include:

- Neurophysiological measures: quantitative electroencephalography (qEEG) as well as event-related cortical potentials
- Linguistic measures: Reading and spelling test (30 mns)
- Cognitive ability test (15 mns) – this will only be administered once, at baseline

In our study these brain measures will be studied before and after the neurofeedback training and the changes in each student's brain physiology will be correlated to improvements in performance and clinical measures. This experimental

approach not only allows us to individualise treatment for each student (and thus maximise any potential benefit for the student) but also provides us with data to answer more complex clinical questions that relate to the disorder proper, such as what the neural basis of dyslexia might be and whether the neurophysiological underpinnings are amenable to treatment.

In our study we will record qEEG from 19 cortical regions in each student and from this data we will construct a model of brain function that will include the relative frequency distribution of the following brainwave frequency bands: delta, theta, alpha, beta and gamma. The various EEG frequency bands and patterns reflect different information, i.e. linguistic, attentive, behavioural performance.

As an intervention tool, neurofeedback trains an individual to normalise aberrant EEG patterns that reflects deviant to normal activity, specific to the disorder of interest. So in our study, we aim to modulate the specific EEG patterns and simultaneously reinforce a wider reorganisation of the EEG with consequent behavioural organisation.

Neurofeedback training is ideal intervention technique to address frequencies changes at specific locations as well as normalising deviant coherence (Breteler, Arns, Peters, Giepman, & Verhoeven, 2010). The first random control trial on neurofeedback training in dyslexia revealed significant and clinically relevant improvement in spelling abilities. Thornton and Carmody (2005) as well as Walker and Norman (2006) reported increases in grade levels. Nazari, Mosanezhad, Hashemi, and Jahan (2012), reported significant improvement in reading and phonemic awareness skills, reflecting positive changes in temporal lobes and improved coherence between central-frontal and central-parietal regions. This also indicates sensory-motor integration and increased cerebral maturity in children with dyslexia.

If you are interested and would like to know more about our research study, please contact Eleana via email at:

eleni.papagiannopoulou@sydney.edu.au

Advanced Learning Centre (Wagga) - Nominated for THREE National Awards



For Rachael Cornius-Randall, the past year has been filled with hard work, creativity and passion, and it has paid off as she has just been nominated for three National 2014 AusMumpreneur Awards. The 2014 AusMumpreneur Awards presented by The AusMumpreneur Network celebrate and recognise Mothers in business achieving outstanding success. The awards are designed to highlight the growing number of women who successfully balance motherhood and business in a way that suits their life and family.

Mrs Cornius-Randall is the founder and director of Advanced Learning Centre, which specialises in empowering young minds to develop a love of learning, through the delivery of innovative programs designed to cater for the diverse learning needs of each individual student. *“We provide a service, throughout New South Wales and Victoria, where all students, pre-school, primary and secondary school through to university/TAFE, can obtain additional assistance with their learning that supports what is taking place within formal classroom settings. Whilst our programs have an academic focus, we are proactive in integrating social and emotional development throughout each session, essential skills which build confidence and self-esteem, in and outside of the classroom.”*

Rachael said she is *“thrilled with Advanced Learning Centre’s continued success, having started with only a*

handful of students; we now run individual and small group sessions and service many clients outside of the Riverina via Skype and through our popular holiday programs.”

There are many benefits to balancing business and motherhood as Rachael explains, *“I have the ability of always being available to our children, they know where I am, and if they need me I am always close by. Advanced Learning Centre is family orientated, our children have grown up in the business, and they are involved in what I do – there are not too many careers where this can take place!”*

However, it is not always easy and often can be challenging to be a successful business woman whilst raising a family, and Rachael gives this advice for others thinking about starting their own enterprise. *“Turning an idea into a profitable business is about staying focused on what you are trying to achieve, and returning to this initial idea often, adapting it as your business develops and grows. For me, my focus is about looking at each day as an incredible opportunity to make a difference to the lives of each and every student, no matter the age, who comes through our door. Education can change lives, and offering a service which provides opportunities for each student to develop a love of learning is a wonderful opportunity. My aim is to empower a positive change – this is what gets me up in the morning, drives my day and gets me excited and inspired by what I am doing! At Advanced Learning Centre we focus on positive attitudes to learning, we want all of our clients to have fun while they are learning and to understand that learning is lifelong, it doesn’t finish when formal schooling ceases.”*

Finalists will be selected by a public vote at www.ausmumpreneur.com with voting closing at midnight on Monday 6 October 2014. The winners of the 2014 AusMumpreneur Awards will be announced at a glamorous Awards event in Melbourne in October 2014.

NEUROFEEDBACK TRAINING IN CHILDREN

DO YOU ENJOY READING AND ARE BETWEEN 6 AND 11 YEARS OF AGE?
OR ARE YOU THE PARENT OR TEACHER OF CHILDREN WHO ENJOY READING, WRITING AND SPELLING?

PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH IN DYSLEXIA

We aim to identify linguistic and brain activity markers of dyslexia.

As part of this study we need to test students who do not have dyslexia and who don't experience difficulties in reading and writing domains.

Participation involves attending the BMRI in two sessions of:

- Neurophysiological testing using electroencephalography (60 mins)
- Neuropsychological testing (15 mins)
- Linguistic testing (30 mins)

**BRAIN & MIND
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

This research is being conducted by Associate Professor Jim Lagopoulos and Miss Eleana Papagiannopoulou.

If you would like more information regarding this study or are interested in participating, please contact:

Eleana Papagiannopoulou
E eleni.papagiannopoulou@sydney.edu.au
T +61 2 9114 4003

For more information head to
sydney.edu.au/bmri

NEUROFEEDBACK TRAINING IN CHILDREN

HAVE YOU BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH DYSLEXIA?
ARE YOU BETWEEN 6 AND 11 YEARS OF AGE OR ARE YOU THE
PARENT OR LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER OF CHILDREN
EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES WITH READING, WRITING & SPELLING?

PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH IN DYSLEXIA

We aim to identify markers of dyslexia and determine the efficacy of neurofeedback training as a treatment for dyslexia. Neurofeedback training has been used in other childhood conditions and there is evidence to suggest that it may also be useful in dyslexia.

Participation involves:

- Neurophysiological testing using electroencephalography (60 mins), neuropsychological testing (15 mins) and linguistic testing (30 mins)
- 20 neurofeedback training sessions (2 sessions per week, over 10 consecutive weeks)

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ATA Submission to Victorian Parliament inquiry into homework

1. What regulation of private tutors are there in Australia?

There is no regulation specific to private tutors in any jurisdiction in Australia. The main laws that regulate the conduct of tutors are consumer protection laws such as the Competition and Consumer Act (Cth) and the fair trading laws in each State. In some states there is emerging legislation in the realm of child protection that requires all tutors to have a Working With Children Check (WWCC). NSW is leading the way in this regard and some States (eg South Australia) have no such requirement.

2. Does the Association consider that the industry should be regulated and, if so, what form of regulation should there be?

Predictably, the view of the Association is no, but subject to important qualifiers. The ATA takes the view that self-regulation is the preferred option BUT that the approach to self-regulation must be responsible. Responsible self-regulation has a number of features that we espouse:

- A industry Code of Conduct that members must agree to be bound by and that is widely disseminated (in many languages) with sanctions against members who fail to adhere to the code. Sanctions include a capacity to expel members who fail to adhere to the Code. This has occurred on 4 occasions, including once this year
- A grievance handling procedure that helps resolve disputes between consumers and members
- A form of accreditation that benchmarks best practice standards

Given the lack of regulation over the industry the ATA also, innovatively, espouses a precautionary approach in the absence of clear laws. Thus, for example, we take the view that, in the absence of a national award, the minimum tutoring wage (for non-teahcher trained teachers) should be above the amount discernible from the Miscellaneous Award (Skill Level 4). In this way, the ATA would recommend favouring the vulnerable rather than commercial interests, where there is a contest or conflict between the two.

Responsible self-regulation works best when government authorities support the self-regulation body because government recognises that the industry is taking it upon itself to create standards that are in the interests of consumers. This means that working with educators, consumer protection authorities and commission for children and young persons is very important. At present only the NSW government works with the ATA with these three bodies. The other states, Victoria included has not yet engaged with us despite or approaches.

In the event that self-regulation becomes self-serving then we would favour a licensing approach. Under such an approach it would be anticipated that the ATA would be the body that is funded to undertaking the licensing and perform the necessary audits.

3. If not, does the Association consider there are other forms of protection for parents and students to ensure the tutors they engage are suitably qualified, know the curriculum and the service is of a high standard?

The ATA would not ever promote non-member tutors as we cannot guarantee that they abide by the industry code. Moreover, with accreditation now

a reality, over the coming year ALL ATA members will move to become accredited. This will be free and includes a national crime check (from CrimTrak - the same people who do the WWCC).

The ATA takes the view that the best protection for parents and students comes from parents being empowered to ask questions of tutors. We also believe that tutors should work closely with parent representative bodies, principals associations and consumer protection groups to create a means by which tutors can be held to account and also that important questions relating to tutor quality and also the issue of accountability can be properly addressed.

4. Does the Association have a view on whether tutors' main role is remedial by helping students who are struggling with a particular subject or are part of a competitive educational environment, where tutors assist high performing students achieve higher marks?

Tutors are used for many reasons, all of which are valid, depending how they are conducted. The industry is experiencing growth in several niches: the increase in understanding of special needs and how students learn, the understanding that early remediation is important and also the issues created by external exams (such as the VCE, HSC, IB and other university entrance tests, transfer tests and the like). It is the case also that as incomes rise parents increase the amount of their discretionary spending they allocate to education - the tutoring market being a beneficiary. This appears to come from the feeling from parents that they would like to control or shape, as far as possible, the outcomes of education by doing everything they can for their children. Of course, this can make parents vulnerable to dishonest tutors or those who create dependencies.

5. Are there any differences in the skill sets required for the different functions?

The ideal tutor, like the ideal teacher, seeks to differentiate instruction according to the learning needs and goals of the students and family. This requires a broad skill set akin to that seen in the best classrooms. Since most private tuition is one-to-one the opportunity to differentiate is greater. However, some of the worst tutoring practice mirrors the worst classroom practice - large class sizes, an undifferentiated curriculum, poor levels of tutor accountability and lack of disclosure.

6. Given that a student's ability to achieve relies to a certain extent on confidence in their own efficacy, is there a risk that tutors may undermine the confidence of students by making themselves indispensable to the student – by making the student believe that they cannot do it without the tutor's help?

By far the main reason that tutors are sought is due to a lack of confidence and skill gaps in the student. The best tutors, like the best teachers, aim to make themselves redundant. The Association has redefined the whole issue of plagiarism because in a commercial context it causes dependencies rather than independence. This is a very important issue. It extends also to reporting. Reports should be honest - we call it 'truth-in-reporting' and should not aim to create dependencies or mask the true ability of the student. The ATA Code of Conduct addresses the issue of creation of dependencies directly.

7. What is the Association's view on tutors taking on such a central role that students are seeking assistance from their classroom teacher to complete the work assigned to them by their tutor?

Some parents actually request homework for their children and so the issue here is managing the unreasonable and also the legitimate expectations of parents. There appears to be a perception that if homework is given it must translate to better teaching or better tutoring. However, high levels

of homework by either schools or tutors can also be 'outsourcing' the child's learning to the child. The teacher or tutor is there to teach or tutor, not outsource work to the child.

On this point the ATA's preferred position would be to have a close association with principal's associations and parent representative bodies. Alas the unions do not want to talk to the ATA despite many unionised teachers tutoring and also despite many unionised teachers taking on tutors for their own children

The lack of cohesion amongst the stakeholders - mainstream educators, parents and tutors leaves an abyss whereby parents make choices but not from a best informed space.

On this point it should also be noted that if a child takes tennis lessons, singing or dancing lessons or other it is encouraged by schools and in the media. If a child takes on extra academic work then the view is a child's life is compromised. This ambivalent approach to the intellect causes parents to feel like they have to make decisions in silence and thus the problems are compounded.

8. Does the Association consider there is a risk that students will give a higher priority to the work assigned by the tutor because of the financial cost to their parents?

This is evidently the case - but on this point some schools are not doing what they should be doing and thus tutors are required to rebuild confidence. Moreover, in tutoring centres students can meet other students from other schools and can assess the quality of the teaching in their schools. Since confidence in schools is what we all want then there should be a close dialogue between the ATA and the other stakeholders, including advice to parents and when, if ever, to use a tutor.

Child protection issues and concerns

The lack of cohesion in Australia's child protection laws is worrying. That there is currently the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which has produced an interim report. That there was a need for the Royal Commission might imply that there is a need for greater attention to vulnerable children and the need for a proactive and precautionary approach to child protection matters.

Alas this is NOT the case.

The ATA sent a letter (see page 10) to each of the State and Territory Commissions as well as one to the relevant National Commissioner. In total nine letters were sent in April. To date – mid July – only four responses have been received. In each case the answer was minimal and not one offered an on-going dialogue about how tutors and child protection authorities could work together to protect the interests of children through creating improved processes.

Child protection - a proactive not reactive approach required

Federalism, necessary over 100 years ago, creates problems when a unified approach to law-making is required. In respect of child protection, a unified, cohesive and consistent national response is much needed. The disparate systems operating across the various jurisdictions provide an opportunity for nefarious characters to exploit loopholes. The ATA calls on all levels of government to take both a proactive and also a precautionary approach.

A proactive approach involves reassessing the child protection standards that currently exists and setting new rules and procedures commensurate with the greatest protections for children. A precautionary approach means making policy decisions that favour caution over risk. An example of an application of the precautionary approach in respect of child protection is NOT allowing privacy to be used as a shield when it subverts child protection standards.

Dear Commissioner,

I write to alert you to a couple issues with the current child protection regime and seeking a meeting with you at your earliest convenience. Specifically I wish to discuss how the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) can assist to ameliorate the issues as they pertain to tutors and support your Office in the development of uniform national child protection laws.

An issue was uncovered in South Australia last week as detailed in the attached documents. In summary, in 2010 a teacher was found to have been engaged in disgraceful and improper conduct with respect to 12-year-old school girl he taught. This teacher was suspended but did not complete the disciplinary action and subsequently let his teacher registration lapse. He then became a tutor.

In 2010 the teacher was given a Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance in NSW.

Of concern to the ATA is the following:

- A teacher suspended due to child-related matters, particularly where the suspension occurs in another jurisdiction that may not be flagged on a WWCC in NSW.
- Our accreditation partner, Accredited Tutor, is a National Crime Check Agent and this would not have come up on a search conducted by CrimTrak as no charges were ever laid.
- The ATA and Accredited Tutor take a precautionary approach to these matters and would not allow membership to our organisations on the basis of the suspension.

I wish to discuss how the ATA or its Accreditation partner can work in cooperation with the appropriate Commonwealth Government departments to mitigate the risk of past teachers circumventing existing child protection systems to become an ATA member and/or accredited tutors, thereby exposing vulnerable members of the community to risks that can be eliminated through the implementation of appropriate systems and procedures.

Yours Sincerely,

Mohan Dhall
CEO, Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) Ltd.
B Com, Grad Dip Ed, Grad Dip in Workplace Relations, CoGE, MACE, AAIM, MATA



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Dismissal of an ATA member for breaches of the ATA Code of Conduct

In April we received an on-line application for membership. The applicant sought a Category C membership – Associate membership. Within two weeks a complaint had been received about this new associate member.

The allegations, later taken as factual, were that:

- The applicant had applied for membership after complaints had been taken to the NSW Office of Fair Trading about the conduct of the applicant
- Included in complaints was that the applicant had refused a legitimate request for a refund having made promises that were not honoured and also having bullied both a child and the complaining parent
- The applicant later refused to follow the processes for complaints resolution as detailed in the ATA Code of Conduct
- There was evidence that the applicant had used a false ABN

Apart from dismissing the member as a result of the complaint the ATA has made changes to membership requirements following this process. The Fair Trading Tribunal held that the complainant was right on all matters subject to the complaint and also ordered a full refund. The Applicant refused to attend the Tribunal hearing.

Changes to ATA membership requirements

When processes are tested as they were in this case we found that a prospective member could become listed without the Office being able to verify important data such as the ABN. Thus, we have made it a requirement that the ABN must be provided as a condition of membership.

Since this change has been implemented we have found that one applicant could not become a member. In that case the ABN quoted was not current and the on-line check revealed disconcerting anomalies in data given.

This added layer of protection, whilst more onerous, does distinguish members from non-members.

Within Tuition Editor

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