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# RaPAL

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# Journal

# The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

## Who we are

RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacies and numeracy. Our support is generated by membership subscription only, and we are therefore completely independent in our views. RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in adult life.

## What we do

- Campaign for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives
- Critique current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- Emphasise the importance of social context in literacy
- Encourage collaborative and reflective research
- Believe in democratic practices in adult literacy
- Create networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- Publish a journal three times a year

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# Editorial

## Naomi Horrocks and Amy Burgess

*Naomi is a freelance working in research and literacy. She is a member of the RaPAL management committee and Joint Coordinator for the RaPAL journal.*

*Amy has been involved with literacy education for 20 years, first as a tutor and coordinator and more recently as a Research Fellow at the universities of Lancaster and Exeter. She is currently Chair of RaPAL and works in the voluntary sector.*

Welcome to this conference 2012 edition of the journal. We are delighted that so many of the contributors to the conference have found time in their busy schedules to remind us of the interesting and stimulating talks and workshops they presented in October 2012. As **Amy Burgess, Sue Southwood and Dan Taubman** explain in the introduction to this journal RaPAL, NIACE and UCU came together for the first time to hold our first joint annual conference. As they said, "We were delighted to come together in this way because although we all support adult learning in different ways, we share common aims and values and believe that a joint conference provides a valuable opportunity for us to learn from and support each other".

At the conference, Carol Taylor, NIACE Director of Development and Research, launched *More Powerful Literacies*, the sequel to *Powerful Literacies* (Crowther, Hamilton and Tett 2001) published by NIACE in 2001. The original volume grew out of the RaPAL conference in 1999, so it was fitting that its sequel should be launched at this conference. We were therefore delighted that two of the editors, Mary Hamilton and Lyn Tett were keynote speakers at the conference.

**Mary Hamilton** drew on her recent book (Hamilton, 2012) to talk about literacy and representation. In her article she expands on her talk to urge us as practitioners to "get to grips with numbers and statistics in order to be able to evaluate and critique their use within policy discourse". Only in this way, she argues can we construct alternatives to the "narrow...vision" pursued by policy makers consisting of "hard measurable outcomes fashioned by funders of policy for their purposes of accountability".

**Lyn Tett** continued Mary's theme in her talk by examining the role of comparative measurement and the use of statistical data in Scotland. In her article Lyn explains how in Scotland the use of OECD data was used to support existing policy in adult literacy provision, taking a positive view

of the data rather than the deficit view so often expressed in England. So far Scotland has resisted moving away from its 'current broad, learner-centred approach' to a more employability-focused agenda, but like Mary, Lyn cautions us to be constantly vigilant in order to retain this wider view of literacy.

The workshops at the conference reflected the interesting and varied work that continues to take place in literacy and numeracy provision even in these straitened times. **Genevieve Clarke** of the Reading Agency looks at the benefits of reading for pleasure as a motivator for groups of adult learners in a wide range of settings as well as its role in building confidence and reading skills. One of the ways the Reading Agency supports reading for pleasure is through its 'Six Book Challenge' where readers are encouraged to 'pick six reads and write a simple diary in order to receive a certificate'.

We are all aware that organisations have to reinvent themselves or change the way they work in order to meet new challenges. Both **Pauline Nugent** and **Judith Swift** explain how in their different working environments they are doing just that. Pecket Well began its life in 1985 as a residential centre for adult literacy and numeracy. Pauline explained its particular philosophy of working as a collective in which all decisions made about the running and learning within the community are made by both students and tutors. Since 2011 when the collective was forced to sell its premises they have decided to continue their work by developing a website 'which will contain the oral history, archive, films and free training materials... using a variety of media to make the content accessible to a broad spectrum of users – including people who have difficulties with reading and writing'. Unionlearn has been successful in the past says **Judith Swift** because it has been responsive to learner need, using employees from within the workforce to motivate, encourage and advise their colleagues and then tailoring provision to their needs.

Working with partners has also been crucial. Despite the difficult financial climate Judith believes that unionlearn can build on their successes by expanding their provision to workers' families and the wider community, taking on the challenge of digital skills learning and engaging in cooperative planning with other education providers.

NIACE has been working with unionlearn to pilot the concept of maths champions in the workplace and **Sue Southwood** describes how they are now working with partners to take this initiative further as part of the post-19 skills agenda for England which includes a national maths initiative to engage 'champions' from employers, communities, agencies and organisations to encourage and enthuse adults to take up maths learning.

In our final article for this edition of the RaPAL Journal **Alison Wedgbury** provides us with an update on the final report of the independent review panel into professionalism in the FE field led by Lord Lingfield, taking up the baton from Helen Casey who spoke at the conference before the final report was published. Alison confirms that specialist qualifications for literacy, numeracy and ESOL teachers will continue within the new qualifications framework and will be developed during 2013.

### Book Reviews

We have four book reviews for you in this edition. We are delighted that **Claire Collins** shares with us her enjoyment of *'More Powerful Literacies'* launched at the conference. Claire takes us through a whistlestop tour of the themes: Theoretical and Policy Frameworks, Making Power Visible and Resistance and Challenges, providing us with a taste of what's

inside and tempting me (Naomi) at least to order the book immediately.

**Azumah Carol Dennis** also recommends *'Improving Adult Literacy'* as 'a definitive evidence-based guide on effective literacy teaching'. She cautions that the publication is aimed at the US, nevertheless it provides us in the UK with an opportunity to understand 'that there is an alternative' way of teaching more closely related to a social practice view. As Carol says '(t)he text provides sound theory and empirical evidence which helps establish this fluidity in approach to what good teaching requires if it is to become outstanding teaching. That is, an appreciation that effective pedagogy is thoroughly and completely contextualised'.

*'God and decision-making: a Quaker approach'* by Jane Mace provides **Sam Duncan** with much food for thought. Describing the book as 'challenging, insightful, thought-provoking and beautifully written', Sam talks about the resonance the Quaker approach to reading and writing may have for literacy practitioners whilst also challenging us to think about how we work with each other in our work and in our lives.

We end on **Mandi Smith's** review of a very practical guide and tool for ESOL and literacy teaching at entry level 2. *'Improve Your Spelling'*, published by NIACE. It consists of a teachers' guide, a student workbook and an audio CD. Mandi has trialled a number of units with her students and thoroughly recommends this as a resource to both new and experienced ESOL and literacy teachers.

*Please note that the views expressed by individual contributors to the journal do not necessarily reflect those of RaPAL.*

## Adults Learning English and Maths: Reflecting on Policy, Research and Practice

Amy Burgess, Sue Southwood and Dan Taubman

*Amy has been involved with literacy education for 20 years, first as a tutor and coordinator and more recently as a Research Fellow at the universities of Lancaster and Exeter. She is currently Chair of RaPAL and works in the voluntary sector.*

*Sue currently leads on Functional Skills for NIACE. Sue trained as a teacher in 1986 and worked for Norfolk County Council where she taught Literacy and GCSE English to adults. She has held a number of posts including working as a Curriculum Manager for City and Islington College and spending a year in Spain as an EFL Teacher. Before joining NIACE in August 2004, Sue set up and managed workplace basic skills programmes for Northern Foods, Ford Motor Company and Transport for London. Sue has just completed an MA in Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy.*

*Dan's career, now spanning over 30 years, has been spent in adult learning. In the 1970s and 1980s he worked in the ILEA adult education service. In 1994 he was appointed National Education Official in NATFHE (now UCU), where his responsibilities include policy formulation and advice across the fields of further, adult and prison education. Dan has been very closely connected with the various strands of work on initial teacher training and CPD and is a member of the BIS Workforce Development Strategy Group. He has been a member of the Institute for Learning's Council since the inception of the IfL. Dan was awarded a MBE in summer 2009 for services to further and adult education.*

On 9 October 2012 RaPAL, NIACE and UCU held its first annual joint conference at UCU headquarters in London. We were delighted to come together in this way because although we all support adult learning in different ways, we share common aims and values and believe that a joint conference provides a valuable opportunity for us to learn from and support each other.

At the conference, Carol Taylor, NIACE Director of Development and Research, launched *More Powerful Literacies*, the sequel to *Powerful Literacies* (Crowther, Hamilton and Tett 2001) published by NIACE in 2001. The original volume grew out of the RaPAL conference in 1999, so it was fitting that its sequel should be launched at this conference. The introduction to the new book notes that a combination of international pressures, a culture of audit and accountability and large fluctuations in funding currently create numerous challenges for literacy practitioners and researchers alike. The book's editors argue that '[a] new space needs to be created, where we can collectively imagine literacy differently' (Tett, Hamilton and Crowther 2012:2). They go on to propose that '[r]esearchers and practitioners have to construct alliances in order to develop their own agency to act back on the forces that seek to shackle them to a narrow and impoverished vision of literacy' (Tett, Hamilton and Crowther 2012:5). It was in this spirit that we planned the conference, aiming to strengthen the alliance between our organisations and open up a space for practitioners and researchers to engage in dialogue and reflection.

As the new academic year was getting underway, we knew that most practitioners would be facing

significant changes and challenges, including new qualifications in the shape of Functional English and maths, changes in teacher education as a result of the proposals made by the Lingfield Review, and a new Minister for Skills, Matthew Hancock. The aim of the conference was to consider how we can meet these and other challenges that lie ahead. We invited delegates to reflect on several crucial questions:

*What can we learn from research to help us deal with the challenges we face? How can we adapt to change while continuing to ensure that we keep learners at the heart of what we do? How can we meet external demands and continue to work creatively, remaining true to our own values and vision as educators?*

Throughout the conference there was a palpable sense of energy and enthusiasm amongst delegates. The keynote talks and workshops provided both practical ideas for teaching and the opportunity to re-examine some of the theory that underpins and gives meaning to our work. We hope that at least some of this will be conveyed by the contributions to this journal.

Planning the conference together has cemented the relationship between our three organisations and we have had plenty of very positive feedback from delegates, so we are already looking forward to running another conference together next year.

### References

- Crowther, J., Tett, L., & Hamilton, M. (2012). *More Powerful Literacies*. Leicester: NIACE.  
Crowther, J., Tett, L., & Hamilton, M. (2001). *Powerful Literacies*. Leicester: NIACE.

# The Politics of Representation: Imagining Literacy in the Skills for Life Era

Mary Hamilton

*Dr Mary Hamilton is Professor of Adult Learning and Literacy at Lancaster University and Associate Director of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre. She has written extensively on policy, practice and everyday learning in adult literacy. She is co-author of a number of books including Local Literacies (with David Barton); Powerful Literacies (with Jim Crowther and Lyn Tett) and Changing Faces of Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy: A Critical History (with Yvonne Hillier). Mary was a founder member of RaPAL. You can find out more about her work here <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/edres/profiles/216/2> and can contact her at [m.hamilton@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:m.hamilton@lancaster.ac.uk)*

## Introduction: Imagining Literacy

This article draws on material from a new book (Hamilton 2012) to talk about literacy and the politics of representation. In the book, I discuss the ways in which the semiotic resources of metaphor, visual images, number and testimonial narratives are combined to produce powerful imaginaries of literacy that circulate widely in the media, government and popular discourse. These are used to advocate for and justify policy interventions into citizens' lives while at the same time, I argue, obscuring the powerful role literacy plays in organising and coordinating everyday social actions (what Dorothy Smith calls "the relations of ruling" [Smith 2005]).

In this article, I focus especially on the power of numbers in how we imagine what literacy is and might be and who literacy learners are and might become. I argue that it is crucial for literacy practitioners to get to grips with numbers and statistics in order to be able to evaluate and critique their use within policy discourse.

In the UK we are just emerging from a period of major state funding for literacy, numeracy and ESOL, that has also included digital skills. In England this strategy was called *Skills for Life* (DfES, 2001) and the examples I use in this article are taken from this context. *Skills for Life* appealed to a human resource model of literacy as well as making use of the European notion of social inclusion (Levitas, 2005). Extensive use was made of the mass media. The unstable and previously fragmented field of basic skills was pulled together into an organised system, managed through target setting, performance indicators and outcome related funding. The field was re-imagined by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit as a system of 'inputs' and 'outputs' (The Learning Infrastructure) that could be ordered and controlled by central government to produce a measurable improvement in adult

literacy achievement. There was an ambitious belief in the possibility of root and branch reform, organised centrally to change practice in the field.

At the start the *Skills for Life* strategy had a wide definition of what this achievement would mean, based on social inclusion and lifelong learning. Over time, however, the focus gradually narrowed to mean participation in the employment market (see Hamilton and Pitt, 2011). This more limited way of imagining literacy has been reinforced by the current economic recession.

There are many ways in which people have tried to define and explain how literacy functions in individual lives and in society, asserting its usefulness for the state and for other social and economic institutions. As a term, literacy is elastic and slippery and it can be made to carry all kinds of hopes, judgements and expectations. These stories about literacy are part of what shapes literacy education in different historical eras and places. They circulate in many places – in policy documents, in the news and popular media, but also in everyday social interactions in homes and classrooms. In my talk I gave some historical examples where educators and policy makers have told this story in terms of religious morality or cultural enlightenment or nation-building. In his forward to the 1999 report *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A Fresh Start* which set the ground for the *Skills for Life* policy (Moser, 1999), Claus Moser quotes from *The Reader*, a novel by Bernhard Schlink (Schlink, 1998) which was widely popularised by Oprah Winfrey to make the point that "*Illiteracy is dependence*" claiming that literacy offers liberation and independence. Adult literacy policy and publicity often is concerned to encourage people to imagine themselves as being in a deficit state and in need of help even though they do not necessarily share this vision.



Charles Taylor uses the term “social imaginary” to refer to “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations ... The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” (Taylor 2007:23). In my book I argue that literacy is deeply implicated in our contemporary social imaginary and this is reflected in the stories we currently tell one another about reading and writing.

### **Multimodal Representation: Text, Image, Number**

Stories, or narratives, are not just expressed in the form of words. A moment's thought will bring to mind the great range of media that were used to promote the *Skills for Life* strategy: the Get On! campaign used the Gremlin figures to encourage people to sign up for literacy and numeracy classes (see Hamilton and Hillier, 2006). There were many kinds of associated logos and artefacts used in the campaign and images of successful learners were also circulated widely along with their testimonies of how literacy classes had changed their lives. The Gremlins also carry a kind of metaphor about literacy as a monster or demon to be struggled with and overcome and other metaphors were coined by policy makers and practitioners, such as “spiky profiles” to describe the uneven competences of adult learners, “the hard to reach” and the “low hanging fruit” to talk about how difficult or easy it was to engage with different learners.

The other pervasive way in which narratives about literacy are expressed is through the use of numbers and statistics and this is what I would like to explore in the rest of this article. Looking at how literacy and literacy learners are represented in the *Skills for Life* policy documents shows that numbers are used to create narratives and to make arguments throughout, using statistical findings and visualisations such as tables which are used to relate numerical categories to many other different kinds of information.

### **How Numbers are Used in the Policy Discourse**

Take, for example, this statement by the Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett in his Foreword to the *Skills for Life* Strategy document:

*“A shocking 7 million adults in England cannot read and write at the level we would expect of an 11-year-old. Even more have problems with numbers. The cost to the country as a whole could be as high as £10 billion a year. The cost to people's personal lives is incalculable. People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives, are more likely to have health problems, or to turn to crime.”*

The headline findings from the International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD, 2000), backed up by national cohort surveys, underpin the rationale offered for investing in the *Skills for Life* Policy. This evidence is reduced in this statement to one figure: “7 million adults” who cannot read and write at the level of an 11 year old child. This figure is introduced here as one that we should be shocked and dismayed by. It is re-iterated many times through the 58 page document (seven times as an overall figure and a further twenty times as the basis for estimates of subgroups in need of help). The origin of this figure is not, however, explained in the document at all, but referred back to an earlier national report (Moser, 1998) which contains both the research evidence and the table that relates the national measures to the international ones. The *Skills for Life* strategy document thus omits the origins of the figures it uses while strongly inviting us to imagine national adult literacy achievement through them.

Another powerful use of number in this example is the inclusion of headline figures from the cost-benefit analyses used in policy discourses (especially the amount of money lost through lack of literacy skills).

Further uses of number are shown in my second example below.

*The Skills for Life Strategy was launched in 2001. Since then, an unprecedented £5bn investment has enabled 5.7 million adults to improve their skills on 12 million courses, with 2.8 million achieving first qualifications. Looking forward, the Government's long-term ambition is for 95% of adults to have functional literacy and numeracy skills by 2020, up from 85% and 79% respectively in 2005.*

(Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills Press Release - March 2009)

This quote from a government press release is dense with numbers, especially very large

numbers, used with the aim of creating a persuasive narrative about literacy and the success of the current policy strategy. These superlatives are used rhetorically, not for the purposes of calculation. There are references to performance indicators such as participation targets for particular groups of students; numbers of courses and qualifications; references to funding formulae and fees that enable administrators to calculate the value of a course to an individual or an institution. Time scales are centrally embedded in the definitions of many of these numbers. They refer to the length of courses of study, the dates by which learning achievements should be reviewed, policy horizons are specified along with time-limited investments in projects. This indicates that time is an important dimension in the meaning-making of narratives about number with real consequences for how policy is implemented and experienced.

In texts like this, the numbers are 'black boxed', meaning that they become accepted as truth although their origins and limitations are not explicitly discussed and would be hard for a reader to recover without specialist knowledge and access to the organisations that collated the figures. The meanings of the numbers rely on complex procedures of data collection and manipulation that would have to be reconstructed in order to understand how they were derived. The reader of such media texts is not invited nor expected to delve into these. Nevertheless, as advocates of literacy education, we often pick up these numbers and circulate them ourselves in order to make the case for more funding. Jay Lemke is fiercely critical of this uninformed use of numbers in policy. He says:

*"only technical experts can function as critical participants in this mode of social policy discourse. Only readers who know where the technical bodies must have been buried can see such texts as the graveyard of informed public political discourse that they surely are."*  
(Lemke 1995:76)

In my book I give further examples of how numbers are used in policy discourses, both national and international. One device that is so common we take it for granted is the use of tables to make relationships and equivalences between categories – a very succinct way of making a numerical argument or narrative. Such tables often present information very densely and with labels or keys that refer outward to other documents and definitions of the

categories they contain. For many readers, these tables are difficult to read and the other documents they refer to are not readily available to us. As a result we often pass over them to the summaries that are given, unable or unwilling to critically absorb the information on which the argument is based.

### **What Numbers Can Do to Shape our Understanding of Literacy**

Increasingly sophisticated technologies of measurement applied to adult literacy encourage us to imagine it as a commodity, a quantified thing which is embedded in and related to other measured social goods.

Using numbers helps to create the impression of clear categories setting unambiguous boundaries around literacy. This impression is far from the everyday experience of most people. The numbers may well be spuriously accurate but they help us to rank and order individuals and groups. They shape decisions about who is and isn't literate, the meaning(s) of literacy, which languages and varieties of language count and which should be ignored. They invite us to imagine national adult literacy achievement through them and ourselves in relation to other nations. We use these categories to fabricate thresholds and levels of achievement and match curriculum elements to them. Individuals appear in these accounts, not as themselves, but as instances of a general category (for example 'an Entry Level 3 speaking and listening ESOL learner') so that they can be placed in relation to others through agreed upon rankings and orderings.

However, categories are not only descriptive but normalising devices, defining not just what is, but what *should be*. Determining what or who counts as eligible to be a citizen or a literate person also shapes the flip side - *non-citizens*, and *illiterates* whose characteristics and experiences are outside the classification system and therefore excluded. Their experience is deleted from the account and they are stigmatised as outsiders who do not meet the norm. Furthermore, the collectives defined through measuring are not self-constituted social groups, but statistical artefacts. People frequently do not identify themselves as a member of the category they have been allocated to or excluded from and there are consistently big gaps between self-assessment and external measurements of peoples' literacy abilities. That is why so much effort needs to go into publicity campaigns to get people to recognise themselves in the appropriate way.

The presented appearance of accuracy, and the translation of the arbitrary and fuzzy categories that numbers rest on into hard and accepted facts, are their most powerful assets for policy and research. Such 'black boxed' categories achieve scientific credibility and become rationales for action, aided by the fact that many people do not feel in control of numbers and therefore do not approach them critically.

Numbers are essential for processes of auditing, counting and measuring people, achievements and outcomes related to their performance (see Strathern, 2000 and Power, 1997), for statistics and surveys. They are useful to politicians and civil servants who are pushed to justify their expenditure on policies: how much more, or less to what effect. Since numbers facilitate comparisons across incomparable spaces of time and place they are also useful to current processes of internationalisation, enabling qualifications and other indicators of social well-being and quality to be harmonised across global market places. International networks and new technologies make such counting and comparison easier, faster and more flexible.

### In Conclusion

All the examples I have offered involve publicly re-presenting the experience, characteristics and aspirations of the social actors involved with adult literacy education. Policy arguments, justifications, achievements and needs are constructed using the meaning-making resources of image, voice and number. Each of these modes has its own strengths and ways of helping us imagine literacy and literacy learners in particular ways. I have focused here particularly on the power of numbers but, as I argue in my book, in combination these modes are even more powerful.

*Skills for Life* organised a narrative of literacy that is about homogeneous human resource development, individual deficit and inevitable change. This narrative is produced by translating everyday experience into categories that can be counted and ordered and recognised by policy. In this process everyday experiences and contexts are smoothed over and much detail is 'deleted' or seen as of little consequence. This narrative is part of the legacy of *Skills for Life*.

In her discussion of the development of mathematics, O'Halloran (2008) describes numerical measurement as a powerful form of meaning making which was invented by Descartes and then used by Newton to build his experimental science. It was explicitly designed

to increase the possibility for prediction and control by isolating elements from a complex human context and defining truths as independent of human experience and sensuality. As a result, as O'Halloran says, it "offers much more at the price of admitting substantially less".

Mathematical symbolism evolved from language to develop new grammatical systems of meaning so that precise description and manipulation of *continuous patterns* of relations between entities in time and space became possible. Language is not well equipped to do this although it is good at categorising. Using examples of illustrations from early texts O'Halloran shows how the original context and purpose for developing mathematical knowledge (often military as in the example of describing the curve that a cannonball would take) drops away, as does the human agent (first depicted as a human figure within the illustration, later just as a hand manipulating an object and still later omitted altogether). Below is Descartes's sketch of how a rainbow is formed, based on his theory of light rays refracted through water (Fig 1). This image contains the human figure observing the rainbow, with arcs and lines superimposed to show the trajectory of the light ray. This later becomes an abstract diagram of circles and lines, labeled with numbers or letters of the alphabet. These examples show how human experience of the natural world became abstracted and encoded into geometric and mathematical symbols. In turn, this resulted in the system of algebra which is fundamental to the science of statistics and is now applied to human behavior as well.

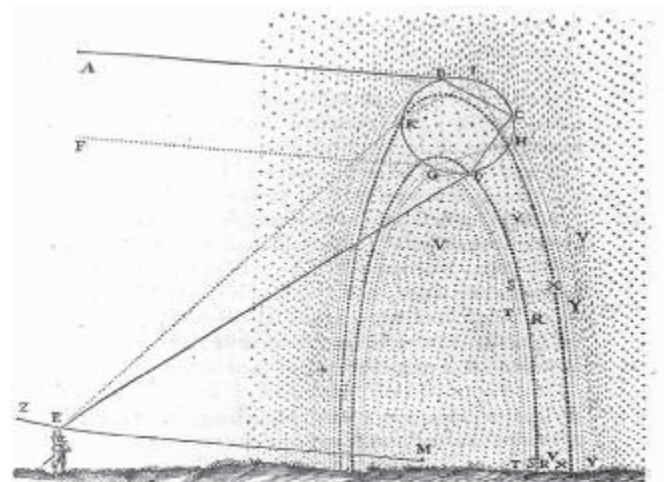


Fig 1. Descartes's Rainbow.

Through the devices of defining categories, labeling them with symbols and relating them through tables and graphs, numerical representations help align our understandings of

literacy with those of current national and international policy. And, like the numbers it relies on so heavily, *Skills for Life*, in comparison to earlier adult literacy education offers a similarly narrowed vision in the pursuit of 'hard' measurable outcomes that have been fashioned by the funders of policy for their purposes of accountability.

The use of numbers to describe literacy in these ways reduces it to a seemingly technical entity, devoid of values or moral qualities. But in this process, other ways of imagining literacy are inevitably marginalised. This means that understanding the power – and the limitations of – numbers is (as O'Halloran 2007:212 points out) crucial for activists and anyone who wants to intervene in the ordering of social life.

Kris Gutierrez (2008) understands this challenge to committed practitioners of literacy. She suggests that teachers can be major sponsors of change but this involves becoming aware of the narratives we buy into and play a role in circulating ourselves. It is important to understand how these are constructed and the powerful hold they have on our imagination so that we may be better able to craft alternatives, to reflect critically on 'given' knowledge and combine these reflections with personal experience. In her own teaching, Gutierrez works with students, through different modes of expression, to reassess their past and future possibilities, to develop new kinds of collective imagination to see things differently and as differently connected. This process draws attention to the invisible collaborations and shaping work that goes into producing our understandings of the social world.

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# Measuring Adult Literacies in Scotland: the "Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies" and its consequences

Lyn Tett

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## Introduction

This paper is about the measurement of literacies in Scotland and the impact of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as an international agency responsible for the provision of a wide range of international comparisons. The ranking of all kinds of institutions has become particularly apparent at the international level where a number of researchers (e.g. Martens, 2007; Grek, 2009) have shown the role that comparative educational performance measures have in framing and steering education policy particularly through the statistics, reports and studies produced by the OECD. These researchers have argued that the OECD, through its publication of education indicators, has become an accepted part of the policy lexicon across the globe and it has constructed a global educational policy field through the mechanism of governance by comparison. Such comparisons overtly imply a rationalist approach to political decision making 'where the parties evaluated are implicitly pressured to converge towards what is regarded as *best* (either most effective or most appropriate) in line with the specific criteria of the respective framework of comparison' (Martens & Nieman, 2010:7).

The paper focuses on one example of an international comparison - the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) that was organised by the OECD in partnership with national statistical research agencies in Canada and the USA (OECD, 1997).

## Critiques of IALS

The ostensible aim of IALS was to provide a comparison of levels of 'prose', 'document' and 'quantitative' literacy in the participating countries using the same measuring instrument. This was then expected to provide equivalent interpretations in the different cultures and languages. The test items in the survey are based on an information-processing model of reading and cognition, meaning that the difficulty of test items is varied by making the language more dense, or asking people to find more

complicated bits of information (National Research Council, Committee on performance levels for literacy, 2005).

Two main types of criticisms have been made of the value of the IALS survey as a comparative measure. The first type is that the collection and analysis of the data is flawed (e.g. Blum et al, 2001; Carey, 2000). Blum and colleagues found that the psychometric criteria used in the tests did not provide a satisfactory basis for international comparisons. This was because of linguistic and cultural differences, translation issues and scoring and processing biases. Moreover they found that:

*It was not possible to assume that the IALS measures only literacy. It seems to measure a combination of different factors: motivation (reflected in the different ways of filling in the questionnaire), understandings of what items mean, and differences in test taking behaviour more generally (Blum et al, 2001:244).*

The second type of critique is that the approach to measuring literacy comes from a particular paradigm that does not recognise the complexity of literacy (e.g. Darville, 2011; Hamilton & Barton, 2000). These researchers argue that the assessments used in IALS treat literacy as if it were a set of information-processing cognitive skills and deal primarily with formal text-based reading. Thus, as Hamilton and Barton (2000: 380) point out, whilst IALS claims to represent 'all of literacy' it 'only provides a *partial* picture'. What is omitted is an acknowledgement that literacy only has meaning within its particular context of social practice and does not transfer unproblematically across different contexts. This is because:

*There are different literacy practices in different domains of social life, such as education, religion, workplaces, public services, families, community activities; they change over time and these different literacies are supported and shaped by the different institutions and social relationships (ibid: 379).*

Literacy from this perspective is constituted by its cultural context. This means that the IALS assessments, which seek to generate test items that are culturally unbiased, direct attention away from the 'very features that are most essential for an understanding of literacy and its dynamic within everyday life' (ibid, 382). In addition literacy researchers (e.g. Barton, 2006; Papan, 2005) point out that people use 'multiple literacies' to engage with different forms of literacy, such as media representations or icons to navigate the Internet. These literacies are not assessed in IALS.

However, despite these criticisms, the 'league tables' derived from the (poor) performance of adults from the participating countries have been strong drivers behind government decisions at the national level to invest in improving adults' literacy. In order to investigate this further this paper now sets out the Scottish literacies context in order to show why using IALS was a particularly interesting decision.

### **Scotland and Literacies Policy**

There are two reasons for using the Scottish context to examine these issues. The first is that Scotland replicated, in 2009, the IALS survey used in 1996 as a way of assessing the literacies capabilities of its population (St Clair et al, 2010). This was despite the well-known criticisms of it as outlined above. The second reason for examining the Scottish context is because the use of IALS is directly contradicted by another aspect of literacies education. This is that Scotland uses a 'social practices' approach where literacies are defined in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Curriculum Framework for Scotland as:

*To be literate and numerate is not only to have the mechanical skills of encoding and decoding symbols but also the knowledge, skills and understanding that enable us to do what we want to do in our private, family, community and working lives;*

*The key life areas and social contexts in which literacy and numeracy are used are important in deciding on what is to be learned; and*

*Literacy and numeracy skills are almost always employed for a purpose - such as making decisions or solving problems - and in a particular social context.*

(Learning Connections, 2005: 13)

This approach emphasises the importance of the context in which people use their literacies

capabilities (Barton, 2006) and assumes that people are part of social networks and will rely on work colleagues, family or friends to help them with some literacies tasks. Research by Bynner and Parsons (2006:10) confirms this perspective as they found in their analysis of the 1958 and 1970 British birth cohort studies that there was a 'continuing low awareness of literacy and numeracy difficulties, which is not surprising among adults, most of whom manage their lives well and learn to cope with any skills difficulties they have'.

In Scotland the purpose of being literate is defined as being able: 'to handle information, communicate with others, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners' (Scottish Government, 2011: 2). Given this broad purpose most of what would fall within it cannot be captured usefully by the IALS tests. This is particularly the case in relation to people's use of literacies in their social contexts, such as home or work. The survey also cannot indicate what specific level of skill is required to run a business, manage a household, or obtain, hold or advance in a particular occupation. It is therefore likely that the skills measured in the individual tests do not assess what people can do in real-world settings.

In addition the test items require very little writing, whereas the Scottish definition includes being able to produce, as well as engage with, texts. Although the test simulates materials and activities that adults may encounter in their everyday lives it does not capture how they engage with those materials in a real-world setting.

So the information-processing model of reading and cognition adopted by the IALS survey does not capture most of the practices used by learners in Scotland and yet this was chosen as the instrument to evaluate changes in the Scottish population's literacy levels. This means that the data on performance produced and collected by the survey were directly contradictory to the national curriculum framework for literacies endorsed by the Scottish Government.

### **Why use IALS in Scotland?**

There appear to be a number of reasons for using IALS in Scotland. One is the advantage IALS gave to national governments through having external 'experts' define standards. This is because the data produced can be used to justify change such as education reforms that

might otherwise be contested or provide support for existing policy direction (see Grek, 2009). In Scotland's case it was used to provide support for the existing literacies policy. Scottish policy had diverged considerably from that of England since devolution in 1999 and with a Nationalist Government (SNP) in power there was an expectation that this policy would be vindicated by this so-called objective assessment.

Another reason was that the Scottish Government had set a National Performance Indicator to: 'Reduce the number of working age people with severe literacy and numeracy problems' (Scottish Government, 2007: part 8) and they needed to assess the differences in literacies capabilities over time using the same measure if they were to make a direct comparison. The last specific analysis of the Scottish population had been carried out after the 1996 IALS survey so the commissioners of the research (Scottish Government: Social Research), adopting an apparently rational approach, deemed that the same survey should be repeated. This apparently rational approach is, however, inappropriate when the approach to measuring changes in literacies capacities is related to the distance travelled by the individual in relation to the achievement of their own goals (Learning Connections, 2005).

A final reason for using IALS was that one of its important aims was to understand the relationship between literacy and economic indicators (Kirsch, 2001). This explicit link between literacy and the economic is significant, as a number of researchers have argued. For example, Martens & Nieman (2010) demonstrate how the OECD's interpretation of education as central to the economic performance of a whole country has now become widely accepted together with the assumption that poor performance in education would jeopardize future economic prosperity. However, as Rubenson points out, the OECD's construction of this new international consensus through surveys such as IALS has:

*Equipped the OECD with a particularly effective instrument through which to present a policy agenda that is allegedly evidence-based but where the evidence is viewed through the dominant ideological glasses. In this case, they have a neoliberal tint. (2009: 259).*

In Scotland's case the Scottish Government has placed economic objectives at the heart of its policies. For example their vision for adult literacies is that:

*By 2020 Scotland's society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively (Scottish Government, 2011: 2).*

Therefore IALS was deemed appropriate to reinforce this link at an international level. Having established the reasons for using what appears to be an instrument at odds with the Government endorsed practice of literacy in Scotland I now turn to a discussion of how the results of the survey were reported and its impact.

### **The Impact of the Findings**

When the findings from the 'Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies' (SSAL) project (St Clair et al, 2010) were reported in 2010 the headlines were that:

- 73.3% of the Scottish working age population have a level of literacies that is recognised internationally as appropriate for a contemporary society;
- Around one quarter of the Scottish population (26.7%) may face occasional challenges and constrained opportunities due to their literacies difficulties, but will generally cope with their day-to-day lives;
- Within this quarter of the population, 3.6% (one person in 28) face serious challenges in their literacies practices;
- That one of the key factors linked to lower literacies capabilities is poverty, with adults living in the 15% of the most deprived areas in Scotland being more likely to have literacies capabilities at the lower end of the scale (St Clair et al, 2010: 2).

The reporting of these findings in this positive way was unusual because other countries, such as Canada and England, had emphasised the lack of literacy skills of their populations rather than their strengths (Darville, 2011; Hamilton & Pitt, 2011). Instead the SSAL not only emphasised the strengths, rather than the deficits, of the skills of Scotland's population but also showed the link between the structural issue of poverty and lower literacy skills. Again this was unusual because, as Hamilton & Pitt (2011) have pointed out in their analysis of the English *Skills for Life Strategy*, lack of literacy is commonly 'collocated with negative, stigmatised identities' (p. 598) that emphasis that lower literacy skills are the result of individual's deficits.

Sotiria Grek (2009) has argued that using data produced by an apparently objective source can be used to justify change that might otherwise be contested or, alternatively, to provide support for an existing policy direction. In Scotland's case IALS was used to provide support for the existing literacy policy. Scottish policy had diverged considerably from that of England since devolution in 1999 and with a Nationalist Government (SNP) in power that wished to have any divergences from English policy regarded positively (see Mooney and Scott, 2012) there was an expectation that this policy would be vindicated by the 'objective assessment' provided by IALS. The positive findings also meant that there was little media coverage since, as many researchers have shown (e.g. Lawn & Grek, 2012; Martens & Nieman, 2010), it is bad news that promotes interest. So there was little pressure on the government to change the broad thrust of its existing policy of focusing on the literacy practices of the learner and keeping its 'social practices' approach.

However, other aspects of the adult literacy strategy (Scottish Government, 2011) that was published the year after the SSAL findings showed a change in emphasis. Here priority was given to the financial 'we live in a different world [where] public services are adapting to reduced funding' (p 6) and the economic - 'by 2020 Scotland's society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively' (ibid: 2) above most other aspects of provision. This changed emphasis was reflected in the distribution of funding and the associated systems of accountability which, as Mary Hamilton argues, have a major effect on 'teachers' lives including the content and structuring of their everyday activities with learners' (2012: 174). In terms of the funding, what was available for adult literacy provision from the Local Authorities had been considerably reduced since 2007 when ring-fenced allocations were withdrawn so that Local Authorities had complete control over their budgets. As the overall budget available for the Local Authorities was steadily reduced, since adult literacy provision was not a statutory requirement, it was one of the areas to have the most severe cuts (see Hamilton and Tett, 2012).

Accountability was exercised through Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education who, in the review of adult literacy practice and provision in Scotland - *Improving Adult Literacy in Scotland* (HMIE 2010), made reference to the absence of evidence of improvements in reading and writing particularly due to the lack of formal accreditation. Whilst the report was positive

about the 'use of learners' individual learning plans to assess progress towards individual learning goals' (ibid: 52) this was regarded as much less important than the achievement of formal qualifications. The prioritisation of formal qualifications over the measurement of the 'distance travelled' by learners in the pursuit of their own goals thus steered practitioners towards a much more standardised form of assessment and away from the learner centred approach based on learners' own individual learning plans.

However, whilst there were pressures to change there was also resistance. This was supported by the commitment from the staff in the government advisory agency (Education Scotland) responsible for adult literacy policy implementation to maintaining the 'social practices' approach. This was partly due to their practitioner background where they had been involved in community-based provision prior to their secondment to *Education Scotland*. Community providers are part of the strong tradition of community education in Scotland that has been influenced by the critical pedagogy of Freire (1972). This tradition validates the breadth and depth of knowledge that adults acquire in a variety of contexts and particularly through their lived experience and is thus learner centred (Tett, 2010). This led to continuing commitment to the system that expects learner progress to be measured by the changes achieved by literacy learners rather than by passing or failing tests that may have no direct relevance to them.

### Discussion and Conclusion

As Martens & Nieman (2010: 7) have pointed out, pressure for improving national education performance can only emerge from poor results in an international comparison if the topic 'education' is equated with a risk to overall economic prosperity. Whilst there is no clear link between literacies and economic prosperity (Rubenson, 2009), the hegemony of the OECD analysis has made this an uncontested policy link. So when Scotland found itself at the lower end of the IALS league table, it caused high pressure for improvement because its self-impression was that its education system was excellent. The shock of finding that many of its people had literacy difficulties led to on-going investment in adult literacy education. This commitment was reinforced by a nationalist government committed to an independence agenda that emphasized its superiority to action south of the border in England (Mooney, and Scott, 2012).



The current audit and performance measuring culture meant that this investment needed to be justified and this was seen as most appropriately carried out through an apparently objective measure – the IALS. This demonstrates the role that international organisations such as the OECD play in national policy making by creating standards and establishing best practices which then produce pressure to improve (Abbott and Snidal, 2000). It also shows the consequences for policy and practice of the globalising strategies of 'governing by numbers' (Grek, 2009).

The seamless extension of economic objectives into education where 'skills have become the global currency of 21st century economies' (OECD 2012, p. 10) presents education and training as a primary site of policy intervention to improve, simultaneously, the well-being of individuals and the economic strength of nations. This paper has shown the power of numbers to influence governance by providing evidence that legitimises political actions through the construction of comparable indicators that serve as a reference point that leads 'the various national institutions to adopt 'freely' the same kind of actions and perspectives within the educational field' (Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal 2003, 427). IALS not only counted people, it attempted to make them comparable by articulating what is expected of them using easy to calculate measures. This also means that political decisions based on this type of information insulates the experts that produced them because the technical nature of the data obscures the subjective judgements on which it is based (see Atkinson, 2012).

The IALS approach to measuring literacy combined with the OECD's emphasis on economic objectives has far-reaching implications for Scotland's people by tying its current broad, learner-centred objectives much more closely into the employability agenda. This could result in a system that deems some people to be 'costly investments with unlikely pay-off', as Darville (2011: 167) has argued is the case in Canada. For the time being Scotland is sticking to its social practices approach but the battle for the wider view requires constant vigilance.

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## Reading for Pleasure: Creating a Virtuous Circle

### Genevieve Clarke

*Genevieve Clarke, Programme Manager at The Reading Agency, promotes the use of reading for pleasure in all adult literacy provision. Here she explores the principles underpinning this approach.*

"Books have no place in this course; it's about learning to read!" So said a basic skills tutor back some ten years ago. His or her name, luckily for us all, has been lost in the mists of time or someone's filing cabinet and, we hope, the sentiments too. For surely learning to read *has* to include books or at least parts of books or other 'real' materials, these days in digital form as well as print. Indeed we have the evidence that engagement in books is fundamental to how learners begin to think of themselves as 'readers'.

They don't always make the connection though. "The students didn't think they could learn through reading," commented Skills for Life tutor Jill Harrison when Assistant Manager, Skills for Life & Family Learning in Tameside. "It's been a revelation to them that they could enjoy a book and still be learning." She was reporting on how her students had been tempted into reading for pleasure with Quick Reads titles<sup>1</sup> and soon progressed to more demanding books.

Reading for pleasure is core to our work at The Reading Agency. The term itself can be problematic, conjuring up images of a frivolous pursuit and a focus on fiction. But we use it in the sense of reading beyond the purely functional, undertaken according to individual choice and encompassing fictional and factual text of all kinds. With a mission to 'inspire more people to read more' The Reading Agency has a formal partnership with public libraries because they offer equal access to this breadth of reading for all ages and abilities. But we're also working increasingly with libraries in colleges, prisons and workplaces in order to promote their resources to tutors and learners who could be benefiting from them.

#### Evidence

Unsurprisingly, impact research with groups of adult learners, supported by their local library, has shown engaging adults in reading for pleasure can make a real difference to their motivation to learn as well as developing their confidence and their skills (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre 2005)<sup>2</sup>. It's also demonstrated that this creative activity can be integrated into regular literacy provision, bringing benefits not only for reading but for writing, speaking and listening as

learners reflect on and share views about what they have read (Oakey 2007)<sup>3</sup>.

However evidence of this kind needs to be reasserted to successive policymakers if it's not to be drowned out by the political imperatives of the moment, as pointed out by Green and Howard in 2007: "The association of enjoyment and pleasure, and of self-motivated literacy practices, with successful learning, is a key finding for the future of basic skills strategies, whatever their fundamental policy drivers might be (Green & Howard 2007)."<sup>4</sup>

#### Six Book Challenge

Our approach has been to marry advocacy with practicality. We've been keen to support national initiatives such as Quick Reads and BBC campaigns including RaW (Reading and Writing) but also to create our own range of tools to support the use of reading for pleasure. These include the Six Book Challenge, about to enter its sixth year, which reached 23,500 people aged 16 and above in 2012 through public libraries, colleges, prisons and workplaces.<sup>5</sup>

This annual incentive scheme invites people to pick six reads and record their reading in a simple diary in order to receive a certificate. Our vision is that people's attitudes to reading, both in print and online, are changed by taking part, whether or not they are already readers. Its greatest impact is on those who struggle with the written word and have never thought that reading was for them. In doing the Challenge they have engaged in a new reading habit, thereby improving their skills, employability and quality of life. Ninety per cent of survey respondents in 2012 said they felt more confident about reading after taking part.

"I've now read a lot more than six books," says 61-year-old Brian Bates who completed the Six Book Challenge in 2012 with the encouragement of his tutor Alison Rodger at the Shirebrook Adult Education Centre in Derbyshire. "I didn't read much before but I am going to keep going to classes, keep reading and keep going to the library to get books out."

"At first I thought I couldn't do the Challenge because I wasn't very good at reading," explains

Yvonne Hirst, a cleaning supervisor at De Montfort University in Leicester who has been supported two years running by UNISON learning rep Andrew Jennison. "But it has helped me a lot. I'm enjoying reading now whereas I wouldn't pick up a book before."

Prison tutors and library staff have also adopted the Six Book Challenge with enthusiasm and it's now used in around 100 prisons and young offender institutions. "The Challenge has helped our students to understand the value of a good book and how it can help with spelling, punctuation and improve on your vocabulary," reports Martine Fontenelle, literacy tutor at HMP Wandsworth.

But FE and sixth form colleges are the most obvious location for the scheme to grow and reap the biggest rewards for large numbers of students. Northampton College has been running the Challenge for five years with the library promoting its use to tutors across the college. As overall winner of our new awards for best performing organisations, they achieved 215 completers in 2012 drawn from courses ranging from Supported Learning to ESOL, Functional Skills and GCSE English. They now have more ambitious plans, spurred on by the finding that, on an initial sample of Functional Skills students who took part in the Challenge in 2012, whether they completed or not, there was a 78% pass rate, whereas those who did not join the Challenge attained a 65% pass rate. "We've piloted the Six Book Challenge with our lower level learners and found it to have a significant impact on their achievement," says Deputy Principal John Bexson. *"We're going to roll out it to all Level 1 learners as part of their teaching and learning which will include regular trips to the college library. We're also building it into the syllabus for all Level 2 Functional Skills and GCSE English students. It goes beyond the functionality of literacy skills to help with course retention and with students' employability and life skills – as well as being about an enjoyment of reading. It's invaluable to us at Northampton College."*

### Entry Level Learners

It's important to stress that even learners with very little literacy or with severe learning difficulties can benefit from a scheme of this kind and begin to feel like 'readers'. Funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation enabled us to pilot the use of reading for pleasure with Entry and pre-Entry Level learners in three settings in 2011, in each case with the support of library services: Essex Adult Community Learning,

Priestley College in Warrington and HMP Birmingham. It was a revelation for tutors as demonstrated in a resource pack based on the work.<sup>6</sup> *"It's made me move beyond the basics of the curriculum a bit more," said tutor Jenny Main in Essex who used newspapers, local history and a library quiz with her Entry Level learners. "You look at the outside world... and try and bring it into the class." Library staff and tutors in Warrington adapted the concept of 'storiesacks' for adults to make 'book boxes' containing a book and associated materials such as an audio recording, quizzes and games. "It made us all realise that small is OK," said tutor Kate Hillesden. "It doesn't have to be War and Peace for it to be a proper book."*

And an evaluation by NRDC, commissioned by The Reading Agency, found that *'beginning readers' are, in essence, no different from emergent readers or any other readers. They want interesting, attractive materials with an appropriate balance of accessibility and challenge.*<sup>7</sup>

### Reading Materials

Of course this raises a key question for all work of this kind: where to source the materials. Right from the start we have tried to identify examples of fiction and non-fiction that will have adult appeal while matching the reading ability of individual learners. The result is the unique Find a Read database on the Reading Agency website which now contains more than 1000 items – everything from printed books from pre-Entry to Level 2 to audio, large print, newspapers and even digital games.<sup>8</sup>

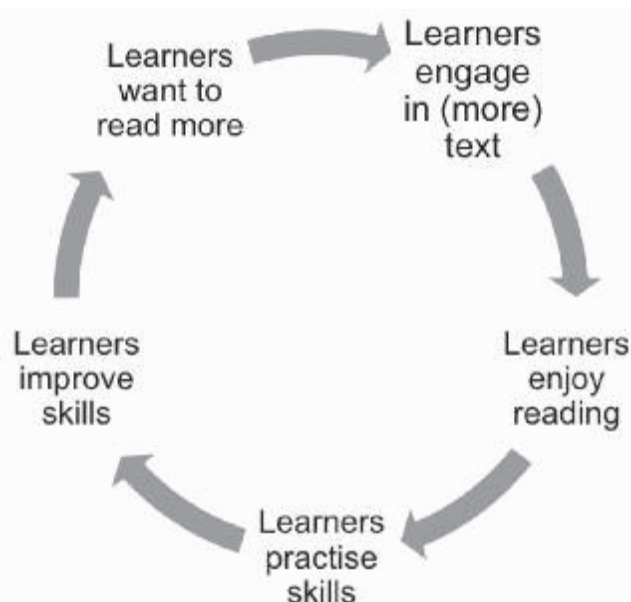
Indeed digital material becomes ever more important with some younger learners more likely to download a book to their mobile phone than pick up a traditional print volume. With this in mind we're working with mobile network operator Three to launch a digital platform for the Six Book Challenge in 2013 to complement use of the printed reading diary. Using a smartphone, tablet or desktop computer, participants will be able to create their own profile, search for titles in the database to suit their reading ability and interests and log and share their views about what they read. We'd be pleased to hear from practitioners interested in this approach or willing to trial use of the platform with their learners.

### Virtuous Circle

All of this activity is underpinned by the principle that reading for pleasure has a role to play at every stage of a learner's journey. At whatever

level an individual engages with text there's an opportunity for them to enjoy the experience and want to repeat it. As they do, they get a chance to practise their new-found skills and improve them. And so it continues, in a virtuous circle (see figure below).

Ideally the circle brings in further progression too. As their reading identity develops, learners build the confidence to read to their children and to venture into other communication skills such as trying out their own writing or talking with others about what they read in a reading group. After all, as Sam Duncan concludes in her study of reading circles for adult literacy learners, 'the complex pleasures and ethical discussions inherent in novel reading are likely to be as important for adult emergent readers as for any of us.'<sup>9</sup> My only proviso would be that non-fiction is included in the mix.



### What next?

Partnership working is fundamental to reaching audiences who will benefit most from reading for pleasure. Library staff need to link with tutors, trade union learning reps and HR managers. Publishers need to keep abreast of the kinds of resources that learners respond to in a digital age. And lateral thinking is required to make inroads into sections of our communities who feel that reading is simply not for them. With 5.1 million of the working age population reported to be at or below the literacy level expected of an 11 year old<sup>10</sup>, there's a huge role for the motivational trigger that an enjoyment of reading can provide.

At The Reading Agency we've just committed to doubling the scale of the Six Book Challenge to

50,000 participants by 2017. We've got some brilliant practitioners around the UK setting the pace but we're also renewing our strategic efforts at national level to get the message across. For instance the Six Book Challenge is part of the new Universal Reading Offer from public libraries which we've developed with the Society of Chief Librarians. We'll continue to encourage union learning reps to use the Challenge and book swaps as imaginative ways to engage their colleagues. And we're experimenting with a sporting link for 2013 with the aim of reaching non-readers among rugby league fans in the build up to the Rugby League World Cup in October/November 2013.

The crucial thing is that learners are given the opportunity to embark upon a virtuous circle of reading for pleasure, even if they choose not to take it up. As author and former SAS soldier Andy McNab, currently Ambassador for the Six Book Challenge, puts it: "It's never too late to start reading. And I guarantee once you start you won't be able to stop."

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## Pecket Learning Community Oral History and Digital Archive Project 2011 to 2013

Pauline Nugent

*Pauline Nugent is committed to inclusive and cooperative ways of working. She is drawn to user-led projects and organisations (as a volunteer and/or paid worker) and interested in the potential of assistive technologies and community philosophy to help redress inequalities in health and 'well-being'.*

Pecket is a user led voluntary organisation – a charity and company limited by guarantee run by and for people who have difficulties with reading, writing and/or numbers. Its constitution states that the majority of directors must have these difficulties themselves. Other directors are academics and educationalists (paid or unpaid) who are committed to promoting best practice in education, addressing inequalities in literacy/numeracy and increasing awareness of the impact on lives e.g. social/financial /health. (We refer to our organisation as 'Pecket' and people who are involved are known as 'Pecket Wellians'. We were originally named 'Pecket Well College'.)

In her conference workshop Pauline Nugent, oral history and digital archive project coordinator gave a brief background to Pecket and its current work, which involves creating a digital archive and oral history of Pecket.

### **Brief Background to Pecket Learning Community**

In 1985 some adult learners from Halifax, West Yorkshire had an experience that changed their lives. They attended a residential course held at Nottingham University and had a positive experience of education. On the journey home they had a dream - they decided to set up and run a small residential centre run by and for people like themselves. None of them had prior experience of fundraising, running a centre, being a charity director or a company director – but they did not hesitate. It took almost a decade for the dream to become reality. They campaigned and challenged many negative stereotypes and they did buy and renovate an old Co-op building in Pecket Well, near Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire and ran a successful centre for many years. Founder members were all adult learners who had attended Horton House Adult Education Centre in Halifax, West Yorkshire with the exception of Gillian Frost who had been their tutor at the centre. They all shared the dream of education based on equal relationships – rejecting traditional relationships of 'tutor' and 'student'. Crucially at Pecket, people who had difficulties with reading and

writing themselves were workshop leaders – working alongside experienced tutors but on an equal basis. This 'peer education' approach provided an atmosphere that enabled people who often had difficult and painful experiences within the mainstream education system to relax and develop confidence.

Pecket Wellians called their collective approach to education the 'Pecket Way' – sharing strengths, breaking down traditional roles and involving learners in all aspects of their education. Extensive peer outreach led to many previously 'hard to reach' individuals and groups coming to Pecket and finding they were treated with respect and listened to. Colin Neville was a guidance advisor at the University of Bradford Access Unit in 1999. He visited Pecket Well College, gave one to one and group careers guidance and attended some course sessions. During his recent interview for our Oral History Project he recalls:

*"The style of teaching was very non-hierarchical and informal and decisions were made collectively. All tutors were very respectful to students. It was obvious they believed in the students' abilities and clearly wanted to help them as best they could. When I think of Pecket I think of the word empowerment. Control moved to the students rather than teacher leading and dominating. There was a big emphasis on improving students' communication skills both verbal and written. It was very much about improving students' confidence and helping them realise they had something to say. Lots of students didn't think their words meant anything but Pecket was good at listening and valuing their words. I think it was a lifeline for many who experienced loneliness and poverty. Pecket helped them move on emotionally and vocationally. I remember during careers guidance sessions asking people about their previous experience of education. People often talked negatively about school and bad experiences had stopped them moving on in life. Pecket helped rebuild the confidence lost at school."*

Pecket was a pioneering organisation which tried to put into practice what it promoted. They wanted education to be accessible to all and planned inclusive projects costing them accordingly. This meant that on paper course costs looked 'expensive'. Workers and Pecket members had to explain time and time again that inclusion costs – but exclusion costs more. Funders who awarded grants recognised that something different was happening at Pecket. Extensive peer outreach, the involvement of learners in planning their own courses and producing publications about them all created a relaxed atmosphere. For many people it was the first time they felt they had something to say!

In her workshop Pauline explained that as at November 2011 when this project began there hadn't been any paid coordinator for some time. Pecket continued its work but on a very much reduced scale and was reliant on volunteers. Sadly a combination of factors (which will be explored in the oral history) led to the closure and sale of the building in 2011. The Lottery, who funded the purchase in 1999, could have clawed back the proceeds but Pecket appealed and asked to use these monies to continue its educational work. The Lottery agreed and have approved of the decision to use the monies to record Pecket's work and history in order to promote good practice. We are now half way through our project and our website will 'go live' early in 2013. We will continue to add archive materials up until the end of the end of October 2013 when this project ends.

### Current Oral History and Digital Archive Project

Pecket's democratic form of education was inspiring, fun, life changing, challenging and sometimes painful. The oral history project will document all of these elements and attempt to put Pecket's work in a wider context of both educational and socio-economic developments.

All directors sit on the project steering group and Mary Hamilton, Professor of Adult Learning and Literacy, Lancaster University is also a steering group member. People who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy are involved in all aspects of project planning, design, production and evaluation. Founder members and others on the steering group are now in their sixties or seventies. Most experience health problems and mobility problems and ongoing problems associated with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

In spite of these possible barriers we were

determined to run this project in the traditional 'Pecket Way'. We believe working cooperatively and as equals is worth all the hard work and reaps results that cannot always be predicted. Our oral history project will try to capture and record these.

At the conference Pauline showed the group Pecket's draft website which will contain the oral history, archive, films and free training materials. We are using a variety of media to make the content accessible to a broad spectrum of users – including people who have difficulties with reading and writing. The groups watched a short film 'Hole in the wall' (in which Florence Agbah tells how difficult it can be to get her own money out of the bank when every system relies on the skills of reading and writing). We will produce further films showing how literacy and numeracy difficulties continue to impact on people's lives. You can view this film at [vimeo.com/49164158](http://vimeo.com/49164158).



Page from draft version of Pecket website.

### Our Website

We recruited Andrassy Media to work with us to design our website. All Pecket Wellians have been involved in the design and development of this site. We want it to be attractive and as easy to use as possible to people like ourselves, to educationalists, policy makers and academics. People from each of these groups have offered to test our draft site for ease of use in February 2013. This feedback will help us to complete the site and we hope it will go live sometime in April 2013.



Draft version of Pecket homepage.



Archiving – hard work!



Pecket Wellians get together to look at draft website.



Archiving – aaargh!!

## Our Archives

Sadly the college building was flooded in 2010 and many items that had previously been archived were stored in the basement and lost or damaged. A small team of Pecket Wellians salvaged whatever they could and the remains have been stored in approximately 100 cardboard boxes at Voluntary Action Calderdale.

During this project we will sort the contents and prioritise items for digitizing. Items range from papers and reports, audio cassette recordings of meetings and readings, videos, art works, textiles and hundreds of photographs. Digitising will enable us to put these on a website thus making them available to as many people as possible. We are also recording our work on this project as we progress to illustrate how we continue to work in the 'Pecket Way'.

## Our Oral History

We recruited Cilla Ross, an oral historian, to work with Pecket Wellians and to interview as many people as possible by January 2013. Interviews have been face to face whenever possible. Some have been by telephone or skype e.g. interviews with previous partner organisations in Canada. Cilla conducted initial interviews and trained some Pecket Wellians in interview skills. During the next months they will conduct 'peer interviews' with past participants.

It has taken many hours/days of detective work to trace past participants, funders and people from partner organisations. Early in the project the Coordinator contacted all living Founder members and invited them to a reunion and celebration meal. Founder members are ageing, experiencing health problems and still tackling their own difficulties with reading, writing and



numbers. This was a rare get together. Peter Goode commented, "We put our own education on hold to give others like us a chance." Michelle said, "We may not have all worked on our own reading and writing but we learned so much along the way. How to be a director of a company and a charity. How to be an employer. We went to places we would never have seen. I will never forget that first train journey to London and the terrifying journey on the underground."

We have been delighted that everyone we have contacted has agreed to take part in our oral history project. Some people had retired from posts but still agreed to be interviewed. For example Janet Mitchell who was contact at West Yorkshire Grants 20 years ago. Her support and constructive criticism was invaluable in those early days and helped us to develop confidence as an organisation.

### Free Educational Resources

Once we have sorted through our archives and completed our oral history we will decide what educational materials we can share with others. They will explain how we have worked and invite others to learn from us and develop these materials to promote best practice in working with people who have difficulties with reading, writing and/or numbers. For example: we developed training for Writing Hands who wrote people's own words down for them. We found that this does not come naturally as we often think we are listening when in fact we are thinking what we thought the person said. It also takes training to break the habit of correcting people's grammar, language or punctuation. All of which can change the essence of the person and what they are saying.

### What is the Pecket Way?

During the project we continue to reflect and ask ourselves – What is the Pecket Way? For those of us who have been involved it has become second nature. The process of unpacking this approach and attempting to explain it to others is challenging. It is helping some directors come to terms with the sad loss of our residential building and celebrate our combined achievements. We realise that the 'Pecket Way' was/is an evolving approach. We will soon be working with young people in Halifax, some of whom have missed out on education. We are interested to find out what they think of our story and the 'Pecket Way' and whether or not it has any relevance to them.

We hope that our oral history and archives will tell our story and inspire others like us to take control of their own education. We hope that educationalists, funders and policy makers will be inspired to find new ways of working. So many people helped us along the way – we want to thank everyone and hope our reflections will benefit others. Our website will be live from April 2013 at [www.pecket.org](http://www.pecket.org). We will continue to add to the site up until the end of this project on 31st October 2013.



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## Championing Maths Learning for Adults

### Sue Southwood

*Sue currently leads on Functional Skills for NIACE. Sue trained as a teacher in 1986 and worked for Norfolk County Council where she taught Literacy and GCSE English to adults. She has held a number of posts including working as a Curriculum Manager for City and Islington College and spending a year in Spain as an EFL Teacher. Before joining NIACE in August 2004, Sue set up and managed workplace basic skills programmes for Northern Foods, Ford Motor Company and Transport for London. Sue has just completed an MA in Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy.*

New Challenges, New Chances (BIS, 2011) sets out the post 19 skills agenda for England, and includes a national maths initiative to engage 'champions' from employers, communities, agencies and organisations to encourage and enthuse adults to take up maths learning. It states,

*Promote is a national Maths campaign. Instead of taking an expensive, top-down approach as has been done in the past, we will work with stakeholders and seek to engage 'champions', including high profile employers. These champions will target other employers and individuals with low skills in employment; and those on the margins of the labour market. (p11)*

NIACE is delighted to be leading a partnership body with a range of different stakeholders to implement this initiative over the next three years. *Action on Adult Maths* aims to raise awareness of the role, value and importance of maths for adults as well as the opportunities for improving maths throughout life. An ambitious part of the plan is to train 8,000 Maths Champions who can play a critical peer support role to engage adults with maths learning. We have already piloted the concept of 'champions' with unionlearn and the results were both positive and encouraging. One Union Learning Rep (ULR) stated, *"It made you realise maths is not threatening."* Another commented, *"A seed was planted to further my skills in this area and to encourage people in the workplace by signposting them on to the maths development opportunities available to us."* Our joint publication, *Facing Up to Maths* (NIACE/unionlearn 2012), aims to provide ULRs, and a whole range of intermediaries, to focus on maths learning and includes inspiring stories of adults who have made the journey from fearing or disliking maths to finding it useful and enjoyable.

Increasing demand for maths learning means increasing teachers, and the refreshed *Skills for Life* Strategy notes both a shortage of numeracy

teachers and difficulties in recruiting additional teachers. Research undertaken by NRDC estimated that using current delivery models, we need roughly an additional 7,000 numeracy teachers. It also noted a capacity issue among teacher-training providers. The profession still lacks full time jobs and the opportunities for progression needed to attract a younger workforce. NIACE's Committee of Inquiry into Adult Numeracy Learning (NIACE 2011) recommends training more numeracy teachers but also to train a new cadre of people to support maths in a variety of ways. Intermediaries such as family learning practitioners, ULRs and front line workers can encourage adults to improve their maths and to work with specialist teachers to support adults to be confident, competent and comfortable in when to use maths and how to use it in their daily lives.

Many adults who feel their maths is weak, perhaps because of a negative early experience of maths learning, may be reluctant to return to it and some will develop a real fear of maths. An unintended consequence of the *Skills for Life* Strategy may have exacerbated this, as the development of qualifications became the driver for most provision, leading to a limited menu for maths learning. A curriculum-driven approach to maths fails to respect the maths adults can already do and the maths they want to learn. The funding mechanisms, and the rigid framework that qualifications impose on what is taught, mean there have been fewer opportunities for teaching that builds on adults' needs and interests. How we define maths for adult learners influences provision as well as the attitudes of policy makers and funders, teachers and learners, and gives greater or less value to different kinds of activity. Not all learning needs to be accredited and happen in a classroom. NIACE's Inquiry Report (NIACE 2011) recommends a diversity of learning opportunities and *Action on Adult Maths* gives us the platform to do this. We are hoping to stimulate plenty of options to suit different people, including informal and formal group activities, online

learning, blended approaches, work-place learning, volunteer and mentor support, peer-to-peer learning and drop-in.

Our view of assessment also needs to change. Assessments that only test procedural competence may be of little value in measuring the maths adults can and can't do and how they use maths in everyday life. The move to *Functional Skills* with its emphasis on understanding, problem-solving and applying skills in contexts is a welcome step in the right direction and initial, formative and summative assessment should begin to develop learners' thinking, understanding and behaviour in relation to maths. Final assessment for *Functional Skills* maths does not just test maths ability but requires the individual to make decisions about what maths to use in real-life scenarios. This brings challenges for teachers and learners. The 'real-life scenarios' could be about gardening, plumbing or planning a party – learners may find this comfortingly familiar or feel anxious about the unfamiliarity of a context they have never experienced. However, this is how we have to use maths in real life. Clearly, it takes longer to prepare learners to achieve a robustly assessed qualification that tests ability to apply and transfer knowledge rather than to pass a multiple choice test. For learners transferring from *Skills for Life* numeracy to *Functional Skills* maths, the next level of qualification may be more difficult to achieve, particularly for those learners at lower levels, yet funding currently dictates the need to move learners up to the next level when transferring to *Functional Skills*.

### Maths Mentors in Prisons

One innovative idea from NIACE is the creation of Maths Mentors in prisons. We are currently trialling a new way of supporting maths in prisons by training offenders who are confident in their maths skills to support others who are less confident. We know that informal maths support already happens in prisons – often on the wing to help with money management – and we hope the Maths Mentors programme will build on this. Mentors, recognisable by a distinctive T shirt, will discuss maths, encourage reflection and promote maths learning for those who do not join classes because of fear or previous negative experiences. They will also provide one-to-one support for current maths learners to consolidate their skills and feel more confident in the prison classroom. 20 Mentors have been recruited and trained at HMP Hewell and HMP Coldingley. This work is funded by BIS and will report in March 2013.

This is only one idea but *Action on Adult Maths* should produce lots more. Such a complex issue is not easily solved but bringing together a rich range of partners to work together for a common purpose is a positive step in the right direction. Partners are working to produce awareness sessions, resources and online learning modules using MOOCS (Massive Online Open Course) that will be freely available to everyone. There will be courses for everyday maths, for parents and carers to support their children with maths and to support financial capability. MOOCS allow materials to be re-purposed and adapted to be used in different settings. This joint focus on maths enables a variety of organisations to come together with a common aim to examine what works, build on effective practice and, perhaps most importantly, to generate new ideas.

**Why not be a Maths Mentor?**

Adults use maths all the time to budget, carry out DIY and to help their children. We use maths at home, in prison, in the garden or in the gym. However, around 1 in 4 people struggle with basic maths and many of these people are in prison. If someone has had a negative experience of maths at school they may be very reluctant to join a class as an adult in order to improve their skills. Some people develop a real fear of maths and go to great lengths to avoid it. You can help by becoming a Maths Mentor!



Is this maths?



Or is this maths?

As a Maths Mentor, you can play an important role. You can help people on the wing or around the prison with maths problems and encourage them to take up maths learning. You can also help people going along to maths classes to understand topics better by discussing difficulties and practising skills with them on a one-to-one basis. This will make a huge difference to their confidence and their progress.

You do not need any maths qualifications but just be reasonably confident in maths and able to help others to feel confident. You need to be able to listen and have patience and understanding. Training and materials will be provided.

Find out more by \_\_\_\_\_

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## What is Union Learning for? What have we learnt from the past 10 years?

Judith Swift

*Before the launch of unionlearn, Judith worked nationally for TUC Learning Services since it was set up in 1998. Her role has been to support the work of unions and union learning representatives, particularly through the Union Learning Fund, which started in October 1998.*

*Judith has had responsibility for co-ordinating the TUC support to unions in ULF and in particular for Adult English and maths. The last few years have seen a rapid expansion of unions and union learning representatives engaged in learning including personal, professional and workforce development. Over 40 unions are currently involved.*

*Judith was appointed as Union Development Manager for unionlearn in January 2006 and is responsible for supporting unions and their ULRs to develop their learning and skills strategies. Her area of responsibility includes the Union Learning Fund and unionlearn's network of learning centres.*

*She was awarded the MBE in 2005 for her work in adult basic skills.*

*Immediately before joining TUC Learning Services, Judith worked as a TUC tutor for a number of years in the North West delivering courses for union representatives and health and safety representatives. Her wider background in FE also includes teaching English and German primarily, but a few other bits and pieces too.*

In this article, I will review the activities of unionlearn who work with over 60 unions, with a particular focus on English and maths. I will identify the features of our work which makes union learning different from, other forms of adult learning, whether this is through organisation, target groups catered for, or content. Using a case study from of a major union/employer programme in the North West, I will try to pick out effective elements of union-sponsored provision. Finally, I will set out some key issues for the future of union learning; and how the relationship between unions and education providers might need to develop for new contexts.

### Background

Unionlearn is the learning and skills organisation of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). Unionlearn works to assist unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members as well as managing the £15 million Union Learning Fund (ULF), which provides unions with the funding to develop new programmes for members, non-members, families and communities. Over the past 12 years, more than 28,000 union learning representatives (ULRs) have been trained and 230,000 people are being given training and learning opportunities through their union every year (Source: Unionlearn Annual Report 2011). Unionlearn is also responsible for providing education and training opportunities for workplace reps and professionals via TUC Education. Each year more than 50,000 trade union members enrol in trade union education courses organised by the TUC.

Of course, trade unions have been involved in the education and development of members since the nineteenth century. In the field of adult English and maths, unions got involved in the current campaigns early, beginning with the NUPE basic skills programmes at Imperial College London in the 1980s, at a time when UK workplace literacy programmes were few and far between. Unionlearn came into being in 1998, with a remit from the TUC General Council to provide a "high profile role for the TUC and trade unions as providers and/or facilitators of vocational and other learning opportunities for members and potential members".

### What is Union Learning for?

Since the nineteenth century, unions have included education as part of their remit. Unions were responding to the general lack of opportunity for working class people, and recognised that mutual support and organisation lay at the heart of their efforts:

*"The healthy spirit of self-help created amongst working people would more than any other measure serve to raise them as a class, and this, not by any pulling down of others, but by levelling up to a higher level"<sup>1</sup>*

Modern union learning is founded on the same principles. Union programmes are based on the notion of 'Doing with, not doing to'. This entails building programmes that meet learner demands, ranging from basic English, maths and ICT programmes through to higher education entry programmes. It has brought about

systems of advice, guidance and learning journey planning that respond to learner needs. For example, the union Climbing Frame<sup>2</sup> helps learners plan their learning to encompass employment, career and personal goals. Finally, the principles that underpin our work lead union members to become Union Learning Reps (ULRs), workplace assessors and, in increasing numbers, training as teachers.

Successive governments have recognised the value of union learning to the individual, but also to the economy and wider society. They have therefore continued to fund both access to learning and union learning programmes themselves; but at the same time they have acknowledged the value of the independent approach that unions take, in reaching learners who would not otherwise be engaged; by negotiating for learning to take place in workplaces that would otherwise not offer any staff development; and by building progression routes that take learners into higher learning and qualification.

Fundamentally, union learning programmes share one aim: to support adults to get into work, stay in work and thrive and progress. And it has worked. In the past 10 years:

- Over 60 unions have been involved in ULF English and maths learning
- 257 Union Learning Fund projects have run
- 475 union learning centres have been established
- Over 20,000 ULRs have been trained
- There have been 138,662 Sfl learners
- 43,083 achievements have been reported to date.<sup>3</sup>

### Case Study: Merseytravel

Merseytravel is the authority responsible for overseeing the public transport network on Merseyside, and are responsible for coordinating bus and rail services, maintaining transport infrastructure. Over the past decade, the organisation and its staff have overcome a number of problems – from poor industrial relations to the overall performance of the company.

What changed? At the heart of it was the approach to education and training, initiated by a new attitude by senior management, and co-operation with the unions. At the heart of the new approach is that 'Merseylearn supports workers in the transport sector on Merseyside to gain the skills they need to be successful in their jobs'. As a result, it has been possible to

negotiate a system of ULRs, the establishment of a learning centre with a hub and spoke model throughout Merseyside. The company has adopted a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life. New opportunities for learning have been introduced, supported by an in house tutor. ULR forums ensured unions worked together, between themselves and with management, to grow learning and progression opportunities.

The outcome has been a total of 1611 English and maths learners, with 893 achievements of qualifications to date. ICT programmes have flourished, drawing in not only Merseytravel employees, but staff from other workplaces. Now Merseytravel are gearing up for the introduction of Functional Skills, piloting with English and maths learners before September 2012, undertaking focused work with ULRs so that they understand and can advise workers on new learning, reviewing practice and materials, utilising workplace scenarios for writing and problem solving.

Merseytravel is an example of what unions can achieve, working with management to institute learning that meets the needs of the company and the individual. Of course, it's not always so successful. The attitudes of too many employers towards learning is still negative. However, Merseytravel is just one example of what can be done.

### What have we learned from the past 10 years of unionlearn?

*There is robust evidence that union learning is successful in engaging learners from groups underrepresented in adult learning such as those without a Level 2 qualification. Once engaged in such learning learners progress through different levels. In one analysis of the one-third learners who had progressed to another level, almost half of them had improved on existing qualifications by two levels.*

The past ten years have demonstrated that there is a clear role for unions in promoting, advising, supporting and providing learning around the workplace. Members and other workers want it, and continue to bargain for it. Employers and wider society, through continued engagement with union learning programmes, appear to recognise its value. Unions have shown that they can deliver good, popular and effective learning.

The features of union learning that seem to be important are:

- A better route to motivation and advice to learners. The role that **Union Learning Reps** play in promoting learning, and giving advice and guidance. Coming as they do from the ranks of employees in the workplace, they both speak the language of the potential learners, and bring confidence and reassurance that what learning offers is both useful and safe. Their training gives them the skills both to advise individuals of the possible learning paths, but also gathers evidence of learning needs in the workplace that will inform union-management bargaining.
- The development of learning spaces and centres, in and around the workplace, where adults, often with limited time and sometimes confidence, can follow sustained learning programmes. We have many examples of individuals who have not taken up external courses for different reasons of opportunity, time or money, who have been able to start in a centre on workplace premises, with courses at a time to suit them.
- The flexibility of what we offer. There are many instances where government or local provider policy has coincided with what learners demand and unions look at develop. Literacy and numeracy, ICT skills are obvious examples. But learners want more and want different, including non-vocational learning, new career opportunities, and the chance to progress to higher education – and the funding and courses for these are not always available. Unions must respond to these aspirations of learners; and to do this....
- Partnership with providers has been an essential element of our work. Without the involvement of colleges, adult providers, HE institutions and others, what we can offer is limited and sometimes of poor quality. These relationships have enabled us to go further with the offer to learners.

It is also important for us to look at what has not worked so well, or provision that we have not been able to maintain. Some unions have organised learning in such a way that it has been better able to withstand changes (reductions) in funding or available college support. Functions, not structures, are the key, by which I mean getting the learning programme and employer relationships right, rather than the physical infrastructure or staffing based on too temporary

a funding base. Union learning cannot and should not replace, either by design or accident, good local adult provision. But by working together, we can help to protect some local provision, and bring it into the lives of many of our members.

### Key Issues for the Future

*Although overall the messages offer optimism about the sustainability of union learning there are limits as to how this impacts on policy and practice in a vocational education and training system that is voluntary and where decision-making social partnership institutions are nonexistent and collective bargaining is limited.*

What is happening currently for unions and their work? Despite the difficult financial climate, demand for the work of union learning grows. The number of English and maths learners continues, and recently we have seen growth in numbers both an Entry Level and at Level 2. Additionally, a number of themes are emerging for our future work:

- Workplace and beyond. Many union centres are opening their programmes to wider groups of learners. These include the families of workers, members of the wider community, employees of neighbouring companies, including non-unionised workers. Recently two ULF projects, run by the First Division Association (FDA) and Managers in Partnership (MiP), have opened their centres to draw in ex-offenders and unemployed adults, offering routes back into work. In partnership with local Community Learning Trusts and others, unions see this as a continuing part of their work.
- The demand for digital skills learning grows, as does education around the green skills agenda.
- Provider/union/employer partnerships must change in the current context. There are benefits and strength to be gained in co-operative planning with local providers. Employers and their sector bodies must get more involved in joint efforts to raise levels of education and training in the workplace, to match levels of activity elsewhere, for example in Germany. Learning agreements form a key part of union strategy to ensure that what learning is developed for workers lasts.

Ten years on, unions can be proud of what has been achieved. We have a lot of successful (as

well lessons from unsuccessful) experience to draw on. The next ten years will be harder, but the demand for our work will be greater than ever.

**References**

1. *Smiles, S.* (1882). *Self-Help*. London: John Murray.
2. For information on the Climbing Frame, visit <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/our-work-and-projects/supporting-learners/climbing-frame>
3. *Unionlearn Annual Report 2012*

# The Changing Context of Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Teacher Education

Alison Wedgbury

*Alison Wedgbury has worked in adult literacies teaching, work-based learning and teacher education for over 30 years. She is Treasurer of RaPAL and is currently lead for the Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training in the Eastern Region (EECETT) with ACER*  
[www.acer.ac.uk](http://www.acer.ac.uk)

At the October 2012 conference Helen Casey, Executive Director of NRDC at the Institute of Education [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk) outlined features of the professional training of teachers for adult literacies in England since the 1970s. She then initiated a discussion about current policy and practice including the effects on courses planned for 2012-13 in the nine English regions. Her presentation is available on the NIACE website: <http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/events/C3095A-1012/Helen-Casey.pdf> (accessed 22 January 2013).

This article draws on the content of Helen Casey's workshop material and then adds some comment on some key policy reviews and funding proposals since October 2012 that affect teacher education in England. The situation is different in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as each country in the UK has its own development priorities.

Helen Casey's conference presentation tracked changes in the English system from the 1970s up to early October 2012. Briefly, these were:

## 1970s

Teacher qualifications and CPD (Continuing Professional Development) developed 'bottom up' to suit different contexts and without a national plan.

## 1980s

Qualifications for both learners and teachers were further developed, mainly by awarding bodies which operated nationally but did not use a common set of standards. There was no clarity about who was qualified to teach.

## 1990s

During the 1990s a national system for vocational qualifications emerged as NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications). In 1999 the Department for Education and Employment published *A Fresh Start*' (DfEE 1999), the report chaired by Sir Claus Moser that paved the way (in England only) for the 'Skills for Life' era. For the first time, a national set of learner and teacher qualifications was proposed for the 'basic skills' of literacy and numeracy.

## 2000 to October 2012

In 2001 new regulations for the teaching of all post-16 subjects (in vocational and adult education) led to the introduction of specialist Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL teaching qualifications aligned to new national standards. Universities as well as awarding bodies offered these qualifications and the supply of courses was variable across the regions.

In 2007 there were revisions to the post-16 teaching qualifications/standards and new application guides for Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL led to revised teaching qualifications. More universities across England were now offering these qualifications, some with progression to Master's level. The balance was shifting away from awarding body qualifications towards those taught in universities and/or in partnership with further education colleges. Nationally funded research dedicated to adult literacies was flourishing and was now available to all trainee teachers and their course leaders in print, online and at conferences.

From 2010 the new Coalition Government implemented major changes in school, vocational, adult and university education for England in accordance with their policies on de-regulation and 'freedom' from central control. Funding reductions had already started in a time of economic recession.

In March 2012 an interim report was published on *Professionalism in further education*, a government review chaired by Lord Lingfield (BIS 2012). That interim report proposed features of de-regulation that would affect teachers across the further education system in England in which all Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL teachers work. By this time universities or HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) had already considerably raised their student fees because of the changes in their own national funding. This had led to a shift back to awarding body teaching qualifications which in many cases were more cost effective for individuals and institutions. It is not yet clear how many of the HEI and awarding body accredited courses that planned to start in 2011 or 2012 actually started.



### After October 2012

In late October 2012 the final 'Lingfield Report' (BIS 2012), confirmed that government recognised the need for specialist expertise in teaching adult literacies and in teaching disabled learners. This was generally welcomed and overlapped with the start of a review to 'simplify' all post-16 teaching qualifications. During October and November 2012 proposals were discussed across England by individuals and institutions in regional meetings. The aim was to quickly publish the structure of new qualifications for teachers so that universities and awarding bodies could start developing their courses in 2013.

During 2012 and up to the end of February 2013 individual bursaries were also offered to offset some of the cost of qualifications. Bursaries for courses accredited by HEIs were higher than those accredited by awarding bodies. After August 2013 it is expected that there will be no more bursaries but that individuals can apply for student loans. The details of those loans have not yet been published.

### **New Qualifications for Teachers of English (Literacy and Functional English), Mathematics (Numeracy and Functional Mathematics), ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).**

At the time of writing for this journal, the qualifications have just entered the development phase after the publication of the Findings Report (LSIS 2013). Details will emerge during 2013 and it is intended that some courses will start from autumn 2013. In general, the changes for this area of work are less about content than about structure, progression between different levels of qualifications, synergy with other qualifications about learning and development and about the facility to contextualise some aspects for particular working contexts.

People who have already started the 'old' qualifications will continue and complete them and the status of their qualifications will not change. New qualifications are also proposed for teachers of disabled learners and the content of those has not yet been established.

There remain issues that may continue to be debated by RaPAL members in England. HEIs will continue to design, name and, crucially, cost their own qualifications while awarding bodies will use the names designated in the national proposals. Individuals and/or their employers may need careful guidance on choosing between offers. People wanting to start a career in teaching English, Mathematics or ESOL will find courses in some parts of England and not in others. For trainee teachers the costs of getting qualified are likely to continue, in terms of higher fees, travel time, travel fares and increasing amounts of independent study. Teacher educators may feel constrained to reduce the depth of study to fit the new proposed structures.

There will continue to be plenty of discussion points for RaPAL to consider, including the differences between England's approach and the one taken by other UK countries and others worldwide.

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# Reviews

## More Powerful Literacies

Editors: Jim Crowther, Mary Hamilton and Lyn Tett

Leicester: NIACE 2012

ISBN 978-1-862015845

240 pages

£24.95

*Reviewed by Claire Collins*

*Claire Collins is an independent literacies consultant, who started her adult learning career teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in UK urban cities. As a freelancer since 2003, Claire has worked for several organisations, developing and implementing adult literacies projects. Claire's work takes her to a wide range of settings, including prisons, adult learning services, colleges and workplaces. She currently works as part of the national project team for the Dutch 'Taal voor het Leven' (Language for Life) pilot and is the secretary of 'Research and Practice in Adult Literacy' (RaPAL). Claire can be contacted by e-mail at c.collins@gmx.com.*

As the title indicates, *More Powerful Literacies* follows on from *Powerful Literacies*, published in 2001. Like its precursor, this new volume explores the broad themes of literacies and power from many different and thought-provoking angles. The first section on 'Theoretical and Policy Frameworks' starts with 'contexts for literacy work', where Brian Street analyses prevalent discourses and argues that adult literacies should be treated as multimodal, pluralistic practices, inseparable from the contexts in which they occur. Mary Hamilton and Lyn Tett then review international policies on adult literacies development, focussing in particular on England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Hamilton and Tett concur with Street's view that, increasingly, literacy 'skills' are viewed as tools for 'human resource development'. However, they do identify competing policy discourses, particularly in Scotland and Ireland, where wider social concepts of adult literacies and empowerment have a greater influence on policy and practice.

To begin the second section of the book, 'Making Power Visible', Jane Mace reflects on the power inherent in signing, or not signing, your name and the assumptions we can make about people as 'illiterate' because we see a 'cross' next to their name. I was pleased to see this chapter re-printed from the 2001 volume. Tannis Atkinson

next asks, *what literacies count?* when using statistics to plan interventions and measure success in the field of adult literacies. The second section continues with Amy Burgess' chapter on autonomy in writing, which depends, she illustrates, on the author having a confident sense of identity. Burgess argues that issues of identity need to be a key focus when teaching writing. The topic of identity continues with Sandra Varey and Karin Tusting's chapter on how teachers and learners work with 'individual learning plans' (ILPs). They expose ILP forms as powerful literacies that teachers and learners negotiate creatively. Finally, in this section, Jim Crowther and Lyn Tett lucidly illustrate the importance of developing powerful literacies for democracy in the spaces created by discourses on citizenship and social inclusion.

In the final section, 'Resistance and Challenges', we are taken to projects and activities from around the world: Firstly, Maggie Feeley's portrayal of adults who were abused in Irish industrial schools, brings into focus the crucial role of care in adult literacy programmes. Malini Ghose and Disha Mullick then take us to India and the lives of women who have taken part in projects seeking to empower them through literacies and learning. Moving next to Aotearoa/ New Zealand, Jane Hunt explores how migrant workers frequently lack agency to take part in workplace literacy. John Player then shares the work of the 'Glory and Dismay Football Literacy Programme' in Scotland, where club members are inspired to critically examine and challenge dominant literacies in their lives, starting from a shared passion for football. Next, James Simpson and Richard Gresswell explain how young ESOL students in England can find ways to positively express their identities through new media, such as videos and photo diaries. Simpson and Gresswell compare this to the deficient way that the same learners can be positioned when undertaking more traditionally-recognised literacy practices in college, such as 'skills' development and preparation for work. Finally, we have the second of the two re-printed chapters, this time by Alan Addisson, who describes the work of a family literacies programme in Scotland. Here speakers of Scots were supported to recognise and value their tongue as a living, valid language, as opposed to 'slang' that should not be written down.

I enjoyed this book from beginning to end; each chapter evoked a response in me, sometimes

affirming my own practice and sometimes giving me inspiration to think about things in different ways. As such, I would certainly recommend it for your bookcase/ e-shelf.

### **National Research Centre, Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Research and Practice**

Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy (Eds) Alan Lesgold, and Welch-Ross, Melissa Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2012

ISBN 978-0-309-21959-4

504 pages

Paperback \$65

Also accessible free pdf from:

[www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=13242](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13242)

*Reviewed by Azumah Carol Dennis*

*Azumah is employed by Hull University as a Programme Director for Post Compulsory Education and Training. She teaches on a range of initial and continuing professional development courses for FE practitioners. Since 2010 Azumah has researched and published work on literacy education, policy and practice.*

*Improving Adult Literacy offers what every teacher with an interest in improving the life chances of those who have benefited least from state education longs for: a definitive evidence-based guide on effective literacy teaching. It is an ambitious text that to some extent achieves what it sets out to do, to a) synthesise research on literacy and learning and b) draw implications for the instructional practices used to teach reading in adult literacy programme and c) recommend a more systematic approach to research policy and practice.*

The text covers over 400 densely packed pages (including 250 pages of citations and references) and after offering an initial brief chapter that contextualises the report, the authors trawl through and bring together an impressive range of studies that provide a credible empirical foundation to the pedagogies associated with teaching adult literacy, curricular design, barriers to learning, uses of technology, disability and language development in multi-lingual speakers.

The book is written by US practitioners with an American audience in mind and this is reflected in (amongst other things) the language the writers use. The linguistic style is refreshingly upbeat - what is recognisable to a British

readership as a section on 'barriers to learning' is phrased 'motivation, engagement and persistence'. The chapter focuses then not on reasons why adults may not attend classes in a fashion that suits the retention rates of organisation, but rather on the social and psychological determinates of persistence in learning. I like the concept of persistence. It spills over and beyond retention and takes the learner's start and end point; a persistent learner may start three or four different courses before completing any one of them - their learning will continue throughout this time. This is quite unlike retention that measures an institution's course start and end dates and the learners who are present and correct for both. Persistence is a more learner-centred and meaningful concept.

Novice and experienced practitioners should read and re-read this book. For some, there will be the shock of recognition. We may appreciate the text's reminder that although reading and writing have at times been thought of as and therefore taught (most certainly tested) as separate language skills, they depend on similar knowledge and cognitive processes (p53). Insights gained in one area can lead to insights into the other. What is particularly useful is that the text provides a series of references to explore and elaborate upon. There are prosaic reminders, 'literacy, or cognition, cannot be understood fully apart from the contexts in which they develop (p25) is followed by detailed references to Street (1984), Heath (1983), Lave and Wenger (1981) and Scribner and Cole (1981). Anyone who follows a few of these referenced sources will find their views on literacy and how to teach it changed, challenged or deepened.

Any teacher (or teacher trainer) tentatively approaching this terrain for the first time is invited to read, try it out and then re-read. The text may well settle a few long standing arguments. The writers reassure us that specific reading and writing difficulties do not necessarily require qualitatively different teaching (p103) or decontextualised interventions that target general cognitive/sensory processing - balancing beams, coloured lenses, brain retraining (p57). Instead the writers advise approaches to teaching that adapt existing approaches to ensure that they are more explicit and systematic, that they are supportive of transfer and enable extensive practice. This is reassuring. A range of learner needs that at first glance may appear mysterious and daunting, is firmly established as manageable.

This is a good, densely packed read that deserves to be on all our shelves. It draws in a condensed form on a similar body of knowledge to that covered by the NRDC who get a good mention (p90). And, *best of all*, it is available as a free download: (above biblio notes for link)

I do have some reservations about this book. It very clearly emerges from a policy context that is quite unlike that of the UK. Understanding policy and pedagogy in the United States is made complex by the existence of multiple legislative levels - federal, state and district. Uniformity and the monolithic 'one-size-fits-all' approach to improving practice so familiar to teachers in England, is more difficult in the states as federal policies are diluted, diffused and disrupted by state and district level legislators, only to be further adapted to suit the actualities of teaching and learning by institutions. The text then pulls and pushes in opposite directions. For readers in the UK, it is a reminder that There Is An Alternative. The highly prescriptive centralisation of 'outstanding, good, requires improvement' teaching that we by now accept as normal, are not how practitioners in the USA teach.

The text provides sound theory and empirical evidence which helps establish this fluidity in approach to what good teaching requires if it is to become outstanding teaching. That is, an appreciation that effective pedagogy is thoroughly and completely contextualised. 'Literacy, and cognition, can not be understood fully apart from the contexts in which it develops', (p25). Pedagogy is motivating when instructional practices are embedded in meaningful activities, (p34). Adult learners are heterogeneous. Pedagogies need to be varied according to learning goals, skills, interests, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, (p238).

The implications of this contingency are not taken seriously enough by the writers (in my view). They seem to yearn for the centralisation and uniformity of England's policy making. It will be interesting to see whether their polity allows this.

### **God and decision-making: a Quaker approach**

Jane Mace

London: Quaker Books, 2012

ISBN 978-1907123320

146 pages

£8

*Reviewed by Sam Duncan*

*Sam is an adult literacy teacher and teacher educator living and working in London. She is the author of Reading Circles, Novels and Adult Reading Development (2012). You can contact her on s.duncan@ioe.ac.uk.*

It is a treat- and a joy- to get to review a book about something completely different, which this book is (and isn't). It is a delight to get to review a book with a title that stands out from the rest - God! Decision making! A Quaker Approach! And as will surprise no one who knows Jane Mace's writing, this book is indeed a real delight to read: challenging, insightful, thought-provoking and beautifully written. For those who don't know much about the Quaker faith (or even those who do), it is a book which teaches us about the values and practices of Quakers, and introduces key concepts, thinkers and texts. For those involved in adult literacy education, it is a book which teaches us about reading & writing and their relationship to spoken discourse, to religious practice, to organisational practices and to love. For absolutely everyone, it is a book which will teach us to understand how we can work with others, in our roles as local and international citizens, in a different way.

It introduced to me the idea of Quaker business meetings aiming for unity rather than unanimity or majority vote. I find this a very powerful and difficult idea and know I will need to read this book again and talk to others before I'll be able to properly grasp it, but it seems that a focus on the issue itself (and divine guidance, see below) allows the group to come to the right decision. Speakers do not try to convince each other but rather speak about the issue, listen to others, wait, think and listen more until the right path for the group emerges. The context is one of meetings for worship where worship is about getting organised, making decisions, being involved in local, national and international politics. It seems to be a context where the spiritual is wedded to the supremely practical, whether the practical is about organising food for the next meeting or deciding whether to boycott goods from a certain political regime. It is a context where prayer accompanies carefully minuted action. This seems to mean a different understanding of time, or of time's balances, to leave *enough* time [for thought, speaking, writing (minutes), reading (those minutes to the group for checking and discussion), thinking, prayer and

divine guidance] while being careful never to waste that time so precious it allows for those words, wisdom, guidance, decisions and spirituality.

This is another way of writing about literacy and our lives (about when we read and write, about reading aloud and truth, about communal practices) and it is also about God, worship, love, truth and divine guidance. It is about the Quaker values of equality, simplicity, peace, truth. It's not that often we get to read, write, think or talk about these things in our (adult literacy) professional lives and this book has certainly reminded me what a shame that is. Jane Mace explores the concept of 'God's will' and different Quaker interpretations of what it can mean in terms of processes of searching, loving and understanding.

I should reiterate that I am not sure I have understood these complex Quaker ideas and practices correctly and know that I need to read this book again and ask questions to find out more. But that is why this book is so important - a way into quite a different world, and one with so much to teach us about both adult literacy practices and the possibilities of unity.

### **Improve your spelling in English, Teachers' Guide**

Meryl Wilkins

Leicester: NIACE, 2012

ISBN 978-1-862015-59-3

54 pages

£9.95

*Reviewed by Mandi Smith*

*Mandi is a long-experienced Literacy and ESOL specialist practitioner. She has worked for several different employers in South Wales including Cardiff Prison, A4E, Newport, for ITEC and for ACT. She is currently Lead Tutor for Rathbone Cymru in Newport.*

This set consists of two books: a teachers' guide and a student workbook and an audio CD. All the material included is mapped to Entry Level 2 of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum. Though primarily focused on ESOL learners, the activities included are relevant for all Entry Level 2 learners who have difficulties with spelling.

The teachers' guide is extremely well set out and discusses many of the problems ESOL learners

encounter when learning to spell. This would be an invaluable resource for anyone new to ESOL delivery and for use in classes where students are mixed and there is no alternative specific ESOL provision available. The guide explains how the student workbook can be used for large class and small group delivery or for independent learning. It contains example lesson plans along with differentiation and extension activities. The workbook consists of 22 units all of which are based on real world examples and of relevance to the learner in everyday life, with each unit based on a particular spelling pattern. Each unit of the workbook consists of four pages and follows the same format; page one is based on the text, page two the spelling, page three practise and page four looks at learning how to learn. The book focuses throughout on the learners developing their own learning strategies and strategies for remembering and this is reinforced at the end of each unit. The units are designed to be delivered in order, though they can also be used individually for learners who have difficulty with one particular spelling pattern.

To assess how well the units worked within the classroom, I worked collaboratively with a group of other tutors, embedding particular units into our current delivery areas. It would have been fantastic to look at every unit, but time constraints for this review, combined with constraints on delivery time spent with learners meant this was unrealistic. The units chosen were unit 6 (jobs), unit 9 (money), unit 10 (bank accounts), unit 12 (driving lessons), unit 18 (train travel) and unit 21 (a personal account). The student groups were made up of mixed level learners, primarily Entry Level 2 and low Entry Level 3. Though we do not deliver specific ESOL classes at present, for many of our learners English is a second language.

The units were delivered over a four week period, being embedded into our current literacy, numeracy and wider key skills delivery. The tutors found the resources really easy to use and relevant to our learners' needs. The audio provided is of a high quality and the learners found this easier, as they could listen at their own pace and as often as they needed too. Several learners liked the exercises so much that they asked to be able to do other units independently. With these learners we identified any gaps in spelling patterns and then set those units for them to complete.

To assess how well the units had worked, the

students completed unit 21 at the end of the four weeks as a free writing exercise, specifically looking for areas of improvement in spelling as a whole. The learners also completed a diagnostic assessment (which is normal practice), which enabled the tutors to further assess individual improvement. The results were surprising, normally we would see improvement in some areas over a four week period, but on this occasion we could measure specific improvement against the units delivered. All the students had made improvements in the individual areas taught and when comparing the free writing activities at the start and end of the four weeks, the tutors concluded that there was evidence to show a higher level of improvement in spelling ability for the majority of the students who took part in the study. The students who had chosen to work independently on other units reported that they felt more confident in their own spelling ability and this again could be evidenced from the free writing and diagnostic assessment. In conclusion this is an excellent resource, that was easy to embed into current delivery, with noticeable improvement in results. The teacher guide was invaluable, especially for the trainee teachers involved. The workbook is easy to use and written at the appropriate level for independent use as well as whole group teaching. I would thoroughly recommend this book to any ESOL and literacy educators, established or in training.

## Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

We invite contributions from anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share ideas, practice and research with RaPAL readers. This can be writing from learners, ideas linking research and practice, comments about teaching, training or observations about policy. We welcome articles, reviews, reports, commentaries or cartoons that will stimulate interest and discussion.

The journal is published three times a year and represents an independent space, which allows critical reflection and comment linking research with practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL nationally and internationally.

The RaPAL network includes learners, managers, practitioners, researchers, tutors, teacher trainers, and librarians in adult, further and higher education in the UK. It also has an international membership that covers Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

### Guidelines for Contributors

All contributions should be written in an accessible way for a wide and international readership.

- Writing should be readable avoiding jargon. Where acronyms are used these should be clearly explained.
- Ethical guidelines should be followed particularly when writing about individuals or groups. Permission must be gained from those being represented and they should be represented fairly.
- We are interested in linking research and practice; you may have something you wish to contribute but are not sure it will fit. If this is the case please contact the editors to discuss this.
- Writing should encourage debate and reflection, challenging dominant and taken for granted assumption about literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

### Journal Structure

We want to encourage new writers as well as those with experience and to cover a range of topics, to do this the journal is divided into three main sections and a review section. Each section is slightly different in length and focus. We welcome illustrations and graphics for any of the sections. The journal has a different theme for each edition but welcomes general contributions particularly for Section 1 and Section 2 and for reviews.

#### Section 1. Ideas for teaching

This section is for descriptive and reflective pieces on teaching and learning. It is a good place to have a first go at writing for publication and can be based on experiences of learners and teachers in a range of settings. Pieces can be up to 1,000 words long.

#### Section 2. Developing Research and Practice

This section covers a range of contributions from research and practice. In terms of research this could be experience of practitioner research, of taking part in research projects, commenting on research findings or of trying out ideas from research in practice. In terms of practice this could be about trying out new ideas and pushing back boundaries. Contributions should include reflection and critique. Pieces for this section should be between 1,000 - 2,000 words long including references.

#### Section 3. Research and Practice: Multi-disciplinary perspectives

This section is for more sustained analytical pieces about research, practice or policy. The pieces will be up to 6,000

words long including references and will have refereed journal status. Although articles in this section are more theoretically and analytically developed they should nevertheless be clearly written for a general readership. Both empirical work and theoretical perspectives should be accessible and clearly explained. Writing for this section should:

- **Relate to the practices** of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL.
- **Link to research** by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies.
- **Provide critical informed analysis** of the topic including reference to theoretical underpinning.
- **Write coherently and accessibly avoiding impenetrable language and assumed meanings.** The piece should have a clear structure and layout using the Harvard referencing system and notes where applicable. All terminology should be explained, particularly for an international readership.

### Review Section

Reviews and reports of books, articles, and materials including CD should be between 50 to 800 words long. They should clearly state the name of the piece being reviewed, the author, year of publication, name and location of publisher and cost. You should also include your name, a short 2-3 line biography and your contact details. You can write the review based upon your experience of using the book, article or materials in your role as a practitioner, teacher trainer, and researcher or as a student.

### Submitting your work

1. Check the deadline dates and themes which are available in the journal and on the website.
  2. All contributions should have the name of the author/s, a title and contact details which include postal address, email address and phone number. We would also like a short 2-3-line biography to accompany your piece. Sections, subsections, graphs or diagrams should be clearly indicated or labelled.
  3. Send a copy to one of the journal co-ordinators
- Naomi Horrocks** [naomi.horrocks@gmail.com](mailto:naomi.horrocks@gmail.com)  
**Sarah Freeman** [azdak@btopenworld.com](mailto:azdak@btopenworld.com)
4. Your contribution should be word processed, in Arial size 12 font, double spaced on A4 paper with numbered pages.

### What happens next

1. Editors and members of the Editorial Group review contributions for Section 1 and Section 2. Contributions for Section 3 are peer reviewed by a mixture of experienced academic, research and practice referees.
2. Feedback is provided by the editor/s within eight weeks of submission. This will include constructive comment and any suggestions for developing the piece if necessary.
3. You will be informed whether your piece has been accepted, subject to alterations, and if so the editor/s will work on a final editing process. Any final copy will be sent to authors prior to publishing.
4. Where work is not accepted the editor/s may suggest more relevant or alternative places for publication.

Please contact us if you want to discuss any ideas you have for contributing to the journal.

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