journal

Volume No.**60** Summer 2006

RaPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

Rom n Joolz: texting and literacy

Community of enquiry in a prison environment
Extraordinary achievement
Skills for Life for staff at Lewes Prison
A moment not to be missed - Quick Reads, RaW and all that

How can adult literacies provision be made accessible to
and meaningful for profoundly Deaf adults?

English for Speakers of Caribbean Languages (ESOCL)

Policy developments in Literacy & Essential Skills: can the
Peace Process in Northern Ireland provide a way forward?

Making it work together - The challenges of delivering ALNIS
in a rural area in Scotland.

Findings from the 'Evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy
and Numeracy (ALN) Strategy' (Scottish Executive, 2006)

What's underpinning Scotland's literacies policy?

Don't look north through rose-tinted spectacles: tensions,
struggles and guiding lights in Scotland - a reflection.

Lizard dressed as lamb? A cautionary reading of the discourse
of the Scottish Adult Literacies Initiative

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

Who we are
RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, practitioners, 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

Members are involved in the compilation of the journal as reviewers/referees and editors.

We are a friendly group - open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. This Journal is written by and for all learners, tutors and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacy and numeracy work and to encourage debate. Why not join in?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk

Contents

Editorial

This Summer's 2006 edition of the journal contains a mixture from practice, information about research linked to practice and discussion of policy. We were interested and intrigued that our requests for articles relating to policy drew a big response from Scotland and little from elsewhere. This could reflect a particular moment in Scottish policy, which is being reassessed, or that people want the space for a critical dialogue about something that has perhaps been uncritically accepted as better than elsewhere. We hope that this honest self-reflexive dialogue will stimulate similar discussion about how ALN policy is developed and implemented in Wales, Northern Ireland, The Republic of Ireland and England. There may be interesting comparisons to be made between them.

In Section One Kath Schofield describes working with young adults using texting imaginatively as a way of making Shakespeare come alive in the classroom. As she comments, people code switch all the time and texting is one choice within a repertoire of written communications that people use in their lives. Vanesssa Braidwood writes about her work using a Community of Enquiry approach in a prison in Northumberland. She describes how this approach enabled the men attending the session to consider how literacy skills were an important part of their survival in the outside world. Vicky Duckworth makes the link between people in the real world and her classroom showing how this connection helps to support learners achieve their goals. Robert Nuden also takes up the theme of prison education and describes a project that The Network are running in Lewes Prison to support work based learning for staff. Genieve Clarke and Kay Jackman provide an update on the Quick Reads and RaW (Read more and Write better) campaign to support adult reading.

In Section Two Jill Little describes her practitioner research project working with deaf adults. She provides insights into the culture of the deaf community, the significance for working with deaf people and the importance of using British Sign Language (BSL) along with BSA bi-lingual tutors. Liz Millman also identifies the need to recognise and respond to learners' languages in her piece on speakers of Caribbean languages. Liz points out the history of work in this area and the need to keep this issue on the agenda. Rob Mark offers an overview of policy in Northern Ireland and the importance of ALN policy to the Peace Process. This provides insight into the links between ALN and conflict resolution in other parts of the world too. Mary Rhind gives an account of work in rural Scotland where to deliver Scottish policy effectively in the Highland area they have explored and developed ways of working with information and communication technologies (ICTs). Tackling the difficulties of distance, little transport and time ICTs provide a good mode of communication for practitioners as well as learning opportunities for people in rural areas.

Section Three concentrates on Scottish policy providing an interesting forum for self reflection and critical debate. It starts with an official evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) strategy by Lyn Tett and colleagues. They describe the impact of the strategy based upon their data showing that lives are transformed and communities sustained by participation in ALN. In the piece that follows Deirdre Parkinson asks what underpins Scottish policy, questioning the influence of the international adult literacy surveys and the move towards employability within its development. The next article from Kathy Maclachlan argues that to secure what she calls the 'remarkable' aspects of a policy based upon social practice principles there needs to be an honest and sometimes difficult debate about how well it is understood and applied. The Scottish policy is felt by many to be inspirational, and therefore important, but, as Aileen Ackland cautions in her article, it still operates within wider new managerial discourses that focus on performance indicators. This persuasive discourse, supported by the discourse of employability, she argues needs to be acknowledged before it can be resisted.

Yvon Appleby, Jim Crowther and Sarah Rennie

Yvon Appleby is a Research Fellow at Lancaster Literacy Research Centre. She is a full time researcher in the field of literacy, numeracy and ESOL and is committed to practitioner research and linking research with practice.

Jim Crowther is senior lecturer in adult and community education at the University of Edinburgh. He is a former tutor and organiser of adult literacy in Edinburgh and co-edited Powerful Literacies published by NIACE.

Sarah Rennie is Senior Lecturer in Literacy Teacher Education at Sunderland University. She is an active literacy researcher. She has 20 years experience as a literacy teacher in community and college settings.

RaPAL Journals 2005-2006 themes, deadlines and editors

Issue	General Theme	Copy deadline	Editors
Autumn 2006	Conference 2006 Edition: Transforming Literacies	Friday 29th Sept 2006	Fiona Macdonald; Deirdre Parkinson

✂✂✂ Section 1. - Ideas for Teaching ✂✂✂✂ RaPAL
Rom n Joolz: texting and literacy
Kath Schofield

Kath is a literacy tutor with Northern Learning Trust based in Newcastle upon Tyne working mainly with young adults. She wrote this when she was doing the Certificate for Adult Literacy Subject Specialists at Sunderland University.

Virtually all of my students are proficient at texting and it is the one form of 'writing' that they engage in daily, with enjoyment and of their own volition, even those who are the most reluctant to put pen to paper. When I actually thought about the popularity of texting, the reasons for it were blindingly obvious. Texting is owned by the young people themselves, they have developed it to suit their purposes and it is a stress free activity because it is not judged in the same way as the 'dominant' literacies, in which most of my students have been deemed failures.

I believe we have to take texting seriously as it has become a powerful 'vernacular literacy' concerned with organising and documenting life, communicating with each other, sense making and social participation.' (Hamilton 2004) Precisely the ways in which young people use texting.

Texting requires a different set of competencies to other forms of writing. It has its own lexicon and conventions such as abbreviations, symbols/emoticons, use of single letters to represent words, speed and of course no punctuation. If these competencies are mastered and understood then those belonging to other dominant/institutional literacies can be likewise learned and understood.

Rather than have the learners write text messages on lined paper, I decided to photocopy a mobile phone and enlarge it so the screen was spacious enough to actually write on. My mobile phone is functional but nowhere near the cutting edge of technology so I borrowed a Sony Ericsson mobile with 'street cred' from one of the young people in the office. The resultant template looked really good and I used it as the basis for a variety of sessions, sometimes with appropriate texts written by me and pasted onto the mobile phone screen, or as blank screens for learners to explore and work on various competencies within the reading, writing, speaking and listening elements of the literacy core curriculum.
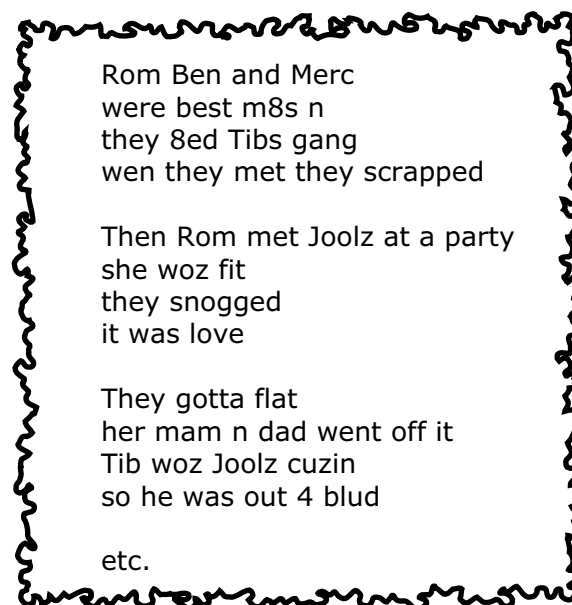
Tasks have included:

• converting text abbreviations into full words.
• writing text messages as full sentences and punctuating them.
• planning, drafting and proof reading.
• using text messages for recounts and then extending them into full words and sentences, adding punctuation and adjectives.
• writing the same information as a text message, a post card and a letter and looking at the different rules governing each one.
• looking at and writing text poetry.
The Guardian and Orange Text Poetry Competition gave me this idea.

I also ventured into rewriting Romeo and Juliet as a series of text messages, sms: short message Shakespeare!

This came about because a group of girls I was working with would not get down to work until they had updated me on their relationship crises and because they identified 'gossiping' as one of the ways in which they used their mobiles.

> Rom Ben and Merc
> were best m8s n
> they 8ed Tibs gang
> wen they met they scrapped
>
> Then Rom met Joolz at a party
> she woz fit
> they snogged
> it was love
>
> They gotta flat
> her mam n dad went off it
> Tib woz Joolz cuzin
> so he was out 4 blud
>
> etc.

The students read, discussed and rewrote my text message of Rom and Joolz. They could empathise with the themes of two families feuding and young love thwarted and this was the session they enjoyed the most.

Some people would be horrified at this 'dumbing down' of something as sacrosanct as a

Shakesperian play but the story of Romeo and Juliet was not original to Shakespeare. The earliest known version of the story was written nearly two hundred years earlier in 1476 by Masuccio Salernitano. Over the centuries it has been adapted for various media, plays, opera, ballet, films, and even as a ten minute advert for H&M clothes in 2005.

So I make no apologies for having a go at introducing a story via text, that people might go on to access in a different form at a later date. I do not see texting as an insidious threat to the English language. I think most people 'code switch' all the time verbally, without even thinking about it and in terms of writing, the conventions of each code can be taught. We have to accept though, that for some people texting will be their major form of 'written' communication. I do not have a problem with that, if it is their choice. I would however like everyone to have a range of options to choose from.

References
Coben, D (2006), The Big Plus: Adult Numeracy in Scotland, in *Numeracy Briefing*, January 2006 Issue 6

Hamilton, M. (1998) *Becoming expert; using ethnographies of everyday learning to inform the education of adults.* Paper presented at the 28th Annual SCUTREA Conference, Exeter, 1998.

Learning Connections (2005) *An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland.* Edinburgh: Communities Scotland

Leavey, J (2005), Adult Literacies: the Scottish approach, in *Reflect the magazine of the NRDC*, Issue 4: October 2005

Merrifield, J, (2005) , Why England should look North for inspiration, *Reflect the magazine of the NRDC,* Issue 4, October 2005

Parsons, P. and Bynner,J.(2005) *Does Numeracy Matter More?* London: National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy

Scottish Executive (2001), *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Community of Enquiry in a Prison Environment
Vanessa Braidwood

Vanessa was on placement at a prison in Northumberland. She has since successfully completed her PGCE (Post-compulsory education and training) and the Level 4 Certificate for Adult Literacy Subject Specialists at Sunderland University.

While studying for my Certificate in Education (FE) I worked one full day each week in a Category 'C' Men's Prison, teaching literacy. The group I taught 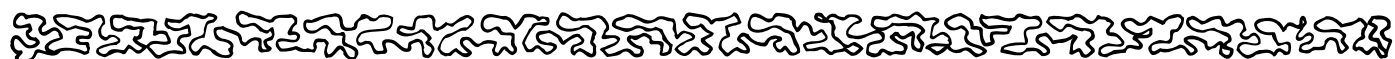in the afternoon was referred to as 'Vulnerable Prisoners'. These were prisoners varying in age from their early twenties to fifties, who were considered to be at risk if housed with the Mainstay Prisoners. Many of them had been sentenced as being sex offenders; others had suffered bullying or were thought to be vulnerable in other ways. They ranged from Pre-Entry Level, through Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3. (DfES 2001).   Some of the men could not read at all, while others were fairly competent at reading and writing, but had limited comprehension skills.   There were three students for whom English was a second language.

I chose to attempt a Community of Enquiry session with the group, because I felt they could benefit from expanding their speaking, listening, thinking and discussion skills. A Community of Enquiry is a structured process with a number of stages based on democratic principles, in which the teacher is the facilitator and everyone participates through reflection and discussion. Part of the process is for the group to choose a question to be discussed.

I started the session by explaining that today I would be reading them a story, and it would not be necessary for them to write anything afterwards. (I think there might have been a communal sigh of relief in hearing this.) Instead, I would like them to consider the story quietly to themselves and then spend some time discussing it with their neighbour. From past experience working in the prison setting, I had learnt that the men have difficulty working together in small groups, but most do well with peer collaboration.

As my stimulus for the session I had chosen the story entitled *"The Professor and the Ferryman"* an Indian folktale retold in Robert Fisher's book, *"Stories for Thinking"* (1996). The story tells how a simple ferryman rowed people across the

River Ganges. *"The ferryman learned a lot about life by talking to his passengers."* On this occasion he was rowing a *"well-dressed man with a shiny briefcase"* across the river. The man inquired what the ferryman had studied, and then made him feel inferior by saying; *"You have learnt nothing! And if you don't know anything you might as well be dead!"* However, at that moment a storm erupted. The ferryman asked the scientist, *"Can you swim?"* The professor replied*, "Oh dear! I cannot swim. I never learnt."* Eventually the small boat overturned and the professor, still clutching his briefcase was drowned, while the ferryman swam to shore.

I had selected this story because I thought that there were many issues within the story, to which these men would be able to relate. However, I was uncertain how the class would receive this digression from their regular format. After completion of the story, they spent some quiet time reflecting, and then talked to their neighbour about various aspects of the story. They were then asked to put forward some questions for discussion.

The class put forward their chosen questions, and each one voted to choose the question for discussion. This is a formal stage in a Community of Enquiry. The question they selected was:

"Why does society seem to value academic learning more than survival skills?"

It was quite surprising how many of the students who usually do not speak at all became very forthcoming. Many of the men had stories to share about a time in their lives when they had survived against great odds, and the discussion was quite animated but very orderly. Several men made the point that learning takes place from birth, and parents and family are usually instrumental in this process, although for some of them this was not the case.

One man, who was from a small village in India, was very outspoken about how hard it is for poor people in that environment to learn if they do not have a school or teachers. However, he later went on to say: *"It is never too late to start to learn to read."* Another man, who was usually very aggressive and negative, told us that he had never learnt to read and write because his mother was illiterate. Later in the discussion he told the group how his mother had worked as a cleaner for 30 years. She had applied for a new job and had been asked to fill out an application form, since she was unable to do this, she did not get the job.

When the discussion reached a natural conclusion, I asked the group to reflect upon what had taken place, and offer some last words. The general consensus was that while survival skills are of the utmost importance, learning to read and write in today's world is also a matter of survival, and it can only be done with the help of a teacher.

This was a very interesting learning session for everyone concerned, including the regular tutor. The outcome far exceeded my expectations of what might result from such a session. I was certainly inspired to conduct another Community of Enquiry with the same group in the future, and also hope to be able to introduce this more frequently into my teaching practice.

References

DFES (2001), *National Standards for adult literacy and num*eracy. London: DFES

Fisher (1996), *Stories for Thinking*. York: York Publishing Services
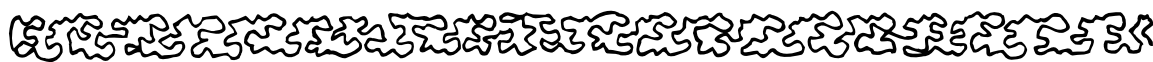
Extraordinary Achievement
Vicky Duckworth

Vicky is a research/practitioner. She is currently involved in research looking at the impact of basic skills on learners' lives. Passionate about the power of education, she continues to be involved in teaching, teacher education and sharing best practice on a regional and national level.

Like every Monday evening, I was preparing for the adult literacy class - a lively, multicultural, mixed age group of basic skills learners. Weary from a day's work or caring for the family and children, their drive to learn and enthusiasm kept them coming; only the biggest emergency could stop them.

I planned to follow a multicultural theme, presenting a landscape familiar to the learners' diverse environment. The resource, 'Chinese Whispers', a poem written by a former student and structured in five short autobiographical verses, is based on the race riots of that unsettled summer in 2001, a shattering event that had torn apart the fabric of Oldham's community, leaving it without direction. I hoped the resource would trigger a lively debate, where racial stereotypes were discussed and hopefully challenged, other causes of racism identified and solutions put forward for further debate.

The regular class of eight learners was each given the poem. That night though, as we started to read each line, two extra copies waited on the desk. I glanced at my watch; ten past seven: ten minutes late, but my fingers remained crossed. You know what, after nearly ten years of basic skills teaching I should be hardened to no-shows, but as I caught reflections in the black wet window the disappointment showed. I'm obviously not. I never will be. Those unread poems are a reminder of mother Kath and her daughter Marie.

The Friday before I'd been promoting basic skills programmes in the local supermarket. The place packed with shoppers, I'd spotted Kath. A couple of years back Kath and Marie had been on the course. Both had put loads of work in but due to personal reasons, Marie left, Kath following to support her. This was my chance to hook them. 'Why don't you both come back to the course- carry on where you left off? ' A non-committed, 'Maybe,' was Kath's reply. 'Don't forget to tell Marie,' I called. Kath smiled. She knew I was keen.

And I was, but now my focus needed to be on the class. Their heads nodded in recognition to the lines:

The sun shone,
As a calm but eerily cold feeling ran in
and out of the rows of terraced houses,

While the classroom door opened and, you've guessed- at nearly half-past seven Marie and her mam stepped in. Umbrellas shoved behind the door, they apologised. Their bus had been late, two arriving one after the other.

'Isn't it always the way?' I joked, just glad they'd made it. 'Fancy being able to write like that,' Marie said, reading the last lines: *Whispers of hate threw out in despair/ Torn lives for the world to see.* 'Doesn't it help you see it from all sides? I was there and like the poet I was dead frightened too.'

What really inspired Marie was how a former student, who had sat where she's sitting, had penned such strong and emotional words. 'To be able to write with that power is incredible,' she said.

And you know what, those passionate verses were the motivation that had Marie wanting to improve her writing and find different ways to express confusing emotions that were sometimes overwhelming. Her enthusiasm thrilled me. And why? I'll tell you, because that poem had engaged her back into learning. This time I was not going to let her go.

But, as the weeks went on and the weather went from bad to worse, keeping Marie attending wasn't without hiccups. Worried, I telephoned her. That's when I found out the difficulty that she'd encountered travelling the one-mile home from class. So I made a promise that I'd drop her off after class. And so I did. No other telephone calls followed.

'I don't want to miss a lesson. It gets the wheels of my mind going,' she'd say.

And didn't the wheels turn - faster and faster. She flourished and began to really believe in herself and her ability, a belief that stems from being brave enough to move from what you know and ask those questions about what you really want from life and what you need to get there. Choices, previously dismissed as being for people, 'brainier than me', were considered.

'I want to get out of dead end factory jobs, get myself something decent, make my kids proud,' she said. I hugged her, admiring a determination and keenness that no storm could sway. Marie was breaking down the barriers that had held her back for so long. Her excitement at successfully passing her first qualification, a level two in literacy, only added to her self-esteem.

Enthused with learning, this September Marie enrolled onto an adult numeracy programme and hopes to join the counselling course in January. But what is truly exciting is that Marie wants to be a role model for other learners. Plans are underway for her to become a volunteer basic skills tutor, in the very class where she was taught.

'I want to help people feel comfortable and confident about who they are,' she says. 'Being able speak out, pick up a book or just put pen to paper without panicking helps you like you wouldn't believe. I'm back on track, and that's where I want to help others to be.'

Against the odds and through determination and hard work, Marie is heading in the direction she wants to go. She's empowered and in control of her future.

I expect a few years down the line; Marie will stand in front of a class with fingers crossed. Listen out for her. I have no doubt she'll be sharing success stories of ordinary people who achieve something extraordinary.

Skills for Life for Staff at Lewes Prison
Robert Nurden

Robert is Press Officer of The Network, formerly known as the Workplace Basic Skills Network

A Skills for Life (SfL) initiative currently in operation at Lewes Prison in East Sussex could provide the model for the training of prison staff across the whole country. The prison has opened its gates to The Network so that, within the workplace context, it can introduce a whole organisation, awareness-raising pilot project for its staff - managers, trainers, officers, caterers, cleaners and chaplains. The scheme, which is being funded by the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA), is thought to be the first of its kind in Britain.

The aim, over several months, is to embed SfL into every aspect of the staff's working practices. The Network, which is dedicated to workplace language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) provision, is advising senior prison staff on how this might best be done. If it succeeds, it could become the blueprint for all British jails.

The Network is seeking to introduce top-to-toe SfL awareness into the prison's policy areas, its recruitment, selection and induction processes, and its appraisal and performance reviews. Early on, the Network's consultants (their salaries are being paid by SEEDA) and Prison Training Manager will make clear the levels of SfL training entitlement that are available to employees - that is, visiting, temporary and volunteer staff, as well as permanent and agency staff. Following on from that, the Network will help to promote and deliver off-the-job training for staff and

embed SfL into on-the-job training. The project represents a new area of involvement for The Network, one that professionally is exciting for all the stakeholders involved.

The first objective is to introduce an SfL element into the prison's own staff induction process. This will be incorporated into either the Move On mini test or the Target Skills test, both of which are currently in operation at Lewes. The pilot will then try to embed SfL into existing training programmes, which will be supported by a prison managers' toolkit. It is hoped that from these approaches a document will emerge that identifies clear progression routes for staff. Integral to the package will be the need to market the training to staff via a range of considered and timely methods which will include open days, talks and workshops as well as publicity material.

The decision by senior managers at the prison to give the pioneering project the green light was partly prompted by the growing complexity of working procedures. Regulations within Her Majesty's prisons have become far more stringent in recent years, and the knock-on effect of that is more demanding work for staff.

It was essential that the project had the full backing of the Lewes Prison authorities. Senior staff saw the importance of embedding learning in the prison's overall delivery processes. Errors

in written work - grammar mistakes, wrong use of words and so on - needed to be ironed out so the project dovetailed well with that particular local need. There was also the requirement to present the right professional image to external bodies such as solicitors and the courts, and an SfL programme would take care of that.

Following health and safety regulations such as the risk register for the identification of hazards, the filling-in of incident forms, the writing of reports, and the counting of not only inmates but materials are now part of day-to-day life for the 350 staff. Improved numeracy, as well as literacy, is an important issue. The training, reflecting the importance of the whole organisation approach, will be taken up by all prison staff, from senior managers to cleaners.

Staff, whose duties previously required them to have only limited literacy and numeracy skills, now have to be at ease with a wide range of written material writing instructional posters for display on the wings, for example. What's more, they must also have good speaking and listening skills. Poor skills may mean procedures become sloppy or that regulations are simply not followed.

The success of The Network's project at Lewes will also be judged on its impact on levels of staff retention, performance and absenteeism. It is hoped too that it will make it easier for staff to access promotion to higher-grade jobs within the prison. Or, if staff choose, to enable them to broaden their choice of career outside the prison.

Another element in the wide-ranging effect that SfL invariably has in these situations is in the way trainees benefit as individuals. Literacy and numeracy does not stop at work. It is a 24-hour phenomenon and improvement impacts on every aspect of life, from the reading of road signs, using a PC, to helping their children with

homework. One of the most important aspects of the project is the fact that Network staff had to familiarise themselves with the discrete culture, policies and long-term learning and development plans of the prison.

A steering group has been established to drive the project forward. If the Lewes pilot works well, the next step could be the development of an SfL strategic plan for the whole organisation approach in prisons, aiming to look specifically at entry-to-exit for prison staff. This will involve not only issues of recruitment and induction, but appraisal, performance review and target-setting as well.

Another aspect of the consultancy is the involvement of union learning reps (ULRs), who play a key role in the project and are represented within the steering group. As in other SfL projects they are a vital bridge between staff and management.

It is emerging that there are many more issues to do with SfL at Lewes Prison than managers at first envisaged. "Whole organisation" does in fact mean just that. It is becoming clear that the scheme involves a much more radical management overhaul than was first realised. But managers there are confident that procedures at the prison can be improved after this project with The Network.

It is anticipated that the Lewes Prison case study will soon be written up and ready for dissemination. It will include recommendations for a best practice model for developing and delivering SfL for all staff in prisons nationwide. If all goes well, The Network intends to develop a suite of potential SfL courses for all staff, involving local educational providers.

The Network's website is: www.thenetwork.co.uk
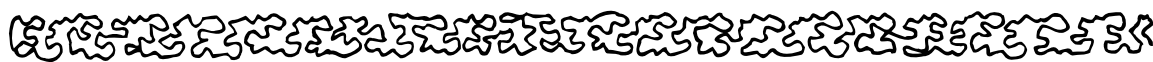
A moment not to be missed - Quick Reads, RaW and all that

Genevieve Clarke and Kay Jackaman

Genevieve is National Co-ordinator of The Vital Link literacy and library programme. Kay runs the Vital Link Reading for Pleasure Campaign. They both work for The Reading Agency.

It's an exciting time for those working to promote reading for pleasure to adult learners. The BBC's RaW campaign (Read more and Write better) is encouraging organisations to focus on people's passions as a starting-point for RaW Reads book groups and RaW Stories creative writing activity. The UK's top publishers have persuaded bestselling authors such as Andy McNab, Joanna Trollope, Conn Iggulden and Ruth Rendell to write short books for a new audience of less confident readers for its Quick Reads initiative. And members of the Government from the Prime Minister down have endorsed the role of reading for enjoyment as a key motivator for those adults who would benefit from improving their literacy skills.

But amid the high-profile focus from politicians, book trade and broadcasters, is there a danger that some fundamental barriers are being glossed over? Might we look back in a year's time to find that we've all missed a golden opportunity?

The Vital Link programme has been working for the last few years to bring together learning providers and the public library service in the belief that an engagement in reading for enjoyment, both fact and fiction, can make all the difference to an adult's approach to learning. Indeed, research carried out last summer found that 'emergent readers' involved in reading activities with library staff and tutors had greater confidence in their skills and increased motivation to learn. They wanted to continue reading for pleasure, and those who were parents or carers felt encouraged to read with their children.

The programme's initial focus has been on building libraries' capacity, making sure they have attractive, non-stigmatised book collections and encouraging them to promote their offer to local colleges, Adult & Community Learning and voluntary sector providers. But from last autumn, funding from the Skills for Life Strategy Unit enabled The Vital Link to promote the message about reading for pleasure and the contribution of libraries more directly to adult literacy practitioners.

A first step was to find out the extent to which

Skills for Life managers and tutors were already integrating reading for pleasure activity into their teaching. An informal 'snapshot' provided by a questionnaire returned by around 360 practitioners indicated overwhelming support for the concept of engaging learners in reading for enjoyment. Over two-thirds said they already had links with libraries. Many mentioned good practice including reading groups for emergent readers, multiple copy and long-term loan of materials and joint professional development.

There were also expressions of concern, however, about the pressure that targets, accreditation and squeezed funding were putting on their time, talk of tutors 'bogged down in functional literacy teaching via core curricula' and 'tension between reading for pleasure and meeting other priorities'. This is reflected in initial findings from ACL tutors involved in an NRDC-funded practitioner-led research project in Essex. Even here, where the library service has pioneered regular input into classes by library staff, there's still a feeling that engagement with books is 'another thing' for them to do rather than an accepted element of everyday practice.

But does it need to be 'either or'? The Vital Link has produced learning resources for the Quick Reads titles that tease out a wealth of activities around thrillers, family sagas and autobiography for the classroom and beyond. They also indicate how all of these can fit with the requirements of the curriculum and, more importantly, encourage teaching practice that has a true regard for 'lifelong learning'. After all, formal learning takes up a very small proportion of an adult's learning life; informal learning (not necessarily involving guidance, facilitation or mediation) plays a much greater part in personal development. Surely activity in the classroom should open up possibilities for learners to explore their own interests rather than narrowing their focus in order to pass a test.

DfES funding has done much to promote the new Quick Reads titles and, through the £1-off tokens, make them as accessible as possible to emergent readers. They have also supported the principle of using these books as part of classroom practice. It's now up to Skills for Life managers to 'allow' their tutors to use the books

with their learners and build their confidence to do so.

RaPAL Bulletin No. 56 in spring 2005 reported on examples of how practitioners are integrating creative activity such as play reading and exposure to a wide variety of texts into their teaching. We'd love to hear how tutors are weaving use of the Quick Reads titles and the associated learning resources into their practice not as an 'add-on' but as a regular part of their effort to develop adults with a thirst for independent learning.   If we don't show the BBC and and the book trade how we can make the most of their investment, we'll have blown it and let our learners down in the process.

The Vital Link is a reader development programme linking libraries and adult literacy. It is run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and the National Reading Campaign. The Quick Reads learning resources and the research study *Confidence all round: The Impact on Emergent Adult Readers of Reading for Pleasure through Libraries* can be found at www.vitallink.org.uk

How can adult literacies provision be made accessible to and meaningful for profoundly Deaf adults?

Jill R Little

Jill Little is an organiser of literacy provision for the Deaf community in Fife.

Introduction

How can adult literacies provision can be made accessible to and meaningful for profoundly Deaf learners? To address this question this article focuses on issues affecting 'Deaf' adults: predominantly, people who have been born deaf or have become deaf before acquiring English and whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL). The convention of using the upper case 'D' signifies their membership of the Deaf community and their identification as a cultural and linguistic minority group (see DeafSign.com 2000).

Across every stratum of society people display diverse levels of literacies skills. However, literacies practitioners should be aware of certain distinguishing characteristics common within the Deaf community. Many Deaf adults have experienced an unsuccessful school career, during which they were denied access to their own naturally developing language.

> Deaf adults belong to a cultural and linguistic minority group living in a majority, hearing society. To communicate with the majority, non-signing, public and to "…function in an English-literate society, most Deaf adults believe that English literacy is important." (Holcomb and Peyton 1992:2)

Cultural diversity

Paddy Ladd, a prominent Deaf activist and academic, describes, "…the belief widely held among signing Deaf communities that their existential situation is primarily that of a language minority, rather than as a disability group." He puts forward the theory that "…sign language-using communities in fact constitute…. a *culturo-linguistic model,"* and describes their "…daily effort to co-exist alongside majority culture members who do not understand them." (Ladd 2003:15-16)

By embracing the concept that Deaf adults are bicultural individuals, practitioners can exploit the contrasts between Deaf and hearing cultures, rather than focussing on a perceived impairment. The emphasis then shifts from the "…'medical deficit model' where deafness is regarded as a severe handicap and not just a receptive or expressive difference … [to the social perspective, focussing on]…capabilities, contexts, cultures and processes for literacy among deaf literacy learners instead of attending to only their deemed deficits." (Brueggemann 2004:3)

Linguistic diversity

Literacies providers are in danger of unintentionally discriminating against Deaf adults due to a "…lack of linguistic access … resulting in inequality and social exclusion for many Deaf … people." (SALSI 2003)

Literacies tutors with the necessary skills to offer tuition in BSL are scarce. This, and the severe shortage of BSL interpreters in Scotland, means that a "…lack of personnel with appropriate linguistic skills, education and qualifications [including] British Sign Language /English interpreters … [and] multi-lingual professionals with fluency in BSL …[and] … lack of awareness and understanding of the relevant linguistic issues on the part of … service providers…" (SALSI 2003) are significant barriers to Deaf people wishing to access literacies provision.

Common misconceptions that BSL is an inferior language or system of gestures following English word order are entirely wrong. BSL "… is not visual English … [it] is a language in its own right, systematic and rule-governed, different from English in its grammatical concepts and structures." (Neville 1991) BSL evolved naturally and uses both manual and non-manual components, hand shapes and movement, facial expression and shoulder movement.

In BSL, a time framework is set up at the beginning of the signer's first sentence to establish when events happened. Information about time is not in every verb as it is in English, through changes in spelling. (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999: 53) BSL does not use the auxiliary: 'to be'; nor does it use the articles 'a', 'an', or 'the'. These linguistic differences illustrate some of the issues relevant to practitioners.

Ninety per cent of deaf children in Britain have hearing parents. Consequently, these children often only begin to learn sign language when they go to school and learn from children of Deaf families who have naturally acquired BSL in the home.

After more than twenty years of campaigning, BSL was officially recognised by the British Government on 18th March 2003 and is now an official minority language of Britain.

Practitioner Research
In a small-scale practitioner research project I interviewed ten profoundly Deaf adult literacies learners. All were engaged in an adult literacies programme at the time of their interview.

Participants were asked how easily they had accessed information regarding literacies provision and why they had decided it was something they wanted to do. They reported that they had 'fallen into' attending groups when they were made aware of the provision and while all respondents indicated a desire to learn, none had managed to access the relevant information independently.

Participants were asked where they thought literacies groups for Deaf adults should be advertised. Ideas included the local Deaf club, the Deaf Communication Service, the workplace and utilising the Deaf community itself to pass on information. Recommendations included presenting the information in person, rather than using posters and leaflets and letting other agencies and professionals who work with members of the Deaf community know about the service so they can pass on the information.

"I wouldn't really pay any attention to an advert or leaflets. I think it was best that you came … here to tell us about the group you were planning. That's why I joined."
(Participant 6)

When asked about the importance of education, all respondents replied that it was 'important' or 'very important' for Deaf adults to be able to access provision.

Participants' descriptions of their school experiences highlighted the frustrations often echoed in the literature.

"… I hated that I wasn't allowed to sign in class. We had to practise speaking instead."
(Participant 8)

Other accounts highlighted the ambivalent nature of many participants' school experience, with the negative effects of a purely oral formal education within the classroom being balanced by the positive language experiences found with other children out with the classroom.

"…I feel that I missed out on a lot of information because of the way I was taught … I had no confidence at all. I remember we had to wear these headphones and practise stupid vocal exercises … It was meant to teach us how to speak. It was a complete waste of time and I knew I would never get it right.

My parents were both hearing so I learned how to sign at school from the other children. We signed whenever we were out of the classroom. It was great to have a language that I knew I was good at.

I remember there was one older girl that I looked up to as a role model. She could sign really well and I learned a lot from her…"
(Participant 7)

All participants reflected on their misgivings about joining a group, indicating that previous educational experiences had affected how they felt about accessing education as an adult. An understanding of these issues can help practitioners begin to address these misgivings.

The learning experience is at its most meaningful when tuition is based upon the individual learner's everyday literacies practices. Participants were asked to describe their own uses of literacies in order to provide a flavour of the kind of tasks this might involve. In addition to many literacies events in common with hearing learners, two additional areas emerged as being significant to Deaf literacies learners.

Six participants mentioned reading subtitles on television. Already difficult because they are in English, the Deaf television viewer's second language, subtitles are particularly challenging because they only appear on the screen for a few moments before they are gone, replaced by the next sentence.

Five participants explained how they use their literacies skills to aid communication with the wider, hearing society.

"I'm forever writing notes to communicate with hearing people at work or when I'm out and about, shopping or whatever…"
(Participant 4)

One clear theme emerging from the research was the importance of language choice in educational settings. The preferred language of all respondents was BSL. Nine respondents

commented that it was 'important' or 'very important' that tutors used BSL in the group situation. Eight of the ten participants indicated that a tutor should be qualified to at least CACDP[1] stage two or be 'fluent' in BSL in order to tutor Deaf adults.

One response illustrated the unique opportunity for tutors and learners to share their expertise in one language whilst improving their skills in a second language.

> *"Stage two is enough for me. I can always help the tutor with her signing if she needs it."* (Participant 4)

When asked about alternative communication tactics, seven respondents stated a preference for direct communication with the tutor through BSL. Two indicated that they would be happy to work with an interpreter, although one pointed out the shortage of BSL /English interpreters. (See section 2.3)

> *"I wouldn't mind using an interpreter but I think you would find it very difficult to get one every week there aren't enough to go round."* (Participant 6)

Eight of the ten participants felt it was important for a literacies tutor to have an understanding of Deaf culture. The following examples give a flavour of Deaf culture as explained by participants:

> *"Deaf people use direct eye gaze. Sometimes hearing people seem to feel uncomfortable with this."* (Participant 10)

> *"Things like pointing. Hearing people think we are rude because we point but it's a part of BSL … Also, you shouldn't assume that all Deaf people can lip read."* (Participant 7)

> *"Hearing people sometimes think that all Deaf people in the area know each other and are friends but there are a lot of arguments and internal politics within the Deaf community."* (Participant 5)

> *"The way I move and that using body movement and facial expression is part of BSL. They should understand that English is a completely different language to BSL and that's why it can be hard for Deaf people. Also, Deaf humour is really different. It's visual, not based on word play like it is with hearing people."* (Participant 4)

> *"How to get our attention - hearing people are scared to touch each other. It's really strange! We have to tap each other on the shoulder or wave our arm up and down to attract another person's attention."* (Participant 8)

Finally, participants were asked to describe their ideal tutor. Perhaps surprisingly, no respondents mentioned whether they thought a tutor should be Deaf or hearing. Skills and characteristics that were deemed important included fluent signing skills, a knowledge of English grammar, a good sense of humour, an awareness of Deaf culture, patience, confidence, good communication skills and adaptability.

One response illustrated some of the more practical elements involved when tutoring Deaf learners.

> *"They should be aware of things like where to sit so everyone can see them and know not to sit in front of the window because you can't see a person's face properly if there is bright light coming from behind them."* (Participant 10)

Implications and conclusion

Ideally, literacies practitioners working with Deaf learners should be bilingual; either Deaf tutors fluent in written English or hearing tutors fluent in BSL. An underpinning understanding and respect for BSL as a full and advanced language is essential, so as not to devalue BSL or undermine the language of the Deaf community.

Whether signing or using communication support, it is imperative that tutors have undergone Deaf awareness training and understand the cultural and linguistic elements involved when working with Deaf adults. Hearing tutors with basic signing skills should not attempt to proceed without communication support.

Utilising the close-knit nature of the Deaf community to pass on information is advisable, as is taking information to places where Deaf people go: the workplace, the Deaf club, the Deaf Communication Service. Information presented personally is much more likely to succeed in reaching its target audience than posters or leaflets which might be put to better use through distribution to other agencies and professionals who work with members of the Deaf community.

BSL is a visual language. Clear layout of worksheets is very important. The layout of the training room should be given careful consideration. All learners need to be able to see each other, the tutor and, if necessary, the interpreter. Practical issues, such as lighting, should be addressed. If there is bright light coming from a window, the facial expression of anyone standing in front of it will be lost. "Other parts of the body are … very important in BSL. Signers actually look at each other's faces, not their hands, when communicating." (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999: 81)

When Deaf adults are working on various written tasks, they are also working in their second language so will need tuition on the grammar and structure of English. It is therefore useful to have a good grammar workbook to refer to. English as a Foreign Language resources can be useful but need to be used selectively as they often take spoken English as their starting point.

Television programmes with signing and subtitles and Deaf publications, magazines and websites should make good source material. Read Hear on BBC Ceefax and See Hear, a BBC television programme made for a Deaf audience, will both stimulate ideas. The Forest Bookshop (www.forestbooks.com) specialise in Deaf related issues, including some literacies resources, both ICT and paper-based. Most importantly, examples of learners' own everyday uses of literacies make the best source material on which to base a session.

Bilingual /bicultural approaches will integrate BSL and English. If all group discussions and explanations are carried out in BSL and all exercises are carried out in written English, equal status is given to BSL, the language of the Deaf community, and English, the target language.

The learning should be made real and meaningful and knowledge of different cultural backgrounds and experiences should be utilised. Practitioners can make "…linguistic differences part of the learning process." (Basic Skills Agency 2002)

The findings of this research project illustrate the importance of using BSL in literacies tuition. The lack of bi-lingual professionals in the literacies field is an area requiring significant future development. Further research with Deaf adults might also illustrate what professionals can learn from their experiences of informal learning.

[1] Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (1999 2005: CACDP Qualifications)

References
Basic Skills Agency (2002), *Access for all guidance on making the adult literacy and numeracy core curricula accessible.* London: Basic Skills Agency

Brueggemann, Brenda Jo (ed.) (2004), *Literacy and Deaf People: Cultural and Contextual Perspectives.* Washington, D.C: Gallaudet University Press

DeafSign.Com (October 2000) *Do all deaf people use sign language?* Electronically sourced: http://www.deafsign.com/ds/index.cfm?scn=article&articleID=20 (accessed 3/1/06)

Holcomb, Tom & Peyton, Joy Kreeft (1992), *ESL Literacy for a Linguistic Minority: The Deaf Experience.* Electronically sourced: http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/2a/1d/df.pdf (accessed 4/11/05)

Ladd, Paddy (2003), *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood.* Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd.

Neville, Patricia (1991), *Teaching Literacy Skills to Deaf Adults.* London: The City Literary Institute.

Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters Training Strategy Group (2002), *Creating Linguistic Access for Deaf and Deafblind People: A Strategy for Scotland.* Electronically sourced: http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/resources/deaf/sasli/intro.html (accessed 27/12/05)

Sutton-Spence, Rachel & Woll, Bencie (1999), *The Linguistics of British Sign Language: An Introduction.* Cambridge: University Press.

English for Speakers of Caribbean Languages (ESOCL)
Liz Millman

Liz is Director of Curriculum, Skills for Life at City College Birmingham

Introduction

The last few years have seen recognition and acceptance of the fascinating range of languages spoken in the Caribbean and there is currently a need to move forward to ensure teaching staff currently working with adults under Skills for Life use effective strategies to support speakers of English-based Caribbean Languages. In September 2005 CILT, the national organisation for languages, gave an award to the "Valuing Caribbean Languages" project to recognise the very significant achievements made recently (see http://www.cilt.org.uk/eal/2005/winners/caribbean.htm)

Background

Since 2002 Wolverhampton-based Jamaica 2K have worked with colleagues in the UK and Jamaica to explore the issues relating to adult literacy teaching to speakers of Caribbean languages, as little significant work appeared to have been published recently:

• In 1979 the Adult Literacy Unit (pre ALBSU) published *"Caribbean English and Adult Literacy",* by Roxy Harris,

• In 1985 the Adult Basic Education Team and students led by Judy Craven and Frances Johnson at Manchester Central Area of Continuing Education, published *"Whose language? A teaching approach for Caribbean Heritage Students"*,

• In 1990 a group of teachers working on the ILEA Afro-Caribbean Language and Literacy Project in Further and Adult Education published *"Language and Power"*.

All these publications are now long out of print and so there is little information available to inform and guide those working in the fields of education across all age groups, health services, legal services and other areas.

Jamaica 2K has worked to explore these issues relating to adult literacy teaching to speakers of Caribbean languages by focussing on Jamaican and in February 2003, under the banner "Mek wi liv an mek wi laan" (the Jamaican translation for "Skills for Life") Professor Hubert Devonish, the leading expert in Caribbean Languages, was invited to the UK to present information about language recognition in the Caribbean at a highly successful NIACE supported conference series that also showcased his work to gain recognition for Jamaican.

The initial idea was to establish the current status of the ways people from the Caribbean speak, so that adult literacy teachers could discuss these community languages with the students and work to enable them to recognise their need to become bilingual i.e. gaining speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in Standard English, as well as valuing their community language.

The Jamaica 2K team followed this first conference up with further events, research, lobbying and exchange visits to Jamaica to learn about the work of the Jamaican Language Unit, headed by Professor Devonish, at the University of the West Indies (see http://www.mona.uwi.edu/dllp/jlu/about/index.htm)

Some schools in Jamaica are now piloting bilingual approaches to learning. The Department of International Development (DfID) sponsored an adult literacy project to "Train the Trainers" and a growing understanding of Caribbean Languages developed through the opportunities to learn from experts from the Caribbean.

Teachers and others who work with Caribbean Language speakers need to have an understanding about these languages, to enable them to support children and adults who speak Jamaican and other Caribbean languages. Teachers also need to address the misunderstandings that still prevail about the use of English vocabulary in many Caribbean Languages and the negative terminologies often used to describe Caribbean Languages.

This is a particularly important time in the UK as the Adult Literacy, Adult Numeracy and ESOL Teacher Training qualifications at NVQ Levels 2, 3 and 4 are reviewed through the "Skills for Life" strategy. Currently Adult Literacy teachers have to be aware of *"the social factors influencing language and literacy learning and development"* (Level 2) and *"the factors that influence and shape the use of language and literacy"* (Level 4). More specific guidance is needed.

The language routes that created the languages of the Caribbean can lead to specific confusion
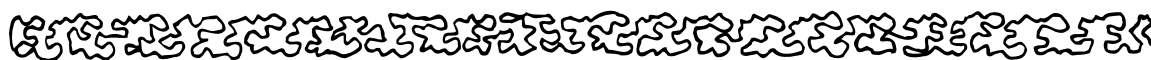
e.g. African grammar is often criticised as wrong or "bad English". Words from a European language (e.g. English) used in the context of a Caribbean language often have different meanings to the standard English meaning.

Many people who speak a Caribbean language refer to it as "Patois" or "Creole", neither accurate descriptions, but more worryingly refer to the way they speak as "bad English" or "broken English" or "slang", all inaccurate and derogatory ways of referring to their way of speaking.

Most Jamaicans and speakers of other Caribbean Languages living in the UK do not recognise that they are bilingual. They state their first language is English, as until very recently this was the only officially recognised language of their family's country of origin.

Language is power and criticising a way of speaking is a good way to put down an individual or a community. With current technologies connecting countries across the globe languages are evolving and changing more quickly than ever. The languages of the Caribbean are no exception; recognition and respect are long overdue.

Most Jamaicans and others with family links with the Caribbean sign up for Adult Literacy classes rather that ESOL classes and as Adult Literacy teachers are not English language teaching specialists specific training is needed.

Skills for Life teachers needs to recognise the specific support needed for speakers of Caribbean languages. We need to clarify and share best practice strategies:

- identify how to use the Adult Literacy and ESOL Core Curricula documents to support teaching ESOCL
- Identify good practice to share between Skills for Life teams
- share materials that are relevant and of interest to learners
- develop a training programme and articles/publications, so that all staff working in ESOCL understand the issues and have an understanding of the grammatical challenges
- devise ways to assess individuals' English language development needs, against the Skills for Life National Standards
- influence policy and practice at all levels, nationally and locally
- enable speakers of Caribbean Languages in

the UK to recognise the need to be bilingual and understand the continuum between the two ways of speaking.

In order to do this we need to make training available to staff:

- to create understanding about the range and diversity of Caribbean Languages and the implications for current practice
- to raise, or refresh, awareness of the issues related to valuing Caribbean Languages
- to identify examples of the good practice and good materials for teaching Adult Literacy to speakers of Caribbean Languages from the UK and the Caribbean
- to include training on ESOCL in Level 4 training under Section B "The factors that influence or shape the use of language and literacy" demonstrating knowledge of "Language as a social, cultural and historical phenomenon".
- To make information and resources readily available for teachers supporting Caribbean Language speakers who want to gain literacy skills in Standard English

Jamaican is now accepted by the Institute of Linguists for the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting and the Certificate in Bilingual Studies. The Awarding Body Consortium includes Jamaican in its "Practical Languages Award" and Jamaican Language and Culture courses are now run by City College Birmingham to complement ESOCL support. The ABC programmes range from Entry 2 through to Level 3. Work on accreditation for other Caribbean Languages will follow on from this lead.

Jamaica 2K has a training team based in the UK and runs an ongoing programme of conferences and seminars. Professor Devonish is returning to the UK this summer to speak at a series of events in July 2006 to share information about languages developments in Jamaica and there will be workshops in ESOCL and related topics. These events are supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat and other sponsors.

For more information, contact Liz Millman, City College Birmingham
lizmillman@yahoo.co.uk

Policy Developments in Literacy & Essential Skills: can the Peace Process in Northern Ireland provide a way forward?

Rob Mark

Rob is coordinator of the tutor training project for adult literacy and numeracy in Northern Ireland. He has worked as a tutor, volunteer tutor and researcher in adult literacy in various sectors of provision and across the UK. He has a particular interest in European lifelong learning and literacy developments.

Background

This article outlines and discusses the development of recent adult literacy and basic education policy in Northern Ireland. It traces some of the key moments in the development of policy which have impacted on adult literacy in Northern Ireland and asks the question what is the future for policy in Northern Ireland?

In Northern Ireland, training in literacy and numeracy is provided largely through the further education colleges and institutes and the training sector, with a growing community and voluntary sector involvement. The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), formerly known as the Department of Education in Northern Ireland (DENI), has overall responsibility for the formulation of policy in adult literacy and basic education. Funding is provided through the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). Provision across Northern Ireland is said to be patchy and suffering from a lack of consistency in terms of curriculum and a professional career structure for tutors.

The Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) also plays an important role in the development of Essential Skills through acting as an advocate for adult learners, through raising awareness about essential skills and by supporting community-based organisations. The advent of the Northern Ireland Peace Process has also brought additional funding for literacy & Essential Skills to Northern Ireland from the EU and the British & Irish Governments which has been used largely to support the development of provision in the community and voluntary sector.

The emergence of adult literacy as an educational issue

Adult literacy classes in Northern Ireland can be traced back as far as the mid 1950s but it was only after the screening of the BBC television programme *On the Move,* in 1975, that a greater emphasis was given to the development of provision to meet the basic learning needs of adults.

During the 1970s the *Adult Literacy & Basi Education Committee* (ALBEC) was set up by the then Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) to advise on adult literacy provision and this body remained in existence until comparatively recently. ALBEC was a cross-sectoral body which included members from the different sectors of literacy provision including further education, the training sector and the voluntary and the community sector. It also maintained links with bodies with similar interests in other parts of the UK and Ireland, and promoted quality standards in the delivery of ABE. It acted in as an advocate for literacy and basic education practice in Northern Ireland over an extended period of social and political turmoil during which Northern Ireland was governed directly from Westminster and where local politicians had little or no say in the development of Government policy. Its activities included organising conferences, training programmes and consultancy and advice to support the development of literacy and adult basic education. It also provided support for tutors, for example, through the preparation of tutor manuals and through publishing student writing. Its impact was, however, limited by its status as an add hoc group. It represented the interests of a group of committed professionals who relied on minimal financial support from the Department of Education to develop ideas, and to respond to the expressed needs of tutors and learners. While ALBEC might be criticised as largely a talking shop, it did succeed in keeping the needs of literacy learners on the political agenda in Northern Ireland.

Recent developments in policy in Northern Ireland

From the late 1990's, a series of policy reports on lifelong learning in Northern Ireland have set out a rationale for the development of literacy policy. In 1999, a Government Paper *Lifelong Learning: a New Learning Culture for All (DEL, 99, p.1)* proposed *a* new framework for the development of lifelong learning in Northern Ireland for the twenty-first century. This paper was strongly influenced by the Government's

Green Paper (1998) the *Learning Age: a Renaissance for a New Britain,* which emphasised the importance of 'the continuous development of skills, knowledge and understanding essential for employability and fulfilment' (DEL 99, p. 3). The paper emphasised the particular contribution that lifelong learning can make to economic development, to healing the divisions of society, to supporting social cohesion, and to helping communities respond to social and economic change. It also acknowledged that adult learning was not sufficiently well established in Northern Ireland and outlined a set of interlocking proposals, aimed at creating a culture where continued lifelong learning would become the normal pattern. The paper went on to stress the importance of increasing general skill levels to improve international competitiveness, enabling individuals of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to enhance their employability in a rapidly changing economy. The paper set out key aims for the development of lifelong learning which included increasing participation from previously under-represented groups, providing more coherent relationships between education and training and the skills of the regional economy, and providing greater ease of progression through the system of qualifications. The strategy also emphasised the importance of '*the development of basic and key skills in the context of skills, knowledge and understanding, essential for employability and* fulfilment' (DEL 99, p.1).

The development of the lifelong learning strategy also coincided with the setting up of a new short lived power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland that brought educational policies under the scrutiny of local ministers for the first time in many years. The strategy document - *Essential Skills for Living: a framework and consultation paper on adult literary (2002)* - was one of the first policy documents developed with local involvement in the decision making process. The document sets out a framework and actions to improve the essential skills of literacy and numeracy in Northern Ireland. The paper defined these skills as: '*the ability to communicate by talking and listening; reading and writing; use numeracy, and the ability to handle information.'* (2002, p. 5). It also set out a framework for the development of a regional curriculum based on the core curriculum for England and Wales and for the accreditation of learners at five levels of entry. The improvement of tutor qualifications was set out as a priority and DEL now requires

tutors to have a tutor qualification which is offered either by Queen's University Belfast or a further & higher education college in Northern Ireland. The qualifications are endorsed by Lifelong Learning (UK) and other equivalent qualifications are accepted. While not addressing the development of ICT skills specifically, the strategy did recognise the importance of ICT skills as a medium for drawing many adults into learning.

The strategy was endorsed by the Minister for Employment and Learning, Carmel Hanna MLA, who acknowledged the importance of improving essential skills for the future success of Northern Ireland as a society, economy and culture.   DEL commissioned an appraisal of the Essential Skills for Living Strategy *Appraisal of Essential Skills for Living (2006)* and early results from this study conclude that the essential skills strategy is achieving its objectives and that Essential Skills need to be continued as a priority area.

Moving Forward
Under direct rule from Westminster since 1972, literacy policy in Northern Ireland has been strongly influenced by Central Government. There has been a focus on the development of the ailing economy including the development of literacy and essential skills to provide new job opportunities and economic advancement. While the needs of the most marginalised are recognised in policy statements, programmes in Government funded provision have been largely focused on addressing the skills gap of the workforce and to promote individuals into employment. Approaches to literacy which have a strong social, cultural or citizenship focus have tended to develop outside of the formally accredited learning provision, particularly within the voluntary and community sector. This type of provision has been funded mainly by European or other non-governmental sources and with a short lifespan.

Northern Ireland has undergone an extended period of political isolation. During this period policy decisions have been made largely by those who are not locally mandated. The absence of locally elected representatives in the debate about literacy policy has led to the importation of policies from other parts of the UK to Northern Ireland, particularly from England and Wales. In contrast, literacy policy and practices from Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, which are based on a different understanding of literacy and which go beyond the technical skills approach to literacy learning,
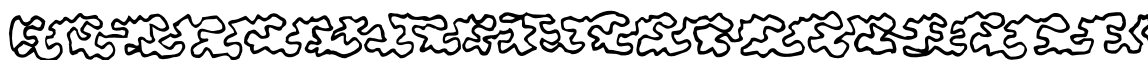
have had less influence on the development of policies in Northern Ireland (2006: Lambe,T., Mark,R., Murphy P. & Soroke, B. p.19).

There is now a real need for greater local inclusion in the debate about policy for adult literacy and the time would seem to be right for this involvement. New policies should be based on consultation and agreement between all the social partners and stakeholders in adult literacy, including local political representatives, policy makers, employers, researchers and learners. Northern Ireland has also useful experience which it can share with others outside of Northern Ireland and this may be of particular interest to those involved with the development of literacy in socially disadvantaged communities or in areas of social, political or cultural conflict. In the future, Northern Ireland should be more involved in national and international debates on the future for literacy. The ongoing Peace Process perhaps offers a unique opportunity to do just that.

References

Department for Education and Employment. (1998) *The Learning Age: a renaissance for a New Britain* Cmd 3790, DfEE, London

Department for Employment and Learning (2002) *Essential Skills for Living: Equipped for the Future: Building for Tomorrow* DEL, Belfast www.delni.gov.uk/index.cfm/area/information/page/ESBackground

Department for Employment and Learning (2006) Appraisal of Essential Skills for Living Report. (unpublished)

Department for Employment and Learning (1999) *Lifelong Learning: A New Learning* http://www.delni.gov.uk/acfbb7f.pdf

Lamb, T. , Mark, R. , Murphy, P. & Soroke, B. (2006) *Literacy, Equality & Creativity. Resource Guide for Adult Educators*. Belfast: Queen's University Belfast.

Making it work together - The challenges of delivering ALNIS in a rural area in Scotland.

Mary Rhind

Mary is the Adult Literacies Co-ordinator for Highland, co-ordinating the work of the Highland Adult Literacies Working Group which progresses the Adult Literacies Strategy for the Community Learning and Development Partnership in Highland. As well as a background in adult education and literacy she has also been involved in community developmental work in Highland for a number of years and enjoys the challenge of building on this experience to facilitate the Scottish Executive's Adult Literacies Initiative in this area. She can be contacted at mary.rhind@highland.gov.uk

Background

Highland is a large local authority area similar in size to the country of Belgium, although, obviously, much more sparsely populated. At the last census it had a population of just over 208,000. It comprises 8 smaller local areas that are naturally quite distinct from each other, both geographically and historically. These are Badenoch & Strathspey, Caithness, Inverness, Lochaber, Nairn, Ross & Cromarty, Skye & Lochalsh, and Sutherland. The challenge to Highland is to make best use of the funding in an area which is not only predominantly rural, with all that this implies for providing a service which can be accessible to all, but presents great physical distances between people - learners, tutors and providers - which are possibly the most extreme in Scotland. In practical terms this means that projects can be separated from each other by as much as a 5 hour journey time and this has implications for monitoring and support, both from the Adult Literacies Co-ordinator and from the Highland Adult Literacies Working Group. There are also issues about planning and co-ordination which are exacerbated by the distances involved and some areas can feel somewhat removed from activities, such as training and conferences, that take place often "centrally" in Inverness.

A lifelong learning approach.

Learner centred programmes have been developed which look at an individual's immediate and also at potential progression routes. Existing partnerships, both Highland wide as well as in the local areas, have been strengthened and Learning Centres, which are now available in all of the geographical areas, are providing a useful bridge and support between individual one to one and learning in a community setting.

ICT has been proving an invaluable way of allowing learners access to learning despite distance. Through grants from Learning Connections we have been able to buy mobile ICT equipment for learning - laptops, Tablet PCs, palm tops, and phones. This has been of two-fold benefit for, as well as proving an effective way of allowing learners in more remote areas access to up-to-the-minute learning tools, it has shown to be a good way of engaging with new, and particularly non-traditional learners who are intrigued to learn about ICT at the same time as improving their literacy skills.

For some too it has presented them with a less stigmatised way of learning. Paradoxically, in Highland, despite the distances between people, there is a very "close" community network. People know each other and of each other through extended family relationships and this can leave people reluctant to declare a literacy learning need openly. Indeed, one learner travels through from the west coast to the east for her learning to avoid family and neighbours in her community knowing what she is doing.

In order to increase and maximise the use of ICT to the benefit of learners in Highland we have engaged as a partnership in several Innovations in ICT research projects with Learning Connections. We are particularly interested in looking at new technologies and are currently engaged in a research project using M-learning (learning delivered through mobile phones and palm tops) which has shown to be particularly attractive as a learning tool for young people. Another such learning tool is the Tablet PC and we have also been trialling some of these with literacies learners. In both we have discovered that good training of the tutors is vital to a successful learning experience and that, if this is provided, these tools can extend learning to non traditional learning places no matter how remote. The People's Network in libraries throughout Highland has also allowed universal and local access to this type of learning to everyone and Highland Libraries staff have worked in partnership with Highland Council's Adult Basic Education service, the Workers Educational Association, and the Training and Guidance Unit to facilitate learners' use of machines in libraries.

Acquiring laptops has also been beneficial and sets are circulated to the different local areas so

that classes can be held in non-traditional places. Our eventual aim is to have a set in each of the 8 local areas to minimise the distances that the machines have to travel to allow everyone access to them. We are currently engaged in a WiFi pilot with Highland Libraries which will allow people access to the internet in libraries throughout Highland via laptops without the need to book on to a static machine. This will give literacies learners too an additional opportunity to learn.

To ensure that every tutor is properly trained for teaching adult literacies the ITALL training (Introductory Training for Adult Literacies Learning) has been cascaded in each geographical area in Highland, according to need and demand, predominantly by ABE Co-ordinators, but supported at times by other partners. As a partnership Highland Adult Literacies runs other training sessions for tutors and literacies practitioners according to the literacies related topics identified from an annual practitioners' training needs analysis. Various training in literacies related topics, which has been developed by Learning Connections, is also cascaded in local areas although this can have an additional cost implication where freelance trainers are required because of travel time needed. Currently the use of ICT is being used to develop further training courses for tutors including an online Curriculum Framework training course and an ESOL PDA course and we anticipate that distance learning through the use of ICT will enable more tutors to take up these options to improve and extend their knowledge and skills.

Free learning provision
Like the rest of Scotland, urban and rural alike, there is a cost implication in supplying free tuition. This has always been the case for ABE learners in Highland. The extra funding from Scottish Executive has allowed us to increase capacity to deliver, but the distances involved in Highland, often mean that the cost for learning is not just the face to face time which a tutor supplies but the additional costs of travel both for learner and tutor. Some projects that we have funded have built travel costs for learners into the project funding, where this may present a barrier to their participation, so that learning can be both free and accessible for all.

ICT also enables local access to learning resources in more remote places. Learning centres and libraries are training staff to be able to support learners to do this accessing. While

free literacies provision is excellent to engage with and start people on the road to education there can still be cost implications for learners if they would like to progress. We are currently conducting research to look at how literacies learning can be made more sustainable for people with learning disabilities by awareness raising and training of support staff. Perhaps though, the most difficult aspect is the "pre-literacy" learning period of trying to engage potential learners.

Targeting Priority Groups.
People living in rural and remote areas and Gaelic speakers who were illiterate in their own language face particular difficulties, becoming additional priority groups. Provision for the latter group has been addressed and a course has been developed by Sabhal Mor Ostaig College in Skye and delivered successfully. The difficulties of getting enough people together in one place to form a class (because of remoteness and rurality) have encouraged the development of an on line version of this course which is shortly to be ready. While the ICT delivery helps to bypass the matter of distance there will still be issues of training both for tutor and learner to ensure that this type of delivery achieves its potential.

The other priority group has been more difficult to assess as there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a remote learner. However, we are endeavouring, particularly through the use of ICT, to make learning accessible to all and to make sure that funding is equally distributed between towns and more rural areas. Obviously, there are higher cost implications in rural areas for travel because of distance but there is also an issue about lower numbers in more sparsely populated areas which means that cost per head of tuition is higher and also, as explained earlier, it is more difficult, and therefore costly, to get people to engage in learning because of "close" communities.

Highland Adult Literacies is reaching all priority groups by working in partnership to provide literacies provision which is relevant to need. Groups have emerged who require slightly different kinds of literacy provision. Examples are work with people with mental health issues, where often literacy has been "lost" through drugs (medicinal or otherwise) or trauma, such as road accident or stroke. ESOL people, looking for basic English language learning, are another group who require a slightly different approach. This group is expanding rapidly as migrant

workers are attracted to work in the area, but so rapidly that any estimate of numbers and need is out of date by the time it is produced. They often live in houses that are in places not very well served by public transport so that reaching a class can be a difficult thing to do logistically as well as potentially costly.

In order to increase outreach to people in the priority groups we conduct awareness raising for partners who work with people who fall into these groups. Because of distance there is a cost factor here for delivery. For those who do not even have the time to attend training we have developed other ways of getting the message across. For example we have collaborated with the NHS to produce a leaflet which raises the awareness of medical practitioners about potential literacy need in their patients. For some organisations there is a distinct cost implication for staff to attend training. For example for Highland Libraries relief staff have to be brought in to keep small rural libraries open while the regular staff receive their literacies awareness training.

Due to the rurality and small scale of businesses, it has also been very hard to persuade employers to release staff so that they can improve their literacies skills. It has been more difficult with businesses which employ ESOL workers, for whom an improvement in literacies skills may mean that they will be more likely to leave a company and move on to other work.

Research and Learner consultation.
Because of the rural aspect of provision in Highland it has not been possible to draw together a regular "learners forum" although learners who are working on a group project, and sometimes learners from two different organisations who are maybe learning in the same building or place are invited to come together and discuss some aspect of their learning. We hope by both these methods to learn how best to provide the service that will attract learners into learning and to learn what the barriers are which learners face, both psychological within themselves and physical because of the logistics of attending learning. The annual tutors' conference allows tutors to share good practice and all projects fill in a self-evaluation which encourages a shared approach to quality improvement.

By working in partnership, by being imaginative, and by being practical in the use of ICT, we in Highland are able to deliver literacies provision

throughout the whole Highland area. Although there can often be quite heavy cost implications for both provision and training due to the sparseness of the population in some areas, these are offset by the traditional willingness of people in the Highlands to help each other, which includes a vast cohort of volunteer tutors. The immense distances involved have strengthened partnership working in Highland and the use of ICT has enabled the issue of distance to be controlled cost effectively. By working in partnership and using ICT Adult Literacies Partners in Highland are making it work together!

Research and Practice: Policy Perspectives from Scotland

Findings from the 'Evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Strategy' (Scottish Executive, 2006)

Lyn Tett and Vivien Edwards, University of Edinburgh,
Stuart Hall, Kathy Maclachlan, Graham Thorpe and Linda Garside,
University of Glasgow

Introduction

This paper reports on a two-phased study of over six hundred literacy and numeracy learners in Scotland that was commissioned by the Scottish executive as one way of evaluating the impact of their adult literacy and numeracy (ALN) strategy. The research examined various aspects of the learning experiences and the impact that learning had on the lives of participants in ALN provision. Participants were drawn from nine areas that represented the geographical diversity of Scotland and had taken part in programmes based in over 100 different institutions including Further Education colleges, community-based, work-based, and prison-based tuition. The research analysed the impact of participation in adult literacy and numeracy (ALN) provision on learners and tutors from nine areas of Scotland. It detailed: the barriers and pathways into learning; learners' and tutors' perceptions of the quality of learning and support they received; the outcomes and impact of the ALN strategy on individual learners; the implications for wider social and economic activities. It was an unusual piece of research because it used the perceptions of learners to evaluate the quality of their programmes rather than asking others to evaluate it on their behalf. The full report is available for downloading from the Scottish Executive (see Tett et al, 2006).

Methodology

Gaining access to learners who are studying on 'roll-on roll-off' type of provision by local educational providers in a variety of settings posed many methodological challenges. With thousands of courses in a wide range of locations, the most logical place to contact learners was through providers. However, this required the engagement of learners through a set of relationships that were mediated through stakeholders and gatekeepers (tutors, managers and organisers of learning). Overall over 2000 contacts were made that eventually resulted in 613 people participating in the research.

Face-to-face interviews using a questionnaire were conducted with these learners in their place of tuition between September 2003 and April 2004. After an interval of around one year, learners were re-contacted and re-interviewed. These interviews took place between September 2004 and April 2005. 393 learners were interviewed a second time representing 64% of the original sample. The focus of this interview was mainly on changes since the first interview and the impact of participation in ALN was assessed through an analysis of learners' perceptions of the provision they participated in and its impact on their lives. Assessment of the provision's quality was based on the 'Literacies in the Community: Resources for Practitioners and Managers' (2000) evaluation benchmarks. These benchmarks set out the quality criteria for entry pathways; learning and teaching; the curriculum; guidance and support and exit pathways and details are provided in Scottish Executive, 2000 pp11-17.

The sample of 78 tutors was selected from different centres from those in which the learners' sample was based but in the same ALN Partnership areas. This avoided the replies from learners being influenced by the participation of their tutors. Telephone interviews took place between April and September 2004. The questionnaire was based on the same benchmarks as those used for the learners, in order to assess the quality of tuition provided against the framework. It also provided the opportunity for tutors to reflect on: the learning programme itself, planning, resources, staffing and management within the organisation, their own professional development, partnership working, and the impact of the strategy on themselves, their organisation and learners alike.

Pathways and Barriers

Research shows (e.g. OECD, 2001) that adults with low literacy and numeracy skills do not necessarily seek tuition so the research asked what had *motivated learners to start their programme*. Most learners desired self-improvement and the development of their ALN skills so that they could engage in a range of

activities. Some spoke of their skills 'needing strengthening', some talked of 'brushing up' maths or spelling, whereas others were motivated by the desire to 'better myself, do something with my life'. The next stage in engaging in provision was *enrolling on a programme*. Most learners were encouraged to do this by a variety of people and events. The highest proportion was encouraged to start by unofficial people (family, friends, work-mates or casual acquaintances). This was followed by self-encouragement and then by people holding some position (doctors, social workers, job centre, youth club, employer). They received information on the programme from people at the centre that they enrolled at and the majority had no difficulty in starting their programme. Learners found the people that dealt with them were very helpful, felt that they were made welcome and important and found the information they were given useful.

The factors that would make *joining programmes easier* broadly clustered into better publicity and the process of joining the course. *Publicity*, learners suggested, should change public perceptions about the image of ALN learning in order to make it more positive through de-stigmatising ALN learners and learning and 'not labelling them as stupid' as one local radio station was perceived to have done. Learners were very appreciative of the 'Big Plus' media campaign particularly as it had used 'real' learners talking about their own difficulties. When *joining the course* learners emphasised the importance of the first point of contact being knowledgeable, friendly, welcoming and not patronising. Pre-course guidance was perceived as important and those learners that had met tutors and other students before they started their course found it very helpful.

Learning and Teaching

Learners were asked to give their views on what they had been learning, how it had been taught and what they thought of the staff. Overall responses were very positive with more than 90% satisfaction on the majority of indicators in both rounds of interviews. These included: the learning environment including the timing and location of the course, the cost, the facilities (crèche, transport, café, rooms) and the learning resources that were available. The factors that contributed to a good experience of teaching and learning included what was learnt and the way it was learnt so that learning was enjoyable and suited to the needs of adults. The tutor, the pace of the learning and the number of hours of

tuition available each week were also positively received with learners finding that staff were encouraging and gave good feedback on their progress. Finally, the social nature of the learning including the other students and the social opportunities to meet other people was highly regarded. There were statistically significant decreases in some aspects of their experience between the first and second rounds of interviews that were experienced differentially by particular groups of learners. Learners attending FE provision were less likely to enjoy their course, female learners were less likely to find staff encouraging, older learners were more dissatisfied with their tutors and younger ones were more likely to report that they did not get enough feedback. These slight increases in negativity may be due to learners raising their expectations of learning, teaching and the curriculum over time.

On the other hand, the quality of guidance and support was *weak* at entry to and during the learning process particularly in respect of learners' awareness of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP sets out in detail the learning outcomes, the learning necessary to achieve them and the sequence that learners and tutors should follow towards their achievement. This document is therefore key in enabling learners to reflect on their learning, make informed decisions and plan for progression. Thirty-seven percent of learners were unaware of having an ILP drawn up at the start of their course and 50% of learners in FE settings and 27% in non-FE settings said that they had never had a review of their ILP. Despite this learners were overwhelmingly satisfied with their programmes.

Tutors' perceptions of the ALN strategy were that it had impacted positively in increasing: the number and range of learners participating in ALN; tutors' approaches to teaching and learning; funding and resources; the local and national profile of ALN. Tutors also considered that improvements could be made in: fostering links with, and encouraging transfer to, other learning opportunities; guidance and support; exit pathways; communication with learners by management; access to good quality and appropriate staff development and support for part-time staff and volunteers.

Outcomes and Impact of learning

There is extensive research that demonstrates the link between low literacy and numeracy skills and low socio-economic status (e.g. Scottish Executive, 2001; Schuller *et al.*, 2004; Willms,

2003). Given these negative indicators any positive changes for learners will contribute towards enabling them to fulfil their potential. The dominant outcome that impacted on individual learners was increased self-confidence. Respondents reported that increased self confidence was experienced as a growth in abilities, feeling better about oneself generally and in relation to others. Increased self-confidence acted as a key to opening up a wide range of other changes resulting from the confidence *to* learn, the confidence *in* learning, and the confidence in life that develops *through* learning. The findings from the analysis of the qualitative data from two hundred learners show that increased self-confidence acted as a key to opening up a wide range of other changes. Confidence and self-esteem are quite generalised concepts, so the responses were analysed to identify 'confidence in what', i.e. how the respondents anticipated that their increased confidence would affect various aspects of their personal lives. The responses clustered into three broad groupings that were psychologically related, skills related and activity related.

The *psychological* differences that learners spoke of included increased self esteem, a growing sense of their potential, ability and achievements, more independence, being happier as a person, being more able to voice their own opinions, openly talking about their ALN difficulties, improved health and an enhanced awareness and understanding of aspects of the world around them. The number of learners citing enhanced self-esteem and belief in their own abilities rose from 19% to 30% (38 to 46). For example:

- I believe in myself now that I can achieve things.
- I'm not 'crabbit' [bad tempered] anymore because … I'm not avoiding problems - I'm tackling them head on.'
- I can get out of bed, take more care of myself and get a haircut.
- It's boosted my confidence because I don't feel as thick as I did before.
- I am now confident about sharing the fact that I had this problem and am seeking help.

The confidence *to do things* related to skills, some of which were specific ALN skills and others that had developed as a consequence of participants' enhanced ALN skills. One of the most evident differences in the learners between the two rounds of interviews was a sense of

their achievement in learning. Thirty-two percent in the first interview referred to themselves as *beginning* to achieve things, however 48% in the second interview talked of their pride in their learning achievements. For example:

- I'm more confident in speaking to others so I'm not scared to go to interviews now.
- It has helped me to use the computer and I need it for work. I can also interact with friends better because of the computer, because I know what they're talking about.
- I can tackle things like reading newspapers and books.
- I will now fill in forms which before I would have left to my husband.
- I'm more confident particularly in shopping because I can work out percentage reductions.

The third cluster of confidence indicators relates to a *range of activities* in facets of learners' lives that they are now able to participate in, or can do so with more confidence. 31% of the learners (an increase in 11% from the first interview) talked of things they now do because of their enhanced literacies skills. For example:

- I can help myself. I don't need to depend on others and have changed my mind to be very hopeful and helpful.
- I'm more confident approaching strangers for information.
- It's much easier to live, and I feel safer.
- If a conflict came up, I used to cry, but now I don't. At work I managed to say I didn't do something I was falsely accused of doing, and can stand up for myself.
- I don't need an interpreter when I go to the hospital.

12% (up 3%) said that they socialised more than previously, and were more comfortable doing so. They talked about meeting new friends, going out with their friends more, starting new leisure activities and not being afraid of meeting new people.

Many learners' responses related to changes in the nature of familial relationships. These included relationships between parents and children (37% in both interviews), general relationships amongst family members (35% and 38% respectively) between partners (9% interview 1, 6% interview 2) grandparents and their grandchildren (6% interview 1, 3% interview 2) and other relatives (6% interview 1,
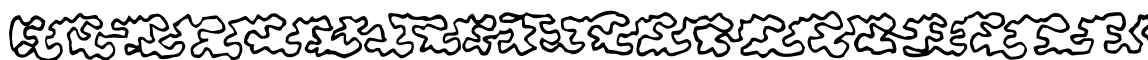
8% interview 2). Although there was little quantitative difference in the volume of responses, there was a noticeable shift in emphasis in the comments. On the whole, learners in interview two were less tentative about changes in their families, and more specific about the precise nature of these changes.   For example:

- There's no more fighting with my daughter when it's homework time because I can help her with it, which I couldn't do in the past.
- I'm helping the children with their homework, reading 'Harry Potter' to my son and helping my daughter who has learning difficulties.
- I'm a bit more patient with my Dad when we go out. I learned from seeing the patience of the tutors.
- It saves my wife doing everything all the time and I don't want to have to rely on her.

The responses to both rounds of interviews show the considerable impact that ALN learning has had on relationships and activities within the family, and though the percentage responses in all aspects of familial change were not always greater in the second interview, cumulatively they represent a numerical increase in learners observing positive differences in this area of life. The greatest changes related to improved relationships, primarily between parents and children, with the main focus here being in parents' enhanced confidence and skills in supporting their children's education and helping with their homework. This in turn gave them more in common to do together and to talk about, thus engendering an all round better relationship between the two parties.

Learners were positive about the likelihood of their ALN involvement to improve their employment situation in both interviews. In the second interview 102 learners (51%) made additional comments regarding their working lives. 29 of those (28%) suggested that their job prospects had improved, 27 said their confidence had improved, seven others mentioned that their 'pool' of potential jobs had widened and two learners suggested that their promotion prospects had improved. While the proportion of respondents who 'perceived' their job prospects to have improved had dropped from the first interview (first interview 55%, second interview 28%) there were positive changes in the 'actual' working lives of many of the learners which would, at least in part, explain this decrease. Moreover, it was clear from their comments that they regarded their ALN involvement as an

important factor in this. Many other learners remained confident about their future employment prospects. For example:

- I am now working with a team of gardeners as a direct result of the college [FE] course.
- I have moved on to two more part-time jobs, helped by having more confidence.
- I am recently promoted, would not have been possible before, I would not even have thought of trying for it.
- I have more responsibility at work - it [ALN] has made work easier.
- I am more confident using the written word, write a lot more, which is required at work.
- I am more confident about filling in applications… my brother used to do it for me.

Moreover, the proportion of those reporting an increase in their confidence had risen from 13% in the first interview to 26% in the second. Eight learners reported securing new employment between the first and second interviews, two others said that they had been promoted and another two indicated that they had been given more responsibility in their job. One noted that he had applied for promotion.

132 learners (66%) from the first round of interviews spoke about the impact of ALN involvement on their educational aspirations. At this stage the overwhelming majority of informants were keen to continue with some form of education on completion of their ALN course. Many of these learners indicated that the additional self-confidence gained in their ALN course had encouraged them to consider further study. 146 learners (73%) commented on their education plans or progress at the second round of interviews, 71 of these still indicated a willingness to engage in future study. For example:

- At some point in the future [I] will do something but not sure yet what.
- I'm much more positive about doing further courses.
- I intend to go back and finish the classroom assistant course.
- Would also like to learn basic accountancy skills to help with the Café project.

Learners have gone on to study a wide range of topics at various levels including computing/IT, communications, social and health care and gardening. 14 interviewees said that they had no plans for further study. Of these, four reported

that 'personal circumstances' (employment, illness, or family commitments) prevented them from carrying on with education. Two learners suggested that their ALN experiences had been less positive and they were unlikely to continue in education. What does come across strongly from the learners who commented was the importance of ALN in building their confidence and providing them with positive educational experiences that encouraged them to undertake further study.

91 learners (46%) commented on the impact of their involvement in ALN on their public lives during their second interview compared with 89 learners (45%) in the first. 74 of these interviewees indicated that their involvement would result in changes to their public lives. As in the first round of interviews, many interviewees suggested that changes in their public lives had already taken place. Many of these replies were clearly related to an increase in self-confidence. For example:

- I am more confident socially and able to attend local gyms.
- I am a Union representative at work, and doing this course has helped in this area. People at work now come to [me] for advice with problems with staff.
- Walking outside, mixing more with the general public and going into a shop on my own.
- I am involved in voluntary work in the school, confidence from the course helped with making this move.

19 learners indicated that they were prevented from increasing their public lives due to other commitments (including their studies). In a number of cases learners have begun to increase their public profile and develop new areas of involvement as a direct result of their ALN involvement.

Conclusion
There is an extensive research literature that demonstrates that adults with low literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to be unemployed, living on low incomes, experiencing poor health and early morbidity (Brynner and Parsons, 2001; Chisman and Campbell, 1990; Hammond, 2004; Raudenbush and Kasim, 2003). There is also a strong relationship between educational inequality, income inequality and lack of social cohesion in terms of societal trust and community safety (Gallacher and Crossan, 2000; Green and Preston, 2001; Green et al. 2003) especially in communities

where, '*education is simply not part of [their] value system and behaviour patterns*' (McGivney, 2001: 25). Given these negative indicators any positive changes in outcomes for learners as a result of ALN participation will contribute to widening social capital and bring social and economic benefits.

The data show that learners were more likely to increase their contact with local people and go out regularly therefore indicating an increase in trust and more engagement in their local communities. Research has shown (e.g. Baron et al, 2000) that membership of networks (inside as well as outside the workplace) and the ability to mobilise social capital provides access to employment opportunities and enhances people's ability to do the job effectively. Therefore enhancing social capital through engagement in learning can increase economic and social activity leading to wider benefits for the individual, their community and society. This is particularly important in communities where people generally lack aspirations because it is extremely difficult for an individual living in such locations to behave differently. In other words, the effect of education in raising people's sights is experienced more widely as a positive influence on the cultural norms that encourage others to do the same (see Schuller et al, 2004: 191).

Learning and its benefits are dynamic in the sense that benefits gained in one domain such as education impact on functioning in other domains, such as family and community (see Brynner and Hammond, 2004: 161). Of particular note in this research has been the impact on family relationships, especially with children, that were reported on by learners. Many parents detailed the variety of ways in which their participation in ALN had helped them to do a better job as a parent. The benefits included: more *confidence* in their own ability as a parent; an improved capacity to *communicate* with their children; greater understanding or *patience*; more *practical skills*, for example in being able to use a computer.

In reporting on learners' views the research has shown that learning brings about *transformation* in people's lives and it also enables individuals and communities to '*sustain* what they are doing through preventing decay or collapse (at individual or community level) or consolidating a positive state of stability' (Schuller et al, 2004: 25). These findings illustrate the impact that participation in ALN has on self-confidence,
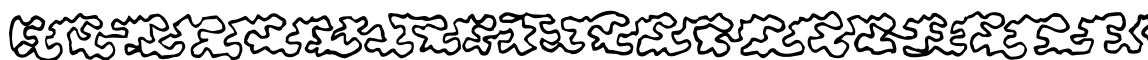
social capital and learner identity and shows the importance of providing good quality teaching and learning to enable this group of people to sustain and progress in their learning. However, this body of evidence that the learners have provided forms little more than a starting point or general guide to the development of quality provision. They have shown *what* they have experienced, we now have to ask '*so what*?' if this research is to have any meaningful impact on practice in Scotland.

References

Baron, S., Field, J., & Schuller, T. (Eds) (2000) *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*, Oxford University Press.

Bynner, J. and Hammond, C. (2004) 'Benefits of adult learning: quantitative insights' in Schuller T. et al, *Wider benefits of learning*, London: Routledge Falmer pp. 161-178

Bynner J. and Parsons S. (2001) Qualifications, Basic Skills and Accelerating Social Exclusion, *Journal of Education and Work*, 14, 279-291

Chisman, F. & Campbell, W. (1990) Narrowing the jobs-skills gap: A focus on workplace literacy. In F. Chisman (Ed) *Leadership for literacy: The agenda for the 1990s*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Gallacher, J. and Crossan,B . (2000) *What Contribution can Lifelong Learning Make to Social Inclusion?* Glasgow Caledonian University.

Green, A. and Preston, J. (2001) 'Education and Social Cohesion: re-entering the debate', *Peabody Journal of Education* 76 (3 and 4): 247-284

Green, A. Preston, J., and Sabates, R. (2003) *Education, Equity and Social Cohesion: a Distributional Model*, Research Report 7: Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, London: Institute of Education/Birkbeck

Hammond, C. (2004) 'Impacts on well-being mental health and coping' in Schuller T. et al, *Wider benefits of learning*, London: Routledge Falmer pp. 37-56

McGivney, V. (2001) *Fixing or changing the pattern?*, Leicester: NIACE

OECD (2001) The *well-being of nations. The role of human and social capital.* Paris: OECD

Raudenbush, S. and Kasim, R. (2002) *Adult Literacy, Social Inequality and the Information Economy, Findings from the National Adult Literacy Survey*, Ottowa and Hull: Statistics Canada and Human Resource Development Canada

Schuller, T., Brasset-Grundy, A., Green, A., Hammond, C. and Preston, J. (2004) *Wider benefits of learning*, London: Routledge Falmer

Scottish Executive (2000) *Literacies in the Community*; *Resources for Practitioners and Managers* (LIC Pack) Edinburgh City Council/Scottish Executive.

Scottish Executive (2001) *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland Report* (ALNIS), Edinburgh Stationary Office

Tett, L., Hall, S. Maclachlan, K., Thorpe, G. Edwards, V. and Garside, L. (2006) *Evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy Initiative*, Scottish Executive http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/03/20102141/0

Willms, J. D. (2003) 'Literacy proficiency of youth: evidence of converging socioeconomic gradients' *International journal of Educational Research* 39, 247-252
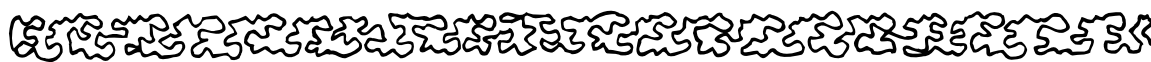
What's underpinning Scotland's literacies policy?
Deirdre Parkinson

Deirdre is an independent researcher, working in adult literacies, prison literacies and prison education. She has also been involved in the analysis and evaluation of Scotland's local literacies action plans and has worked in a local literacies partnership.

Five years have now elapsed since the launch of ALNIS the report on Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland, with its robust assertion of a social practices model of adult literacies:

> *'Literacy and numeracy are skills whose sufficiency may only be judged within a specific social, cultural, economic or political context.'* (Scottish Executive 2001a:7)

For many people in Scotland and beyond, it is sometimes taken for granted that everything here is working well. However, in this paper, I want to challenge the original basis of our current adult literacies policy, particularly the International Adult Literacy Surveys (IALS) and their impact on Scotland and the linking of literacies and employability.

Along with other radical adult educators, I want adult education, and adult literacies provision in Scotland, to be grounded in critical thinking (Allman & Wallis, 1995) and capable of challenging the agenda of skills and employability (Walters et al 2004, Jesson & Newman 2004). Learning needs to be seen where it belongs: in a social context, and not simply as a business of individuals upskilling themselves. (Crowther 2004) If we as researchers and practitioners are to encourage literacies learners to be critical, we must ourselves be critical and ask questions about not only *how* we do what we do here in Scotland but *why* we are doing it. Going back to examine the IALS data, on which ALNIS was based, is a good starting point.

The IALS Surveys
ALNIS has as its basis the very instrumentally-oriented IALS data. ALNIS noted that due to the time it would take and the potential cost, it was not possible to undertake a specific survey of literacy and numeracy skills in Scotland, so instead an analysis of the 1996 Scottish IALS data was commissioned by the Scottish Executive (2001b) and carried out by Office of National Statistics (ONS). The overall aims of the IALS study were to produce meaningful comparisons between countries; to understand the relationship between literacy and economic indicators of wealth and well-being; and to inform and influence policy decisions, although according to Street the motivation for producing

the IALS report was to tell governments and agencies where their populations are failing so that they could put it right. (Street 1996)

The Scottish analysis of the IALS data should be challenged for several reasons. First, the data from the IALS surveys have been used as the basis for ALN policy in all OECD countries, so it is important to understand where they came from. Secondly, IALS has been very heavily critiqued and these criticisms are particularly pertinent to Scotland, which has adopted a social practices approach to adult literacy and numeracy. Thirdly, the data used were quantitative rather than qualitative. Those involved in IALS research were 'testers and statisticians, committed to quantitative methodologies' (Hamilton & Barton 2000) This immediately raises an issue for Scotland because its social practices approach is (or, I would argue, should be) grounded in the collection of information about learners' perceptions of their literacy requirements via qualitative and ethnographic methods.

The ONS survey was based on a representative sample of adults of working age (16-65) with an achieved sample in Britain of 3,811 and an achieved sample size for Scotland of 704 cases. Given such a small baseline, the report notes that only relatively large differences in percentages for sample sub groups are statistically significant. IALS defined and tested 3 dimensions of literacy: prose (e.g. newspapers, books), document (e.g. timetables, graphs) and quantitative (e.g. calculations). Respondents completed a self-assessment via booklets to ascertain their skill levels and interviewers completed a background questionnaire to provide information on respondents' socio-economic characteristics and literacy practices, using tests. The test items used texts which meant that people were asked questions in relation to texts which may have had no relation whatsoever to their own everyday practices. 'Once a real life text such as a bus timetable is wrenched out of its real life context it ceases to be a timetable and it becomes a test item.' (Hamilton & Barton 2000)

Analysis of performance in IALS tests
Of particular interest is the criticism by Tom Sticht of the analysis of performance in these tests. Performance was grouped in five levels of

literacy in each group, with Level 1 being low and Level 5 high, although no reason was given for this 'statistical invention' (Hamilton & Barton 2000) of the boundaries of the scores within each of these groups. Sticht notes that there is a problem of how to determine on a continuum those points that divide the continuum into various 'amounts' of literacy. This is critical because it underlies the practice of determining how many adults are 'at risk' for poorly developed literacy skills and might therefore benefit from some level of government support for adult education. (Sticht 1999) He comments on the arbitrary nature not just of the division of the scale into five sections but also of the decision to set the criterion standard of performance at the 80% probability level: categorising adults into one of the 5 levels of literacy 'was an essentially arbitrary decision about what constitutes competence (or mastery) of literacy at different levels'. (Sticht 2000) Very importantly, he highlighted that if a 50% probability level had been used instead, the results in each country would have seen almost a 50% reduction of adults considered most 'at risk'.

In Scotland this would have meant that instead of categorising almost 25% of our adult population as requiring literacies support, we would have been looking at a figure of 10%. Many people tested in IALS were actually capable of performing quite a few items at a higher level of literacy, raising the question as to who are the 'many experts' who have determined that Level 3 is 'the minimum level of competence needed to cope adequately with the complex demands of everyday life and work' because IALS does not identify these experts. I would argue that different methods were (and probably still are) needed to establish the 'true' scale of need for adult literacy provision in Scotland.

What the IALS data actually show
The ONS analysis of the data for Scotland showed **'**no evidence that people in Scotland with low literacy skills were more likely than those with higher skills to be unemployed.' (Scottish Executive 2001b:p5; emphasis added) This raises questions about the subsequent linking of literacies and employability (but more of that later). It is worthwhile highlighting some of the figures in the analysis as they raise questions about how and why people in Scotland have been categorised and the actual level of 'need'. The analysis showed a high level of access to reading materials at home - 77% had

at least 25 books, 84% had a daily paper and 91% had a dictionary. On self-assessment, 10% rated their reading skills as moderate or poor, 18% their writing skills and 28% their maths skills. However, 93% of all respondents were satisfied with their reading and writing skills, with 84% of respondents in Level 1 saying they were satisfied with the reading and writing skills they required for their everyday use. 20% of all respondents needed help reading 'official' information and this included 21% of respondents at Levels 3+. Just 5% wanted help with basic arithmetic.

Sticht notes that the choice of probability level, referred to above, could explain why most of the adults in Level 1 thought their literacy skills were just fine for meeting the requirements of everyday life, noting that they could in fact perform quite a few (1 in 6) of the most difficult literacy tasks. (Sticht 1999) Or the fact that people's own judgement of their everyday literacy competence is more positive than the test scores indicate may lead one to the conclusion that the IALS test is measuring something other than everyday literacy practices. (Hamilton & Barton 2000) In future assessments perhaps more attention should be given to the use of self-perceptions of skills so that those who believe they are in need of additional literacy development can be identified and provided with information about educational opportunities. (Sticht 2001) Although self-assessments may include overestimations of their skills by adults, Sticht notes that there is a closer relationship between the number of adults who rate themselves as 'poor' in literacy in the IALS and the number who enrol in programmes, than there is with the IALS performance test results and the numbers enrolling in programmes. This may indicate that learners are more likely to act upon their own assessment of their literacy ability/requirements than on a test result.

As far as literacy at work was concerned, higher literacy levels were noted in managerial, professional, technical and clerical groups than in others, with this variation partly reflecting differing educational attainments. The majority of people assessed their skills for their job as either good or excellent and only 11% felt their skills were limiting their job opportunities. It is interesting to note the coincidence between this finding and the finding that the majority of employers (see below) were apparently satisfied with the level of their employees' literacy and numeracy skills. Why then, we might ask, is
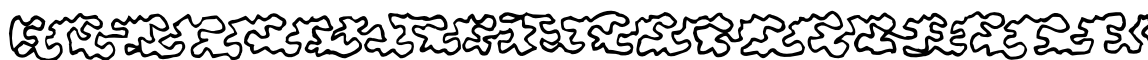
there the constant refrain about the need to improve literacy skills for the job market?

Hamilton & Barton argue that IALS' success has been limited. It failed to produce meaningful comparisons between countries because of its failure to achieve an adequately standardised sample and procedure across countries. They argue that it has had limited success in understanding the relationship between literacy and economic indicators of wealth and well-being and that policy is driving the research rather than research driving the policy. However, IALS has been successful in its aim of informing and influencing policy decisions because it 'will be used to justify policy interventions in individual countries, based on its estimates of the percentage of the population with 'very poor' literacy. (Hamilton & Barton 2000) This is exactly what has happened in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

It is also noted that more than two decades of critical, empirical and theoretical work, a significant amount of which focuses on or includes literacy, is neither acknowledged nor allowed to influence the IALS study design, conduct or reported conclusions. (Graff 1996) IALS failed to acknowledge the extensive work and debates around the complexities of literacy and social practice. Concerns have been expressed about the tests used in the studies because they provide only a partial picture of literacy. IALS claims to represent *all* of literacy but in fact recognises only a limited and simplistic view of what literacy is in the lives of the millions of people covered by the survey. It treats culture as bias (Hamilton & Barton) and in its search for cultural neutrality, by developing a test that can be used across all cultures, it directed attention away from the very features that are most essential for an understanding of literacy and its dynamic within everyday life: literacy is a social practice that is constituted by its cultural context. It is argued that the test items used did not represent the real-life items as claimed. The consistent message from ethnographic work is that the uses of texts are not obvious: one cannot read off from a text, nor from the intentions of the text-producers, how a text is actually used and this is a crucial point for understanding the nature of literacy and important for evaluating the reality of the test situation. (Barton & Hamilton 2000)

IALS and power
According to Street, the broader issue underlying the IALS tests is one of power: the interpretations placed on texts by the researchers are constantly referred to as 'correct' and where respondents offer different interpretations these are used to mark them down in the scales. (Street 1996). He was, however challenged by one of the authors of the IALS reports who noted that as far as 'correct' answers to the test items were concerned, 'we reviewed novel answers and continually added new *correct* responses to the scoring protocol … Some of these were as good as ones we did anticipate and we accepted them and had our scorers include them in their protocols; others were *as off the mark as wrong answers* we anticipated and we did not accept them'. (Jones 1997; emphasis added) Perhaps his response confirmed only too clearly that Street's view on the location of power in the IALS survey was correct.

Literacies and employability
It is useful to consider at this point the explicit link between employment, employabilty, and literacies, which was noted at the beginning of this paper. Employability is a theme which runs not just through ALNIS but through all of the policy documents produced by the Scottish Executive since 1999, along with the underpinning belief that social inclusion is best achieved by participation in the labour market. It is useful to note that ALNIS's definition of literacy was expressed in terms of learners as 'family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.' Literacy as a pathway to work was not, therefore, the sole or main intention of the definition. However, 'employability' has been transformed into an individual obligation, something that individuals must actively achieve, regardless of the fact that employability is affected by social and economic factors beyond the control of most individuals and that these factors are influential irrespective of whether an individual is 'literate' or not.

As Maclachlan and Cloonan (2003) noted, ALNIS suffers from the heavy influence upon it of labour market demands. The requirement for those with *low* levels of literacy and numeracy to improve their *employability* is referred to on several occasions and the pressure to upgrade skills is highlighted: 'Scotland's future prosperity and competitiveness depends on building up the skills of her existing workforce and improving the employability of those seeking work.' (Scottish Executive 2001a) Further, 'tackling literacy and numeracy in the workforce both improves the employability of the individual and raises productivity and earning levels.' (ibid:10).

ALNIS noted that whilst 'the majority of the population are satisfied with their skills for the uses they encounter … the importance of literacy and numeracy as underpinning skills is *invisible* to employers' (Scottish Executive 2001a; emphasis added) and that employers 'do not *readily* identify literacy and numeracy as a key employee issue.' (ibid:16; emphasis added)

However, according to the employers' survey 'the literacy core skills (reading, writing, numeracy) did not appear at the forefront of employers' minds as just over one in 10 (13%) mentioned maths/numeracy skills and seven per cent mentioned reading and writing skills.' (Scottish Executive 2001b) Other skills were more important: communication, thinking, team working and IT. Despite the views of employers, ALNIS concluded that '(a)s good literacy and numeracy skills underpin effective performance in these areas, their role in explaining poor performance may often be *invisible* and other personal or *behavioural* attributes may be *blamed*…' (Scottish Executive 2001a; emphasis added). Note the way in which ALNIS individualises the issue of literacy. It seems that despite employers' views about their employees' requirements for literacy and numeracy and despite learners' assessments of their own literacies abilities and needs, the Scottish Executive, via ALNIS, has insisted that there is a need for some 800,000 people in Scotland to improve their levels of literacy.

Conclusion

It will be clear that all is not perfect. ALNIS is based on questionable data, gathered via assessment and it makes explicit links, where none exist, between literacies and employability. ALNIS acknowledged in 2001 that 'Scottish-based research is virtually non-existent'. Some five years later, the Scottish strategy has been evaluated (Tett et al 2006) and a welcome pilot project has been undertaken to research the engagement of new literacies learners. (Maclachlan K et al, 2006) It is anticipated that this will be the start of an ongoing process of researching the experiences of Scottish learners, providers and partners. Given that over the coming months we will be revisiting ALNIS, now may be an appropriate time to consider whether we should also revisit the data that underpin it.

References
Allman P & Wallis J (1995) 'Challenging the Postmodern Condition: Radical Adult Education for Critical Intelligence' in Mayo M & Thompson J (Eds)*Adult Learning Critical Intelligence and Social Change* NIACE. Leicester.

Crowther J (2004) 'Do you believe in magic? Adult literacy, economic growth, social inclusion and other fairy tales.' in *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, Tohoku University, Japan. (vol 7 2004)

Graff H J (1996) *The persisting power and costs of the Literacy Myth* http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/Publications/working/page3.htm [Accessed 10th March 2006]

Hamilton M and Barton D (2000) 'The International Adult Literacy Survey: What does it really measure' in *International Review of Education* 46(5): 377-389, 2000

Jesson J & Newman N (2004) 'Radical adult education and learning' in Foley G (Ed) *Dimensions of Adult Learning. Adult Education and training in a global era.* Open University Press. Berkshire

Jones S (1997) *Ending the myth of the 'Literacy Myth'* http://www.nald.ca/province/que/litcent/Publication_Products/working/page17.htm [Accessed 12 November 2003]

Maclachlan K et al (2006) *Practitioner Led Action Research in Adult Literacies Project: 'New Ways to Engage new Learners'.* Learning Connections & Scottish Executive

Maclachlan K and Cloonan M (2003) 'Three Dimensional Change? The Relationship Between Theory, Policy and Adults' Understanding of Literacies' in *Research in Post-Compulsory Education.* Vol. 8 No. 1, 2003 pp123-136

Scottish Executive (2001a) *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland.* The Stationery Office Bookshop. Edinburgh

Scottish Executive (2001b) *Adult Literacy in Scotland: Analysis of data from the 1996 Adult Literacy Survey.* The Stationery Office Bookshop. Edinburgh

Sticht T G (2001) 'The International Adult Literacy Survey: How well does it represent the literacy abilities of adults?' in *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* Vol. 15 No 2 November 2001 pp19-36

Sticht T G (2000) *From International Competitiveness to International Inequality: New Perspectives on Social Justice From the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)* http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/sticht/dec00/page1.htm [Accessed 12 November 2003]

Sticht T G (1999) *How Many Low Literate Adults Are There in Canada, the United States, and United Kingdom? Should the IALS Estimates be Revised?* http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/sticht/sticht.PDF [Accessed 12 November 2003]

Street B V (1996) *Literacy, Economy and Society: A Review* http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/Publications/working/page7.htm [Accessed 10th March 2006]

Tett L, Hall S, Maclachlan K, Thorpe G, Edwards V & Garside L (2006) *Evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Strategy. Final Report.* Scottish Executive Social Research. Edinburgh.

Walters S, Borg C, Mayo P & Foley G (2004) 'Economics, politics and adult education' in Foley G (Ed) *Dimensions of Adult Learning. Adult Education and training in a global era.* Open University Press. Berkshire
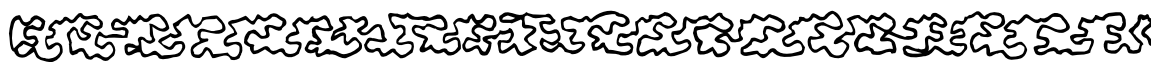
Don't Look North Through Rose Tinted Spectacles: Tensions, Struggles and Guiding Lights in Scotland, - A reflection.
Kathy Maclachlan

Kathy is a senior lecturer in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Glasgow. She has been involved in a range of Adult Literacy and Numeracy research projects in Scotland, and currently leads the Practitioner Action Research Project. She also runs a Postgraduate Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Introduction

'*Scotland has been developing a remarkable adult literacy and numeracy strategy….[it is]…..one of the most dynamic and exciting places in the world right now to be an adult literacy or numeracy practitioner*' ('Why England should look North for inspiration'. Merrifield, J. 2005, pp 21 & 22).

Juliet's and three other articles in the Reflect journal, October 2005, collectively paint a wonderfully rosy picture of policy, strategy and provision north of the border, though Juliet herself recognises the '*frustration, confusion, dissatisfaction and resistance*' (p 22) that inevitably accompany radical change on the scale that Scotland is striving to implement. Whilst not intending to counter the key tenets of these articles, nor to deny the innovative work that is undoubtedly happening, I want to talk about the flip side of this 'remarkable' coin; to balance the hype a little and to offer what I see as a more grounded perspective of ALN in the country. I do this because I believe that whilst we justifiably celebrate the 'moment of opportunity' (Hamilton, Macrae & Tett, 2001. p 39) we are presented with, if we cannot publicly debate the tensions, contradictions and shortcomings that we encounter in our literacies work, we may be in danger of losing the direction, the ideals and ultimately the opportunities that currently excite and spur us forward.

Policy

To begin at the policy level. Yes, ALNIS (Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland, Scottish Executive. 2001) does refer to a '*lifelong learning approach*' (p 14), does recognise literacies as '*complex skills and knowledge*' and does ground *it 'in the context of people's lives*' (p 7). It also significantly affirms that: '*Literacy and numeracy are skills whose sufficiency may only be judged within a specific social, cultural, economic or political context,* (p 7) and such statements have helped frame the ideological basis of the policy and consequent strategic developments. But ALNIS also has its darker parts. It is littered with statements and pages of text that fundamentally contradict the construction of literacies embodied in these quotes. For example the notion of ALN as skills 'whose sufficiency can only be judged' within different contexts sits uneasily with the identification of the scale of need (pp 8-11), the targeting of priority groups (pp 13-14) and the use of partner professionals to uncover 'latent or invisible need' (p 15). Although it recognises that the IALS tests 'have been the subject of some criticism' (p8) it nonetheless draws heavily on them and extrapolates that therefore around 800,000 adults in Scotland have very low literacy and numeracy skills' (p8), thus establishing the target number of new learners for the following three years. So on the one hand, we are steered by statements that clearly locate literacies within the ideological or social practices models that Street (1984), Barton and Hamilton (1998) and others describe, yet on the other hand, we are under pressure to target and rectify the 'skills deficiencies' of those whom tests indicate have low 'dominant' literacies skills.

ALN's historical location within community education, and its current embedding in community learning and development offer tremendous potential for innovative ways of working with partner agencies on their own ground, and ALNIS's advocacy of such work should be lauded. However assigning the role of uncovering latent or invisible need to partner professionals, and naming them '*spotters and referrers*' (p 18) smacks of a literacies police, or a literate enforcement agency whose role it is to ferret out those whose skills are 'deficient' whether they deem them to be so or not. It also triggers an uncomfortable reminder of Armstrong's powerful article critiquing the 'The 'Needs Meeting' ideology in Liberal Adult Education' (Armstrong, 1982). Both again sit uneasily with the relative, wealth model of literacies advocated elsewhere in the policy document.

A further example of such dissonance can be seen in the level of attention given to the employability imperative in ALNIS and the

concomitant assumption that the roots of Scotland's mediocre economic prosperity lie in the poor ALN skills of its workforce, i.e. the weak link in the social/economic chain. *'Raising literacy and numeracy levels will help promote……economic development. In an increasingly globalised economy, Scotland's future prosperity and competitiveness depends on building up the skills of her existing workforce and improving the employability of those seeking work'* (ALNIS p 7). Two things strike me about comments such as this. The first is that they are premised on unfounded assumptions about the *causal* relationship between increasing basic skills and enhanced employment opportunities (see Avis 1996, Coffield, 1999, Field 2000, Keep 2003) because the demand side of employment is circumscribed by a whole range of factors that have little to do with learning**.** The second is that they promote a narrow type of skills-based learning for earning, that is antithetical to the critical and the creative that are integral to the ideological construction of literacies.

It is ironic that one of the greatest tensions in ALN in Scotland stems from one of the most enlightened sections of the policy. ALNIS affirms that *'the measurement of progress should be based around learner goals and distance travelled'* (p3) not by levels of qualifications attained that can be (mis)used to position providers and countries into meaningless league tables. In other words, the success or otherwise of the policy will be judged by the difference it makes in people's lives and in the communities in which they live. It is the 'so what?' factor that we will be looking for. Now on the one hand this is wonderfully liberating in that it encourages the spread of responsive innovatory work that can challenge and can bring about real change, but on the other hand it opens up a monitoring/accounting void that we have not yet successfully filled. For though we recognise that there has to be public accountability for the spending of public money, there is concern that boxing anecdotal evidence or soft outcomes into measurable indicators places them in danger of becoming the definitive target outcomes to which learning is then artificially orientated. At present, providers and projects supply both statistical and anecdotal evidence of change in the annual partnership reports submitted to the Scottish Executive. It includes the number of learners who have achieved their personal learning goals as identified in their Individual Learning Plans together with case studies of learners for whom aspects of their lives have changed because of their learning, and this is

supplemented by research at partnership levels (for example Glasgow City Council, 2006) and national levels (Tett et al 2006), so the body of evidence pertaining to the impact of literacies' learning is growing. The problem is that it is unwieldy, it does not easily transpose into the soundbite statistics that ministers may require to fight their funding battles, and more significantly, it is difficult to isolate the literacies factor from others that might also have affected learners' lives. The danger therefore is that down the road, more easily measurable indicators may creep into becoming the yardsticks, against that which is not easily measurable, will come to be judged. I believe that if we are pushed in that direction, resistance will be strong and vociferous, but I also recognise that we have to be vigilantly aware of any subtle shifts that may begin to nudge us in that direction.

Strategy

Turning from policy to strategy, while the location of Learning Connections' national ALN team within a regeneration agency (Communities Scotland) does root literacies learning firmly within community contexts, it also creates a number of difficulties for the development and monitoring of work across the country. Communities Scotland's prime responsibility is for housing, as its objectives listed on its website illustrate (www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk). Learning Connections is one of two 'self contained units' (ibid) within the agency, and it is made up of three teams, of which adult literacy and numeracy is the smallest. Of the 500 staff employed by Communities Scotland, only 17 have an ALN remit for the whole of the country which suggests that it cannot have the highest of priorities within the agency as a whole. Furthermore, as an agency of government, its staff are civil servants bound by the strictures of government (Campbell, forthcoming) which limits their critical capacity as advisors and development workers.

Additionally, the siting of ALN within local authority community structures has led to a complex nexus of accounting and responsibility. Campbell (forthcoming) summarises the situation thus: The responsibility for youth work lies with the Scottish Executive Education Department [SEED], community work is the responsibility of the Scottish Executive Communities Department [SECD] where Communities Scotland is housed, and adult and continuing education is located in the Scottish

Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department [ETLLD]. No single department has ultimate responsibility therefore for the adult literacy and numeracy strategy, and as each has separate systems and criteria of accountability, staff on the ground can find themselves pulled in confusingly different directions by the imperatives of their different masters.

Practice

Moving from the strategic to the operational, I now want to question a common assumption about literacies work in Scotland. We frequently hear, and Learning Connections' ALN website affirms it, that Scotland has adopted a social practices model, but what do we mean by this? Whilst not wanting to appear unduly pedantic, 'adopted' can have two meanings in this context, and I have major concerns that they are used interchangeably. Let me explain. Adopted, in the sense that I believe Learning Connections intends it, refers to the fact that the social practices model is an ideal that we have embraced, that we aspire to and that we are working towards attaining. The alternative meaning suggests that we <u>have</u> taken it on board and it is reflected in practice throughout the country. The former is aspirational, the latter describes what is. In conversations at conferences, meetings, and in the ordinary course of work, I frequently hear the affirmation that 'we have adopted/use a social practices model', but then ongoing conversations about practice show that this is not the case. The danger here is that the adage becomes internalised; the assumption is made that the ideal has been attained and that therefore re-thinking practice is no longer necessary.

Given that the ALN policy was only launched in 2001 and that the first few years were spent building local and national infrastructures for the development of provision, it is hardly surprising that research about the social practices model in Scotland is only now beginning to surface in published research journals. However unpublished Masters' dissertations (Burns 2003, Hunter 2005, McGee 2005) and small scale postgraduate research reports, testify to the mixed, partial and at times total lack of understanding of the concept of literacies as social practices amongst ALN staff. Burns (2003) found in her interviews with practitioners, managers and development workers that though some of the participants had a clear grasp of the meaning and implications of social practices, *'many respondents had taken on the new*

language without fully appreciating its implications for practice' (p 49) and that *'people at all levels were confused about the social practices model'* (p38). They believed *'that provision should not be based on a deficit approach but were not able to detect the 'hidden' discourse of deficit that they were engaged in'* and though they talked of social practices, they believed that *'literacy was an individual problem that required individual solutions'* (p 49) which entailed 'topping up' functional skills to an acceptable level. For example, practitioners talked about needing *'to see what they [learners] can't do…..to plug the gaps'* (p31); one manager argued that *'sometimes you do need the deficit model* [to understand how learners could] *get topped up'* and another explained that in Scotland *'it's only up to intermediate level one,….. so we really are talking about the bottom rung'* (pp28-29).

Burns' conclusions that the concept of social practices was often not clearly understood, and that few respondents had a sense of what it implied for practice, were understandable given that the research was conducted only two years after the policy launch. However that similar findings are still evident in more resent research (Hunter 2005, McGee 2005) does indicate that it is the aspirational rather than descriptive form of 'adopted' that conveys where we stand, and this needs to be clearly articulated and understood in all levels and types of communication. So whilst being learner centred and starting where learners are at, are commendable (and good adult education practice for all learners), they do not *on their own* constitute a social practices model. They represent a good starting point only. Similarly though developing contextualised communicative skills is equally commendable and a part of what social practices implies, it is rare for example, to hear people talking about their literacies work as critical, and as a 'resource for acting back' against the world (Crowther, Hamilton and Tett, 2001). These few illustrative comments show that whilst we *are* working hard towards the normalisation of a social practices approach, we have not yet attained it and still have a long hard road to travel in order to do so. My understanding of literacies as social practices suggests that literacies provision and literacies learning should:

• Recognise, value and validate the wide range of literacies used by learners, as well as their expertise in them,
• Start from people's strengths and aspirations

not their weaknesses and perceived needs,
- Understand the significance of different literacies in contexts of practice,
- Recognise and build on the ways that people learn them informally in these contexts,
- Arise from and be embedded in relevant contexts of use,
- Recognise the different values, emotions and perspectives that are always and inevitably embedded in literacies use and literacies learning,
- Be open about the power dimensions of literacies and enable learners to exercise power through different literacies,
- Develop learners' critical capacities,
- Develop learners' meta-cognitive capabilities so that the leaning can be transferred and adapted in different contexts.

I wonder how many practitioners or managers would attest to having achieved such ambitious goals? I also wonder how comfortably this 'Communities of Practice' understanding of literacies fits with the universal adoption of Individual Learning Plans that foreground the individual rather than the social or collective nature of learning.

The research cited above all points to the need for more, and more challenging training and I fully support their recommendations. However other research evaluating the national strategy (Tett et al, 2006) shows that those who perhaps have most contact with learners, i.e. part time, short term contract and volunteer tutors, have least, or no access to ongoing training opportunities and frequently work in isolation from other tutor colleagues. The journey towards adoption as a description is likely to be long in such circumstances.

A further barrier to the full adoption (descriptive) of a social practices model in Scotland, is the structuring of the curriculum in further education colleges, where a substantial amount (though still a minority) of provision is located. The CAVSS (Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills) model (Bates, 2005) provides an excellent example of its de-stigmatised integration into vocational learning, but as Bates admits, *it is currently only operational in 'approximately ten different industry areas in a number of further education colleges across Scotland'* (p27). The norm is for students with assessed 'literacy needs' to be extracted from classes for specialist support which stigmatises them, separates the literacies from the vocational learning and epitomises all that has been discredited in the 'learn first, apply later' model of learning.

This discussion of the tensions and contradictions within which adult literacy and numeracy work in Scotland unfolds, could be extended to include for example, the role of formal assessments in measuring and comparing ALN achievement and levels; the importance of retaining the criteria of change, i.e. the wider benefits of learning as measures of success, but for the purpose of this article, the few examples above will have to suffice.

Guiding Lights
I am acutely aware that this 'other' glimpse of Scotland's adult literacy and numeracy work may paint a depressingly negative picture of activity north of the border and I do not intend this to be the case. There *is* much to celebrate, as Juliet's article and other writing affirm, and there are also some significant guiding lights that should keep the literacies train on the right track. The first of these is the LiC (Literacies in the Community: resources for practitioners and managers) pack. Was it serendipity or fortuitous manoeuvring that resulted in it being used in ALNIS as the benchmark for good practice? It matters not. The outcome is that the quality 'bible' unequivocally affirms a social practices approach to ALN teaching and learning, and constructs its benchmarks upon the premise that this should frame all aspects of provision. LiC also provides the criteria against which all provision in the 32 local authority partnerships is annually monitored and evaluated. A brief historical reflection is relevant here. We are fortunate in inheriting a tradition of ALN learning in Scotland that is community rather than institutionally based. And whilst this has in part contributed to its history of neglect, it has served to tie it in with the broader aims of community education and community development instead of the more institutional and vocationally oriented structures of further education colleges as it is in England. This positioning, together with the re-affirmation of a sense of Scottish identity that devolution fostered, opened up the possibility of doing things differently north of the border and building on the strengths of its historical alignment.

The second guiding light is the recently launched Curriculum Framework document. Its key sections guide practitioners through the principles, processes and examples of literacies learning, or, as the foreword says, 'the whats, hows and whys of literacies learning in Scotland today' (Scottish Executive, 2005, p 5). It does not prescribe; it does not determine content, but it does provide tutors with the tools and the

rationale behind them that will enable them to construct informed quality learning experiences in tandem with their learners and in accordance with the LiC principles.

The third is part guiding light, part support and development, and part jack of all trades. It is of course the Learning Connections Adult Literacy and Numeracy team. Notwithstanding the limitations discussed above, it has developed an array of training, support networks, conferences, guides and research/development projects in the space of a few years that are collectively putting flesh on the policy bones and encouraging innovative practices.

And the rest? The rest is the growing mass of managers, practitioners, partners and academics who recognise, or are coming to recognise what the vision means and the possibilities that it could open up for them. Some may never change old ways of thinking and working; some may try but not succeed, but once the critical mass has been attained, the new literacies converts should secure the footing of the 'remarkable' aspects of Scotland's ambitious policy.

Conclusion
We will never firmly secure these 'remarkable' aspects without open, honest and sometimes difficult debate, however. And this debate needs to go on and be heard at all different levels, with all our different partners. I am not suggesting that it does not happen. I know that it does at times, between partners subject to different systems of accountability, between neighbouring partnerships and between practitioners in the same and other organisations. I am suggesting, however, that we need more of it and that it needs a more public voicing. We need to talk openly about the contradictions in policy, how they pull us in different directions and what we can do about it individually and collectively. We need to continually examine what a social practices approach really means, to air our doubts, our uncertainties and our apprehensions about its full implications for practice, and all in a supportive context where there is no fear of censure. And of course we need the outcomes of these debates to be heard and be acted upon by those with the power to orchestrate change. My hope is that this reflective piece will open up some of these debates, or re-kindle them where they have started and have waned, and I trust that it will be read not as a negative criticism, but as a constructive critique that might make a very tiny contribution to the ongoing

development of policy and practice in adult literacies in Scotland. Will my optimism be well founded?

References
Armstrong, P (1982) The 'Needs-Meeting' Ideology in Liberal Adult Education. in, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. vol 1, no 4. pp 293-321

Avis, J. et al. (1996) *Knowledge and Nationhood: Education, Politics and Work* (London. Cassell).

Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (1998) *Local Literacies*, London: Routledge.

Bates, S. (2005) Integrating literacies: the CAVSS approach. in *Reflect*. Issue 4, October, pp26-27.

Burns, T. (2003) *The Meaning and Nature of Literacies in Scotland*. MSc dissertation (unpublished), Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow.

Campbell, E (forthcoming) *Is the Policy Working? Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* (working title). unsubmitted PhD thesis. Glasgow, University of Glasgow.

Coffield, F. (1999) Breaking the Consensus: Lifelong Learning as Social Control. *British Educational Research Journal*. Vol 25, No 4, pp 479 - 499.

Field, J. (2000) *Lifelong Learning and the New Educational Order*. Stoke on Trent, Trentham

Glasgow City Council (2006) *Learning and Growing: Glasgow Community Learning Strategy Partnership, Longitudinal Research*. Glasgow. Glasgow City Council.

Hamilton, M. Macrae, C. & Tett, L. (2001) Powerful Literacies: the policy context, in Crowther J, Hamilton M, and Tett L, *Powerful Literacies*, Leicester, NIACE.

Hunter, K. (2005) *Group Learning in Adult Literacy*. MSc dissertation (unpublished), Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow.

Keep, E, (2003) Visioning the Future High Skills For All or a Two-Tier Labour Market? *Scottish Forum on Lifelong Learning Forum Report No. 10*. Glasgow, centre for research in lifelong learning.
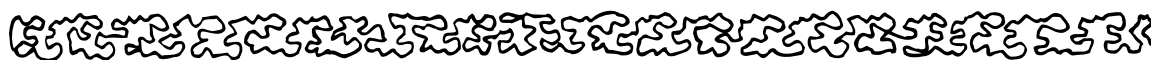
Leavey, J. (2005) Adult Literacies: the Scottish approach. in *Reflect*. Issue 4, October, pp22-24.

McAlindon, A. (2005) The Curriculum framework for Scotland: the wheel. in *Reflect*. Issue 4, October, pp24-25.

McGee, C. (2005) *How Do adult literacy practitioners working within the Scottish adult literacy system conduct initial assessment?* MSc dissertation (unpublished), Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow.

Merrifield, J. (2005) Why England should look North for inspiration. in *Reflect*. Issue 4, October, pp 20-22.

Scottish Executive (2001) *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland*. Edinburgh. Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive & City of Edinburgh Council (2000) *Literacies in the Community: resources for practitioners and managers*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive and the City of Edinburgh Council.

Scottish Executive & Communities Scotland (2005) *An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland*, Edinburgh: Communities Scotland.

Street B (1984) *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Tett, L., Hall, S. Maclachlan, K., Thorpe, G. Edwards, V. and Garside, L. (2006) *Evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy Initiative*, Scottish Executive
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/0 3/20102141/0

Lizard dressed as lamb? A cautionary reading of the discourse of the Scottish Adult Literacies Initiative
Aileen Ackland

Aileen is a lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen where she specialises in CPD for adult educators. Her career has encompassed a diverse portfolio of literacies work in which she gained experience of most sectors of Scottish education, formal and informal. She can be contacted at a.ackland@abdn.ac.uk

This article arises out of ongoing research into the discourse of professional development in the contemporary Scottish Adult Literacies field. Using the research framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2003), my research explores 'how discourse figures within processes of change' (ibid, 205) as the implementation of new policy in Adult Literacies in Scotland impacts on practice and practitioners.

I see discourse as a shifting representation of social reality, both a cause and an effect of ideological change. CDA assumes that language is inherent to social life and, as a cultural tool, can establish, sustain or change power relations in social networks. CDA offers a checklist of aspects of 'text' that can be investigated and provides tools for linguistic analysis.

My work exploits the techniques of CDA to examine the language of key Scottish policy documents and a range of written and oral material generated by stakeholders in the Initiative. Written texts employed include local literacies partnerships plans and reports. In addition, I am undertaking a series of ninety minute long 'dialogues' with people who work in the adult literacies field in Scotland. The dialogues are recorded and the transcriptions used to create additional 'text ', in an attempt to capture how people are discussing change informally as well as in formal written artefacts. I believe this to be a significant dimension of discourse, the analysis of which can provide an insight into how the identities and positions projected in the rhetoric of policy are adopted, adapted or resisted. Thus far, all the research material (other than national documents) has come from North East Scotland, where I am based. I have engaged in 6 dialogues with individual adult literacies workers. Selected to represent the variety of organisations and contexts in the local field, all are people who have a paid role that includes the support and development of adult literacies tutors.

Stating my position
All discourse analysis is partial and has a pretext (Widdowson, 2004, 103). This text provides one interpretation of the research 'texts' and their implications, with the purpose of presenting a

perspective on the tensions in the Scottish situation.

This text has been created from the point of view of a practitioner who has been engaged in literacies work for many years and who embraces the 'new literacies' as a theoretical position consistent with my commitment to the social justice objectives of education.   I arrive at this position by way of a decade of 'juggling for a living' (Sellers, 1998) as a tutor, and with the belief that I have benefited from the diversity of experience and freedom to experiment afforded me by a loosely-regulated field.   I am committed to the necessity of developing our understandings and our practice of adult literacies learning, but believe that new understandings of the ecology of literacies and learning require congruent professional developmental processes. Instead of aspiring to traditional hierarchical models of 'professional status', I believe we should be working together, drawing on anthropological understandings of learning in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), to capitalise on diverse contributions through trust and encouragement, and towards innovation rather than standardisation.

Background
The Scottish Adult Literacies initiative has been described as a 'grand experiment.' (Merrifield, 2005, 22) At the outset Maclachlan and Cloonan signalled 'a moment of opportunity' (2003, 127). Such effusive language projects an irresistible image of indomitable, pioneering Scots and most of what has been written in the public domain has celebrated our good fortune; much less has been said of our struggle.

I believe literacies workers in Scotland *have* embraced change and strive for practice congruent with a social practices model of literacies. In common with colleagues elsewhere, and in other sectors of education, we operate, however, in a conflicted field. I want to try here to make tangible some of the competing projects. This article is not an attempt to unmask a malign agency at the centre; instead it attends to a dynamic of which we are all a part.

Discourse and power
Critical discourse analysis is concerned 'with the radical changes that are taking place in contemporary social life; in how discourse figures within processes of change' (Fairclough, 2003, 205). Such an investigation can expose 'the polymorphous techniques of power' (Foucault, 1998, 11).

 'Power is not simply the glue that holds the social together...but the processes that generate and enable any form of social action…in this sense power, while certainly constraining is also enabling' (Barker and Galanski, 2001, 25).

Influenced in particular by the work of Michel Foucault (1977; 1979; 1998), I understand power to act through the many capillaries of the social fabric rather than through hierarchical channels. Power is productive; control is exerted not by repression but by the normalisation of certain attitudes, behaviours and beliefs through discursive practices. This pastoral form of governance 'enables individuals to actively participate in disciplinary regimes through investing their own identity, subjectivities and desires with those ascribed to them by certain knowledgeable discourses' (Usher and Edwards, 1998, 215).

Hybrid discourses
Maclachlan and Cloonan noted that 'the language within which the [Scottish] policy is couched suggests that the vision that drives it sympathises with the theoretical paradigm that constructs literacies as a relative, socially situated set of practices' (2003, 127). I agree with their attention to text but suggest that the rhetoric may act more as a trojan horse, concealing in its hybridity of discourse the dangerous with the benign.

 ' Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, …[they] do not only represent the world as it is, they are also projective…and tied into projects to change the world in particular directions' (Fairclough, 2003, 124).

If we examine the text of the initial policy document - The Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) report (2001) - for the language of distinct discourses, we find a juxtaposition of the jargon of different social projects. The discourse of social practices is indeed evident:

 ' Literacy and numeracy are skills whose sufficiency may only be judged within a specific social, cultural, economic or political context' (p.7);

as is a discourse of lifelong learning which encourages development irrespective of age, stage or level:

'… a lifelong learning approach which focuses more attention on the interplay between demands and opportunities that trigger and maintain voluntary participation' (p. 14);

but there is also a vociferous discourse of 'managerialism' (Ball, 2005, 6) with its emphasis on holding to account those in receipt of public funds by means of targets, measurement and outputs:

'A rigorous system of quality assurance should be promoted by making available a set of performance indicators applicable to all sectors' (p. 34).

Ball considers management and performativity to be 'the ugly sisters of reform... they dispense the twin disciplines of evidence and imperative…they are bitter, unforgiving, and tireless, and impossible to satisfy' (2005, 7). The apparent reasonableness of the language of performativity - who would dare be *un*accountable, or endorse *bad* practice - obfuscates its power to enforce compliance to disembodied criteria.

Having examined the key documents that have figured in the Scottish Initiative (see Glossary) for the juxtaposition of language associated with these different discourses, I suggest this managerialist discourse is dominating and recontextualising the more radical discourses of social practices and lifelong learning. Recontextualisation involves 'the appropriation of elements of one social practice within another, placing the former within the context of the latter, and transforming it in particular ways in the process' (Fairclough, 2003, 32). So, for example, the section in ALNIS headed 'A system that *leams*' (my emphasis) (p.33) actually introduces processes of management, not development e.g.:

• *Cross sectoral standards applied*
• *All providers subject to quality assurance processes*
• *The development of performance and progress indicators*
• *Ongoing programme of inspections and reviews (HMIe)*
• *Comprehensive review of progress against targets*

The two agendas are not compatible. There is mounting evidence from other sectors that an audit culture diverts professional resource and paradoxically reduces the quality of experience of the learners (Armstrong, 2000, 2; Etherington, 2006; Henderson, 2006). The current trend towards managing performance in education by means of measurement against targets is likely to inhibit risk taking, honest self-evaluation and therefore genuine breakthrough learning (Ozga, 2003). Post-structuralist theories of knowledge, such as social practice literacies, change the relationship of knower and learner, fundamentally challenging the foundations of educational institutions. Such a radical shift requires us to respond with innovation, improvisation and creativity, to experiment with approaches with *un*certain outputs.

Despite the radical shift in theoretical perspective alluded to in ALNIS, Section 4.3.2 (p 36) of that document, headed 'Raising expertise through improved training and development', again concentrates on processes of standardisation rather than change: *'Development of a professional qualification in teaching adult literacy and numeracy…is required to create a high quality professional level of service delivery across all sectors*.'

The *Benchmark Statements* (Learning Connections, 2005a) subsequently devised for the proposed professional qualification - Teaching Qualification: Adult Literacies (TQAL) - exhibit a fusion of conflicted discourses e.g.:

'…one of the measures which the Scottish Executive has introduced to encourage the development of a confident and professional workforce to deliver high-quality services to adult literacies learners.' (p. i)

The words '*encourage', 'development'* and *'confident*' are language associated with a developmental purpose there is a qualitative difference between a 'confident' as opposed to 'competent' professional. They contrast sharply with the forceful imagery of the following sentence:

'This is an important step forward in **driving up** *quality in the adult literacies field'* (p. i)

This statement is more consistent with a deficit model of professional development and carries with it an implicit assumption that quality is currently low.

The following sentence introduces quite another agenda:

'In order for adult literacies teaching and learning to be recognised as a legitimate, specialist area and therefore have the prerequisites to be recognised as an area of professionalism, the need for a Teaching Qualification: Adult Literacies… is pressing' (p. 5).

The need to enclose professional turf to ensure its exclusivity and, thus, status is not new (Bourdieu, 1979; Eraut, 1994, 165) - the narrative of professionalism has always included an element of self-interest (Humes, 1986) - but it is, I contend, in conflict with a social practices approach to literacies which emphasises the ubiquity of literacies issues and recognises the need for comprehensive support networks. In the contemporary 'open moorland' of adult learning, professional defensiveness is 'misplaced' (Usher et al, 1997, 27).

I do not have space here to expand on the discourses of professionalism; suffice to say that 'professionalism' is a contested concept (Humes, 1986; Bottery, 1998; Goodson, 2003; Hargreaves, 2003; Sachs, 2003; Ball, 2005) and is invoked for diverse and sometimes conflicting purposes. A call for greater professionalism carries with it implicit demands on those aspiring to nomination. As these writers have suggested, the expectation of audit has replaced an earlier assumption of autonomy in the notion of the 'professional'. The significance of accountability in new conceptions of the 'professional' creates a site of conflict in which part-time workers and volunteers may struggle to protect the things which attracted them to the work in the first place; for example, their control of their own portfolio of jobs and their freedom to develop their own interests and curricula. As Jan Sellers demonstrates in her chapter on the working lives of women adult education tutors (1998, 142-151), Adult Literacies has benefited in the past from the creative efforts of those who were marginal to the system. Part-time tutors often act as brokers between institutions, introducing ideas from one into another. Increasing demands on, and control of part-time staff and volunteers, an implication of the 'professionalisation' agenda, risks 'killing the innovative goose that lays educational golden eggs' (Groves, 2005, 26).

Eraut argues that qualifications based on the notion of a professional 'standard' are incompatible with a lifelong learning approach: 'It is inherent in the concept of a qualification: somebody is qualified or is not qualified.' (Eraut, 1994, 215). In contrast to the gatekeeping

language of the TQAL benchmarks, the *Literacies in the Community* (LiC) pack (National Development Project, 2000), an early key document in the Scottish initiative, emphasised the ongoing nature of professional development and the necessity of a range of appropriate types and levels of professional development process.

The response of practitioners
The tensions between the values within this hybrid discourse are felt by practitioners. One adult literacies tutor/organiser (A) expressed her frustration in the following terms:

'they're telling students that it's about distance travelled, it's not about getting bits of paper and then they turn around and say to tutors 'but you have to have this bit of paper'...there's HUGE contradictions ...it's like 'do as I say but not as I do'.'

In our dialogue she gave examples of what she saw as 'contradictions': the use of training and qualifications as quality assurance evidence rather than for the development of tutors' expertise; the use of terminology (e.g *teaching* qualification) that seems to align adult literacies tutors with mainstream teachers and their methods; the obligation to acquire specific specialist qualifications in a partnership culture that promotes shared approaches rather than discrete roles: '*I can't do everyone's qualifications!*'

One of the most striking features of the language of the dialogues is the extent to which people use the pronoun 'they' to refer to a nameless authority that is regulating their practice. When asked who 'they' are, respondents become uncertain. The demands are experienced as incontestable:

'we've been told we have to do ITALL... we've all been told... every one's been told you must have this qualification' (dialogue with B)

but it is unclear just where the directive emanates from and with what authority it is actually invested.

Sometimes, the directive is attributed to *Learning Connections* (see glossary). The stated role of *Learning Connections* is to 'support' and 'promote' (Learning Connections, 2005b). As civil servants, *Learning Connections* cannot enforce.

Yet 'it is increasingly the perception that Learning Connections is reinventing the agenda nationally and imposing it on partnerships' (partnership end year report, 2004). In one of the dialogues, we discussed the fact that the minutes of a literacies partnership meeting had had to be amended to delete the incorrect attribution of a directive with respect to training to *Learning Connections*.

The necessity of qualifications is a consistent theme. The words 'had to', 'have to', or, with respect to TQAL, 'will have to' recur throughout the dialogues. These verb phrases express not just necessity, but obligation. They suggest an internalisation of the imperative.

When the imperative is questioned, arguments tend to draw on the concept of 'professional' with the underlying assumption that the term brings with it an obligation of formal accreditation, and that to deny such a requirement would be *un*professional; the antonym is usually unspoken but its power implied in the taken-for-granted desire to be professional.

Goodson (2003, 125-126) offers a clarification of the terms 'professionalization' and 'professionalism': the professionalization project is 'the pursuit of status and resources for an occupational group'. Professionalism, on the other hand involves 'teachers' definitions of their peer group practices, their best ways of pursuing the art and craft of teaching.' Sometimes the two projects are consistent with one another and sometimes not (ibid, 126).

The introduction of national qualifications in Scotland has created a context in which these projects compete. For instance, we are told the PDA: ITALL (see glossary) '... is intended for tutors new to adult literacies and has been developed to prepare candidates to work as tutor assistants.' (Learning Connections, 2003, 2) Yet in some areas in Scotland, all adult literacies workers, including the most experienced tutors and managers, are required to achieve this basic certificate. For some, there is a tension here between their values with respect to 'their best ways of pursuing' professional development and the purposes of accreditation as part of a professionalization agenda.

The requirement for all literacies workers to undertake this qualification does not, however, appear in any of the policy documents or official correspondence to partnerships.

A chain link fence?

If the directive is not contained within the text of any single document perhaps instead it is the discursive effect of the interrelationship of one text with another. Each of the following texts (see glossary for more information) form a link in the chain of the dialogue between 'the field' and the centralised policy makers in Scotland:

- Literacies in the Community resource pack
- ALNIS report (and other branded reports)
- Directions to local authorities
- Partnership action plans and annual reporting templates
- Evaluation of action plans and reports
- Partnership procedures - funding bids
- PDA ITALL
- Curriculum framework
- TQAL Benchmarks
- HMIe inspection report
- Learning Connections' annual reports

As Fairclough suggests, this 'chain' can have effects beyond the impact of any single text:

'Discourses which are drawn upon in one genre may be 'filtered out' in the movement to another, so that the genre chain works as a regulative device for selecting and privileging some discourses and excluding others' (Fairclough, 2003, 34).

Let's take, for example, the way in which the *Literacies in the Community (LiC)* pack has metamorphosed through the chain. The pack was entitled '*Resources* (my emphasis) for practitioners and managers' (2000) and its genre reinforced by the ring binder format. In ALNIS it had become 'A cross sectoral set of *standards*' (2001, 33) and in the recent HMIe report it is described as a 'tool for *quality assurance*' (2005, exec summary p.vi). This discursive shift from a developmental purpose to one of accountability is achieved not just by statements of intent but by the introduction of managerial artefacts such as funding criteria and reporting mechanisms e.g.:

'Each agency that receives an adult literacies funding allocation is obliged to carry out the self evaluation as described in the LiC pack. Each agency is required to develop and maintain a portfolio of evidence for each of the relevant quality framework elements' (Local partnership action plan 2004 2006)

'Issues for attention: universal use of LiC process' (Evaluation of local partnership end year report, 2004)

One explanation of the comprehensive approach to ITALL accreditation was that 'training targets *had to* be met' (dialogue with C). The 2005 newsletter of one local partnership notes amongst its achievements: 'Increased number of literacies tutors trained to national standards'.

Perhaps here we witness 'the peculiar elusiveness of performativity' (Ball, 2005, 9). The accreditation of all field staff, irrespective of their stage of development, by means of a single prescriptive training course (PDA: ITALL) has been self-imposed out of a desire to validate themselves and their work using the only measure available. The self-evaluation processes inscribed in the LiC pack have been imposed on partners *by* partners by means of agreed project funding criteria. Assimilating definitions of good practice never agreed to in the first place (remember it was only a 'resource'), these definitions now constrain what is and is not considered appropriate for partners to do in their diverse practices.

Summarising Foucault's theory of the mechanisms of governance, Usher et al highlight the crucial role of self regulation:

> *'Government is about the means of marshalling resources in order to know more about a population, to subject it to an all encompassing gaze and to have it keep a watchful eye on itself"* (1997, 58).

As they suggest, we contribute to the control of practice by our acceptance and operation of codifications which break down the ineffable qualities of 'good practice' into analysable and therefore assessable components. Even apparently autonomous forms such as self-evaluation and reflective practice are means by which we discipline ourselves within the 'normalising gaze' (Foucault, 1977). By conforming to expectations that have become 'taken for granted', such as the need for self-evaluation and the production of evidence of our outputs, 'we are all partial authors of the current 'truths' of our practice' (Usher et al 1997, 59).

Returning to text, we can see the beginnings of a similar process of transmutation taking place with the recently published *Curriculum Framework* (Scottish Executive, 2005)*.* The framework claims to explore principles rather than prescribe particular approaches. The introduction (p. 7) states:

'We hope it will be useful for
• Tutors - to *stimulate reflection* about their work
• Managers - to *introduce wider possibilities* for organising provision
• Workers in all sectors, to *promote discussion* about how adult literacy and numeracy are learned and taught.'

The words I have emphasised are in tune with a discourse of development. But when the framework is referred to in *Learning Connections'* end of year report, this has been superseded by a discourse of managerialism in which they propose to 'Develop roll-out training and progress indicators to support the implementation of the curriculum framework' (Learning Connections, 2005b, 21). I find it hard to see how a framework that promotes processes of reflection, creativity and discussion can be *'rolled-out'*, *'implemented'* and measured. As Armstrong points out, the precision of 'performance indicators' is particularly apt for manufacturing industries but 'less appropriate for service or people processing industries, including education' (2000, 10).
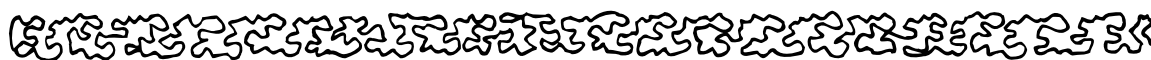
An emphasis on measurement characterises the most recent documents in the chain:

> *'More focused monitoring of learners' progress and achievement is now needed to enable quantification of the specific literacy gains across the large group of learners and to provide assurance that the national initiative is having the effect that Ministers intended'* (HMIe, 2005, iii).

Why? Even a cursory linguistic analysis of the following extract begins to ring alarm bells:

> *'This deficiency in assessment practice made it difficult to measure the levels of achievement of individuals, and to quantify improved possibilities for progression provided by literacies learning. Consequently, the overall extent of the gains in specific literacies competence of the Scottish population as an outcome of the Ministerial initiative cannot be established with confidence'* (ibid, 10).

'This deficiency' the use of the definite article

assumes that the deficiency is proven and agreed; *'assessment practice'* - what is the nature of *the* assessment practice? *'made it difficult'* - for whom? *'measure the levels of achievement of individuals'* - the shadow of an autonomous model of literacies looms - *'the gains in specific literacies'* - and falls. And finally, the purpose of such measurement? *'to establish with confidence the outcome of the Ministerial Initiative.'* Whose 'project' is this?

In a culture of perfomativity, work that is not statistically visible is not effective professional 'performance' and thus valueless: 'Effectiveness only exists when it is measured and demonstrated' (Ball, 2005, 5). The personal testimonies of 'changed lives' of the title of the HMIe report (2005) are insufficient.

Inevitably each of the social organisations within literacies, such as HMIe, operate within their own paradigm and bring to the discourse their own projects. But let us pause for a moment and think how far we have shifted from the rhetoric of the commitment to a radical social practices model and a system that promised to learn from the ground up. Coffield's comment on the difficulties of implementing the implications of a recognition of informal learning could equally be applied to social practice literacies:

> *'There is a strong tendency for policy makers, researchers and practitioners to admit readily the importance of informal learning and then proceed to develop policy, theory and practice without further reference to it'* (2000, 2).

As Williamson observes 'education systems function more effectively to reproduce social orders than to challenge them. Lifelong learning is a radical idea but it is equally in danger of doing the same' (Williamson, 1998, 29).

The language and the effects of the genre chains are pernicious:

> *'The language of management deploys rationality and efficiency to promote control; it is a regime of 'jurisdiction' and 'veridiction'. As a discourse, it eschews or marginalises the problems, concerns, difficulties, and fears of the 'subject' - the managed'* (Ball, 1990, 157).

The powerful discourse of managerialism takes for granted, for example, that literacies assessment practice in a new theoretical context

is straightforward. It does not fully acknowledge the problems faced by Scottish adult literacies practitioners as they strive to develop assessment practice congruent with learner-led social practices.

Partnerships are compelled to struggle with accountability measures and targets that they do not believe capture the quality of the work they do:

> *' the framework does not allow the partnerships to describe the successes and developments in a way which is meaningful'* (Consultant's evaluation comments on partnership end year report 2004)

The rhetoric of 'professionalisation' ignores the fears of practitioners (like A) that the qualifications they are required to undertake may be of little value, either developmentally or financially.
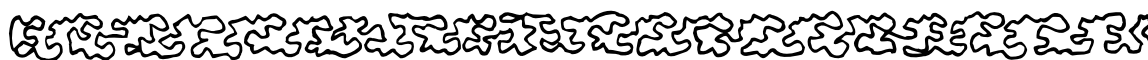
Opening up the spaces for resistance
Power operates in complex ways, however; the effects are not as predictable as it might seem.

> *'There is always some competition for the use of resources, particularly for professionals' time, and there will usually be some conflict between accountability measures which reflect the interests of different stakeholders. Hence the effect of any set of accountability measures on the balance of priorities has to be carefully studied. It rarely reflects the original intentions'* (Eraut, 1994, 240).

As A said of the regulatory approach to PDA: ITALL:

> *'y'know the government think they're getting a good deal but they're not...it comes back to the question who gets the benefit from what they're doing? It doesn't benefit them [tutors] y'know and the government's actually not going to get what they want either coz it's about ticking boxes...'*

The managerial discourse in education may be becoming 'enacted' in Adult Literacies in Scotland but it is not yet 'inculcated' (Fairclough, 2003, 9). Its accommodation is proving uncomfortable. But if it is not to pervert our purposes we need to be more aware of the

tensions, inconsistencies and contradictions, and potential sites of resistance. It is not sufficient to place our faith in the power of good intentions (Edwards, 1997, 21). As Gee (2003) warns, the language of radical social theories can be recruited to differing political aims; the work of new literacy studies must include the work of 'enaction' and 'recognition' - the analysis and use of language to negotiate, advocate and resist the projects of diverse interest groups.

My title was deliberately provocative. I hope I made my position clear. I have selected contrasting text to present an argument that other political aims may be in conflict with the principles I invested in social practice literacies theory. My purpose is to contribute to the discourse with this text and to encourage a dialogue about the threat to a radical theoretical position from the dominance of a managerial discourse which focuses our practice on the information which feeds the perfomance indicators and may be redefining our professionalism in ways which are at odds with peer notions of best practice. With such a dialogue, with the conscious work of 'enaction and recognition' advocated by Gee (2003), I am hopeful that we can exploit the spaces for resistance and reclaim our 'grand experiment'.

References

Armstrong, P. (2000) 'Never Mind the Quality, Measure the Length: Issues for Lifelong Learning' www.open.ac.uk/lifelong-learning [12/02/06]

Ball, S. (2005) 'Education reform as social barberism: economism and the end of authenticity' in *Scottish Educational Review* Volume 37 Number 1 May 2005 pp. 4-16

Barker C. and Galanski D. (2001) *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A dialogue on Language and Identity* London, Sage

Bottery, M. (1998) *Professionals and Policy* London, Cassell

Bourdieu, P. (1979) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press

Coffield, F. (ed) (2000) *The necessity of Informal Learning* Bristol The Policy Press

Edwards, R. (1997*) Changing Places? Flexibility, lifelong learning and a learning society* London, Routledge

Eraut, M. (1994) *Developing Professional Knowledge and Competence* London, Falmer

Etherington, N. (2006) 'Quality Regimes in the Scottish Further Education Sector' University of Strathclyde

Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing Discourse* Oxon, Routledge

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* Hammondsworth, Penguin

Foucault, M. (1979) *On Governmentality, Ideology and Consciousness*, 6 (1), 5-22

Foucault M (1998) *History of Sexuality Volume 1 The Will to Knowledge* London, Penguin

Gee. J, (2003) 'The New Literacy Studies and the 'Social Turn'' http://wwschools.ash.org.au/litweb/page300.html [21/03/05]

Goodson, I. (2003) *Professional Knowledge, Professional Lives* Berkshire, Open University Press

Groves, B. (2005) 'Ten years at the whiteboard' in *Adults Learning* Volume 17 Number 6 pp26-27

Gubrium, J. and Holstein, J. (eds) (2003) *Postmodern Interviewing* London, Sage

Hargreaves, A. (2003) *Teaching in the Knowledge Society* Berkshire, Open University Press

Henderson, N. (2006) 'Teacher revolt on pupil targets' *Times Educational Supplement* 17/02/06

HM Inspectorate of Education (2005) *Changing Lives: Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* Livingston, HM Inspectorate of Education

Humes, W. (1986) *The Leadership Class in Scottish Education* Edinburgh, John Donald

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* New York, Cambridge University Press

Learning Connections (2003) *SQA Professional Development Award: Introduction to Adult Literacies Learning* Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Learning Connections (2005a) *Benchmark Statements for the Teaching Qualification: Adult Literacies* Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Learning Connections (2005b) *Report on the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy strategy 2004-2005* Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Maclachlan, K. and Cloonan, M. (2003) 'Three Dimensional Change? The Relationship Between Theory, Policy and Adults' Understanding of Literacies' *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* Volume 8 Number 1 pp 123-136

Merrifield, J. (2005) 'Why England should look North for inspiration' in *Reflect* Issue 4 October 2005

National Development Project Adult Literacies in Scotland (2000) *Literacies in the community resources for practitioners and managers* Edinburgh, City of Edinburgh Council

Ozga, J. (2003) 'Measuring & Managing Performance in Education', Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh *Briefing* No 27 February 2003 http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/PDF%20Files/Brief027.pdf

Sachs, J. (2003) *The Activist Teaching Profession* Berkshire, Open University Press

Scottish Executive (2001) *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2005) *An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum framework for Scotland* Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Sellers, J. (1998) 'Juggling for a living' in Benn, R.; Elliott. J. and Whaley, P.(eds) *Educating Rita and her sisters* Leicester, NIACE

Usher, R.; Bryant, I. and Johnston, R. (1997) *Adult Education and the Post modern Challenge* London, Routledge

Usher, R. and Edwards, R. (1998) *Postmodernism and Education* London, Routledge

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Widdowson, H. G. (2004) *Text, Context, Pretext: Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis* Oxford, Blackwell Publishing

Williamson, B. (1998) *Lifeworlds and learning: essays in the theory, philosophy and practice of lifelong learning* Leicester, NIACE

Glossary

ALNIS	*Adult literacy and Numeracy in Scotland Report (2001)* This report set out the Scottish Executive strategy for Adult Literacies. It forms the basis of the new Initiative.
Curriculum Framework	*An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Framework for Scotland (2005)* This is not a prescriptive curriculum framework, but 'a reference manual for the whats, hows and whys of literacies learning in Scotland today'.
HMIE Inspection Report	*Changing Lives: Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland A report by HM Inspectorate of Education (2005).* This report contributed to the review of progress of the Initiative after the first three years.
Learning Connections	Learning Connections is part of Communities Scotland, The Scottish Executive's housing and community regeneration agency. Its remit is to support the implementation of the Executive's strategy.
LiC Pack	*Literacies in the Community Resources for practitioners and managers* (2000) This ring binder pack was devised by the National Development team and was the first artefact of the Initiative. It was circulated as a resource pack to encourage reflection on practice within a new theoretical paradigm. It quickly became used as a tool for the self-evaluation increasingly required of organisations.
Local Literacies Partnerships	Funding for the Initiative was directed to partnerships in each local authority area. Typically, partnerships include representation from local authority community learning services, FE colleges, voluntary sector adult education organisations, libraries. Partnerships must account for the funding they receive by means of annual action plans and reports which are then evaluated by consultants contracted by the Executive. Each partnership has devised its own procedures to allocate and track funding to individual agencies.
PDA ITALL	*Professional Development Award: Introduction to Adult Literacies Learning (2003)* This Scottish Qualifications Authority award was the first specialist qualification to be introduced in Scotland. It was intended as introductory training for tutor assistants and is at level 6 in the SCQF framework.
TQAL	*Teaching Qualification: Adult Literacies* This qualification was proposed in the ALNIS Report and Benchmark Statements were published in 2005 as guidelines for HE/FE institutions developing the course.

Debates in ESOL Teaching & Learning: Culture, communities and classrooms,
Kathy Pitt, Routledge 2005

Reviewed for RaPAL by Linda Pearce who is a Research Associate at Lancaster University

I first encountered the material discussed in this fascinating book as a part of my 'Continuous Professional Development' on the distance learning MA in Adult Literacy, Numeracy & ESOL run by Lancaster University. At this point I was teaching ESOL in a Family Learning context working largely with asylum seekers and refugees. I had completed a TEFL course whilst working with these families, as there was no ESOL specific teacher training in our region at that time and I felt the need to learn more to support my practice.

The first thing that struck me about Kathy's approach to the subject was the way she structures the book itself. Whilst each topic area presents relevant theoretical perspectives relating to teaching and learning in the ESOL context, these are then focused through both guided readings and then practical activities that are rooted back into practice. Not only practice in the language learning classroom, but practice that recognises the socially situated nature of language learning in the lives of learners living in many and varied cultures and communities.

A pertinent example of this can be found in the chapter on 'The Good Language Learner: Changing Definitions' (2005: 40). The first part of this chapter gives an overview of research to date in this area and of the predominant focus, which has been on 'the characteristics of individuals who are learning the language' (2005: 40). It then goes on to highlight that there are current debates over 'Cognitive and social research perspectives' (2005: 40). These debates are then explored in Norton and Toohey's reading, which contains 2 case studies of learners (2005: 42). We are given a question, which encourages us to reflect on the experiences of these learners both in and outside of the classroom, as we read. It is this theoretical discussion linked both to reflection on the experience of real people and to the discussion of classroom practice that brings this book alive.

I would also like to say that the content of this book has been relevant to my changing role within the Adult Basic Education field. It has contributed significantly to my professional development and understanding whilst teaching and subsequently has provided a valuable resource in supporting my more recent roles in both educational research and as a teacher trainer.

From a research perspective it provides an introduction to the different approaches that have been and are being taken in investigating the processes of learning English for adults who are speakers of other languages. As a researcher involved in interviewing students in varied settings, the insights gained have helped provide a framework for understanding the broader contexts of learning and with developing a culturally sensitive approach. As a teacher educator it provides both critical awareness and a forum for debate when considering the Level 4 subject specifications and gives ideas for practical activities that can be used, extended or developed in this learning setting.

The range of issues discussed and illustrated give much food for thought, stimulation for practice and perhaps most importantly a deeper understanding of the many and varied cultures and communities our learners are drawn from and participate in.

This book is not a quick read, but it is written accessibly and can be dipped into as a resource, which given most Adult Educators and Teacher Trainer's demanding lifestyles is a valuable asset.

Outside the classroom: researching literacy with adult learners
Edited by Ellayne Fowler and Jane Mace, NIACE 2005

Reviewed for RaPAL By Hilary Farrer, Basic Skills & ICT Tutor with the Croftlands Trust (a charity supporting people with severe and enduring mental ill-health)

This book has stemmed from the editors setting an assignment for teachers who were participating in the Level 4 training for literacy teachers, a report on literacy as a social practice and its implication for adult literacy teaching and learning, illustrated by a case study. These reports are not included in the book, but some interesting, thought-provoking case studies are. I found it very easy to become involved in these case studies and wished at times I could ask my

own questions of these learners.

The case studies were taken from interviews and, in some instances, the learners' own pen portraits over a period of time, with the teachers meeting up to discuss their findings, which prompted further questioning. Some of the teachers followed up this work by visiting the learners' everyday environment. For example, one learner collected her parents' pension at her local post office, the teacher visited the post office to find out what this would involve and, by exploring the locality, identified many examples of literacy in the environment.

Besides the case studies there is a discussion of how this research informs practice. Again I found this thought provoking, with ideas that I could take into the classroom. It also made me question some of my own practices as a literacy teacher. My first career was a secretary, so I have very set ideas as to how letters should be set out. Now I have a collection of letters with a variety of layouts, my literacy group can discuss these and decide which they prefer for writing a letter. My learners no longer have the anxiety of whether they have set out a letter correctly and they can concentrate of the actual writing.

There is also a very useful appendix setting out the guidance the teachers received to help them to carry out the research for these case studies. I feel this would be useful to both teacher trainers and trainee teachers, not only on literacy courses but on numeracy and ESOL courses that require case studies as part of the assessment procedure.

This is an easy book to read. It's a resource that should be part of all professional development bookshelves and would be useful for trainee literacy teachers in provoking discussions on literacy as a social practice.

✂ Writing Guidelines ✂
Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

This is an invitation to anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share their ideas, practice and evidence with RaPAL readers. The RaPAL network includes approximately two hundred managers, practitioner researchers, researchers, tutors, students and librarians in adult, further and higher education in the UK. It also has overseas members in Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

The RaPAL network produces a journal three times a year - winter, spring and summer-for contributions linking research and practice. RaPAL welcomes articles, reviews, reports, commentaries, letters and cartoons which reflect the range of activities and interests of those involved in this field. By writing for this network you will have the opportunity to refine your ideas and disseminate to the field.
For RaPAL, research involves asking questions, trying to answer them, asking other people, recording what they say, developing ideas, changing them, and writing and sharing ideas in many different ways. We think that these processes should be open to students and tutors as well as to paid researchers. They often underpin the day- to- day reflective and evaluative work of practitioners but are not usually recognised as research activity.

We would like to develop our connections with the vibrant research and practice dialogue happening in Canada. Tannis Atkinson, editor of *Literacies*, hopes to attend the RaPAL 2006 Conference in Glasgow. Tannis is committed to supporting literacy practitioners to write about their work. She conducts workshops across Canada that lead participants through a series of activities where they reflect on literacy work. Using collage and different forms of writing, literacy workers explore some of the excitement, pain, and frustration of their practice. You can check out some of the writing and collages from these workshops at http://www.literacyjournal.ca/cwpages/nbCALNconf2005.htm. We hope you will have the chance to meet Tannis in Glasgow in June and experience one of her writing workshops.

Journal Structure
We have decided to retain the three-section structure introduced in 2002-3, as a means of addressing the emerging needs in this field:

1. Ideas for teaching
Descriptive and reflective pieces on teaching and learning to meet the needs of current teachers in this field. The contributions must demonstrate democratic practice.

2. Developing Research and Practice
An open-ended category for a varied range of contributions. We want to include articles which show people trying out ideas, pushing back boundaries alongside analysis and critique

3. Research and Practice: Multi-disciplinary perspectives
A section for more sustained pieces of analysis about research, policy and practice which will have refereed journal status.

We welcome contributions for each of these sections and are happy to discuss your ideas and proposals with you. We want the RaPAL Journal to continue its vibrant tradition of publishing views from all parts of the field.

Guidelines for Contributors

General
1. Writing for RaPAL must be in a readable, accessible style aimed at a diverse and international readership.
2. If you are writing about individuals or groups you must follow the usual ethical guidelines, seeking permission whenever possible and in all cases representing people fairly.
3. We are always looking for articles which link research and practice in some way. There are many possibilities and we do not set hard and fast rules about how this should be done.
4. RaPAL articles should encourage readers to question dominant or taken for granted views of literacy, numeracy and ESOL. We would, for example, challenge views which fail to acknowledge the abilities of learners to be actively involved in developing and evaluating practice.

Specific Pointers
1. When you submit your work, please indicate the intended section for publication.

2. Articles should have a title with clear headings and subheadings; and must contain a clear introduction, indicating the scope of the piece.

3. If you write for section 3, the article should:

- ***relate to the practice*** of learning or teaching adult literacy (in any language)
- ***relate to research***: either by itself being a report of a research study and/or showing links to related research work;
- ***provide ' critical' analysis*** of the topic, involving theoretical underpinnings; and
- ***be coherent*** with a clear structure, explanation of any terminology, use of examples and the usual referencing conventions (Use the Harvard referencing system and make sure that all references are in alphabetical order and complete).

4. Length - Articles should be 1,000-2500 words for sections 1 and 2 and not more than 4000 words for section 3. These limits do not include any accompanying references and bibliographies. Reviews and reports should be 50-800 words.

5. Illustrations and graphic material are much appreciated. Please consult the editor about preferred formats.

6. Your article must be submitted both in hard copy and in electronic form. Please send it word processed, double-spaced, on A4 paper and with numbered pages. The electronic versions must be sent as Word files attached to emails. If we do not receive both versions, we cannot consider the paper for publication.

7. Please provide a title page with your name, title, and contact details (postal address, e-mail address and phone number). It is very important that you also provide a short 2-3 line biography to accompany the article. We like to encourage correspondence between readers and writers and if you would like readers to get in touch with you, please provide contact details at the end of the article.

Editorial Procedures
1. All contributions are peer reviewed by researchers and practitioners in the Editorial Group. The reviewing for section three is done by an experienced researcher and two additional researcher practitioners and focuses on the criteria noted above.
2. Feedback is provided by the editor within eight to ten weeks of receiving your text and constructive comment (and notes to be of use in its development) are made if appropriate.
3. If the article is accepted, once the amendments have been made, the editor will work on a final edit. We may make minor alterations ourselves and the final version will be sent to you for checking before it goes to print.

Please send an electronic copy to Deirdre Parkinson at: deirdre@dp-associates.org.uk

If this is not possible, then a paper copy can be sent to:
Deirdre Parkinson
20 Alnwick Drive, Glasgow G76 0AZ

RaPAL Membership form

RaPAL Membership Fees for 2006-2007

	UK & Eire	Other EU	Outside EU
Individual Membership*			
Full-time	£35	£50	£50
Low-waged, unwaged, student	£20	£30	£30
* includes 1 copy of the RaPAL Journal			
Institutional Membership			
2 copies of Journal	£70	£75	£75
3-5 copies of Journal	£90	£100	£100
6-10 copies of Journal	£135	N/A	N/A

Help us to DOUBLE RaPAL's Membership in 2006-2007!

We are always keen to attract new individual and institutional members.
Please copy or pass this page to friends, colleagues and your workplace library and encourage them to join RaPAL now!

Name _____

Address for correspondence _____

_____

_____

Postcode _____

Tel No: _____   Work _____

Email _____

If you **DON'T** want us to add your email address to the RaPAL circulation list (RAPALLIST)

please tick here ☐

Special interests:

I wish to join RaPAL. (Please see table of membership fees for 2006-07)

Please pay by one of the methods below (tick box):

☐   I enclose a cheque (made payable to RaPAL) for £

☐   I wish to pay by Standing Order/Direct Debit - please send me further information

☐   Please invoice me (institutions only)

Please send your completed application form and cheque (if appropriate) to:

Kathryn James
RaPAL Membership Secretary
Department of Educational Research
County South
Lancaster University
Lancaster LA1 4YD

Inside this Issue

RaPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy