RaPAL journal

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It contains the articles and reviews only

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Editorial

This edition of the RaPAL journal celebrates the conference we held at the University of Wales, Newport in June 2009.   The conference theme was Sustainable Literacies and, as always, the presenters interpreted the theme in a variety of stimulating and creative ways.   This variety is reflected in the format and content of the contributions to the journal and we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has written for it. As we write this on a dreary November day, the different voices of the writers remind us of the vitality and warmth we enjoyed back in June. We hope you will get a sense of this as you read.

This was RaPAL's first conference in Wales, and both the local context of Newport and the national Welsh context added important dimensions to the event. We were especially pleased to hold the conference in Wales, as previously RaPAL has not been well represented there and we have struggled to recruit members and form networks. However, the enthusiasm of the Welsh colleagues who joined us in Newport makes us confident that this will now change. It's worth reflecting that RaPAL itself continues to be sustained as it is renewed by new members who bring fresh ideas and perspectives.

Amy Burgess and Rachel Stubley

Introducing Newport, South Wales

Rachel Stubley

It was a real pleasure and privilege to welcome the 2009 RaPAL conference to the University of Wales, Newport, and to the city of Newport. Newport is a former Victorian industrial town on the Severn Estuary between Bristol and Cardiff, which flourished as a port, docks and steel town until the 1970s. It had a symbiotic relationship with the Welsh valleys running north from the Severn, as coal and iron ore were mined in the valleys, and brought down to Newport, from where they were shipped all over the world. Although there was poverty and hardship in mining communities, from Victorian times onwards, "adult learning" (at least for working men) flourished here as elsewhere in the UK. There remain fine Working Men's Institute buildings in the area, and Newport Art College (now the university's School of Art, Media and Design) began life as a Mechanics Institute in 1841. Newport has undergone a familiar trajectory for such a town: the severe recession and unemployment of the '70s leading to municipal regeneration, which continues today. In my seven years of living here, two bridges across the Usk and a brand new arts centre have been built, and the 1970s parts of the town centre are currently being redesigned.

Adult learning is still very important for a place like Newport, though how it is viewed both by adult learners and by society in general has probably changed considerably over the last century. For example, whether there is a particular and current crisis in "levels" of literacy and numeracy is debatable. Deborah Brandt (2001) makes the point that judgements about literacy/educational ability may depend on a range of social and cultural factors, including changing expectations of school achievement and the changing status of local industries and ways of life. To illustrate this, she contrasts the lives of two women from small farming communities in the mid West of the USA. Despite very similar educational achievements, farming backgrounds, and similar out-of-school interests in reading and writing, Martha Day (born in 1903) was considered well-educated and became a journalist for a local farming publication, whereas Barbara Hunt (born in 1971) found only low status, casual work at a petrol station and in child care (2001: 30/1). Hearing Brandt talk at an NRDC conference some years ago, I wondered whether this historical contrast might be true of the Welsh Valleys too. The young miners using the working men's institutes and libraries of the 19th century might find themselves today in literacy classes, labelled as "NEETs" or "socially excluded". Their uses of literacy may be as skilled and varied as ever, but their social status has radically diminished.

Notwithstanding such challenges, there are many adults in this area who wish to develop their communication and confidence, and many teachers who are keen to develop their professional skills in order to support them. Over the last four years, we have developed teacher education programmes in literacy, Numeracy and ESOL at Newport. I have met many creative and committed practitioners both in the Newport area and across Wales, and I would love to think that having the RaPAL conference in Newport has made a small contribution to supporting and extending adult literacy learning and teaching in Wales.

Beyond the boundaries of this industrial town lie windswept hills, Iron-age hill forts, ancient woodland, Norman castles (defending Norman interests against the Welsh hordes!), Jacobean mansions, estuary mudflats and wetlands, 18th century canals, and steep green valleys… It really is a wonderfully diverse corner of the UK and I am very glad to be living here.

Reference
BRANDT, D. (2001) *Literacy in American Lives* Cambridge. Cambridge: CUP
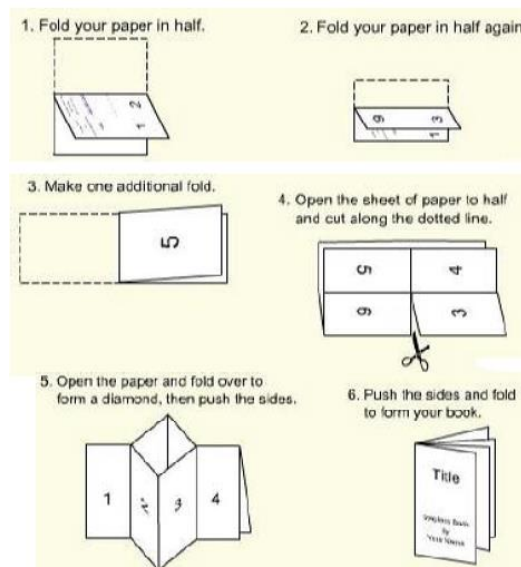
Reflections from RaPAL's Roving Rapporteurs

Marilyn…..and Sabine

As Roving Rapporteurs, we were given the task of summing up our overall impressions at the end of the conference. All the events and workshops we attended were packed with information and ideas and selecting was difficult. Eventually, we opted for a 'pick one thing' game which I (Marilyn) had designed as a feedback activity for my literacy classes. Limited to one thing, we are inclined to recall the most enjoyable or challenging (rather than the most worthy) activities – a lesson in itself?

1. **Say one thing you can do now that you couldn't do before (the conference).**

Sabine: Construct a haiku on the subject on sustainable literacy!

Marilyn: I can make a tiny booklet from a single sheet of paper – useful for learners to record their 'words for work', mini story …or anything else.

1. Fold your paper in half.
2. Fold your paper in half again.
3. Make one additional fold.
4. Open the sheet of paper to half and cut along the dotted line.
5. Open the paper and fold over to form a diamond, then push the sides.
6. Push the sides and fold to form your book.

(I got this diagram from http://www.amdsb.ca/ESL/pdfs/instructionbook.pdf

I can also use *Windows Movie Maker* to make a film out of a series of photographs and add music or other sound track. (This refers to the workshop given by Jim Mullen, Queen's University, Belfast –

Using digital Technologies to Support and Develop Collaborative and Reflective Practice in Teacher Education)

2. Say one thing you liked doing best.

Sabine: Playing snakes and ladders (on how to develop good professional training)

(This refers to the workshop on workforce professionalisation with Meriel Lobley and Marie Kerwin, Dialogue NW, where we mapped out the geographical areas within the UK to get a picture of the reality with regard to tutor qualification)

Marilyn: Listening to the Harpist/Storyteller at the Conference dinner. (Surely the story is always the most sustainable of all literacies?) "What is it that all women most desire?" This was the riddle asked of King Arthur by the loathly lady in the story we listened to. I think it's cheating to give away the answer to the riddle here!

3. Say what was the most difficult thing you did (at the conference).

Sabine: Draw a picture of the beast of unemployment (I mean the actual act of drawing…)

(This refers to the workshop of Margaret Morris and Pat Smith, Basic Skills Cymru, Jobseekers Development Project, where we were actually asked to draw a picture of the above.)

Marilyn: Attempting to get an overall picture of literacy provision and organization throughout the UK. There are so many different models of delivery and mechanisms for funding. How difficult it is to evaluate quality, value-for-money and best practice. (Meriel Lobley and Marie Kerwin, Dialogue NW - Workforce Professionalism) We both attended this.

4. Say what you have to do for homework.

S: Tell everybody about the great work that RaPAL is doing!

M: I have to read all the back numbers of the Journal I've collected at the conference and tell my colleagues about RaPAL and its work.

5. Say a new word or expression you've learnt.

Sabine: *I have learnt about Fairies and what women want most in the world!* (Well, it isn't really a word or an expression…) This refers to our dinner in the hotel and the wonderful performance on Welsh myths…

Marilyn: 'Sustainable Literacies'. I'm still pondering this one!

6. **Say what you think you need to do again**

Sabine: Attend the RaPAL conference again next year! Thanks again to everybody!

Marilyn: I need to reflect constantly on the literacy practices of those who come to our classes and those who help them to learn. I need to read the literature and encourage other practitioners to come with me to the RaPAL conference next year. I also need to thank Rachel again, and everyone else responsible for bringing the conference to Wales. It was wonderful!

Barriers, Boundaries, Welsh Marches and Marshes!

Mary Rhind

Mary Rhind is the Adult Literacies Coordinator for the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership. The work of HALP encompasses ESOL and Gaelic Literacy as well as ALN. The challenges of delivering provision in a wide area with a scattered population mean that we are always open to trialling effective, new and innovative ways of providing tuition and support in all these fields.

I come from mixed Celtic ancestry with a Scottish Gaelic speaking grandfather and a Welsh speaking grandmother. I speak, read and write in Gaelic – I'm even a published novelist in Gaelic. But my Welsh has never progressed beyond the nursery. I can still recite the rhyme "Two little dickie birds" in full in Welsh, but remain illiterate and otherwise unable to communicate in that language! In addition, I'd never been to Wales before this year, so felt a real tingle of adventure as my train crossed over the Severn from Bristol to Newport.
The instructions to reach the hotel from the station were excellent. As I walked through the shopping precinct with its ubiquitous chain stores, I was struck by the eerie Marie Celeste atmosphere of the place. The shops were all open for Thursday late night shopping but with nary a soul inside, never mind even on the street.

A sign of the times? The Credit Crunch is affecting all areas of activity and of course literacies is no exception with budgets being cut in all directions. So *Sustainable Literacies* was, I felt, a spot-on title for the conference.
Amy Burgess started our thoughts rolling as she opened by referring to David Barton's metaphor of literacies as an ecosystem. Easy enough to parallel learning and teaching within that and to see how the effect of every single activity knocks on to other things. As in nature a lot (probably most) of this change and interaction is unseen. In the workshop on working with women who have experienced (or are experiencing) violence Yvon Appleby commented too on the unseen-ness of the forces at work in learners' lives. For this sector of people there are particular barriers – low self esteem and confidence, finance, mental health and the actual violence and threat of violence itself - that can all be "unseen" but of whose existence (or potential existence) the tutor has to be very much aware.

Of course, many, if not most, of the barriers that all learners face can be "unseen" by others, although very much real to them. The workshop on Friday afternoon with Julie Collins and Fiona Watters looked at how skills and confidence can be built by "re-cycling" the resources that people have within them rather than introducing new resources in from outside. They used ceramics, photography, clay modelling and IT to spark people's imagination and allow them to gain the confidence to tell their own stories. Suddenly I realised

that this was not about barriers any more but about boundaries and about exploring those boundaries and learning on those boundaries by sharing personal moments. It worked because it was well facilitated within a safe environment.

This idea of boundaries was echoed for me in the evening's after-dinner entertainment when we heard stories about the Welsh Marches or Y Mers, to give it its proper Welsh title. Wikipedia tells me that this term in current usage is "an imprecisely defined area along and around the border between England and Wales". But we also heard a lot about marshes which in Celtic mythology (both Gaelic and Welsh) form a kind of hazy imprecisely defined boundary on the edge of the real world. The Celtic Marsh is where amazing things happen, and where there are powerful connections to other worlds and spirits.
Somehow, in Celtic mythology, it is not so much the marsh itself that is powerful but the fact that it is a boundary, a meeting of two worlds, which sparks the energy. So often the meeting of two things generates a force that is greater that the two combined. And this is just as true with literacies learning as it is for anything else.

There was something too about the timelessness in the stories we heard of the Celtic Marsh that resonated for me with literacies activity. Like the mist-wreathed marsh country, the world of literacies learning is a world where time is secondary to what is actually and powerfully happening and does not run at all at the rate that humans live in from day to day. Often it's hard to explain to funders that in the long run slow is fast (and more cost effective).

So, we have barriers to learning which can be overcome, negotiated, circumnavigated or bridged to enable a learner to progress. But we can also have boundaries which may appear as barriers but which are very different. They can be explored, and in the exploring can be the place where some of the most vital learning actually takes place. If that boundary is less well defined, like a Celtic marsh, full of mist and half light, it can be a rich learning ground. But it needs expert and sensitive facilitation if a learner is not to get lost or totally swamped.

In similar vein, research into Adult Literacies straddles the boundary area between the academic world and the delivery field. Yvonne Appleby called it the sandwich filling but I wonder if the analogy of the Celtic Marsh stands here too; an exciting place between two worlds where anything can happen?

The RaPAL Conference in Newport

Paul Carberry

Paul Carberry has been an adult literacy and numeracy (ALN) learner with Positive About Literacies (PAL) in the East End of Glasgow for the last 3 years. He has overcome issues with literacy and numeracy caused by childhood illnesses, a traumatic injury sustained in a work accident and the loss of my partner with illness. This has all been possible with the help of his support worker and ALN tutor. He has attended the last 2 RaPAL conferences and hopes to attend the next one in 2010 with further support!

I was delighted to be told that I was able to attend RAPaL conference in Newport, South Wales. I arrived on my own this time and was a wee bit nervous. However, I was made to feel welcome by some people from last year's conference in Galway.

I enjoyed the text game we played where we had to guess the movie's title. The workshop on pen and pigeonholes was very interesting to me. The workshop called Do-it-yourself reading' was very useful to me as a learner as it told me about software and I had recently bought myself a laptop. I attended the workshop on 'Exploring the Underworld' that was about learner's using digital literacy.

We finished the conference off by heading to Glen-Yr-Afon House Hotel for a meal, which was lovely. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff who helped me to attend this year's conference.

What do we mean by Sustainable Literacies?

Amy Burgess

Amy Burgess is a Research Fellow in the Literacy Research Centre and Department of Educational Studies at Lancaster University, UK. She previously taught adult literacy for 10 years and worked as a researcher on the NRDC project Effective Teaching and Learning: Writing. She also teaches on the MA in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL at Lancaster and is currently chair of RaPAL.

This is the text of the opening plenary address to the conference in Newport.

What do we mean by sustainable literacies?   This may be a new term for some people and even for those who have heard it before, it might not be easy to define.   We hear words like 'sustainability' and 'sustainable' all the time in many very different contexts. The words are applied to numerous areas of life, including agriculture, architecture, economics and development, to name just a few.   When I was preparing this talk I looked at a range of books, articles and websites and I learnt, amongst other things, that there are over 300 different definitions of sustainability. The word 'literacies' is also interpreted in many different ways – in fact we've had discussions at previous RaPAL conferences and in our journal about how we want to define the word 'literacies', and about whether we want to talk about' literacy' or 'literacies'. So both 'sustainable' and 'literacies' seem to be contested words; this indicates that they represent issues that are very significant and at the forefront of many people's minds.   However, when particular words are used in so many different contexts, by different groups of people with different concerns and motivations, there is a danger that they can become confusing.

I'd like to mention some of the issues and concepts that I think are indexed by the words 'sustainable literacies'. I hope this will serve as a starting point for us to clarify and develop our ideas. My intention is not to explore the concepts in depth here, but rather to offer some suggestions which I hope will provide a catalyst for our discussions at the conference. I want to do this by offering some images and metaphors connected with the idea of sustainability which I've found useful when thinking about sustainable literacies. I hope they will spark off associations in your mind and lead to insights and questions which you will share with us during the conference.

For me, the idea of sustainable literacies originates in the metaphor of the ecology of literacy, as developed David Barton in his book *Literacy: an introduction to the ecology of written language* (Barton 1994)*.*   Barton explains that

'[Ecology] is concerned with how the activity – literacy in this case – is part of the environment and at the same time influences and is influenced by the environment. An ecological view takes as its starting-point this interaction between individuals and their environments.' (Barton 1994 p 29).

He goes on to explain that:

'Using the term changes the whole endeavour of trying to understand the nature of reading and writing. Rather than isolating literacy activities from everything else in order to understand them, an ecological approach aims to understand how literacy is embedded in other human activity, its embeddedness in social life and thought, and its position in history, language and learning.' (p32)

I think it's useful to apply the metaphor of an ecosystem to literacy because it helps us to remember some important ideas which can sometimes get lost. I'm going to mention five ways of thinking about literacy as ecology or as an ecosystem and, connected with that, what I think it might mean to talk about sustainable literacies.

First, if we want to understand ecosystems in nature we have to think not just of the characteristics of individual plants or animals, but of how they interact. We also have to think about how living things are affected by their environment but also of how they change their environment. Similarly with literacy, we need to think not just in terms of individuals and of skills that they might or might not have, but of the **context** in which people use literacy, what purposes they use it for and how they interact around literacy. We have to think about how literacy is affected by the contexts in which people use it and how it changes those contexts.

Second, when we're thinking about ecosystems in nature we often hear about the importance of maintaining a **diversity** of species if we want to sustain particular ecosystems. Similarly in literacy, we need to understand the importance of a diversity of languages – and of course that's something that's particularly relevant here in Wales and which we're going to hear more about from some of our speakers. But of course it's not just languages; we need to support diverse literacy practices as well and to remember that literacy isn't just one monolithic entity but that different people understand, use and value it in different ways.

Third, when we think about ecosystems in the natural world we know that sustainability means we have to think on **long timescales**. If we want to live sustainably, we have to think not just of what we do in the short term but of how our actions now might affect the kind of world we leave to future generations. And similarly when we think of ourselves as literacy educators, we have to think

not just in terms of quick fixes, but of what happens after we the teachers are gone.   Are the literacies we help people to engage with truly sustainable over a long period of time?

Fourth, when we think about sustainability one thing which we probably all think about is the importance of recycling and I think that could also be applied to literacy learning and we could think about what it might mean to say that **literacy practices can be recycled**. We often hear about the importance of people learning new skills, and it's true that literacy learning does enable people to do new things. However, we know that it's also important to be aware of what people already have, what they can already do. We have to remember that when people come to learn new literacy practices, we're not asking them just to discard the old ones, and that they already have plenty of resources that they can draw on and re-use.

Thinking in terms of recyclable literacy practices also has the advantage that it makes all of us equal, whether we happen to be called learners, teachers or researchers. When it comes to recycling, we all have to do it and it's the same with literacy learning. We all have to respond to changes in our lives by recycling our literacy practices so that we can use them in new contexts for new purposes. And using the metaphor of recyclable literacy practices helps us to remember that – like pencils made from recycled CDs, or rulers made from recycled plastic cups – when people are able to recycle their literacy practices some amazing transformations can take place. The new practices might not look much like the old ones and they might be used for very different purposes.   Incidentally, I really like the logo on the recycled pencils in the photo below – 'I used to be something else' – because it reminds us that recycling our literacy practices can sometimes enable us to say 'I used to be **someone** else'. Literacy learning changes people's identities.

The last idea I want to touch on now can be summed up by this image:

It reminds us that sustainability in the natural world can only be achieved if we work together. And it's the same in our work; sustainable literacies are supported by people having common aims and working together. That's something that RaPAL is committed to and I'm looking forward to seeing it in action during our conference.

Reference
Barton D (1994) *Literacy, an introduction to the ecology of written language* Oxford: Blackwell.

Collage-making and the Art of Sustainable Literacy

Shelley Tracey and Karen Kealey

Shelley Tracey is the coordinator of a teacher education programme for adult literacy and numeracy practitioners at Queen's University Belfast. She first worked in literacy and numeracy in South Africa in the 1980s. Her practice is informed by a sense of the power of creativity to engage and support learners and the learning process.

Introduction

Collage-making is an exploratory process which involves the gathering and combining of stimuli and found objects. It provides a space for playing with ideas as well as more deliberative opportunities for reflecting on these ideas and organising and arranging them. The results of collage making are both tangible – the finished piece – and the more elusive forms of understanding that emerge. In this workshop, we wanted to show how collage-making informs our practices and shifting identities as teacher educator, researcher, adult literacy practitioner and learner. We perceive collage-making as a sustainable literacy in its capacity to develop and express learner autonomy, diversity and the capacity to "read the world" as well as to transform it. While there are different forms of "collage", our work focuses on the practice of arranging on a piece of card or paper words and images from magazines and newspapers to explore an idea or theme. The juxtaposition of text and image reflects our understanding of literacy as more than words-based; we believe that sustainable literacies need to reflect the prominence of image in our society and its evolving relationship with text.

We began the workshop by sharing our experiences of using collage-making in teaching and learning: Karen used collage to carry out a piece of practitioner research for her qualifications as a literacy teacher. She had felt that as the research process was new to her, it would be a very daunting task to carry out, but when she realised that there were other forms in which she could convey her information, she was relieved and looked forward to it rather than dreading it. She found collage to be a very effective tool through which to depict her journey through the research process, from the planning (i.e. the roots of the flower) to the methods used (i.e. the elements needed to make the flower grow, the sun, and its surroundings) to the findings (i.e. the quotations from learners, their finished collages and quotes from other practitioners and experts). She thoroughly enjoyed creating her collage and would definitely use this form of delivery again for future endeavours.

Karen also used collage with her learners, as she wanted to provide them with an opportunity for independent thinking and expression whilst also encouraging the abandonment of self-limiting ideas. She wanted the group to work co-operatively

in pairs, to create an collage to portray how images relate to particular words or, in some cases, vice versa. The learners were not afraid of 'doing it wrong' as she assured them that it was their own interpretations she required. She found that collage was a medium for her learners to convey an idea/plan/process through pictures and words. They approached the task with curiosity and interest. They were eager to see how the finished piece would turn out. As the learners began to create their collages, Karen observed that they were very focused and that they discussed with each other various ideas of which pictures to cut out and where to place the words. They also discussed the relevance of the words in relation to the pictures. At the end of the session, Karen initiated a discussion on the activity, how the learners felt about it and if they would ever like to do it again. She incorporated some of the learners' comments into her final research collage.

Shelley has been using collage in three ways:

- in her PhD research on teacher creativity to explore and represent her understanding about reflective practice and the research process
- on a postgraduate skills training programme as a means of exploring and developing research questions. Participants commented about using collage for this purpose that "it is a great new artistic method of idea generation" and "gives the chance to be more creative/visual than always doing written work."
- on a teacher qualifications programme for adult literacy practitioners to involve her students in exploring their ideas about learning (image 2/3). Responses include: "Great for kinaesthetic learning sessions" and "something that I could use with my learners." Some of these tutor collages may be viewed online at http://www.qub.ac.uk/edu/eskills

One of these tutors commented about the use of collage-making with her learners, who live in a hostel for homeless people:

Although none of the learners in my class made it as far as accreditation while I was there, we did use the final session as a time of acknowledgement. The learners participated in collage-making (something none of the men had ever tried before), with the theme "What I have learnt about myself". Afterwards we engaged in a discussion about the collages, what they meant to us, and how much we had learnt about ourselves, as learners and as people, through the classes. I acknowledged the work each individual learner had done and highlighted their progression with particular note to some of the more difficult areas in their literacy learning that they had overcome. Everyone, myself included, came away from that final session inspired by the potential and possibilities we had seen for ourselves and each other.

The conference workshop

Participants used newspapers and magazines and images which they had brought along with them to explore their ideas about learning. Some focused on their own experiences of learning and work and others on their practice. As collage-making is a personal process which offers opportunities for developing and expressing individual understanding, we offer no comments on these images. Participants' responses to the workshop have enhanced our awareness of the need for calm spaces in learning to reflect and to play with ideas and images.

"Having spent the past year writing about literacy for the Cert in Adult Lit, it was a really refreshing change to use pictures and words to represent varieties of literacies. It gave much more scope and flexibility to express thoughts, views and ideas about literacy."

"I learned a lot about myself as a learner. Really enjoyed the activity and the calm, intense atmosphere as we worked. I will look at using it as a methodology in my work of training tutors (moving out of my word-based comfort zone!). Thank you both."

"How to use collage and visual styles in my own learning journey and that of learners' journeys. Very peaceful, collaborative session - good support from workshop leaders."

"The joy of collage in the quiet introverted working focused space - <u>in company</u>. Excellent re Karen's presentation of her collages. The leaders were supportive, encouraging and positive."

" Great to have some time and space for quiet reflection. Working with images is liberating and reminds us of the importance of multimodal literacies."

"Considering the creative potential of collage-making, and the chance to create one - very enjoyable and thought provoking!"

Karen's response to the workshop:

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RAPaL

First time there

Sustainable literacies

Watching, learning, watching again

Workshop, very nervous

Made new friends

Home

</div>

We would like to leave fellow-practitioners with some questions to consider about collage-making:

- How does the creation of a collage develop understanding of the processes of meaning-making?
- does the use of newspaper and magazines as a basis for collage reinforce stereotypes or develop criticality?
- how might collage-making support literacy learning?

Environmental Literacy

Sally Sweeney

Sally Sweeney lectures in Adult Education studies (Philosophy of Adult Education, Psychology of Adult Learning, Curriculum Development, Microteaching, Group Dynamics) in Ireland's only Literacy Development Centre (LDC), which is based in the Waterford Institute of Technology. The Centre houses the WIT/National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) Accreditation Project designed to professionalise teacher education in the area of adult literacy in Ireland.

Literacy is more than just learning to read and write – it is about developing an ability to use the tools of written language to function within society and about developing a critical approach to understanding the world (St Clair, 2003). The environmental challenges that face us today are very much part of that world. Because having literacy difficulties often keeps people on the margins of their society, literacy students may have a low awareness of environmental issues. In my work as a tutor on the Waterford Institute of Technology's professional qualification programme for literacy tutors, I have observed a strong personal concern about the environment among my students and a desire to increase awareness of environmental issues in their own learners. However these tutors also felt there was a need for training to develop their own understanding of the topic and give them an opportunity to reflect on these issues. Being involved in a number of local environmental initiatives such as the Transition movement and GIY (Grow-it-Yourself) Ireland, I decided to research the feasibility of developing a module for our programme, which would give literacy tutors the knowledge and understanding to incorporate environmental themes in their teaching. I convened two separate focus group of tutors who were students on my Philosophy of Adult Education module and their comments confirmed the assumptions I had made – that literacy learners generally have little or no appreciation of environmetal problems and that they themselves would need training to feel confident in introducing the topic into their lessons. It is on the basis of these findings that I am currently developing a module entitled "Environmental Literacy" as a elective module in our programme.

The environmental educator, David Orr (cited in St Clair, 2003), gives a very simple definition of environmental literacy – it is the ability to ask *"What next?"* when making decisions likely to impact on the environment. Before people can even ask that question, they need to be made aware of *why* they should care. The concept of environmental education and education for sustainability is not particulary innovative in the field of community education which promotes local action to effect change. However the concept of embedding education on the environmental issues that face us at present in curricula across a range of disciplines is one that is gaining momentum. In the area of literacy provision, through choice of materials

and activities, concepts relating to sustainability can fit very appropriately into the curriculum.

To explore the ideas of the module further, I offered a workshop at the RAPAL conference which aimed to introduce participants to some of the facts and figures behind the concepts of Peak Oil and Climate Change and get them thinking about the possibility of raising their learners' awareness by including topics relating to the environment in their lesson plans.

We began with a fun quiz (see below) to get people tuned in to the subject. This was followed by the "Global Citizen" exercise (also below) which serves to highlight the interrelatedness of our globalized way of life and the environmental impact that results from it. It is one that could be easily adapted in content and complexity to a level that would be accessible to literacy learners. The workshop continued with an exploration of some of the issues relating to Peak Oil and Climate Change and concluded with participants discussing in small groups the potential in their own area of teaching for introducing an environmental dimension.

The feedback from the workshop encouraged me in my belief that this is a valuable course to develop and it also reinforced what had emerged from the Irish focus groups – that most of the tutors themselves did not currently have a sufficient level of understanding of the topics to feel confident enough to use them in their own schemes of work but that they felt it was an important area in which learners' awareness needs to be raised.

Literacy is situated practice. One of its prime functions is to empower people to survive in day-to-day life. We are living in an increasingly complex world and I believe that a move to connect social and ecological issues with educational provision, in the classroom or the community, will contribute to the change in attitudes and behaviour needed to make a difference. We talk about transformative learning in literacy practice and creating opportunities for critical reflection, working with the ideas of Mezirow (1978) and Brookfield (1990). The environment is an area where people's perceptions need to be challenged and transformed.

Extensive scientific knowledge, while it obviously has a role in formal environmental education, is not a pre-requisite for developing an awareness of the issues – if it were, then it would make environmental education elitist. There are other ways of approaching the topic. In fact it would be ironic to look exclusively to science to come up with solutions to the problems that it has been instrumental in creating, in so far as scientific progress has brought about the technological advancement which has unleashed many of today's environmental problems. Einstein has said "*No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We have to learn to see the world anew*". Currently much of our education system is serving the global market – producing graduates to perpetuate the existing technological, industrial and economic structures that, as we have

seen in recent times, have largely created the mess we are in. It "sustains unsustainability" by uncritically reproducing norms which service the consumerist lifestyle to which we have become accustomed (Sterling, 2001).

Ecofeminists such as Charlene Spretnak (in Hill and Clover (eds), 2003) advocate a connective approach that takes into account the interrelatedness of human beings and their natural environment, something that was lost with the advent of the mechanistic approach. P. Senge (cited in Sterling, 2001) maintains that "… the unhealthiness of our world today is in direct proportion to our inability to see it as a whole".

Much education for environmental literacy is focused in schools but for many reasons it is vital to address it at all levels of learning, including adult education. The gravity of the situation means there is a short time-span to reverse our trajectory towards irreversible environmental damage and we cannot afford to wait till the generation currently in education are in a position to take action. There is the potential here for a strong link with Family Literacy. Since children are learning in school about the environment, parents engaging with the issues through their literacy classes will develop insights into their children's learning and be better able to relate to the materials they bring home. Ultimately it is important for that learning to lead to action and change. Environmental education on its own is not a strong indicator of action – it needs also to link in with learners' experience. This linking of new learning to learners' day-to-day lives is familiar territory for literacy tutors.

The two main topics when discussing environmental challenges - Peak Oil and Climate Change - are often considered separately and the inextricable link between the two is lost. Climate Change and Global Warming get a lot of press, Peak Oil less. Both subjects raise very disturbing questions about the future – questions that impact on our very existence and on the legacy we leave to our children and grandchildren. The enormity of the problem, once people become aware of it, can be a complete "turn off". Responses to it can take a number of forms, from denial (it isn't happening; the reports are exaggerated; it's all due to naturally occurring phenomena which have always come in cycles) to fatalism (we're all doomed and nothing we can do will make any difference, so let's just party on till the oil runs out). Between these extremes, there are other responses. Adaptation and accommodation admit a realisation of the problem and a commitment to making changes but ultimately the underlying structures remain the same, putting our trust in "green technology" to replace fossil fuels. A truly transformative approach envisions a new way forward, a new paradigm, which focuses on "power-down", reducing our dependence on fossil fuel, localisation instead of globalisation, rebuilding local communities and re-discovering lost skills.

There is often a high level of *awareness* of the problems of climate change (and less so of peak oil) but a low level of *understanding*. What follows are some of the facts about these two issues. While they are scary, it is important to promote a vision of the possibility for a transition to a future that can be better, healthier and

more wholesome than what we have at present, if we act collectively and collaboratively. While I have concentrated in the following paragraphs on the issues of peak oil and climate change because they are fundamental to what is happening in our environment and need to be understood by tutors considering introducing environmental awareness to their literacy learners, the form in which they endeavour to raise this awareness must be tailored to the abilities of the class, linking it to their everyday lives, and can be presented in a more accessible way through topics such as food miles, reducing waste and packaging, growing their own vegetables, saving energy, recycling etc. An emphasis on how it can make financial sense is also a good starting point.

Peak oil is when world oil production has reached its maximum and begins to decline. We have used about 50% of the world's supply – but that was the easy half, easily extracted and of high quality. What is left becomes more and more difficult to extract, is of lower quality and therefore requires more input of energy to refine. Once the EROEI (energy return on energy invested) is less that 1:1, extraction is no longer viable.
We are currently using between four and six barrels of oil for every one discovered.

A brief glance around us, wherever we happen to be, will quickly reinforce the realisation that everything we see is in some way dependent on fossil fuel for its existence – as a raw material, in the energy used to produce it, package it or transport it. Energy underpins our food production – it takes ten calories of energy to produce one calorie of food. Our economic growth is coupled to growth in energy consumption. Everything that sustains our current way of life is oil dependent. We currently produce only 0.4% of our energy from renewable sources. If we were to double that, double it again and double that again, it would still only meet less than 4% of our needs.

Although it can only be proven with hindsight, all the indicators of peak oil - light sweet crude oil peaking first; the world's largest oil fields peaking and declining; oil prices behaving erratically by rapidly increasing then slumping when there is a recession; oil producing countries take control of their resources – all these have happened in the past 5 years and the process is accelerating. Recent reports, even those produced by petroleum companies such as Exxon, recognise that it is happening. The most optimistic date is that it will peak in 2020 but most reckon it will be around 2010. In spite of this, all government predictions for economic recovery seem to be focused on getting back to "business as usual", that is back to a model of growth which is totally dependent on an uninterrupted supply of cheap fossil fuel. Is any country, with the exception of Sweden, really facing up to planning for a future when this fuel source is exhausted?

Climate changes are those that are "significant", that is to say beyond what might be expected in the natural cycle of events. Scientific opinion such as the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) states that climate change is uniquivocal. Although there are still nay-sayers, more than 90% of scientists are

in agreement that human activity is the cause of the increased levels of CO2 in the atmosphere which are causing climate change. The results which include drought, flooding, acidic seas, species loss, are the subject of regular newspaper articles and TV documentaries. Since it is the burning of fossil fuel and the use of petroleum-based chemicals that are the main causes of this degradation of the planet, then the link between peak oil and climate change becomes clear.

In the face of facts and statistics such as these above, it would be easy to be overwhelmed by a feeling of powerlessness. Change can happen, though it can be excruciatingly slow, particularly when it comes to governments taking action. However an understanding of the issues relating to the environment, peak oil and climate change, can be a catalyst for change at a personal level and create a sense of agency rather than impotence. This is where literacy tutors come in. Within literacy and numeracy provision, there is ample flexibility with regard to the materials and topics used to teach the core subjects. By developing their own knowledge of the issues and their own vision for the future in relation to sustainability and the environment, tutors can then introduce relevant topics and materials into their schemes of work, thereby enabling their learners to effect changes in their own lifestyle based on their ability to critically reflect and ask the question *"What next?"*

Someone once said that it is "better to light a candle than curse the darkness". Put all those candles together and the future can be brighter for us all.

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        Green Books

Web sites:

www.transitiontowns.org   www.ipcc.ch
www.peopleandplanet.org   www.realclimate.org
www.powerswitch.org.uk   www.peakoil.net
www.pathtofreedom.com

A Google search will bring up free viewings of the following movies:

"The Story of Stuff" – an excellent 15 min. cartoon on how we consume, narrated by Annie Leonard.
"Waste = Food" – a documentary showing breakthroughs in turning waste back into food and raw materials.
"Money as Debt" – tells how money is created out of thin air and manipulated by those in control.
Email: soswee@eircom.net

Fun Quiz

1.   In 2004, the UK imported 1.5 million kg. of potatoes from Germany. In the same year, its exports of potatoes to Germany totalled:
       a. 100,000 kg; b. 500,000 kg; c. 1.5 million kg.

2.   At present there are about 60 years' worth of uranium left. However, if all the world's energy needs were to be   met by nuclear power, the world's supply of uranium would be exhausted in:
       a. 6 months; b. 3 years; c. 10 years

3.   The amount of energy needed to maintain an average US citizen is the equivalent of:
       a. 10; b. 30; c. 50
people pedalling furiously in the backyard 24/7.

4.   The percentage of the planet's original forests that has been destroyed is:

a. 60%; <u>b. 80%;</u> c. 90%

5.   In 2006, the world was consuming the equivalent of:
a. 920; b. 3,270; <u>c. 5,500</u>
olympic-size swimming pools of oil per day.

Global Citizen Exercise

Ask one of the group to read the following aloud:

I was woken this morning by the alarm on my mobile phone coming on at 7.00. Got dressed. Went out for a run – really appreciated the comfort of my Nike running shoes. Had a good breakfast – orange juice, muesli, coffee and toast. Just had time for a quick glance at the paper before heading off to work. Running a bit late, so felt the pressure mounting as I sat in an endless traffic jam. Fortunately I had filled the tank on my way home from work yesterday. Got really ratty when a learner driver almost rear-ended my brand new Renault Clio.

Then read it again with the following interjections:

I was woken this morning by the alarm on my mobile phone coming on at 7.00.

STOP! Your phone is made from metal mined in South Africa, using petroleum from Iraq, with plastic components sourced in China and assembled in China too. Its electronic components contain coltan – often called "black gold" – which originated in the Congo and has been a major contributor to the bloody conflict in that country. The phone was then shipped from China in a Greek-owned ship manufactured in Sweden, licensed in Liberia and staffed by a Filipino crew.

Got dressed.

STOP!   Your cotton underwear and T-shirt are made from cotton grown in Central Asia (source of most of the cotton used in clothes sold in the UK), picked by children who, from the age of seven, are compelled by the government to assist with the cotton harvest and whose health has been severely affected by the chemicals used to control cotton pests. The garments were then manufactured in Bangladesh where the minimum wage is equal to one-third the real living wage.

Went out for a run – really appreciated the comfort of my Nike running shoes.

STOP! Nike sports shoes used to be made in Indonesia, where working conditions were in direct contravention of Article 23 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Following a campaign against the working conditions, some improvements have

been made. However, much of the production was subsequently moved to Vietnam, where labour costs are currently lower.

Going for a run is part of a widespread trend towards physical fitness, as a precaution against health problems associated with stress and lack of exercise, brought about by the type of work practices dictated by the need to survive in the current globalised economy.

Had a good breakfast – orange juice, muesli, coffee and toast. Just had time for a quick glance at the paper before heading off to work.

STOP!   The orange juice is from Brazil, packaged in a Tetra-pak manufactured in the Ukraine – one of the 137 billion drinks cartons produced annually for the giant Swedish corporation. The coffee is Fair Trade, from a co-operative in the Mbale dictrict of SE Uganda, contributing to fairer prices and better conditions for the farmers.
The newspaper gets its news from United Press International, Associated Press International and Reuters. These are all trans-national information agencies with their own agendas.   The paper on which it is printed is from managed forests in Finland.

Running a bit late, so felt the pressure mounting as I sat in an endless traffic jam. Fortunately I had filled the tank on my way home from work yesterday. Got really ratty when a learner driver almost rear-ended my brand new Renault Clio.

STOP! Your car is a Renault, a product of the third largest French-based trans-national corporation. The raw materials for your car come from over 70 nations. You bought it new and so it has already clocked up almost 30% of it's life-time carbon foot-print before it even leaves the factory. It is fuelled with an ever-dwindling natural resource and the price you pay for your petrol, and its patterns of supply, are controlled by OPEC which plays a significant role in the development of the global economic system.

Letter from Australia

Margaret

I sit here at my desk at home in Western Australia wondering what to write for the RaPAL 2009 Conference journal. I am listening to the first Incredible String Band album from the late 60s. The songs make me smile – in part this is in response to the humour, naivety and gladness in the lyrics and in part because they remind me of feeling young and hopeful when anything was still possible. This is a very juvenile album and we are all wiser now! Now, it is harder to believe that the world can come to rights.

In June this year, I was lucky enough to attend the annual RaPAL conference in South Wales and take part in discussions, workshops and lectures from which emerged concerns and themes that are also relevant to life on this side of the planet. I was particularly encouraged by the triumphant account of the journey towards bilingual education in Wales. In Australia, where we still have languages associated with cultures that have been continuously alive for 40,000 years, the vexed issue of bilingual education is one of perennial contestation. In October 2008, the Northern Territory Minister for Education scrapped the 40 year bilingual schools policy and overnight imposed a regime where the first 4 hours of the school day were to be conducted in and focussed on English – a first language for none of the children attending these remote schools. The last hour of the school day could be devoted to teaching a traditional language. This represented a shift away from both a bilingual approach (seeking to preserve traditional languages and ensure transmission of strong cultural identities) and a two-way approach (scaffolding the learning of Standard Australian English from a basis of literacy learning in a first language.) Learning in a first language now occupies the same place in the NT curriculum as all other Language Other Than English (LOTE) courses.

The Minister's sudden decision was taken after the first set of results from the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) were published and children from bilingual schools in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 performed less well on the standard tests. The same standard tests measure the English language performance of children whether they are from an English speaking background or not. There are no nationally agreed instruments to distinguish between children who have been learning to speak English for a minimum of eight years when they are first tested and children who may have been learning English as a second language for a maximum of three years before they are first tested. The NAPLAN reports have been designed by the Australian Government to report on a child's individual performance and also to provide a benchmark of school effectiveness so that schools' literacy performance may be publicly ranked.

Readers in the UK might like to visit the website of a recent ABC television documentary called "Going back to Lajamanu" which reviews the history of bilingual education in the Northern Territory
http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2009/s2683288.htm
The program can be downloaded for viewing and the web page provides links to background information including related reports and policy documents. The program revisited some of the protagonists in a documentary made 23 years earlier and took the opportunity to sound out the views of those currently making the political decisions. Some members of the Warlpiri language group are also interviewed.

In some senses the topic of this documentary crystalises a problem at the heart of the literacy policy agenda – an agenda that has as much currency in the UK as it has in Australia. The problem is that governments and system managers seem reluctant to engage with the complexities of language and language teaching and prefer instead to focus on defining and imposing a single standard or benchmark. The benchmark is an essential management tool in a data driven system and enables policy makers to define change by setting targets that can be easily or conveniently measured. This is a dangerous situation for at least two reasons. Firstly the benchmark can easily become mistaken for the thing itself. In creating matrixes, frameworks or scales that purport to capture the infinite complexity of language and cognition, we may easily forget about what lies outside the frame. If we are not naming it or valuing it—if it does not count in meeting a target—it may cease to exist. A substitution occurs: the measure becomes the whole activity, and the whole value of the activity. The second danger is that in focussing exclusively on outcome measures, too little attention and thought are given to the inputs needed to improve language and literacy teaching. These inputs include teacher education, recruitment, curriculum and curriculum resources and in-service development. If we are to improve the outcomes of our literacy teaching, what we really need is a far more sophisticated understanding of language and language learning at all levels of the system from policy making to classroom teaching.

In Australia there is no recent explicit policy for adult literacy, but there are national targets and priorities that impact on the delivery of literacy programs. The last policy statement was issued as the *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* White Paper in 1991 under the Keating Labor Government. Since that time we have been dealing with adult language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) as an integral part of vocational training. We have told ourselves that our training products (documents in which we specify competencies needed for work related qualifications) will explicitly identify the LLN skills embedded in the units of competence. We have also created a range of accredited courses producing general education qualifications for adults and delivery of these currently comprises around 5% of the publicly funded national training effort. The

Australian Government funds English language programs for new migrants and language and literacy programs that target job-seekers and workplaces.

The benefits of this approach have been that the scale and scope of LLN delivery have increased and that general education qualifications now provide better transition pathways into vocational courses, the workplace and to university. Some of the drawbacks are that assessable courses have replaced the less formal type of program, delivered often in community settings; that competency-based formats sometimes make teachers feel constrained and less responsive to students' needs; that job-related skills are more highly valued than skills for other aspects of social and personal life; and that the multiple reasons adults have for learning are not properly recognised or respected.

In recent years, the low status of lower level training courses (including LLN courses) has been exacerbated by a number of reports conducted by the National Centre of Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) 'proving' that lower level courses do not provide value to their graduates (measured in employment outcomes) and do not therefore represent value for money for governments. The targets set for the national training system by the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) include an increase in higher level qualifications. A second target is to reduce the proportion of the adult population with the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy skills: this will be measured in 2011 when another national survey of adult literacy is taken. A third target is to close the statistical gap in employment and training outcomes for Aboriginal people. Student outcomes data show that Aboriginal people are not well served by the training system—a replication of the poor pattern of outcomes in the schools sector. Poor literacy in adults is therefore nominated as a problem to be overcome, yet there is no policy to address the systemic shortcoming that produce poor outcomes. Instead, funding is being drawn away from LLN programs, while attention is drawn to literacy as a means to measure system performance.

At the conference in South Wales, in keeping with the theme of sustainability, Amy Burgess invited delegates to use the metaphor of environmental ecology to take stock of how adult literacy work was progressing. The invitation prompted in me the recognition of just how toxic the policy environment is to many adult literacy practitioners and how few of the field's aspirations for themselves or their students can flourish in this contaminated atmosphere.

What are the features of this toxicity? One feature is an increased administrative burden associated with a focus on frequent assessment and reporting: the labour market literacy program in particular requires teachers to report frequently on students' skill acquisition using a numerator from the National Reporting System (NRS)[1] and also to monitor attendance since the program participants are in

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[1] The *National Reporting System (NRS) for language literacy and numeracy* developed in 1995 for use with Commonwealth-funded programs including the Settlement Program for new

receipt of income support. In all programs now, outcomes are measured in successful completion of modules and funding penalties may apply if benchmarks are not met.

A second feature of the 'toxic' environment is the definition of literacy competence as an attribute of human capital: skill that are needed by workers in order for them to be sufficiently productive or competitive in the labour market. The pre-eminence of this definition in policy making is reflected in the formulation of curriculum documents, in the dominance and influence of industry's voice in the advice provided to governments, in the formulation of indicators for program evaluation purposes and, perhaps most importantly, in the way a human being (the learner) is positioned as a deficient object rather than an autonomous subject. Most adult literacy teachers see the person first and the skills set second. Most adult literacy teachers recognise that learners have multiple motivations for learning and some of these may be to do with family, with community or with notions of self-worth or self-expression. Work (or lack of it) plays an important part in a person's life, but the part played by literacy in an individual's relationship with an employer goes beyond an exchange of time and skill for money.

A third feature is the development of a competitive market in which the costs of delivering programs are driven down by means of short term funding let by tender: providers try to outbid each other by offering an ever cheaper price. This process incurs disadvantages for teachers in terms of driving wages down and reducing job security and it incurs disadvantages for learners in that it is hard for organizations to hold on to well performing staff when there is no prospect of long term employment and the conditions and wages are not good. Providers struggle with a high staff turnover and program instability is one result. In conjunction with other features of the Australian training market (see below for a discussion on quality standards) short term, competitive funding has failed to provide incentives for private or community-based training organizations to employ skilled and qualified personnel to teach literacy.

In Australia at the moment, a proportion of the national money, previously allocated to the states to invest in range of training programs including adult and basic education programs delivered by the public providers—in Australia these are the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges—is now the subject of two special 'partnership' agreements targeted at job seekers and existing workers. The training for existing workers must deliver higher levels qualifications, while the training for jobseekers delivers lower level qualifications some of which may have a literacy focus. Those that have an entry level industry focus have very little focus on literacy. Unfortunately, the new partnership agreements mean that the states are now deprived of funding to maintain the

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Migrants, the labour market llanguage and literacy programs and the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program. This instrument has been renamed as the *Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF).*

infrastructure to deliver access and bridging courses including language, literacy and numeracy programs. The majority of language, literacy and numeracy courses—75%—are at the two lowest levels of credential and these are not a priority for the Australian Government. This change in funding policy threatens to undermine the states' capacity to deliver accredited literacy and numeracy programs built up through programs in the TAFE and community colleges since the early 1990s.

A fourth feature is the predominance of regulatory frameworks for quality and accountability that have been designed for a system delivering training for industry. These same regulations and standards have also been applied, willy-nilly, to that part of the system that delivers general education courses. Some of these regulations, not having been crafted with literacy courses in mind, created confusion. Three aspects have been of major concern: staff skills, assessment protocols and customising course design to workplace expectations. The standard about staff skills began to undermine the status of the post graduate teaching qualifications held by most LLN teachers: these qualifications were no longer adequate without the new vocational assessor's qualification.[2] The lack of clarity was not helpful in sustaining an argument that teachers of language, literacy and numeracy needed specialist skills and qualifications at postgraduate level. Assessment became over-regulated, manifesting in an obsession with version control. Version control is an impossible job for a literacy teacher who wants to customise assessment for each individual in response to each person's interests or particular goals for learning. Thirdly, teachers designing basic education courses understood it to be a requirement that local employers should approve their plans, even though these qualifications did not lead directly to employment.

I could go on. Some of these patterns may be recognisable to adult literacy practitioners and researchers in the UK. I have spoken with literacy workers both in the UK and in Australia who have complained about increased reporting requirements, undermining of working conditions, the assessment tail wagging the teaching dog, constraints imposed by mechanistic curriculum specifications, narrow evaluation indicators and a lack of focus on the humanitarian agenda. Most adult literacy teachers still want to think about their work in terms of equity; giving people another go; putting right some of the inequities of the past; offering new hope for the future; building competence and confidence. Essentially adult literacy workers understand their work as contributing to social wellbeing and capacity building rather than producing human capital. Adult literacy workers resist being coopted as conveyor belt operatives fashioning other people into the standard product defined as desirable by industry. It is for these reasons that the policy environment might be considered toxic: it is not an environment where the

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[2] This qualification, a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA), was designed to provide industry lecturers with trade and other vocational qualifications with the skills to ensure the consistency of assessment outcomes for vocational qualifications in a national system.

values of adult literacy workers are reflected and therefore the aspirations of adult literacy workers cannot be realised or sustained.

In a toxic environment what can you do to avoid being poisoned?

First, **don't breathe the air**. Do not try to make sense of the incoherent rhetoric; do not accept the insupportable premises; develop a taste for anarchy; undermine the fallacious logic whenever you get a chance. Retain a sense of humour.

Second, **plant a garden** with trees in it to purify the air. Permaculture techniques show how to reclaim concrete wastelands. Find what can be nurtured and gives you joy. This may mean that you choose to focus entirely on your students, standing up with them against whatever forces of evil and oppression you or they face. It may mean that you determine to follow your own research rather than look for government funding where the outcomes are expected to support a prevailing ideology. It may mean that as a bureaucrat you give frank and fearless advice and look for opportunities to correct the parts of a failing system, where, if you are clever and brave (and are not breathing the air) you have a realistic chance of succeeding. (This will almost certainly mean that you have the right kind and number of allies and collaborators.)

Third, **don't drink the water**.   You may need to provision yourself from clean springs. Go looking for the ideas that really can make a difference. In Australia we were told to 'integrate LLN with vocational training' and in Western Australia we took the opportunity to devise a methodology for partnerships between vocational lecturers and literacy teachers. The methodology is now used all over Australia and LLN teachers are learning new skills from the vocational staff they work with. The strategy has given us an opportunity to insist on the need for specialist teachers, to demonstrate that LLN support can improve vocational outcomes and to allocate resources without demanding additional assessment.

Fourth, **take the long view**: what goes around comes around. Nothing lasts forever. An unsustainable system cannot be sustained. It will collapse – sometimes the best thing may be to refrain from pointing out the problems the quicker to hasten its demise.

As I write, the WA Adult Literacy Council is making the final arrangements for the 2009 ACAL National Conference. Around 200 delegates have registered; this is quite a healthy number considering how far Fremantle is from every other population centre in Australia. The economic downturn has not helped, but people are still coming. Some of them are coming quite a long way—from New Zealand, Hong Kong, South Africa, the UK and Canada. We have taken *strength* as a theme and encouraged presenters to explore literacy (once again) as an equity, justice and human rights issue. This is a bit of a departure from the discourse of human capital and employment skills which has dominated our talk

for years now. Next year the conference will be in Darwin – we have already begun to plan it. Do you want to come?

In the meantime, perhaps there can be a stronger alliance between our two organizations. Quite what form this alliance will take will be up to individuals on the executive committees. On this side we are using web-based conferencing as a cheap method to keep in touch with each other since we are spread over a whole continent. We have delivered professional development events in the virtual classroom, and as long as we sort out the time zones, there is no reason why we could not do some sharing with our colleagues in the UK. We will be recording some of the presentations from the 2009 conference and will post these on our website www.acal.edu.au Please feel free to browse.

Supporting Reflective Practice and Collaborative Learning in Teacher Education through Technology Enhanced Learning

Jim Mullan

Jim Mullan is a teacher educator at Queen's University Belfast, co-ordinating the professional development programme for adult numeracy tutors. His research interests include: embedded teaching and learning, the active learning approach in teaching numeracy, and the role of ICT/TEL to support the teaching and learning of numeracy. He also has many years experience teaching mathematics and numeracy at secondary level and to adult learners.

During the academic year 2008 - 2009, Queen's University Belfast (QUB), was involved in a pilot project investigating the use of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) to support reflective and collaborative practice on their Adult Literacy and Numeracy teacher education programme. A detailed report on this project has been written as part of the European EVETE project (Empowerment of Vocati

onal Education and Training by Improving the E-learning Competencies of Teachers and Trainers). The full report is available on the EVETE website at www.evete.org and the QUB Essential Skills website at www.qub.ac.uk/eskills

At the RaPAL conference some of these TEL tools were demonstrated and discussed. In a well-attended workshop, fourteen delegates were first shown examples of word-processing, PowerPoint and spreadsheet documents created by QUB students using the on-line collaboration tool GoogleDocs, to support small group work. Later, the group participated in a practical session using Windows Moviemaker to manipulate and present images. A Moviemaker video created by one of the QUB students was also shown to illustrate how she used images to support reflections on her teaching practice.

The workshop finished with a brief discussion on the relevance of these TEL tools to the conference theme of 'sustainable literacies'. My interpretation of this theme is that literacies are sustainable if they are accessible to people who are diverse in age, learning preferences, and educational backgrounds; if they have a range of applications, if they are affordable, and if they allow for meaningful communication. Feedback on the workshop, where many expressed surprise at how accessible and relevant these tools were, yet easy to use, affirmed that participants regarded them as tools that would contribute to sustainable literacies.

The remainder of this article gives the background and a summary of the main activities and outcomes of this project, including some comments on the efficacy of TEL to support students' reflective and collaborative practices

Introduction

Reflective practice and collaborative tasks and are two very important features of the QUB tutor education programme.

Reflection - the model of the reflective practitioner underpins the programme and the QUB model perceives reflection as a complex process of meaning-making which takes place collectively as well as individually, through discussion as well as writing and through the approach of arts-based approaches and technologies. A number of course assignments assess the students' reflective practice

Collaboration - tutors and students agree that group work and social constructivism (knowledge created through social interactions) is important in developing effective teaching and learning environments. The model of communities of practice (Wenger 1998), where students with common interests can share ideas and engage in social learning, is central to this. Collaborative tasks, very often involving small groups of 2 to 4 students, have therefore been integrated into the course; examples include small group work to prepare lesson plans, microteaching sessions and for assignments etc.

Background to present study

The tutor education programme started in 2002 and over the years student evaluations of the course have been very positive. However, in some of the feedback, issues have emerged regarding collaborative tasks and reflective practice. Below are examples of two such comments from past students prior to 2008:

"I learnt so much from my peers and therefore enjoyed the group work but very often we did not have the time to finish this work during class time; we therefore had to meet up on a Saturday, when everyone was free. Some people had to travel long distances which was a real nuisance"

"I found it really difficult to do my reflective learning journal assignment and also the final reflection for my teaching practice. I do reflect but find it very difficult to put in words"

Similar responses were expressed by a number of other students. This was of concern to the course team because of the central importance of collaborative tasks and reflective practice to the programme.

The challenge

How could the course team deal with these issues?

One obvious solution - to allocate more time for collaborative tasks and reflection - was not an option due to time constraints, typical of a part-time course such as this, where students come together for only one session per week.

Course tutors agreed to try to address these issues using TEL tools. The importance of TEL in supporting teaching and learning on the course has long been recognized, and, over the years, considerable progress has been made in incorporating appropriate use of TEL into the literacy and numeracy provision.

But what TEL tools should be used? There is a bewildering array of Web 2.0 technologies available to support teaching and learning and careful consideration needed to be given to which technologies were relevant to the course.

Our response

Course tutors agreed that the tools chosen must be appropriate and easily accessible. They also had to be practical and simple to use so that they can be used by all students irrespective of their skills or confidence. This was very important because most of our students are aged 35+ and are not typical 'generation 2.0 ' learners , who use computers seamlessly; most of them are 'digital immigrants' (Prensky,**200**1,p 2)

Finally, we also thought it important to select tools that the students may use to help support future professional practice when they complete and leave our course at QUB.

A number of applications were identified that satisfied all these requirements: Google Docs, Skye and Mikogo for collaborative work and Windows Moviemaker to support reflective practice.

What we did
The full report describes in detail a number of activities designed by the course team to introduce and encourage the use of these tools. These were mapped into our programme and delivered to students at various stages. Some of these activities are summarized below.

GoogleDocs (docs.google.com) is a free, Web-based word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, and form application offered by Google. It allows users to create and edit documents online while col[...] other users.
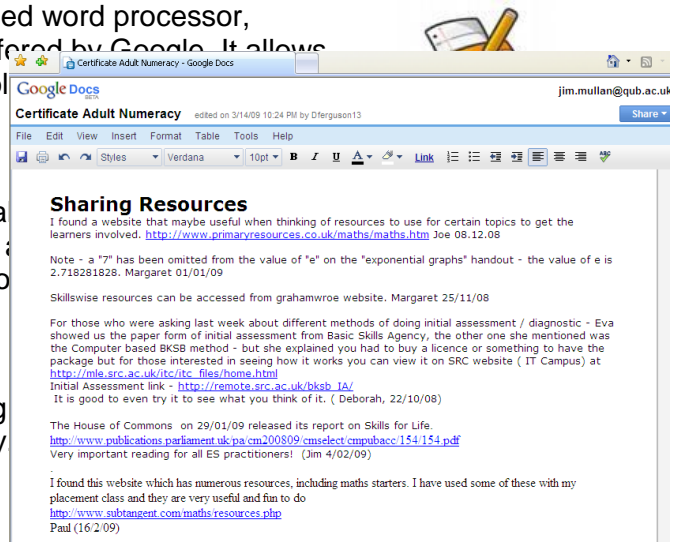
Skype (www.skype.com) is a free application that a[...] telephone calls over the Internet; using Skype with [...] send and receive live video during your conversatio[...] Skype

Mikogo (www.mikogo.com) is a free online meeting [...] your desktop with other participants simultaneously [...] in the latest version of Skype

Windows Moviemaker (it comes 'bundled' with Windows XP or Vista) is a video editing program that allows you to make home movies, photo albums and business presentations

Early in the course, GoogleDocs was demonstrated to students and used to carry out an activity in web-based collaborative learning. Here, a Google document titled 'Feedback & Discussion' was created by the tutors and shared with the whole class. This was a Word document inviting students to make comments and evaluations on various aspects of the course so far. For this activity, students also considered some of the rules of participation and good practice in web-based collaborative learning e.g. the importance of applying the rules of net-etiqutte, sharing responsibility and roles and how to nurture others to help host and facilitate the group.

Students discussed their experiences and how this tool might support other tasks in the course. In particular, they were encouraged to use this application to support small group work for an assignment which required them to present exhibitions on literacy and numeracy. They were also encouraged to use this application to support group work for microteaching sessions. A podcast where some of our students discuss their use of GoogleDocs for these assignments is available of the Essential Skills website at www.qub.ac.uk/eskills.

In a later activity, this use of web-based tools for collaboration was further extended, when, midway through the course, students were invited to borrow webcams, headsets to allow them to use Skype. A number of students did borrow the equipment: some using it only for Skype chatting to friends etc, but others did use the resources to share and discuss course assignments. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, it was not possible to introduce Mikogo to the classes

To help generate discussion on the use of images and video to support alternative approaches to reflection, students were shown a collection of images presented in a PowerPoint file, created by one of the course tutors. These were images taken by the tutor, using a digital camera, of some of the student classroom activities in previous classes. The tutor and students evaluated how these images allowed the tutor to capture, preserve, represent and contrast classroom events.
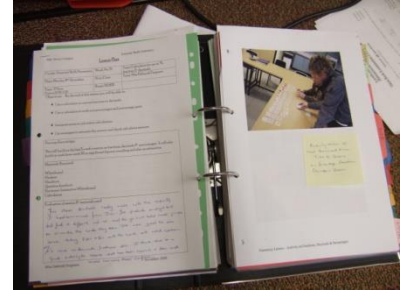
Students also discussed how they might use their mobile phone or a digital camera to capture key moments and events during their classroom practice. In a follow-up workshop they were shown how to present these images using Windows Moviemaker and how to create 'videos'. Soon a number of students were using images or videos to support evidence of their reflective learning journal and portfolio of teaching practice. Examples of these are can be viewed on the QUB website.

Finally, at the end of the course, two detailed surveys were carried out to assess their use of these tools.

What difference did it make?

The first survey on their use of the tools for collaboration attempted to ascertain to what extent:

- the use of TEL tools supported working and learning together?
- these technologies have contributed to the value of group work, as perceived by tutors and students?
- has the use of these applications encouraged students to mentor and assist each other?
- has the use of TEL tools for group work contributed to the quality of the work?

The many positive responses suggest that these tools were supportive in working and learning together.

"I worried about time constraints. When would we get the opportunity to get together to prepare for the assignment? ….. I believe the introduction of GoogleDocs proved a life-saver for the group …… we created a PowerPoint file so that we could all collaborate. This was fantastic as it gave us an insight into what each person was adding to the slides"

"Skype definitely contributed to students assisting and supporting one another, especially through the difficult times on the course – it helped to 'see' a friendly face".

The second survey attempted to ascertain to what extent their use of images and video helped them to:

- 'see' more of what is going on in the classroom?
- engage in self-reflection?
- enhance the sharing of their practice with others?
- integrate theory with practice?

Again, their responses are positive and would indicate that a number of the students found this a valuable experience; students clearly enjoyed showing and seeing images of their own and their peers' practice and experiences:

"I did use my mobile to take pictures during teaching sessions; they were particularly good as a reflection tool "
"I find self reflection quite difficult. I find it hard to express myself through words - I can't seem to be able to state how I feel using only language. Being able to use Moviemaker greatly enhanced my ability to reflect not only on what I had learned but also on what my learners had learned. To say all I wanted to using only words would have required me to write page after page! Using Moviemaker allowed me to address the many intricacies of my reflection in a fuller and more interesting format."

This feedback in both surveys is supported with extensive evidence of their use of these tools. The full report also includes an evaluation by the course team which clearly indicates these tools contributed to the quality of student work for the programme

"The use of images helped them to understand concepts they were struggling with; they came to understand the importance of visual literacy; the use of images supported learner engagement in discussion, reading and creative writing; their enjoyment of the process of making films had facilitated them in using this method in their own practice" (Course tutor)

Course tutors have also been encouraged by reports from some students who have completed the course that they have continued to use these tools in their classroom practice.

Lessons learned
In planning the delivery of the activities, course tutors were concerned about overloading the students with too much technology. These applications were therefore introduced at various stages of the programme, using a 'drip-feed' approach. A number of students in their feedback commented that they would

have preferred all these tools to be introduced at the beginning so that they could take maximum advantage of them.

The attempt to use GoogleDocs to create a feedback/discussion forum for the whole class was not very successful. Tutors and students agreed that GoogleDocs works best for small group work. Skype was used by only a few of the students. Course tutors feel that this was mainly due to timing issues – it was introduced midway through course, when some students, struggling with assignments etc were not amenable to new ideas – and, also due to the failure to show the Mikogo application because, when used together, these two applications provide a very simple but powerful way for students to talk, see each other and to share desktops and files.

The Windows Moviemaker reflections consisted mainly of images and music. None of the students used the facility to add narrative to their Moviemaker timelines. Tutors believe that in many instances this could have contributed to their reflections. Most students used their own mobile phone or digital cameras for images and video. Video cameras were also available for students to borrow, but none of them did.   Some explained they were apprehensive about borrowing such expensive equipment and that they had never used this technology. Next year, the programme hopes to make available for borrowing, 'flip' video cameras, which provide for a more 'user-friendly' way of making videos.

Questions raised

Despite their accessibility, ease of use etc a number of students did not make use of these tools. Why? The most common reason in their evaluations was 'lack of time'; however, the tutors believe there are other reasons which need to be researched. These include issues to do with student reluctance to engage with new technologies; students' perceptions of the use of visual images and their contribution to meaning-making; and group dynamics and potential personality clashes in web-based collaborative work.

The use of these tools also poses a number of questions for course tutors regarding assessment:

- How are tutors to assess the use of images and videos in assignments requiring evidence of reflective practice? Can visual responses be assessed in the same way as the traditional written responses?
- Does the use of multimedia support teacher educators in assessing teaching practice? What are the advantages and disadvantages, compared to the more conventional observation?
- Should and how can tutors assess small group collaborative work undertaken using social networking tools such as GoogleDocs?

Traditional teacher education programmes lack criteria for assessing visual reflections and web-based collaborative work. The QUB Adult Literacy and Numeracy students' use of alternative and creative ways for reflection and collaboration has helped course tutors identify and explore these key questions to inform the development of these criteria. For example, focuing on visual reflections, Tracey (in press) recommends that "a language for assessing visual reflection needs to be developed, taking into account opportunities for students to explore the use of images to their practice as literacy and numeracy teachers."

Conclusion

Feedback from students and course tutors would indicate that the original aim of trying to identify and use appropriate, practical and accessible TEL tools to support reflective practice and collaborative learning on our programmes has been achieved:

- **Appropriate** because these tools did contribute to the quality of their work for the programme.
- **Practical** because the tools were easy to use; only a few students had problems with using these applications
- **Accessible** because students were able to use the web-based tools anywhere; all they needed was internet connection

We are satisfied that we have introduced our students to TEL tools that have supported them in their teacher-education course and that this experience will contribute to their professional development when they exit our courses and enter professional practice. This focus on appropriate, practical and accessible tools has also helped them understand how these are vitally important features in contributing to sustainable use.

Course tutors look forward to further developing and incorporating these tools into our programme for next year and further exploration of the assessment issues they highlight.

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Sustaining learning over time: It looks more like a Yellowbrick Road than a straightforward path for women experiencing violence

Vicky Duckworth

Introduction

This workshop delivered by myself and Yvon Appleby looked at how women experiencing violence manage learning: often over time and sometimes on the move. For many, learning has to be sustained over a considerable length of time and with many barriers to be negotiated. The stories of women's lives, in studies we are involved in, show the longer term view that tutors and educators need to take, often in tension with formalised learning outcomes. We drew upon the work of Jenny Horsman (1999) and others to explore how as literacy workers we can support and sustain learning for women experiencing violence. Using two cases studies, we explored what violence means in the lives of these women as they learn and develop their literacy practices both inside and outside the classroom.

For the purpose of this paper I will focus on my contribution to the workshop. Learners who attend adult literacy classes have often had to overcome significant barriers to gain the confidence and courage to return to learning, in some cases bringing with them 'fear of violence, threat and intimidation' (see Barton et al, 2007:165). Even when learners have been in vulnerable situations, facing domestic violence or other social or emotional difficulties, adult literacy education can often be a critical space to support and empower them to take agency, no matter what their trajectory so far. As tutors in the life long learning sector we can create safe learning environments, based on respect, where learners can flourish and reach their potential (Duckworth, 2010).

In the workshop we discussed the barriers that many adult learners have and continue to face. We identified how shifting from a traditional, competency based approach to curriculum design to a more critical model can provide a culturally relevant, learner driven, and socially empowering curriculum (Freire, 1993; Barton et al 2003). The shift towards an egalitarian drive takes into consideration the cultural, psychological and educational factors related to the Learners and their lives. It opens space for dialogic communication between teachers and learners and actively involves learners in their own education. This active participation includes the co-creation of the curriculum whereby their needs, motivations and interests are the driving factors to the curriculum design.

Examples of the co-creation of curriculums and community projects were shared with the delegates.   We explored how practitioners could use learners' stories, poetry and images as foils to represent the generative themes in the lives of the learners.   To support this we discussed the development of Marie McNamara's easy read auto-biography (McNamara, 2007). A single mum with three young children she had found 'coming back to education was the hardest decision I have ever made'. Marie's book looks at the motivation for returning to education

Going back to education
was changing all our lives
History was not going to repeat itself
I was making sure of that.
I took another course
called Access to Heath and Nursing.
I realised I wanted to be a nurse,
but needed more qualifications
(McNamara, 2007: 9 – 10)

We looked at Marie's story in more detail and discussed how it could be used to open up a dialogue with learners. The ideas that arose included exploring experiences of violence, poverty and illiteracy which many learners face, how these problems exist and what could be done to address them.   To support this we read through the holistic resources (Duckworth, 2008) which had been developed to support Marie's story.   The resources encourage learners to consider their own life situation, their hopes for the future and aims to help them identify a series of actions they can take towards achieving *their* goals.

The workshop lead into discussing how community projects can challenge the discourse of a neoliberal approaches to learning societies which privileges individual over collective learning. This positions education as a commodity, and pays no regard to issues of economic, political and social equality.   I spoke of my work with Write About ---- (2008, 2009). The group consists of tutors and mentors, with experience of working with young people and adults who find themselves on the fringes of society. It promotes writing, by ordinary people, about social issues which have impacts on their lives.

The   published collections, based around bullying (2008) and Inspirational people (2009), were circulated around the delegates. We shared our accounts of community work / action and how community projects were empowering to both the writers and the readers of the stories. For the readers they offer strategies for dealing with issues that can impact on their learning and lower their self esteem and confidence, such as bullying.

A key theme to arise from the workshop was how as busy practitioners finding the time for reflection and working with learners to co-create resources can be difficult.   We considered how many noncritical curriculums may have potential to move toward critical pedagogy. An example of this is when tutors may have to use a pre-written curriculum but may also implement a more reflective and critical pedagogy which empower learners. Through empowerment, learners can achieve their potential not only in the cognitive domain but also through feelings of self-worth and pro-activity in controlling their life. This means encouraging learners to look beyond 'reading the word' to 'reading the world', and becoming actors in developing their own communities and societies. (Freire, 1993)

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RaPAL Conference Evaluations: 'sharing sustains us all'

Sandra Varey

Sandra Varey is a member of the RaPAL Management Group and lives in Cumbria.

With this year's focus on *Sustainable Literacies*, feedback from the conference highlights the importance of the event in bringing together people working in many different roles and contexts – and, in doing so, sustaining *them*. The above title, 'sharing sustains us all', is taken from one delegate's conference evaluation form. It sums up something expressed by many over the three days: an important highlight was 'renewing and making new connections - with people as well as ideas'. Meeting both 'old and new friends' is a recurring theme in delegates' evaluations, along with the 'great atmosphere' and 'feeling of community'. This sense of community also supports us in developing 'a greater understanding of the difficulties we all experience!' Appreciation was also expressed for a 'well-organised' conference and for the campus surroundings, food and entertainment provided by the University of Wales, resulting in a 'very enjoyable' few days.

'Discussion with others from a variety of places' is an important feature of RaPAL conferences and, in the event's first visit to Wales, this was a theme reflected in the feedback. For some Wales-based practitioners, 'meeting people from outside Wales [was] a rare opportunity!' which emphasises the great value in the RaPAL conference moving around geographically and extending its network. There was much to learn from the Welsh experience too, for those coming to the conference from outside Wales. Many benefited from the 'input on bilingualism in Wales' and the lecture from Dr Marion Loeffler where they 'learned about history of the Welsh language', its sometimes painful history for official recognition, and its relatively good health today.

Many people also mentioned 'the storytelling harpist', Friday evening's entertainment, as one of the event's highlights. The myths and magic of Welsh culture which the harpist shared is one aspect of the Welsh experience. Another, contrasting, aspect is the history of the labour movement and industry in South Wales. Delegates enjoyed Newport's Chartist Mural (showing the Chartist Uprising – see photo) viewed on a night out in Newport, and this was mentioned as another highlight.

Many enjoyed the links throughout the conference between environmental education and literacy. In particular, delegates enjoyed Amy's opening presentation and recycling metaphor, with comments including how this aided them in their 'thinking and reflection', and provided 'a useful framework' for the issues addressed over the three days.

Evaluations from each year's RaPAL event are used to inform the planning of the next. Feedback from the 2008 RaPAL conference in Galway, for example, indicated that 'questions on the evaluation form could be revisited as delegates were reluctant to answer questions which elicited a negative response', and recommended that questions could focus instead on delegates' 'suggestions about improvements' (Crawford, Waters and Collins, 2008, p.51). This was fed into the evaluation forms used this year and the comments received have been very useful.

Once their choice of workshop was made, for example, some members of the conference party commented on their frustration at missing the other workshops running at the same time. Suggestions to address this in future events include either a 'summary session' in the conference itself, or filming workshops and making them available on the RaPAL website. Feedback from the 2008 Galway event also illustrated how 'opportunities for discussion in the workshops were particularly valued, indicating that consideration might be given to making sessions longer' (Crawford, Waters and Collins, 2008, p.51). This was also commented on this year with delegates stating that workshops were 'excellent', 'interactive' but 'too short'.

Feedback also referred to people's new learning from the event as including 'New websites, new publications [and] new ways of doing things', along with 'Support for developing digital literacies'. Thank you to all who attended and contributed towards the success of the event. We hope to see you all again, along with some new faces, at the 2010 conference in London. Details to follow ....

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NB: All quotes, unless otherwise indicated, are taken directly from conference delegates' written evaluations.

A New Chapter for Roz Ivanič

Amy Burgess

Colleagues who attended the RaPAL conference in Galway in 2008 will remember that the closing address was a farewell speech by Roz Ivanič, who was about to retire[3]. Roz was a founder member of RaPAL and has contributed enormously to its development over the years. As a lecturer and Professor at Lancaster University and Associate Director of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre, she has also made a huge contribution to research in literacy studies and linguistics. This aspect of her work has recently been formally recognised by the publication of a book of essays in her honour. The RaPAL editorial group decided that it would be fitting to include a review of this book in the journal and Sarah Rennie agreed to write it. I was delighted when the group asked me to write an appreciation of Roz to accompany Sarah's review. However, it struck me that there would be many other RaPAL members whose careers and lives have been, and continue to be, influenced by Roz and who might also like to contribute. This also seemed to be in keeping with the collegiate approach which is such a hallmark of Roz's work, so I posted a message on the RaPAL e-mail list asking for contributions. I received the following responses.

From Meriel Lobley:

As soon as I read your request my mind went back to the first time I met Roz, over 26 years ago. I had been working in Lancaster for a short time as a part-time Literacy Tutor Organiser and Roz presented a staff development session on teaching the use of the full stop and I was fascinated! Her questioning nature and obvious rapport with her students came through at that first encounter. The whole team were activated to review their thinking and practice.

Later on we saw more of each other with RaPAL meetings and planning events for the National Year of Literacy. For the latter we hired Rylands House and invited the town - great fun! From memory Roz ran a drop in for parents and children to enjoy learning together.

I've usually attended feedback events for Roz's research projects through the years and she should be very proud of her contribution to the field, always encouraging students and colleagues to aim high!

From Yvon Appleby:

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[3] The text of the speech was published in issue 67 of the RaPAL journal

I think Roz has been a giant in adult literacy in every way. She has developed her own work, focusing on adult learners, as well as supporting the work of many students and researchers who themselves represent another constituency of learners. This shows what a good teacher she was with many beneficiaries of her work.

From Sandie Stratford:

My memories of Roz are warm. I used her writings a lot during my Masters Degree on Writing and Identity, and felt I knew her personally when we finally met up! Walking across Glasgow, through the botanical gardens, Roz was such an approachable and thoughtful person. I'm grateful to have had the chance to meet her in person, courtesy of RaPAL.

From Margaret Herrington:

It would be fair to say that I found Roz rather daunting when I first met her at an early RaPAL conference in Brighton, in the mid 1980's. To me, as a part-time tutor organiser with a large family who was hot and bothered most of the time, she appeared cool and confident. She was also someone who appeared to have her mental sleeves rolled up as she tackled profound questions about literacy theory and practice. I found her open stance vigorous and invigorating.
The dauntedness continued, however, when Roz invited me to join the RaPAL Bulletin editorial group. Though I had had no prior experience of such work and had never, ever, been in meetings in which one waited for a consensus to emerge, I could see that Roz had the patience to work in such a way and so I could only watch and learn.

Over time I learned more about her and no longer felt that kind of distance. Here are some of the reasons:

- o Roz seemed to embody the idea that **the personal is professional**!!! Roz is warm, kind, funny and someone whom you can rely upon to listen. These personal qualities appeared to be woven into her professional life- part and parcel of the same. I had direct experience of this when she went to great lengths to help when I was devising a teaching certificate course for literacy tutors at Leicester university in the late 1980's. Her personal values and sense of collegiality led her to give invaluable advice as well as acting as external examiner. It seemed to me that she provided a living example of constructing one's own professionalism and I felt connected to that idea.

- o Roz always appeared to be **unafraid of trying new forms of working.** I shall never forget the amazingly unstructured and fluid conference at Morecambe (the Midland Hotel I think) during which thinking outside the box really was the order of the day. And her early investigative work with

students (especially on punctuation and on how writing was experienced) was groundbreaking and even now is still amazingly helpful for students and practitioners.

- o **Roz** regarded RAPAL as work in progress**. She was always asking us to revisit the question about what was Rapallish.** For her it was of vital importance to be clear about the values and practices which we regarded as distinctively Rapallish. I could see the value of this 'ongoing revolution' stance both in terms of enabling members to respond publicly to policy developments and also in terms of editing the journal.

We have not always agreed but disagreements are valuable. Roz once explained to me that she loved writing because it enabled her to find out what she thought whereas for me it rarely had that function. This difference led me to think more precisely about the experience of writing and this actively informed future work. It is clear from this that I owe Roz a great deal.

Above all it is difficult to think of her without seeing and feeling her warm smile.

From Mary Ashworth:

I was lucky enough to be included as a volunteer researcher in the Literacies for Learning in Further Education (LfLHE) project from October 2005 to February 2007.

I am so glad to have an opportunity to say how much I appreciated Roz's quite extraordinary generosity, firstly, in giving me, a literacy novice, the opportunity to be involved in the final stages of the LfLFE project, and to learn so much from working in the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre and being able to attend the Tuesday discussion groups. Secondly I want to thank her for being so very generous with her own time, explaining and discussing aspects of the project with me one-to-one when so many other demands were claiming her attention. I felt astonishingly privileged and it has had a major impact on the subsequent direction of my academic interests.

From Tricia Hartley:

I met Roz along with David Barton and Mary Hamilton when I did my MA with them 20 years ago - I found Roz really stimulating and thought-provoking, challenging my thinking and making me see my practice from a different perspective. We worked together on the 'Worlds of Literacy' conference and book, to which I contributed a chapter, and I was struck by her painstaking work to make sure the final volume matched up with everyone's hopes.

Having moved out of literacy work into general adult education some years ago, I hadn't seen Roz for a while, but visited Lancaster with a German

postgraduate basic skills student on placement with us a couple of years ago and bumped into her. She was as warm and welcoming as ever, and spent a lot of time with Suzanne explaining the structure of the postgraduate programmes at Lancaster and pointing her to relevant research. Suzanne was quite overawed to meet Roz, having read her work as part of her course, and commented delightedly on how friendly, human and 'normal' Roz was - a far cry, she said, from some of her own tutors!

Finally, I'd like to add a few thoughts of my own.

Roz has been present, either in person or indirectly through her work, at some key moments in my career. It was her work that first inspired me to study writing and identity and she continues to be a guiding light on my journey as a researcher. I first met Roz and heard her speak when I attended the 1998 RaPAL conference as a practitioner. Roz gave the keynote address, entitled 'Celebrating Our Multiple Selves as Writers and Researchers' and I remember feeling excited, uplifted and challenged in equal measure. I have my handout from that talk in front of me now and can see that I scribbled on it some phrases she used which must have had special resonance for me at that time:

Literacy is not the defining feature of anyone's identity.
There are many ways of being 'the sort of person who writes'.
Teaching should be listening.

As researchers it's our job to find out, listen and watch, but not to know.

Since I wrote those notes I've been fortunate enough to work closely with Roz for a number of years and   looking back now, I can see that they encapsulate some, but by no means all, the things I've learnt from her over that time.

So far these reflections have focused mainly on the past, but RaPAL members who know Roz will want to know what she is doing now. Not surprisingly, she has not left her academic work completely and has been involved in some collaborative writing projects. She's also been spending plenty of time with family and friends and has continued her artistic interests by taking up tapestry. I'm pleased to be able to tell you (although I suspect it will make some of you very envious!) that as I write this, she and her husband, Milan, are spending several weeks in Australia visiting their son. I'm sure all RaPAL readers will want to join me in wishing them a wonderful holiday and a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Book Review

Carter, A., Lillis, T and Parkin S. eds. (2009) *Why Writing Matters.
Issues of access and identity in writing research and pedagogy.*
Amsterdam/Phildelphia:John Benjamin Publishing Company.

Sarah Rennie

This book is a celebration of the life and work of Roz Ivanic who was Professor
of Language and Education at Lancaster University for many years and is now
Emeritus Professor at Lancaster and still actively thinking, writing and
challenging all around her. It is a rich book of many strands with contributions
from friends, colleagues and past PhD students whose personal and professional
lives were transformed by having Roz as a supervisor. The focus is on writing in
formal contexts across all the phases of education; it is organised round three
main themes- creativity and identity , pedagogy and research methodologies.
I first came across Roz Ivanic's work about ten years ago when I read the book
she wrote with Romy Clark, The Politics of Writing. What I remember was
reading the words of some of her students , discussing their struggles with
writing; one of them talked about how writing assignments was " like putting on a
posh frock" I don't think these were the actual words but they certainly introduced
me to Ivanic's work on writing and identity.   It was one of those eureka moments
which changed the ways in which I thought about writing and tried to help the
learners I worked with develop their voices as writers.

So it has been a great pleasure to read this book which shows the way some of
those ideas have developed in the last ten years. I feel I need my "posh frock" as
the warm and personal tributes have come from many of the most distinguished
scholars in the fields of language, linguistics and literacy. These friends and
colleagues talk about Roz, whereas in the research chapters the formal Ivanic is
used and this is how she will be referred to in the review. The fact that this
needs to be thought about is a tribute to Ivanic's work on writing and identity.
The review will discuss how the book can sustain teachers of writing at many
levels, with reference in particular to the chapters contributed by the three
editors.

Shining through the whole book is the central role of the learner writer, not the
researcher and certainly not the teacher. In earlier work referred to here,
(*Linguistics and the Logic of Non-Standard Punctuation* in Hall and Robinson
1996) Ivanic herself listened to adult literacy students talking about punctuation
and came to realise how seriously writers took their punctuation decisions; Sing
and Hall developed this methodology and observed small groups of children,
some as young as seven as they discussed apostrophes with complete

concentration which would put most of us to shame   Theresa Lillis, one of the editors, discusses her research on writers' voices in writing research; the methodology places the writers centre stage and empowers the research participants to contribute to the direction of the research. These values which are shared by all the contributors to this book challenge the uncritical acceptance of dominant forms of writing and open up spaces for new writers.

Awena Carter's chapter discusses her work helping a dyslexic child learn to write (Chapter 5). Carter uses Ivanic's multi-layered view of language and her framework of possible discourses of writing and learning to write. These discourses are then connected to beliefs about learning to write and approach to teaching writing. The skills discourse which has dominated so much of the agenda in recent years is there, but it is set along side a creativity discourse as well as social practices and socio-political discourses. Carter analyses her work with a dyslexic child as she supports him to develop as a writer through the prism of these discourse lenses. Carter was working as a peripatetic dyslexia specialist teaching primary age children and she had the luxury of individual time with the children. However her chapter encourages us to reflect critically and creatively on our approaches to teaching and learning writing and I would urge all literacy teachers to read it particularly as they face the onward march of Functional Skills. Sue Parkin's chapter (CH.2) explores Ivanic's concept of "wrighting", in which writers, in this case college students, have to create an art project as part of their assessment, The concept of "wrighting" allows us to gain an insight into the processes by which a multi-modal text is crafted; the art student uses words but adds images as a wheelwright uses wood but adds metal. Parkin explores the journey on which she and the art student (Dylan) travelled as she supported him in the "wrighting " of his art project.   For teachers like me who wear their "posh frocks" with relative ease this insight into the multi-modal world is challenging and intriguing .

For readers already familiar with Ivanic's work, this book provides plenty of new and interesting articles (I haven't even mentioned the ones looking at issues surrounding writers whose first language is not English). For those new to her work, I hope I have whetted the appetite, although I have to say that it will probably be better to look for some of her other work as this is a serious price, (over £50!) Writing does matter and this challenges us all to think and talk about it.

Reference
Hall, N. and Robinson,A. (1996) *Learning about Puncuation.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.