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RaPAL

Open Edition

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

Who we are

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

What we do

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

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

Why not join in?

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

The RaPAL Journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group.
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Editorial

Linda Pearce and Julie Meredith

Linda is a Parent Support Coordinator at Plymouth Parent Partnership and a member of the RaPAL Editorial Group. Julie is an English Tutor at Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT) and Joint Coordinator of the RaPAL Journal.

Welcome to this Open Edition of the Journal which draws together an engaging and eclectic mix of contributions. If "all writing is still for us always also learning to write",[i] the same holds for editing, and we have thoroughly enjoyed working with all the contributors.

Section 1: Voices from the Classroom
We begin this section with two learner voices. Leroy Powell shares his story and personal realisation that confidence in reading and writing is a prerequisite for finding and gaining employment in 21st century Britain. Aneila Sultan then provides an implicit reminder that the impact of learning and 'measures of success' are not exclusively about test results or 'progression' through 'levels'. She describes how she has begun to find words more approachable and spelling less scary. She addresses tutors and students with some tips.

Following on from our *Digital Literacies Edition*,[ii] our next two writers suggest ways learners can create their own electronic content rather than simply consuming content created by others. Susan Aldridge outlines a project developed from the *Six Book Challenge* [iii] that involved her learners writing about their reading and developing digital literacy at the same time. Are you or your learners blogging yet?

If a blog sounds a rather long-term commitment, you could consider an ebook. Vickie Johnstone suggests this as a way to find an audience outside the classroom. She shares her experience of self-publishing to encourage tutors to consider ebooks as a route for students to publish their own writing. A poem from Vickie's first published collection then highlights that inspiration can come from anywhere.

Whether blogging or creating ebooks, these practical ideas start to address what has been identified as a second 'digital divide'. That is, not a question of access to computers and the Internet, but a divide "between people who have the competencies to use computers productively and creatively, and those who use computers in more prosaic ways". [iv]

Our pieces from Steve Gibson and Jill Jones confront a different divide: language. They may challenge your deaf awareness as they reflect on the role of language in learning and question what it means to have full and equal access to learning. Steve considers the difficulties faced by Deaf[v] students outside the classroom and looks for practical solutions. He has provided a BSL translation of his article at www.tinyurl.com/RaPaLBSL. Jill, a member of DEX,[vi] argues for a change in legislation to give deaf children access to bilingual education. In the same spirit as RaPAL, DEX enables learners to make their views known and encourages their participation in decision-making processes.

The final article in this section highlights that funding needs to reflect the value of a range of outcomes, not just qualifications. Clare Williams from The Reader Organisation brings reading back into focus with her reflections on the inspirational and therapeutic effects of reading groups on participants' mental health, wellbeing and enjoyment of life. We hope you will be encouraged to be part of "building a reading revolution" with your learners, whoever and wherever they may be.

Section 2: Developing Research and Practice
Our contributors to this section grapple with the challenging realities of providing learning experiences which are appropriate and context effective. They do this against the backdrop of economic difficulties both here in the UK, where vocationally-orientated education has been in the spotlight, and globally with relation to adult literacy in international development.

Recently, and particularly during the current economic crisis, vocationally-oriented education has been forefronted. Sarah Aynsley and Jacqui Shepherd's article, drawn from the wider evaluation of the Skills for Life at Work Project, looks in particular at the learners' experience. Their evidence suggests that the opening up of new possibilities, increase in confidence and self-belief are as important as the development of knowledge and skills. This indicates that the vocational element of the project and learning for personal/social reasons are not mutually exclusive.

In the international arena Jan Eldred, from the Literacy Working Group, highlights the realities of global interdependence and the serious implications for all if we neglect to invest in supporting emerging economies. She discusses the centrality of using appropriate approaches to teaching and learning underpinned by lifelong learning policies and practice in building vibrant economies, where social justice, active citizenship and lively democracy prevail.

Section 3: Research and Practice – Multidisciplinary Perspectives
In this section we revisit and build on the reading group theme introduced by Clare in Section 1 and explore the impact of reading groups on prisoners' literacy practices through Kate Hendry's action research project undertaken in Barlinnie Prison. Here Kate argues that reading groups, "rather than focusing on non-ability, non-attendance and non-compliance,

help prisoners to use their literacy practices as a way to sustain their social and individual identities within an institutional setting". Hooray for teachers and learners having the freedom to work creatively and design provision that suits their own contexts!

Reviews
Near the start of the new academic year, it is lovely to have new resources and we are delighted that learners are involved in our first two reviews. Entry Level students and education professionals share their thoughts on two New Leaf titles, *The Cardigan* and *The Kit Kat*, which have come out as bilingual eBooks in collaboration with DeafEducate. Aneila Sultan then gives her opinion on the third in Gatehouse Books' series of Supermarket Stories, *Dan's Dinner*.

Phonics is never far from any discussion about literacy in the UK and continues to get a mixed reception in the post-compulsory classroom. Teacher trainer Irene Schwab suggests that *Phonetics for Phonics* may be just what is needed to support tutors to be both knowledgeable and effective in this area.
Naomi Sorge also reviews a title aimed at practitioners, *Teaching Adults*, and gives a timely reminder to trainers to consider the readability for students on generic teacher training courses.

Yvonne Spare gives her verdict on *Adult Basic Skills*. Produced by the International Review Programme, it considers the key principles of effective practice and the wider gains in terms of human and social capital.

The Journal closes with a review essay on *Remaking Adult Learning*. Margaret Herrington shares her views on this collection of 27 essays on adult education written in honour of Alan Tuckett, former Chief Executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

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

i Clark, R. and Ivanic, R. (1997). *The Politics of Writing*. London: Routledge.
ii RaPAL Journal No. 74. Spring/Summer 2011. ISSN 1747-5600.
iii The Reading Agency, an independent charity with a mission to inspire more people to read more, launched the Six Book Challenge in 2008. The Challenge invites less confident readers to read six books and record their reading in a diary in order to receive incentives, a certificate and the chance to enter a national prize draw. Find out more at http://www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk/
iv Discussion paper High Level Expert Group on Literacy. (2011).*Trends affecting Europe and what they mean for literacy. P.16*
v Deaf with a capital 'D' is taken to represent deaf individuals who use British Sign Language as their main mode of communication.
vi The Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group (DEX) is a deaf-led organisation that was set up to support deaf people who are being educated in mainstream education, or attended mainstream schools.

Learning to Read and Write

Leroy Powell

Leroy Powell was born in Jamaica and raised in the UK. He works in a hospital and is a student in London.

Looking back over my life my biggest regret is that I did not learn to read and write when I was at school. At school sport was all I wanted to do. I played cricket and football for my school but my biggest love was boxing and it was all I wanted to do. I just wanted to box. So every minute I got I went to the gym. I won all my fights and also won school boy title.

My biggest love was boxing and it was all I wanted to do.

So I left school without learning to read and write. After leaving school I could train every day. I won every fight. It was good for me to have people talking about me. It made me feel good. But in the blink of an eye it was all over. One foggy morning I was out running and I was hit by a car.

After leaving the hospital I felt that my boxing could be over. I had a bad feeling. I knew it was all my hopes and dreams gone. It took me two years to get the strength and movements back in the shoulder. I knew boxing was finished for me so I began to work as a machine operator. I did this for 25 years.

Then in 2008 after being made redundant, the reality of not being able to read and write finally sank in. That is when I realised how important reading and writing is because you have to be able to read and write to apply for any kind of job. That is when I enrolled in an English class to learn to read and write.

One thing I learnt is the old saying *don't put all your eggs in one basket* is true because that is what I did. But now I am learning how to read and write it will be better.

My Relationship with Spelling

Aneila Sultan

Aneila went to her local adult education centre in London with her son when he wanted to join a GCSE course. While she was waiting, she saw people doing assessments and thought she'd have a go. She is dyslexic and knew she wanted to learn more. She is now a student as well.

Generally when I first started my Entry 2 course I felt nervous and overwhelmed about things. In class we looked at words within words like bra in library. Then how you chunk them and colour them in, and that's another big thing that opened me up to spellings. They were more approachable and I could cope better with them. Some words felt impossible to learn and understand then seeing that **notice** ends in **ice**, for example, opened my mind to not be overwhelmed by words. They don't feel so scary anymore.

My Tips for Teachers

1. Use personal spelling lists
Students need to have their own personal spellings. They are most likely to use them if they're their personal words. It reinforces them when they use them. In text messages, for example, people send similar messages and use the same words. The same is true for a shopping list with things like potatoes and tomatoes. Words don't stay in our heads if we don't use them!

2. Which words?
Encourage your students to pick their own words to learn. They can get them from anywhere but could start by looking at mistakes in their work. When we pay attention we see words are going on all around us. The students need the words not the teacher, and it needs to be something they want to do. Plus they are adults and need to take responsibility for themselves.

3. Which strategy?
When I said and looked at the word **scary**, I thought of **care** and my tutor saw **car** in it. Work from what your student says but make suggestions as well if a student is struggling so you can bounce off each other. Support them to chunk words themselves and colour them in.

My Suggestions for Students

I suggest that you look for patterns, use colour and try chunking. See what works for you. You could also use underlining. If you're not sure of a spelling, just underline it and keep going without stopping. When you have finished your writing you can go back and check your spelling in your own time.

Here are some new things I have realised or connections I have made since I started my English class in September.

1. Where, there, here are all linked to places.

	here
t	here
w	here

2. January and February have the same ending.

Jan	uary
Febr	uary

Also if you remember February is the second month of the year, you will remember it has r twice.

Feb	r	ua	r	y

September, November and December also have the same ending.

Sept	ember
Nov	ember
Dec	ember

3. CIAN is the ending for musician and dietician. These are professions so <u>cian</u> words are all professional people. It also helped me to split this and say it as c ian (see Ian).

musi	c ian
dieti	c ian

4. From my experience never learn more than one similar ending at one time. For example, avoid doing tion with cian, sion or ssion.

5. I believe if you learn the root word the end changing becomes much easier to deal with, for example, **friend** being the root word for friendly and friendship and so on.

friend	
friend	s
friend	ly
friend	ship
friend	less

6. A E I O U are all vowels so whenever you see a word beginning with A E I O U it's <u>AN</u> not <u>A</u>.

	an	apple	✓
	a	apple	x

There are 26 letters in the alphabet. A E I O U are vowels and the rest are called consonants.

b	c	d	f	g	h	j
k	l	m	n	p	q	r
s	t	v	w	x	y	z

7. No English words end in v so you always write ve on the end.

believ	x
believe	✓

8. Their belongs to someone.

The little man represents that it belongs to a person.

It is their car.	
It is their BBQ.	

9. <u>ice</u> is on the end of notice, choice, slice and juice.

not	ice
cho	ice
sli	ice
ju	ice

10. Get some colourful magnetic letters and put a word on your fridge. Chunk it and use colours for different bits. Each time you go to your fridge you'll see it.

Over the past 37 years I have struggled to understand all these words but with a bit of imagination I have given myself the freedom to help me!

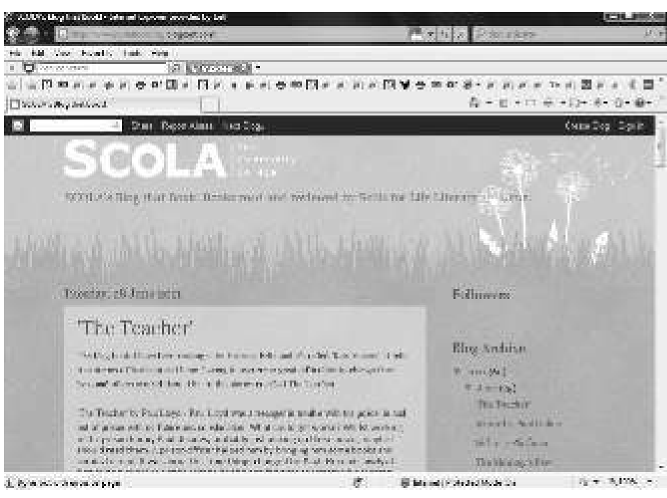
Blog that Book!
An Exciting New Literacy Project at SCOLA

Susan Aldridge

Susan Aldridge is the Senior Lecturer for Skills for Life English and Maths at Sutton College of Learning for Adults (SCOLA). Susan teaches literacy and was awarded QTLS in 2010. Prior to this she was the Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy Coordinator. Susan enjoys developing new courses and projects that further enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Following on from the successful annual Reading Evening at Sutton College of Learning for Adults (SCOLA), which celebrates the written work of our literacy students, we felt there was a need to get our students reading more books. So, the idea of *Blog that Book!* was developed.

Blog that Book! is a simple idea based on the national *Six Book Challenge*[1] run through local libraries. However, rather than reading six books, which we felt for our literacy students was a rather big task, students have to read up to three books, write a short review and then upload their review to the internet in the form of a blog. In some cases the students uploaded their own blogs and did this from home.



Students developed digital literacy by sharing their book reviews on a blog.

We were also aware that for some students reading a novel could be intimidating. So, we offered students the choice of a novel, short story or magazine article. We also promoted the *Quick Reads*[2] as a way of students engaging with novels but at a much easier level.

SCOLA's Principal, Saboohi Famili, awarded the project £400 under her initiative 'Licence to Thrill'. This money went towards promoting the project, awarding USB sticks to participating students and providing a £10 book voucher to all those who completed the challenge.

This project also offered our tutors the opportunity to extend their own IT skills as many of them had no experience of blogging. A simple help sheet was written to help tutors learn how to upload a blog and this proved a useful tool.

Our target was to recruit 20 learners and we achieved this with 81% of them completing the challenge of blogging three reviews. However, the big success was that we got our students reading books. One student commented that this was "*the first book that I have ever read from start to finish in my life".* We also now have an idea of what our literacy students like to read which is a valuable planning resource for all our literacy tutors.

Other student comments have been:

…I wanted to read more and more of this book.

The book excited me and when I told my husband and children around the dinner table, they said, it was as though I was there.

I loved *The Dare* so much that I'm going to read his other five novels.

I read this big book and it gave me confidence and enthusiasm with 445 pages and it is so interesting. I want to read more books rather than watch TV.

… now I can read that helps me with my college work and it gives me confidence to read books. Now I know how to write a book review, that makes me happy.

This project achieved its outcome to get students reading, and even though there was an incentive offered, it became less important as the project progressed and the students got involved, developing their digital literacy with each uploaded blog. This resulted in two students uploading their blogs from home as they had become confident with their digital literacy.

We are planning to continue *Blog that Book!* in the future and develop it further with the involvement of ESOL[3] learners too.

To view our *Blog that Book!* blogs please visit the SCOLA website where you will find a link to the site: http://www.scola.ac.uk or visit www.scolabookblog.blogspot.com

1. The Reading Agency, an independent charity with a mission to inspire more people to read more, launched the Six Book Challenge in 2008. The Challenge invites less confident readers to read six books and record their reading in a diary in order to receive incentives, a certificate and the chance to enter a national prize draw. Find out more at http://www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk/

2. Quick Reads are short books by bestselling writers and celebrities. They are aimed at adults who've stopped reading or find reading tough, and for regular readers who want a short, fast read. 10 new Quick Reads were launched on World Book Day, 3 March. Find out more at http://www.quickreads.org.uk/

3. English for Speakers of Other Languages

Project the Learner Voice: Publish an Ebook

Vickie Johnstone

Vickie lives in London and works as a sub-editor on business magazines. She has been writing stories since she was a child and wrote her first book in junior school. She has self-published five books this year including a poetry collection, Kaleidoscope*, and a children's book,* Kiwi in Cat City*. Vickie is also one of 21 writers featured in* A Flash of Inspiration: A Collection of Very Short Stories by Indie Authors*. Contact her via her blog http://vickiejohnstone.blogspot.com or follow her on Twitter @vickiejohnstone*

Introduction

The internet has made the world smaller and nearly everything accessible[1]. That includes book publishing, which appears to be following the route taken by music online. Now, authors, instead of sending countless letters off to publishers, can dig out that book that has been languishing in a drawer, format it and upload it, along with a cover, to an online publisher's website. And, hey presto, within a day or two, the book will be sitting there online, waiting for potential readers to find it.

Tutors who have been working to support their learners to find their own voice in art, music or writing can now show them how to publish their writing online. Whether an individual is interested in poetry or stories or writing non-fiction about bikes or flowers, there is a place available online for their work. This can help to give confidence to a budding writer, and offer them something to strive for, knowing that the world of publishing has become that much simpler. I wish there had been such a thing as online publishing when I was writing stories starring my classmates back in junior school. And certainly as a teenager it would have been great.

I have tried two self-publishing routes for ebooks, although there are others out there. An ebook is basically an electronic book. There are various formats, such as EPUB, PDF, RTF, PDB, MOBI, LRF and TXT, as well as online HTML and Javascript. Once you have a device or PC software, you can download books from online shops and there are a lot of free ebooks out there if you don't want to purchase anything. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, for example, are available for free download.

Step One: Getting Your Book Published

The place to start for tutors might be a collection of learner writing. With numerous demands on your time, this might sound intimidating and time-consuming, but it isn't. The key is to keep it simple.

1. Put the writing into Microsoft Word and save it as a doc file.

2. Strip out all the formatting, such as double spaces, fancy fonts, odd leading and indents so that all you have is plain text in a plain font such as Arial or Times.

3. Do 'select all' and choose 'Normal' style and font size 10.

4. Make sure you have no extra paragraph returns anywhere.

5. Insert an extra paragraph return between your chapter heading and the main text. If you want to split pages (for example, when formatting poetry) do not attempt to do it manually, but choose insert page break from the menu.

That's basically it. Then, you need to choose a publisher. I chose Amazon and Smashwords. The uploading procedures are similar, although there are differences, and my comments are based on my own experience.

Amazon

Amazon needs no introduction, I guess. I started with Amazon and I had to Google advice on formatting for Kindle as, to be honest, I was a bit confused. The Amazon website offers a guide to publishing and a help section, but I needed to rummage through the forums for information on what to do. This could have been because my first book was poetry, which is a bit harder to format than a straightforward story.

Amazon's platform turns your Microsoft Word doc into an ebook, available for purchase on Kindle devices and Kindle apps for iPad, iPhone, iPod touch, PC, Mac, Blackberry, and Android-based devices. Your Word doc is uploaded to the UK and US online bookshops. You upload in one place, choose the pricing for each store and the book goes up on a US page and a UK page. There are various other options that you must choose for your book to do with publishing rights, but it is easy to follow with help buttons. There, customers can see your book cover, title, your name (linked to your biography), any book reviews, a link to Shelfari[2], tags for your books (words that customers use to search for a book), your sales ranking, etc. If you have more than one book it is easy for customers to find them.

1. This is not to deny or ignore that a 'digital divide' exists. See for example, Bynner, J., Reder, S., Parsons, S. and Strawn, C. (2008) The Digital Divide: Computer Use, Basic Skills and Employment. London: NRDC. They remind us that "poor literacy and, increasingly, lack of digital competence can lead to marginalisation and social exclusion" (p.2). Classrooms can, however, provide a degree of access.

2. Shelfari, acquired by Amazon.com in 2008, allows members to build virtual bookshelves to share their reading, participate in online book groups and interact with authors. The site's mission is to "enhance the experience of reading by connecting readers in meaningful conversations about the published word". www.shelfari.com

At Author Central[3], you can create a profile with a photo, which is linked to your book pages, so customers can find out more about you.

You can use Shelfari to add information on your books, characters, reviews, etc. I think this is a good marketing tool.

Smashwords.com
This company is run by Mark Coker, its founder and CEO. On the website it says that he founded Smashwords in 2008 to change the way books are published, marketed and sold. Coker believes Smashwords holds the promise to make publishing more enriching for authors, readers and publishers.

Smashwords converts your Word doc into many ebook formats such as EPUB, PDF, RTF, PDB, MOBI, LRF and TXT for customers to download, as well as HTML for online reading. By publishing your book in so many formats at the same time, it becomes readable on any reading device, including Amazon's Kindle, Apple's iPad, PCs, iPhone, the Sony Reader, Kobo Reader, Android smart phones, etc.

Smashwords provides authors with free 'how to publish' and formatting guides, which are extremely thorough and an immense help. They cover everything. The company also supplies a free marketing guide, in which it states that Smashwords' motto is "your book, your way", and I think it achieves this.

The author uploads the Word doc and a cover, writes a synopsis, chooses pricing and sample size, etc. Everything is straightforward and explained. You can then sit back and view your book page and author page, which are linked.

Step Two: Marketing
Tutors may well wonder whether step two is relevant to them. I would argue that it is. Not only will it help to sell copies of a book, which could be a way of fundraising for a charity or college, but it is real life experience for learners in creating texts for specific purposes and seeing whether they achieve their purpose.

The two publishers I chose provide slightly different marketing aids. On Amazon, you can view sales, but not traffic (the number of customers visiting your page). Whereas with Smashwords, you can view traffic to your page, number of sample downloads and sales. You can also check what the search engines are showing for your book, which is interesting and you can use this to improve your marketing.

Strategies: How to Get your Book 'Out There'
Now that you've found a voice for your author, and the book is published, how do you make it visible for customers to find? How do you promote it? In my experience, this is the hardest bit. Here are some ideas.

On Amazon, the Voice of the Author thread (for writers) in the forum is a useful place for feedback, and to offer and receive advice. There is also a list of general questions and answers on various subjects, such as royalty payments.

Smashwords provides a marketing guide to help authors to market their books. On Smashwords you can: monitor traffic; offer a free voucher for your book as a promotional tool or so that people can review your book; check which search engines are working; check who has viewed your page or downloaded a free sample or bought your book. Access to the Premium Catalogue gives you distribution to other online retailers.

On both Amazon and Smashwords reviews are good marketing tools. Customers can write their opinion and rate your book out of 5 stars. On Smashwords, you can embed a YouTube video to promote your book. On both websites, you choose tags that describe your book – customers search for a book using a tag word; for example, cat, children, horror, fiction, etc. On Smashwords, you can link to other social sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Delicious. There are also affiliate programmes on both sites whereby authors can share in the sales of other books they promote but I haven't personally looked into this.

Smashwords promotes your book on microsites and offers promotions during the year. Amazon also does sales of books, which can increase downloads (as the book becomes free) thus boosting an unknown author's profile. On both sites you can email for help; I won't reveal here which was the fastest to respond!

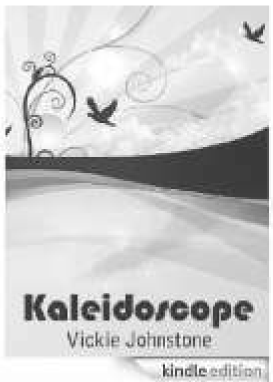
Ten Ideas to Try

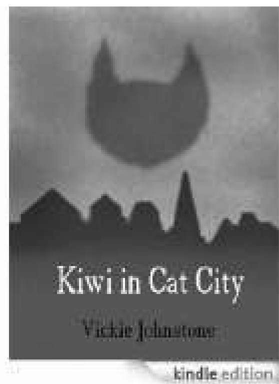
1. Tell friends, workmates and family.
2. Gather reviews. Offer a free book in exchange for an honest review. Mention your good reviews on Facebook or your website or blog. Do reviews of other people's books. Get involved.
3. Join Facebook if you haven't already. Set up a business page for your book with a cover picture, and information with links to where your book is sold. Invite people to 'like' the page. When you have 25 likes you can get a simpler user name for your page, which you can tell people about. Advertise your reviews, new books, etc on these pages.
4. Get your book listed. Sites such as Breakthrough Bookstore (breakthroughbookstore.com) will list your book on their pages. This website works to promote independent self-publishers.
5. Try to do a writer interview.
6. Put the URLs of where your book is sold as your signature on emails. It will show up more in search engines.
7. Compile a press release for your local newspaper or college website.
8. Advertise your other books on the last or first page of each book you publish and on your

3. Author Central is a free service provided by Amazon that allows writers listed in Amazon's catalogue to share up-to-date information about themselves and their work. One way Amazon uses the details is to create Author Pages. www.authorcentral.amazon.co.uk

individual book pages.

9. Give a reading from your book at the college open day or on prize-giving night.
10. Be prepared to try different cover designs.





This article is written from my experience only, and there is a wealth of information on the internet to help and many people following the same dream. The whole process is free. The only cost is your time whereas the rewards could be massive. I sent a copy of my children's book to a publisher about ten years ago and it was rejected. I lost confidence in trying to find a publisher. Amazon and Smashwords gave me the opportunity to self-publish my work, and it has been a dream come true to have people tell me that they have enjoyed reading it. I hope that others can find the same happiness and confidence by self-publishing their own writing. Good luck!

The Pink Highlighter

Vickie Johnstone

Vickie Johnstone has been writing poetry since she was a teenager. This poem is from her first collection, Kaleidoscope*.*

A pink highlighter
Flows across the page
Down
And along
Covering days
And weeks
Of endless chore.
Do I really care
If I highlight this bit?
Is it really important
Or shall I miss it?
Will they notice?
I doubt it.
Such a pretty colour
The little pink highlighter
Better than blue
Or green
Or yellow –
Does it really show
Anyway?
I think I'll miss a few chapters
And underline
The bits that don't really
Matter
Raising their grandeur
And so I get to be
A little fiendish.

Language Matters: Learning Outside the Classroom

Steve Gibson

A British Sign Language translation of this article can be obtained at www.tinyurl.com/RaPaLBSL

Steve is Deaf[1] and British Sign Language (BSL) is his main mode of communication. At present, he runs DeafEducate and sells eBooks. He also supports Deaf students on their degree courses at Sheffield Hallam University. Previously, he worked as computing tutor at Doncaster College for the Deaf and as a Numeracy/Literacy tutor at Sheffield College and Manchester College.

In the past 20 years, there has been a sea change in education provision for Deaf learners, whether in school, FE or HE. Nowadays, Deaf learners are expected to have an array of support in place to facilitate learning: support such as teachers of the deaf (ToDs), interpreters, notetakers, communication support workers (CSWs) and teaching assistants (TAs).[2]

For Deaf people, full education provision came into being in the early 1990s. This led to a clear separation in the educational experiences of Deaf people. Pre-1990, it was one of not having educational support provision, and post-1990 having full provision. Students in the former situation had to obtain information and make learning progress the hard way, and thus gained vital and obligatory skills in learning. Post-1990, students are in danger of becoming dependent on the support obtained whilst in education that they later discover is not available in the working world, and they risk losing out.

Full education provision, in terms of having support as outlined above, does not necessarily mean that Deaf learners have equal and full access to learning on a par with their hearing peers. Reasons why this is so, such as differing standards among interpreters, Deaf learners not having the same ToD throughout their education, CSWs passing on information from teachers and lecturers to Deaf learners that is second hand, are depicted elsewhere.[3]

The main disparity in learning for Deaf learners propounded in this article is the lack of support, provision and resources outside the classroom, the seminar and the lecture. Once a class ends, once a seminar finishes and once a lecture terminates, the Deaf learner is on his/her own as all the support evaporates. The Deaf child is on her own in the playground. The Deaf teenager is in his bedroom trying to make sense of a Shakespearian play with an essay question. The Deaf undergraduate is isolated amongst her peers in the library.

Their hearing peers go out into the corridors, the pubs and their bedrooms and discuss what has been learnt. For many, they go to the libraries and reinforce their learning by browsing textbooks. That is where real learning occurs. Newton's Laws of Motion are discussed over a pint or two. Surgical procedures are mulled by a college mural. Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* is contemplated in a student's bedroom.

Many might pop into a local library to borrow a textbook mentioned during the lecture. Others might scan the internet for articles to supplement their learning as recommended in the middle of a seminar. Another might opt for a podcast provided by their institution. Such a profusion of learning materials all in their mother language, English!

Yet for Deaf learners, what is available for them in BSL? Nil, zilch, nothing and naught. (For a Deaf signer, there would be a corresponding sign for each word; such is the richness and variety of British Sign Language.)

The only possible and realistic alternative for Deaf learners is to rely on English text obtained from written notes via notetakers and textbooks recommended by lecturers. Here understanding can be achieved the hard way by putting in numerous hours of reading. In this way, many Deaf learners achieve their educational goals in spite of English being their second language. However, for many of them, English is a hard language to learn and master with all its idiosyncrasies and ambiguities.

The situation is even worse for Deaf people with poor or no literacy skills. Their hearing peers manage due to being able to rely on their spoken English when reading basic skills books. Such books are, in the main, of no use to Deaf learners at their homes where there is no support – support they are used to at educational sites. Without a hold on the most basic literacy skills, Deaf learners cannot ever begin to acquire real learning.

This reality struck home when I was teaching at Doncaster College for the Deaf. I had a student who wanted to gain a grade C for his GCSE maths so that he could go to university. We had a weekly tutorial and he was anxious that he should be well prepared when the exam came up.

Our weekly tutorials were not really enough and I thought he could supplement his learning by trying out a GCSE maths CD. However, this presented difficulties for him, as he struggled to understand the English involved; people still need good understanding of English to learn maths.

He had to ask me to translate what was on the computer screen into BSL for him. When I thought about this, I realised that the process of learning for many people is to repeatedly read pieces of text until understanding is achieved. How could this student fully understand the numeracy concept on the screen if I translated for him only once? Supposing he wanted to take the CD home; he still needed BSL translation and there would be no one around to sign to him.

I realised that it was possible to create some sort of eBook on CD. Deaf learners could then insert the CD into a computer and get the eBook on screen. They could read pieces of English text and see video clips in BSL by clicking icons at the end of each sentence. The biggest advantage of this technique was the repeatability. Deaf learners could watch the BSL clips over and over again until understanding was achieved.

Initially I thought of doing a GCSE maths eBook, but when I realised the amount of work needed, I changed my mind. A typical maths textbook consists of 250 pages and the amount of BSL video work needed would be huge. I estimated that the cost of a GCSE maths eBook would be in the region of £100 or more in order to cover production costs. Furthermore, I figured it might take me a couple of years to complete. This was simply not feasible.

What was the solution? I turned to producing short eBooks with a word length ranging from 80 to 5,000 words. These short eBooks help Deaf learners to acquire and develop literacy skills to Key Stage 3 for Deaf children and Level 1 for Deaf adults. Once a Deaf reader acquires Level 1 or KS3 English, s/he will have the confidence and self-belief to read English text without the need of BSL translation.

With rapid advances in video media technology and widespread internet usage on a variety of devices, Deaf learners can now have access to resources that can lead them to acquire literacy skills that can bring real and permanent learning. Resources such as eBooks can provide access to independent learning outside the classroom.

1. Deaf with a capital 'D' is taken to represent deaf individuals who use British Sign Language as their main mode of communication.

*2. **Teachers of the Deaf** work for local education authorities. They support deaf children who are integrated into mainstream schools, or at special schools, on an individual basis. An important part of their work is collaboration with mainstream classroom teachers who teach deaf pupils from day to day, and the management of support provided by TAs or CSWs who often accompany deaf pupils in lessons. All teachers of the deaf have specialist training and qualifications.*

***BSL interpreters** facilitate effective communication between Deaf and hearing people in a variety of settings, e.g. conferences and formal meetings; police interviews, court proceedings; medical appointments, social services appointments and community events. They are trained to BSL Level 6.*

***Notetakers** are trained to provide notes either in handwritten (manual) or typed (electronic) format.*

***Communication support workers** mainly work in education supporting Deaf learners to communicate with their teachers and other learners. CSWs work as part of the education team alongside other professionals. Most CSWs are required to have BSL Level 3.*

***Teaching assistants** also mainly work in schools and, if they work in a mainstream setting, may not have a qualification in BSL.*

Sources: www.Signature.org.uk; www.batod.org.uk/

3. See for example:
Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group. (2004). Deaf Toolkit: Best Value Review of Deaf Children in Education, from Users' Perspective. Wakefield: DEX.
Turner, K. (2006, March). Communication Support Workers. The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf: http://www.batod.org.uk/index.php?id=/publications/on-linemagazine/sign/csws.htm. Accessed June 27, 2011.

"How can you be yourself, when you do not know who you are?" [1]

Language, Identity and the Case for Bilingual Education

Jill Jones

Jill Jones is one of the Co-Founders of the Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group (DEX) and its Company Secretary. She is also the Director and Founder of Deaf Quality, which works on deaf adults' issues and offers consultation, training and advocacy to families. Jill's background is in social work and management, but she has also worked in the voluntary sector as a manager for a disabled-led organisation and for the National Deaf Children's Society. After she left the NDCS, she continued on a voluntary basis to finalise an appeal to the House of Lords, which resulted in case law (Fairey/Halliday case) for deaf adults to apply more successfully for the Disability Living Allowance and to enable disabled people to gain the benefit for social reasons. Jill holds the Diploma from the Institute of Management and is a registered Consultant with the Institute of Consulting, part of the Chartered Institute of Management. It is her passion to improve the quality of deaf and disabled people's lives.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

When the Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group (DEX)[2] gathered deaf people's firsthand experiences of mainstream education[3], the findings were that deaf children are in limbo between two worlds and cultures, and perceive both as hard places. These findings were reinforced by DEX's user-led review of education.[4]

The message was clear: it is difficult to fit into hearing communities if an individual is congenitally deaf or early deafened, and without the enculturalisation process of special Deaf schools, it is hard to be deaf,[5] and to accept one's deafness. The person is between a rock and a hard place.

The concept of 'rock' can also mean a sanctuary, however, somewhere to hold on to, as in 'she is my rock'. In this case, the rock refers to being part of the Deaf community, where deaf people can truly belong because of common shared identity, acquired through accessible language, culture and peers.

The Need to Belong

Everyone needs a sense of belonging; it is a basic human need according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.[6] This need is the most significant after basic physiological and safety ones are met. Depriving children of it is neglect. The banning of sign language in education in 1880[7] had an untold effect on the mental health, career prospects and life choices of congenitally deaf and early deafened people who were deprived of a sense of belonging.

Language is not only a means of communication. It is a complex vehicle that includes the enablement of infants to bond with parents and siblings, their wider family members, family friends, peers in playgroups and nursery, and to start to unravel and make sense of the world that impacts on them. This bonding process enables infants to develop their sense of self, their identity, and labels their feelings. It is such slow immersion that it is not tangible, and those who do not belong to their families and networks find it difficult to empathise. Sign languages are natural languages for deaf people, whereas spoken languages are not, despite long-term efforts to make them so. A general lack of awareness about these issues is the main hurdle that deaf people in the UK face in imparting the need to learn British Sign Language (BSL) as well as English and other spoken languages, i.e. a different home language, Welsh and modern foreign languages.

Enduring Monolingualism

Learning BSL is important to enable deaf people to communicate more effectively, but also to be an active part of the Deaf community, which is a vibrant community with a vast range of interest groups within it. Deaf people who are monolingual in English do not have easy access to hearing communities even with hearing aids or cochlear implants. They have to endure "always plan". This is the daily concentration and stress of trying to stay one step ahead whilst having to lipread and listen via artificial aids that can never make deaf people hear normally and which, over time, can have a physical and mental impact on the deaf user, i.e. Repetitive Strain Injury from turning the head to hear, and depression resulting from longstanding tiredness.

Total immersion in a hearing environment and spoken

1. *Question asked by a DEX member*
2. *DEX is a deaf-led organisation that was set up to support deaf people who are being educated in mainstream education, or attended mainstream schools. All members of the group have personal and/or professional experience of deaf mainstream education. They fully understand the needs of the majority of deaf children in mainstream education and the impact this has on the rest of their lives.*
3. *Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group. (2003). Between a Rock and a Hard Place. Wakefield: DEX.*
4. *Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group. (2004). Deaf Toolkit: Best Value Review of Deaf Children in Education, from Users' Perspective. Wakefield: DEX.*

language also imparts a "think-hearing identity". DEX has adopted this phrase to show how deaf children think that they are quasi or fully hearing people, because hearing people are the only ones that they can identify with.

Denying Deafness

Even those deaf children who attend resourced mainstream schools with a few other deaf peers can still not understand that they are not like the majority peer group, especially if sign language is not used. One deaf young man from such a placement, said to us that he was "hearing impaired". When it was explained that this means "deaf", he ran out onto a busy main road in his distress and confusion and narrowly missed being hit by a car. This identity crisis is common in deaf young people. However, since most deaf children are placed in local provider schools as lone deaf children in their school, they tend to consider themselves "think-hearing" or not to be deaf.

One of the stories told to DEX by a deaf adult about her experience of mainstream education is of her fear as she was growing up, and the dread of walking through each set of school gates. She felt sick and afraid, but did not realise this was not the norm, since it was an every school day experience for her. She truanted at an early age, but no-one spotted the reason for this even with heavy and easily identifiable hearing aids. She had no confidence, which she says is a key to learning, compounding the difficulties already being faced due to her inability to hear lessons and easily participate in the wider school curriculum.

Other stories reinforce this and mention bullying. One individual described being put in a bin as she was viewed as rubbish. She continued to think this, with suicide bids. These are just some of the thousands of harrowing individual cases still ongoing because of the policy of integration, which prevents most deaf children from becoming bilingual in English and BSL.

The Best of Both Worlds

Bilingualism has been well researched and the benefits are proven.[8] Research suggests that bilinguals:

- have a head start when learning to read and count
- have a better chance of gaining employment, with improved prospects
- will be better at creative thinking and problem solving
- show better concentration and are less prone to distractions
- have a sense of belonging
- have extended social activities and friendship groups
- have an enriched identity and, consequently, self-esteem
- have improved communication skills in two languages
- find it easier to learn other languages
- have increased appreciation of languages and cultures
- are better able to retain mental abilities into old age.

These are just some of the benefits.

The weight of evidence led DEX to do its four-year Best Value Review in the UK, Norway and Sweden on bilingual education involving sign language. Essentially a service audit with the support of the Audit Commission, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, I&DeA[9] and the Local Government Association, DEX established performance standards in line with UK legislation and regulations, plus UN conventions. Also involved was the Welsh Language Board (WLB) of the Welsh Assembly, which supports DEX in developing a BSL language plan.

The success of the Welsh language plan is viewed as one of the best language plans in the world.[10] DEX is campaigning for this model to be used to ensure the revival of BSL, which is a threatened language because of the low take-up of deaf BSL learners due to the normalisation policy.[11] The Welsh Language Act 1993 established the WLB and schemes that statutory organisations must submit in order to demonstrate actions taken to promote Welsh and deliver services in Welsh.

On 18 March 2003, the government recognised BSL as an official minority language. It now has a similar status to that of Gaelic or Welsh, but this recognition has not given any legal protection to deaf people. This means full access to information and services that hearing people take for granted, including education, health and employment, continues to be denied. Following on from the Welsh language model, DEX advocates the need for a BSL Act to give deaf children access to bilingual education and to ensure language maintenance, not only for academic purposes but for the wellbeing of all deaf children and adults.

5. *DEX uses the term 'deaf' to mean all levels of permanent hearing loss, from mild to profound (as does the National Deaf Children's Society).*
6. *Maslow, A.H. (1954, 3rd revised edition 1987). Motivation and Personality. Hong Kong: Longman Asia Limited.*
7. *In 1880, non-deaf educators held an international conference in Milan and agreed a worldwide ban on the use of sign language in schools for deaf children.*
   It introduced teaching methods using speech and lip-reading that were based on spoken languages rather than sign languages.
8. *See for example, Baker, C. (4th ed. 2006) Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.*
9. *Improvement and Development Agency (now Local Government Improvement and Development)*
10. *Personal communication with Colin Baker, linguist and specialist in bilingualism, who was a member of the Welsh Language Society which campaigned for the WLA*
11. *Normalisation refers to attempts to make deaf children 'normal', i.e. to act as though they are hearing. This means not allowing deaf children to have the Deaf experience or to learn to be Deaf, and expecting deaf children to cope with, or without, hearing aids and cochlear implants. It can also mean that schools place emphasis on correcting/improving the speech and hearing of deaf people instead of concentrating on education.*

"The whole landscape flushes on a sudden at a sound": Get Into Reading in Practice

Clare Williams

Clare is a Get Into Reading Project Worker at The Reader Organisation[1] and has been delivering shared reading groups on Merseyside for over four years. Her current specialisms include reading with adults with learning disabilities, reading with people with depression and other mental health conditions, and reading with people with dementia. Clare studied English Literature at the University of Liverpool and wrote her PhD on working-class writing in Victorian England. Her publications include Shaping Belief: Culture, Politics, and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, edited with Victoria Morgan.[2]*

"At home my walls are lined with books – I've got bookshelves and bookshelves of books – and I can't read any of them." I always remember the man who said this to me. He was a GP and was attending one of our Get Into Reading (GIR) groups. He had once been an avid reader, but at the time of making this statement was unemployed, suffering from a depression that had been brought on by a serious car accident. I remember thinking how awful it must be to be surrounded by books made to be opened, read and enjoyed, books that you had perhaps previously read and enjoyed at an earlier point in your life, and yet to now find yourself unable to read any of them. This man's experience of finding himself not being able to read really struck a chord in me. It opened up my mind to the many different reasons why a person might feel at any one time in their lives that they are not able to read, why the world of literature might be cut off from some people while being easily available to others. It also reinforced a sense of just how important our own work at The Reader Organisation is in making literature available to everyone through our social outreach project, Get Into Reading.

At The Reader Organisation, a national charity dedicated to making great books and great writing available to everyone, we have found that one of the most common reasons for a person not being able to read is to do with mental ill health, and all of the associated difficulties of medication, anxiety, and poor concentration, which can often deprive the most 'literate' of persons of their ability to read.[3] Many of our beneficiaries have spoken to us about their frustrations at not being able to read because of anxiety and poor concentration. They mention what they experience as an inability to sit down and relax with a book for any length of time; a psychological and physical restlessness often stemming from poor mental health and other related conditions.

Recently we carried out a research study into the therapeutic benefits of reading with people with depression.[4] Every participant was 'literate', in terms of the essential mechanics of reading, and some members had quite high levels of literacy, and yet the majority of participants found that their mental health illness made it very difficult for them to read for pleasure in their own time. They would have been able to read aloud word by word and line by line such epic masterpieces as Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but many found it extremely difficult to read for pleasure in their own time, a task which requires the ability to process the words and absorb the meaning enough to be able to actually enjoy the reading. I always remember one member who had participated in the research study telling me that she was not able to read at home. She had studied English Literature at university, but her depression, and associated troubles of anxiety and poor concentration, meant that reading had become something that was just too difficult and, moreover, *painful* for her to do. Reading for pleasure had become a virtual impossibility for her. The only time she was able to engage with literature was during the GIR group.

It is important to point out that when our beneficiaries tell us they are not able to read, they are more often than not specifically referring to that body of literature tied to the literary world of the imagination: novels, short stories, poems and so on. They are not talking about what we might define as fact and information, that is the world of textual paraphernalia that surrounds us on a daily basis in the form of newspapers, magazines, leaflets, posters, TV guides, letters and restaurant menus. Such material requires a very different kind of reading than that demanded of us in works of fiction, where the stakes are raised and our whole being is called to give attention with heart and mind. It is exactly this kind of imaginative literature which is often lacking in the lives of our many beneficiaries and which The Reader Organisation is working to restore and make accessible and enjoyable to all. We believe that such literature has the power to transform lives and that such transformation is brought about by the creative literary language of books and poems which allows our members to revisit and re-imagine both themselves again as individuals and the world about them.

Our GIR groups have been designed to make reading for pleasure an accessible activity for everyone,

1. www.thereader.org.uk
2. Liverpool University Press, 2008.

3. For our most recent findings on reading with people with depression see Billington. J., Dowrick, C., Hamer, A., Robinson, J., and Williams, C. (2011). An investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and well-being. University of Liverpool/Liverpool Primary Care Trust.
4. See Billington et al. (2011) for full details of the study.

regardless of literacy levels, educational background or personal experiences. One of the key strategies which enables such inclusivity is our shared reading model where everything, every single word on every single page of a novel, short story or poem is read aloud in weekly instalments by the facilitator and, as and when they are ready to volunteer, group members themselves. In all cases engagement with the text is immediate and enriched through the spontaneous sharing of life stories and experiences as the facilitator pauses to encourage group members to reflect upon and discuss the text. People are free to simply listen to the reading of the story and the poem if they wish, or they can engage more directly. Groups meet weekly and members set the pace of engagement. The facilitator is present not as a teacher of literature but as a fellow reader joining the many different journeys of discovery which any hour-long weekly session may happen to take them on. The outcomes are profound, often life restorative, sometimes life changing.

Take Carol's story, for instance. Carol joined one of our GIR groups in July 2009 at a time when she found herself unable to read due to her depression:

> *"I found that this time I couldn't concentrate. I tried to change to a different type of book and I couldn't concentrate. So that's what I like about this reading group – you reading or someone else reading and I don't have to necessarily read the book. I can just listen and take it in and scan where we are. And it's also I'm not sitting on my own reading a book. Whereas when I have really bad moments sometimes it's the sitting there on your own and trying to read a book that you can't – you can't do it. Something you've enjoyed and all of a sudden it's like I can't do that and you're looking at it and you might read a paragraph but you're not really enjoying the paragraph and you're not really taking it in whereas you know you used to get really, well, let's turn the page over, or, what's in that paragraph - and that's how I used to be. But at the moment the reading group is all I can manage. There's a flow to it and even if I don't want to read the book or read out from the book, the book's still flowing and the book's still there in front of me and just because I can't read it doesn't mean that the book's been put down or put aside. Other people are still reading it and carrying on with it and if I don't want to look at the book I can still listen and I still know what's happening. It's like a bit of freedom for me and for a time I feel myself again."* [5]

As explained by Carol, our GIR groups restore to many people an essential part of themselves which they might otherwise have had to go without; the reading self which is able to engage with, enjoy, and grow from great literature. For others, it can help them discover a whole new sense of self, as this shared reading model also reaches out to people who may not be able to read at all due to a learning difficulty or physical disability.

Every Monday, I have the pleasure of running a GIR group in a women's centre in Liverpool. There are eight women in the group and the range of literacy is very broad. For some of these women one of the only opportunities they have to read is in the weekly GIR group, where they have read and talked about, enjoyed and absorbed, the broadest scope of literature, including the poetry of Keats, Wordsworth, Hopkins, and Tennyson, the short stories of Saki, Chekov, Katherine Mansfield (*The Doll's House* has been one of the group's favourite stories so far), and more modern gems such as Frank Cottrell Boyce's *Millions* and Tove Jansson's *The Summer Book*. Quite a reading syllabus, and one which might perhaps take some by surprise when we consider the particular dynamic of this group.

Sarah is in her late 50s and attends the group with a carer. She is blind and has a range of physical and learning disabilities. Her favourite part of the session is listening to the poems being read aloud, which she then takes home with her so that she can share them again with her mum.

Belle is in her early 50s and also has learning disabilities. She is unable to read at all because of her learning disability, or at least unable to 'read' in terms of what we might mean by the mechanics of literacy. Her reading experience in the GIR group, however, tells a very different story. She has discovered that she likes poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins, which make her laugh and smile and exhilarated, which, according to Belle, "just come to me and whoosh it's all there!"

Cassie is in her mid-40s and has Down Syndrome. She says that the reading group gives her a place where she can relax and "be calm". She is also unable to read herself but enjoys writing out the poems again on coloured paper when she gets home.

Mary and Sonya also have learning disabilities but they are able to read a little themselves and have come to enjoy the opportunity to read aloud to the group. Since attending the group, Mary has received a copy of *The Nation's Favourite: Poems* for Christmas from her family because they now know she enjoys reading since attending the group. Some weeks Mary will pick out a favourite poem and share it with the group by reading it aloud. Last week she discovered Wordsworth's classic, *I wandered lonely as a cloud*.

Hester is in her late 40s and suffers from MS and short-term memory loss. She is mechanically literate but her memory loss makes it difficult to enjoy reading on her own. She may read one page and then forget what she's read, prompting a vicious cycle of frustration and anxiety which can eventually make reading an activity to avoid rather than pursue. This is

5. Excerpt taken from an interview carried out by Clare Williams, November 2010. Please note that first names only are used throughout this article when referring to Get Into Reading group members for reasons of confidentiality.

a situation especially painful for Hester who was once a keen reader. However, because of the unique format of GIR, where material is read aloud and where the facilitator will frequently pause and encourage the group to reflect and talk about what has just happened in the story or poem, Hester has now got back into reading and has gained the courage to return to her favourite author Hermann Hesse, planning to start with his short stories at first.

This Monday GIR group has enabled these women to read whether they are technically literate or not; it has enabled them, over cups of tea and a plate of biscuits, to read and discuss centuries of thought and feeling, pictures and stories, which for some would have otherwise remained shut, perhaps forever. The GIR group has made reading a fully inclusive activity for them, which they can share in the moment with other people who have become their fellow readers and it has meant that they are not only reading, but reading for pleasure. It has made themselves and the world about them richer places to be and return to, an enlivening animation which can be best explained with one of the group's favourite poets, Gerard Manley Hopkins, who inspires all of us to be readers of the world, to:

> "REPEAT that, repeat,
>
> Cuckoo, bird, and open ear wells, heart-springs, delightfully sweet,
>
> With a ballad, with a ballad, a rebound
> Off trundled timber and scoops of the hillside ground, hollow hollow hollow ground:
>
> The whole landscape flushes on a sudden at a sound." [6]

And we do repeat that. The Reader Organisation is currently delivering over 280 groups on Merseyside alone, reaching over 1,000 beneficiaries each week. Groups take place in libraries, prisons, schools, hostels, mental health centres and hospitals, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, care homes for the elderly and people with dementia, as well as centres for adults with learning disabilities. We are building a reading revolution bringing people together to share their reading all over the UK and further afield. We welcome you to join us.

6. Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Repeat That', in Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 144.

In the Right Place at the Right Time? An Evaluation of Learners' Experience of Skills for Life at Work

Sarah Aynsley and Jacqui Shepherd

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Introduction

This article reports on an independent evaluation of the Skills for Life at Work Project in the South East of England. The evaluation was funded through the CfBT Education Trust.[1] Although data were gathered through interviewing selected employers, training providers and learners, this article focuses particularly on the impacts of the programme on learners.

Context of the Evaluation

Skills for Life was established in 2001 in the wake of the disturbing results from the International Adult Literacy Survey (1996) and the Moser Report (1999) which revealed that close to one adult in five in the UK was not 'functionally literate' with an even higher percentage having problems with numeracy. More recently, several studies of adult learners attending literacy and numeracy provision show at best modest progress (Brooks et al. 2007; Coben et al. 2007; Grief et al. 2007; Warner et al. 2008; Vorhaus et al. 2009; Wolf and Evans, 2011; Brooks and Pilling, 2011).

The Skills for Life at Work initiative developed from the government's Skills for Life Strategy Unit to take learning into the workplace in order to improve accessibility to learning for employed adults, many of whom may have had earlier negative experiences of education. A specific recommendation of the Moser Report was to set up basic skills programmes in the workplace. In the South East, a consortium of professional development centres, known as the New Futures Professional Development Network and led by the CfBT Education Trust, managed the Skills for Life at Work Project. The Project ran between January 2009 and December 2010, by which time it had supported around 5,500 Skills for Life learners and a further 1,200 teaching support staff across the South East.

In this article we argue that the Skills for Life strategy continues to be critical as many young people continue to leave school without English and maths qualifications (Rashid and Brooks, 2010). Reflecting on the Skills for Life survey on literacy levels, by age group, Williams et al (2003 p.10) commented:

> *"There were large differences in educational achievement between the various age-groups. Younger respondents were much more likely to hold qualifications than older respondents…The sharp increase in qualification acquisition since the war – particularly in the 1960s and 1970s – has not led to a sharp increase in literacy skills."*

Research Design

The Evaluation research questions included:

- How has the Skills for Life at Work Project impacted on learners?
- What are the characteristics of learners who participate and who make progress?

These were explored through collating data from four different sources: documentary analysis, individual interviews with 30 employers (small and medium enterprises), face-to-face interviews with three training providers and focus group interviews with five groups of learners. This paper focuses specifically on data generated through the focus group interviews with learners although data from the employer and training provider interviews will occasionally be used to illuminate the learners' perspectives. The focus groups included learners from: a large public service organisation; two private care providers; a Local Authority division and a general Further Education (FE) College. The focus groups were held in the learners' workplaces and the sample included learners from all three types of training covered by the Skills for Life at Work programme, that is, literacy, numeracy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

Impacts on Learners

Overall, the learner feedback provided a number of examples of positive impacts for learners which can be presented in terms of three main areas of benefits:

1. Opening up of new possibilities through learners gaining qualifications needed for promotion or future progression, increased belief and desire to pursue opportunities and greater recognition from senior staff.
2. Increased confidence and self-belief in terms of their own skills and abilities, themselves as

1. *CfBT stands for Centre for British Teachers*

people and as learners, and experiencing a supportive learning environment.
3. Development of knowledge and skills across various areas related to both tasks at work and life beyond work.

These three areas are now explored in more depth.

Opening Up of New Possibilities
In talking about the Skills for Life at Work courses, learners used phrases such as "a crucial first step" and "a start that I can develop from". Across the different workplaces, courses and learners, there seemed to be various ways in which taking part in basic skills training had opened up new opportunities for learners.

Firstly, the courses had enabled staff to gain qualifications that were needed for subsequent promotion. Within a large public service organisation, staff participating in a numeracy Level 2 course saw clear benefits for career progression:

> *"…without it we wouldn't get promoted, so if I get promoted in two or three years' time, then this course has helped it, no matter how long it takes me to get promoted".*

There were similar reports from learners in other public sector organisations, such as health care, where "most were doing it to get onto a nursing course" and in education where "if you want to move on here, you know that you can, because you have that Level 2".

Learners benefited through gaining qualifications that would be useful in the future beyond their current workplace. A relevant example came from nursery nurses who felt that having their numeracy Level 2 was "something extra behind me that backs up my qualification as a nursery nurse and will be better if I go for another job".

Secondly, new possibilities opened up for learners not just because they believed in themselves more but also because others began to believe in them. The following quote from a basic skills training coordinator illustrates this point well:

> *"For the average guy who comes on a course it will move them on a rung – help them to cope just that little bit better e.g. once they can begin to read ... how to confidently write notes...then they get noticed... and are put on other courses and so they can begin to have a proper career. Whereas before they were the ones who couldn't be put on courses because they didn't have basic writing skills."*

Increased Confidence and Self-belief
Another important area of impact on learners was the contribution the courses made to increasing levels of confidence and self-belief. An analysis of learners' accounts suggests that taking part in basic skills training courses helped to bolster learners' confidence in their skills and abilities, confidence in themselves and confidence through a supportive learning environment.

For example, participants on an ESOL course in a care home not only "greatly improved their English skills" but also showed "a massive increase in confidence and self-esteem [in terms of being] more willing to get involved in things and much more confident to communicate with other workers, managers and care home residents". Another example came from support staff in an FE college who, after completing Level 2 literacy and numeracy courses, attached great significance to the fact that:

> *"Now when we are supporting literacy and numeracy, you know you are 100 percent sure what the reason was for something ... you were confident, you know you did the exam and you passed and so you were like, I've got this. I can help a student."*

There were various ways in which undertaking a Skills for Life at Work course provided learners with an opportunity to realise that they were able to do much more than they had previously thought. As this support staff learner in an FE college explained:

> *"Just to be able to achieve and have that course, I felt really good about myself because I'd achieved and I'd worked hard to get it and it made me feel really good."*

As well as giving participants confidence in themselves as learners, the courses also made it possible for staff to do things that "they never would have dared do". In a primary school context, a Level 1 numeracy course required support staff "to form a numeracy club for children, which for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) who before would never have gone near maths, was a huge change … but they realised that they can do it and so have become more confident".

The chance to undertake training in a supportive small group environment within the workplace was another way in which Skills for Life courses contributed to building participants' confidence. For care home ESOL learners, the course was an important opportunity to speak without fear of making mistakes:

> *"Normally we wouldn't talk much because it may go wrong. But before finishing the first class she made us so calm and she gave the freedom to talk to us if we go wrong… So we got the confidence to talk. Now, as I'm talking… and I know somewhere I'm mistaking but still I have the confidence to speak."*

A senior member of staff in a primary school commented that, "If you've got staff that feel under-confident about something then this is a very non-threatening way to gain in confidence because it was a small group and they had a chance to get to know each other and they didn't feel stupid for not knowing things as they were all at a similar level."

The courses created a setting where staff of various nationalities who followed different shift patterns became part of a shared experience. This sense of enabling new connections between employees was touched on in several workplaces, including this manufacturing company:

"It improved their feeling of inclusion in the company greatly … a definite increase in confidence and staff morale, staff are more willing to get involved. They are more motivated and having all the nationalities together in the classroom helped them to bond and meant improved team work."

Development of Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace

Benefits in terms of developments in learners' skills, knowledge and understanding were noted in many workplaces and the enhancement of these basic skills fed directly into an improvement in numerous workbased tasks.

With regard to numeracy skills, a staff member in a large public service organisation explained how he was now able to calculate percentages and:

"It's helped me with maths in my job because my maths was really poor at school. Simple things like ... I'm trying to work out shooting scores for the recruits, and they want to know 'what's the pass percentage'? Before I'd be trying to like work it out and even on a calculator I couldn't do it... I can do it on paper probably quite easily now I know the method, so it's definitely going to help me."

An improvement in both writing skills and in spoken communication was also identified. A member of staff from a private care home said that:

"It helped us with writing. From the beginning we are writing notes about what we are doing with the residents. We just have to record it – everything – sometimes we get confused. Should I write this? How will I write? What is the correct tense to use there? How can we write these sorts of things?"

The Learners' Role and Influence on the Learning Process

As well as investigating how Skills for Life at Work courses had impacted on learners, the evaluation also sought to explore whether the training had been noticeably more or less effective with particular kinds of learners. While no employers or training providers felt that Skills for Life at Work had been detrimental for staff who took part, there was a definite feeling that the degree of benefit did vary between different learners. Firstly, and not surprisingly, the influence of learners themselves was noted by several employers and training providers. There were examples of the powerful effect of learners' different motivation levels. A health service contractor noted the varying levels of motivation:

"There are always some people who don't want to be there and do the least they can, but the majority do not have that attitude."

The influence of learners' age and career stage was also noted with older learners facing more difficulties in some settings but faring better in others as the manager of a community organisation commented:

"It's harder for older people (50+) to access these courses – their motivation is not so great. The biggest negative impact is on those below Entry Level – avoidance. They sometimes won't admit their difficulties or it suits them not to make progress, it can be quite handy to say they don't read or write."

Also significant were cases where learners' engagement was limited by competing priorities in, for example, a social enterprise company, where:

"The only problem for the learners is finding time for training. Many have additional needs and outside pressures on their lives e.g. family."

Overcoming initial negativity by staff selected for Skills for Life at Work courses proved an area of difficulty in some workplaces. The following account from the training coordinator in a company providing housekeeping staff within a large NHS hospital is a good example:

"Getting people to admit that they've got a problem is the main difficulty that we have. Everybody thinks they've got enough skills already. The younger generation think they know everything... they say 'Why am I doing a literacy and numeracy test?' And older people (i.e. in their late 50s) say 'I've never had any problems so why do I need this now?'"

This makes clear that progress amongst learners on Skills for Life at Work courses is not a simple question of which kinds of learners seem to do well, but rather a complex question of what kinds of combinations of learner characteristics, training course processes and workplace contexts seem to be conducive to learner benefits.

Conclusions

The picture emerging from the workplaces that took part in this evaluation is that Skills for Life at Work courses had a range of benefits for learners. In particular, there were reports of learners gaining in three main ways: opening up of new possibilities, increased confidence and self-belief and in the development of knowledge and skills. These findings connect with those of previous studies such as the interim evaluation of the Skills for Life at Work programme which noted that, for the vast majority of learners in their sample, the training was reported to have "improved their skills and helped them to do their job better" (Pageplace and Tallon, 2010, p. 13) and also that "learners grow in confidence and self-esteem" (Adult Learning Inspectorate, 2005, p.3). Similarly, Wolf et al.'s (2010, p. 393) larger-scale study of workplace basic skills programmes found that

"learners had been highly positive in their overall evaluations on the courses".

While there were no clear reports of negative impacts on learners, there was a feeling that the degree of positive impact varied between learners depending upon a mix of factors. This included the influence of: learners themselves (motivation levels, age, career stage, competing priorities), the training courses (group size, timing), and the workplace context (senior staff support, and connection between course content and job role).

Overall, the evaluation presented clear evidence that Skills for Life at Work courses benefited a wide range of learners located within a variety of employment locations. Based on this positive feedback, the overall recommendation of the evaluation was that Skills for Life at Work-type training in the workplace should continue as part of wider efforts to improve levels of skills attainment. It may be worth reminding ourselves that the 2020 minimum basic skill targets set by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) are for 95% of the population to have literacy skills at Level 1 or above, and 95% of the population to have numeracy skills at Entry Level 3 or above (BIS, 2009). We believe this is a target well worth striving to achieve.

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The Literacy Working Group: Advocating Adult Literacy in International Development

Janine Eldred

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Current economic difficulties highlight, in the most tangible and painful ways, the reality of global interdependence. No longer can politicians alone, shape national economies; much bigger, global influences are at play. Shifts of manufacturing and servicing, from industrialised to developing countries, along with interdependency on food and fuel, highlight the need to not only understand global economics but also recognise that investment in skills is vital in developing flexibility, coping with uncertainty, and dealing with rapid change and competition. In this context, the UK appears to have invested far more than any other industrialised country on adult literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages, recognising the importance of these skills to optimise human potential and fulfilment.

The same rationale must also be applied to developing countries if HIV and AIDS, maternal ill-health and infant mortality, climate change and crop failure are not to have a devastating impact upon not only the poorest people on our planet, but all of us.

Our interdependence means that if we neglect to invest in supporting emerging economies, we do so at enormous cost. Powerlessness, a sense that hegemony rests elsewhere, inequity of opportunity to lead healthy, fulfilled lives lead, understandably, to unrest and protest. Helping to create a more equitable, balanced world, where wealth and influence are more evenly distributed can be supported by education and training which equips individuals and countries to assert their rights; adult literacy has a vital role to play in advocating greater global harmony.

Seven years ago, 164 governments and organisations committed to expand educational opportunities for children, young people and adults by 2015. The resulting, *Education For All* (EFA) set the agenda and goals, including literacy for adults and young people. The goals are concerned with:

- Early childhood care and education;
- Universal primary education;
- Meeting the learning needs of young people and adults;
- Developing literacy and literate environments;
- Promoting gender parity and equality; and
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The Global Monitoring Report (GMR) of the mid-term review of the EFA goals reported:

> *"Illiteracy is receiving minimal political attention and remains a global disgrace, keeping one in five adults (one in four women) on the margins of society." UNESCO, 2008, p4*

The statistics tell a graphic story: worldwide, 774 million people, according to centralised measuring systems, lack basic literacy skills; 64% of them are women. In addition, gender disparity is huge with only 59 countries achieving parity in primary and secondary education by 2005. The quality of teaching is of great concern with crowded and dilapidated classrooms, too few materials and large pupil-teacher ratios. HIV-AIDS has impacted enormously on the teaching force. In addition, 72 million children remain out of school. One of the EFA goals is to reduce illiteracy by 50% by the target date.

Adult literacy and numeracy competences have been prioritised as essential aspects of living and working in industrialised countries. The Literacy Working Group is advocating that developing countries should create similar priorities and that UKAid[3] should use its influence and support to assist their implementation.

The group was set up as a result of growing interest in this area, generated especially by the Global Monitoring Report of 2006 which looked in great depth at the state of literacy in the world.[4] The UK National Commission (UKNC) for UNESCO, the UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) and the British Association for Literacy in

1. www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/ Accessed 10 August 2011
2. UNESCO, 2008, EFA Global Monitoring Report: Education for All by 2015. Will we make it? www.unesco.org/new/en/education/ Accessed 10 August 2011
3. http://www.dfid.gov.uk/
4. UNESCO 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report, Literacy for Life, UNESCO www.unesco.org/education/ Accessed 10 August 2011

Development (BALID) organised linked events in December 2005 and January 2006 to discuss the findings. The level of attendance at these events and the quality of discussion there, demonstrated the presence in the UK of a strong professional constituency versed in literacy issues and with wide experience of literacy programmes and projects in the UK and other countries.

A number of those involved in organising and attending these events identified a need to create a continuing UK forum for the exchange of information and ideas, for support and promotion of international literacy programmes and campaigns, for advocacy for the case for literacy development and for facilitating the mobilisation of UK literacy expertise on behalf of development efforts worldwide. The Literacy Working Group was set up as an autonomous group, of both representatives of organisations and experienced, expert individuals, committed to the promotion and development of literacy. Given UNESCO's worldwide leadership responsibility in literacy, it would be linked to the United Kingdom National Commission (UKNC) for UNESCO but would be independent of it.

For the most part, members are drawn from civil society organisations. The current membership is drawn from:

- British Association for Literacy in Development (BALID)
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
- ActionAid
- UKFIET
- Several universities and some individuals who are highly experienced in this field.

NIACE has chaired the group and BALID agreed to provide the secretarial support with UKNC acting as treasurer.

The group aims to encourage the UK government, in particular, to develop and support policies, planning and implementation of more adult literacy and education programmes, including family literacy, in international development activities and to encourage the integration of literacy into aid programmes. The shared vision was that the EFA targets would be more effectively and efficiently achieved if such approaches were adopted.

The group meets approximately 5 times per annum. We have made links with UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg as well as UNESCO, Paris. Early in its formation, it commissioned and edited a position paper on literacy concepts and strategies, which was distributed and discussed at UKFIET and International Adult Learners' week conferences. Members have met, on several occasions, with Department for International Development (DfID) officials to discuss literacy within UK aid programmes. Briefing notes have been produced under contract for senior DfID officials on the concepts, issues and practices of adult literacy. The group responded to the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) on the Mid-term Assessment of all the EFA goals, from a literacy perspective. We provided input into the UK Confintea report[5] and contributed to the global conference of Confintea in Brazil in December 2009. We have presented papers to several international conferences including, in partnership with BALID, conferences on Family Literacy in Sierra Leone and South Africa.[6] More recently, we have sent a paper to UNESCO, Paris, to inform the next GMR which is on skills, where we advocate the inter-dependency of good vocational and skills development with literacy.

The group believes in an holistic view of the EFA goals, arguing that many of them could be achieved more readily and sustainably if adult literacy was woven into the policies and programmes which deliver them. For example, the goals concerning early childhood, primary education and gender would be more effectively reached if family learning programmes were advocated and developed. In both industrialised and developing countries, those children and families experiencing the greatest poverty and disadvantage have the least access to learning support. We know the benefits of family programmes in supporting those families.[7]

We also know that embedded or integrated approaches to learning, where literacy and numeracy are closely linked to vocational education and training (VET) are effective in developing both the vocational and technical skills and literacy skills. Drawing on the expertise of teachers of adult literacy as well as the VET teachers ensures that the learning is explicit, relevant and purposeful. Moreover, we are absolutely clear that the quality of teaching and learning is central to the achievement of EFA goals in just the same way that the UK Skills for Life programme has invested massively in training and developing teachers, to achieve its purposes. The development of their own literacy and numeracy skills equips them to influence the quality of the learning and achievement of their learners.

The future work of the group includes a continuing dialogue with DfID and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), as well as an active association with the Global Campaign for Education. We recently organised an event, with Lord Boswell of Aynho, to advocate a re-thinking of skills development, to embrace adult literacy, in the light of the launch of the report of the NIACE independent inquiry into adult literacy in England.[8] We will continue to explore new and different partnerships and networks, to complement others' agendas in relation to international development, including such organisations as UNICEF and Save

5. Quintero, L and McNair, S, 2008, Confintea V1 – UK National Report, Leicester, NIACE
6. Reports are available from BALID www.balid.org.uk
7. See, for example, Brooks, G., Olga, C. and Swain, J. (2009). Learning Literacy Together: The impact and effectiveness of family literacy on parents, children, families and schools. London: LSIS.
8. NIACE. (2011) Work, Society and Lifelong Learning. Report of the inquiry into adult literacy in England. Available to download: http://shop.niace.org.uk/literacy-inquiry-fullreport.html

the Children. We will also offer a 'powerhouse' of experience and expertise to inform the newly-shaped UKNC as it works more closely with DfID and UNESCO, Paris. We welcome the opportunity to enhance the long-standing relationships between those working in adult literacy in the UK, in particular RaPAL and those of us engaged in literacy and development in countries around the world.

We recognise that as the demands of living and working in the 21st century change and increase, both in the UK and overseas, vibrant economies, where social justice, active citizenship and lively democracies are supported, lifelong learning policies and practices are required. The vision must also embrace UK aid programmes in other countries where the needs are even more obvious and vital. We know how to take such imaginative steps; we must tirelessly advocate globally, nationally and locally to collaborate and support them.

Reading Groups in Prisons: Their Impact on Prisoners' Literacy Practices

Kate Hendry

Kate Hendry teaches English and creative writing in Barlinnie Prison and for the Open University. Her action research project on prison reading groups was funded by Learning and Teaching Scotland.[1] In 2010 she published, in collaboration with prisoners, an anthology of contemporary Scottish poetry for prison reading groups, The Poem Goes to Prison*.[2] You can contact her at khendry@motherwell.co.uk.*

Introduction

The aim of this year-long action research project was to explore the impact of reading groups on prisoners' literacy practices and on their engagement with learning. The key research questions were:

- What is the impact of participatory, oral work on students' literacy practices, both within and beyond the Learning Centre?
- What is the effect of reading groups on student engagement with learning?
- What do the reading groups mean to our students?

To summarise, what, in short, can reading groups in prison do?

Research Context: Learning in a Short Term Prison

HMP Barlinnie in Glasgow is Scotland's largest prison. In 2010, the average number of prisoners was 1,250 adult males, of whom approximately 900 are available for education (the rest are on remand). The majority of convicted prisoners are serving short term [3] sentences (50% have sentences between 1 and 4 years, 20% between 6 months and 1 year, 30% less than 6 months).[4] This means that 50% of convicted prisoners are likely to serve less than 6 months in prison, and that the student population within this context is likely to be highly transient in nature. The Learning Centre sees an average of 325 prisoners a week, or 25% of the total population of the prison. On arrival at the Learning Centre their basic literacy and numeracy skills are assessed. 92% of students have a literacy level of Intermediate 1 or below.[5]

The Learning Centre offers a range of classes focusing mostly on the core skills of literacy, numeracy and IT. There are 15 literacy classes a week; 29% of the total number of classes (compared to 13% for IT). In 2009-10, students achieved 193 modules in literacy-related subjects; 15% of the total number of certificates achieved (compared to 236 certificates in IT - 19% of the total).[6]

Research Sample: Literacy Students in HMP

All classes operate a roll-on/roll-off programme. New students can join a class at any point and students leave for a variety of reasons: transfer to another jail, a job within the prison, an offending behaviour course[7] and liberation. They may not attend classes because they have a visit (from family or lawyers), an appointment at the prison health centre or they have simply not been 'opened up'.[8] For some, there is also a stigma attached to learning - it brands them as stupid or uneducated.

Against this background, teaching staff struggle to retain students for long enough to complete an SQA[9] module. Group work becomes almost impossible and many students, with negative experiences of school, struggle to re-engage with education. Retention in literacy classes is particularly difficult, perhaps because traditional approaches, focusing on functional skills such as spelling and punctuation, remind students of their experience of failure at school.

Given the context and sample described above, this study poses the question: Can reading groups offer solutions to the intractable difficulties of retention and engagement in learning?

Literature Review: Reading Groups in Prison

Reading groups in prisons follow a range of models. Those run by The Reader Organisation[10] follow two main criteria - reading out loud and reading 'literature'.[11] Prison Reading Groups[12] insist that prisoners retain the right to choose the texts that are read. Many reading groups read for pleasure with no overt rehabilitative or educational aim.

In England, a number of Writers in Prison Network[13] residents run Stories Connect: Changing Lives Through Stories, developed from the American programme Changing Lives Through Literature[14], which has an overt rehabilitative aim: students are referred to courses as an alternative to custody. Texts are chosen to encourage students to confront specific issues relating to their offending behaviour.[15] The UK course also uses the reading groups to focus students'

1. www.ltscotland.org.uk
2. Edinburgh: Scottish Poetry Library
3. Less than 4 years
4. Barlinnie Prison Visiting Committee Report 2010
5. The level the Scottish Government has deemed that somebody has a functional literacy or numeracy need. Intermediate 1 is a Scottish Qualifications Authority qualification. It is the equivalent of Level 1 of the English Adult Literacy Core Curriculum.
6. Motherwell College Learning Skills and Employability Monthly Reports for 2010
7. Such as Drug and Alcohol Awareness, and Anger Management
8. There is considerable anecdotal evidence that officers in the residential halls do not unlock prisoners' cells to allow them to attend the Learning Centre.
9. Scottish Qualification Authority
10. www.thereader.org.uk
11. Writing that involves the world of the imagination such as novels, short stories and poems.
12. www.roehampton.ac.uk/prg
13. www.writersinprisonnetwork.org

attention onto the moral and behavioural issues that have contributed to their offending behaviour. It aims to address "key issues such as male violence, family life, individual responsibility etc".[16]

In *Reading Together: The Role of the Reading Group Inside Prison,*[17] Jane Hartley and Sarah Turvey offer a focused evaluation of the work of Prison Reading Groups. Their key conclusion is that reading groups help prisoners to develop "inquiring and critical sociability".[18] They help prisoners to develop the skills required to live positively within other prison communities and in community life outside jail.

Anita Wilson's ethnographic studies of prisoners' literacy practices do not focus on reading groups[19] but more broadly on all the ways in which prisoners engage in literacies during their incarceration. She considers how, where, when and why prisoners engage in literacy-related activities. She reflects on formal and informal literacy activities including "frequent signature writing, official bureaucracy on reception into and release from the jail, graffiti, letters to family and friends, subversive notes to acquaintances in the jail, … reading official prison documentation, … complaints forms, visits requests, tattoos, appeals, poetry, … books, magazines."[20]

Her work insists on the heterogeneous nature of prisoners' literacy practice; what she calls "multiple literacies".[21] Literacy not as a set of functional tools which prisoners lack and which they acquire in the classroom, but as a range of activities which they engage in primarily to support social identity and to resist institutionalization.[22]

Whereas Stories Connect and Prison Reading Groups want to understand the role of reading group practice within prisoners' rehabilitation, Wilson wants to ask what literacy practice means to prisoners in the broadest sense. So, could this project tell us about what reading groups mean to our sample of prisoners in Barlinnie?

Research Methodology
To address the research questions outlined in the introduction The Reader Organisation's model was chosen: reading literature out loud. Literary texts were chosen because they offer stories which engage with powerful and gripping plots and characters. According to The Reader Organisation, "Literature offers a humane, shared language for complex individual experience."[23]

Reading out loud brought students together in a group activity, helping them to focus and to 'own' the text. "Reading aloud is significant. Not only does it mean that non-readers can join in, it also generates an instant personal response, encouraging deeper connections to be made…it also helps concentration."[24] Reading texts in the classroom meant no one had to take texts away to read in between sessions. Many prisoners would not have been able to read in their cells due to the distractions of TV and a cell mate, and some would have found the requirement to complete 'homework' overwhelming, given their negative experiences of school. Reading out loud in class meant all students could take part in discussion and that everyone finished the texts.

I ran two reading groups, each one meeting once a week for an average of 2 hours. One group took place in the morning and one in the afternoon, to enable students to join a group which best fitted with their other time commitments such as work, offending behaviour courses and the gym.

Each group ran for 12 weeks. Although a longer block of classes would have offered more evidence of changes to literacy practices, given the short-term population of Barlinnie it would have been impossible to keep a group together for longer. I ran four blocks over a year which also enabled me to observe problems with my methodology and make necessary changes.

Research Sampling
Students were chosen who had at least 12 weeks of their sentence left to serve and who had scored at Intermediate 1 or below in their Learning Centre initial basic skills test. Over the year, 45 students joined one of the 12-week reading groups. 18 completed a block. 2 of the 18 did not have English as their first language, although they were fluent speakers.

Predictably, for a short-term jail, the major problem was attendance and retention. Even with a choice of am/pm sessions they missed classes for visits from lawyers, appointments with doctors and dentists, sickness or 'being on report'.[25] The prison regime does not take the Learning Centre timetable into account in planning prisoners' activities. Prisoners, especially those with sentences of more than a year, can be transferred, without warning, to other jails and this happened to two students.

14. *Set up in the United States by Prof Robert Waxler & Robert Kane in 1991. Jean Trounstine, J and Waxler, R, (2005) Finding a Voice: The Practice of Changing Lives Through Literature. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.*
15. *Stories Connect is not an alternative to custody.*
16. *www.writersinprisonnetwork.org/Special_Projects.html.*
17. *Hartley, J and Turvey, S. (2009) Reading Together: The Role of the Reading Group Inside Prison. Prison Service Journal, issue 183 pp. 27-32*
18. *Ibid, p. 29*
19. *Except for Wilson, A. (2007) From 'Sit Down and Read That' to 'What We Readin' This Week Miss?' Encouraging Reluctant Young Readers to Read for Pleasure in a Prison Setting. Paul Hamlyn Trust.*
20. *Wilson, A. 'Reading a Library – Writing a Book:' Prisoners' Day to Day Engagement with Literacy/ies' Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Exeter, England 12-14 September 2002 http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002546.htm: pp. 8-9*
21. *Ibid*
22. *Ibid and also, Wilson, A. (2007) I Go to Get Away from the Cockroaches: Educentricity and the Politics of Education in Prisons. The Journal of Correctional Education 58(2) p.188*
23. *http://thereader.org.uk/everything-else/research/*
24. *http://thereader.org.uk/about-us/faqs/*
25. *All privileges, such as education and work, are removed in punishment for unacceptable behaviour or rule breaking.*

There were also frequent occasions when students chose not to come to a class because they did not feel they were in the right frame of mind: "I had too much on my mind", "I'm too fevered up to come",[26] "my co-pilot[27] kept me awake all night".

In subsequent blocks, to try to increase retention, the group was transformed into a book and film club. I hoped that the lure of a film would encourage students, even if they did have "a lot on (their) mind(s)". We read a story/novella in the class and then watched the film adaptation. Students did come to watch a film when they had read the story the previous week, but the institutional reasons for non-attendance remained the same.

Evaluation Methodology

I picked five evaluation tools,[28] developed over time from my own practice and in collaboration with fellow practitioners:[29] confidence scales, student reflection questionnaires, tutor observation journal, focus groups and written exercises. These were chosen as each tool would provide different data, drawing out useful contrasts, comparisons and similarities. Results from the different tools would allow findings to be corroborated or questioned and linked back to my initial research questions. The results only relate to the 18 students who completed a 12-week block.

Confidence scales were chosen to provide clear indications of any change in confidence in literacy practices over time. Students filled in pre- and post-course charts. The four-point scale assessed the impact of reading groups on students' confidence in a range of literacy-related activities and in a number of locations. There were eight situations and students were asked to evaluate how confident they felt in each across three different locations (the Learning Centre, the residential halls, and with friends and family). The situations were chosen to reflect the way students would typically use literacy skills in a prison setting. Of the eight situations, one enquired specifically about writing skills, one about reading and six related mostly to speaking skills. This reflected the primarily oral and social nature of reading groups and of students' lives within the institutional setting of the jail.

Student reflection questionnaires were used to give an understanding of what reading groups meant to students and to illuminate how literacy practices changed over time, both within the Learning Centre and beyond. To capture how the experience of participating in a reading group impacted on students' literacy practices they answered five questions at the end of each session.

Tutor observation journal entries enabled me to track students' engagement with the reading activities and group discussions in the class. For example, I noted how much they read or if they refused, whether they read with confidence or if they stumbled, if there were particular types of language or words that caused difficulty, if they could follow the text while others were reading, if they understood the plot, if they could concentrate. The journal also helped me to capture changes in oral and social literacy practice: the type of interactions they had with other members of the group; whether they discussed the text or talked about other concerns. I noted if they were helpful and supportive to other students or argumentative and dismissive. I also gathered any reports of new or changed activities outside the Learning Centre; activities which they had not reported in their reflection questionnaires.

Focus group sessions, held at the end of each block, also helped me to discuss with students any changes in their literacy practices over the 12 weeks. Having read students' reflection questionnaires, I was able to prompt discussion on particular issues, or ask questions to fill in gaps.

Written exercises, completed by students pre- and post-course, indicated if their written literacy practices had changed over time. In their first week in the reading group students wrote a brief summary of the story that they had read. They were not asked to analyse the text although they could offer an opinion if they wanted to. They were asked to repeat the same exercise, with a different story, at the end of the block. The exercises were not scored, but they revealed changes in their functional writing skills (spelling, punctuation etc), willingness to write at length, express opinion, understand and explain plot.

Results

What is the impact of participatory, oral work on students' literacy practices, both within and beyond the Learning Centre?

Results from the confidence scales suggest that there were three literacy activities which were most affected by participation in reading groups. These are writing, talking in a group and talking to authority (including making a complaint).[30] These results are confirmed by student reflection questionnaires and my observation journal.

Confidence scale results suggest that reading and talking can have an effect on students' writing. Even though they were not focusing on punctuation, sentence construction etc, students still felt more able to express themselves on paper by the end of the course. Most students felt more confident about writing and some even perceived tangible improvements in their writing skills, particularly punctuation and spelling. One student, who stayed for two blocks, showed significant improvement. Whereas his first story summary had been inaccurate and confused, his last had shown a good understanding of plot and theme. There were also specific examples of improvements in his spelling ('intresting→interesting,

26. 'Fevered up' means a prisoner is in a state of great excitement about his imminent release.
27. A 'co-pilot' is a cell mate.
28. See appendices
29. With particular help from Kathy MacLachlan and Stuart Hall of Glasgow University's School of Education.
30. See Appendix 5

listenning→listening, Scotish→Scottish.) Three students also showed the capacity to write at more length by the end of the block.

Confidence scale results showing that students felt more confident talking in a group after participation in a reading group were corroborated by students' responses in reflection questionnaires. Students frequently commented on their growing confidence within the group. Many felt that the group helped them with their social skills:

"The class helps me to get on with others."

They felt their listening skills had improved:

"I have learnt to listen before jumping in with my own sayings."

Some felt that participation in the group helped them to accept different opinions and tolerate others:

"The group helps me to understand other people and their lives."

A number of students felt that the class had helped them to feel able to express their opinions within a group setting:

"The class helps me to be bold in expressing my opinions."

Confidence scale results also showed that students felt more confident talking to authority after participation in a reading group. This meant communication generally and making a complaint in particular. Authority is a prominent feature of prison experience and is present in all situations (within the Learning Centre, in the residential halls and in prisoners' work parties[31]). Survival and progress through the system (parole, tags, moving to a more privileged hall) depends upon effective communication with officers in the residential halls. The prison has a culture of resentment against authority and resistance to co-operation. Many students do not know how to communicate or complain without resorting to aggression; verbal or physical.

One student reported in his questionnaire that he had moved to a more "desirable" work party, which is something that could not have happened without effective communication. I took note in my journal of an ongoing dialogue with a prisoner about his violent behaviour and his growing desire to change: "I don't want to start any new stuff – I end up heavy full of tension." Another student talked about "anger welling up" inside him, but that he knew "not to let it out". Although these problems were clearly not resolved for the prisoners concerned, this shows them to be confronting issues of violence and anger; issues which are most problematic for them within the halls.

The confidence scale results show that the most significant changes in students' literacy practices took place within the halls, as opposed to within the Learning Centre (as might have been expected given that the reading groups took place in that context) or with friends and family. The majority of prisoners share a cell and their experience of life in the hall is therefore almost exclusively communal. Improvements in social skills gained in the Learning Centre helped them to deal with the communal experience of the hall.

Students reported a range of literacy-related activities that they engaged in outside class, many for the first time. These included going to the library, reading newspapers and magazines, doing the crossword and word games in the newspaper, answering quiz questions on TV, reading novels, writing poems (and sending them to magazines), reading instead of watching the TV, writing letters, reading the Bible in the chapel and talking about texts read in the reading group to a cell mate.

What is the effect of reading groups on student engagement with learning?

Student questionnaires showed that reading out loud had a particular effect on student engagement in the reading group experience. Student T, wrote on his questionnaire that in week 1, he had "just listened". In week 3, he "wrote and read out loud". In week 5, he "read out loud and talked". This was a small but significant shift from silence to vocal participation. Six prisoners became, after their participation in the reading group, involved in other learning experiences in Barlinnie. Two prisoners became Listeners[32], two became Toe-by-Toe mentors[33] and two became involved in projects run in Barlinnie by national arts organisations.[34]

In my journal I noted that many students were able to express their opinions more confidently after they had taken a turn to read out loud. Once students had been coming for a few weeks, they began to support each other (students D and L helped others with the pronunciation of tricky words) and to share stories of personal struggles with drugs, homelessness and illness. Some displayed a substantial change in behaviour. Student G began with a dismissive and aggressive attitude towards the texts, my teaching and others' opinions. By the end he was able to take part in discussion in a positive and appropriate manner.

What do the reading groups mean to our students?

Some students expressed in their questionnaires that they felt that the reading group had become a safe place in which they felt they could be themselves. In the tolerant, accepting atmosphere of the group, student N felt much better about himself: "In the past I just didn't like myself at all. I hated the person that I'd become. I've started to like myself more." In a focus group, student P recalled how he had left early one week because he'd been feeling ill. When he came the following week student R had asked him

31. In Barlinnie, work 'parties', as they are known, include joinery, bricklaying, laundry, cooks, gardening, recycling.
32. A scheme run by the Samaritans: http://www.samaritans.org/your_emotional_health/our_work_in_prisons/the_listener_scheme.aspx
33. A learning-to-read scheme: http://www.toe-by-toe.co.uk/
34. The National Galleries of Scotland and The Citizens Theatre

where he'd gone. He was pleased to have been missed. Student P clearly felt so comfortable in the group one week that he sang us a song!

Students reported changes in a range of literacy practices:

> *"I write more letters."*
> *"I've read 6 books since the start."*
> *"I've been getting on better with my ex. She's let me speak to my wee girl on the phone."*

Other students reported in their questionnaires that they had begun to exercise more and to eat a healthier diet. Student A began using the gym and then joined in football matches.

Reflections and Implications for Practice
The results of this project suggest that reading groups can do a number of important things. They help students with a range of literacy practices. Reading out loud seems, in the long term, to improve students' written skills. They help with oral and social literacy practices. Students learn how to express themselves in a group; co-operate, negotiate, tolerate varied opinions, listen and defend their point of view without resorting to aggression. Reading groups help students to communicate with authority in a constructive way. They give students the skills to communicate persuasively and respectfully. They empower them to feel equal to authority, whether that is the text, the teacher or an officer.

Arguably their most important role lies in their ability to engage with and support students' current and developing literacy practices beyond the Learning Centre, engaging with students' 'multiple literacies' practice. Reading groups support the way prisoners use literacy to maintain contact with the outside world,[35] to hold onto a sense of individuality, e.g. writing poems, and to create a sense of private space, such as reading in the cell, in a very public world.

In *Adult Literacy as Social Practice*, Uta Papen writes about the purpose of "social literacies" to forge links between "inside" literacies and "outside" literacies in an attempt to recognise the social uses of literacies.[36] Reading groups bridge the gap between inside, educational literacies and outside, social literacies, between the literacy of assessment and accreditation and the kinds of literacy practices prisoners engage in in the halls, what Wilson calls literacy for "survival and social identity".[37] For students in prison there are two 'outsides' – outside the Learning Centre and outside prison. It is thus even more vital that literacy learning is relevant and meaningful to them. It is a truism of the rhetoric on recidivism that those offenders with the strongest family ties are most likely to resist reoffending. Literacy learning that helps students to maintain and extend these ties is thus especially important.

Wilson argues that prison literacies are not just about sustaining social identities and connections but about surviving institutionalisation – a process which destroys individual as well as social identity. Reading groups help prisoners to do more than read words but to read, as Papen puts it, "beyond and between the lines".[38] They become powerful readers – readers who can express opinion, can disagree, are equal to the text and to each other, readers who feel that they are allowed to access the 'literary' world. Literacy becomes an act not merely of understanding but of interpretation.

As they learn to interpret the text, so they learn to interpret the learning environment; to question the language and structures of formal education. Prisoners, in the space of a reading group, can take control of their own learning, for their own purposes. They can break out of what Wilson calls an "educentric" view of learning in which they "adopt traditional 'policy-oriented' view(s) of what education should be about… (such as) 'neat hand writing, good spelling and poetry that rhymes' as a mark of educational achievement".[39] Involvement in reading groups enables prisoners to value other learning experiences, ones that are more important to their survival in the prison and outside, such as the social skills described above. It also develops confidence in dealing with the formalities of the education system and even a readiness to choose to engage with formal learning.

Clearly, reading groups have an important role to play in prison education and in supporting students' literacy practices while they are in prison. However, in this project their impact on engagement with learning was less strong. Reading groups are not immune to the challenges of the prison system – the drop out rate was not lower than in other classes. The familiar, intransigent problems of teaching in a short-term prison – roll-on/roll-off classes and the consequent difficulty in establishing group work, the institutionalised prioritisation of work parties, short-term sentences, prisoner transfers, students troubled by the shame of educational failure – all of these issues affect reading groups as much as any other class.

However, reading group methods do have something to teach prison education. Whereas most classes respond to the difficulty of roll-on/roll-off class lists by teaching students individually, reading groups offer a way to maintain group work while accepting the weekly arrival of new students. By using poetry and short fiction each class can be a self-contained group session. Long teaching sessions also allow classes to be divided into two parts – one for group work and one for individual work. The advantages of group work are clear: a learning culture is created which new students slot into rapidly and students learn from and support each other.

35. Students reported increases in letter writing and phone calls.
36. Papen, U. (2005) Adult Literacy as Social Practice: More than Skills. London: Routledge.
37. Wilson, A (2004) 'Four Days and a Breakfast – Time, Space and Literacy/ies in the Prison Community' in K Leander and M Sheehy (Eds) Space Matters: Assertions of Space in Literacy Practice and Research. New York: Peter Lang.
38. Ibid p.129
39. Wilson, A. (2007b) pp.196-7

The non-formal nature of the reading group also offers a model that could be beneficial to other prison classes. SQA modules can be embedded into such a relaxed format while students are not reminded of the school environment in which they so frequently failed.

Reading groups should form part of a portfolio of literacy classes which can offer a similar approach to some of the fixed problems of prison education described above. Classes such as creative writing, song writing, drama, prison magazines, literacy for parents, literacy for work, can all offer non-formal learning experiences which engage with *all* prisoners' literacy needs and activities. Such literacy teaching would help to create a learning environment that is engaging, challenging and relevant.

Reading groups, as this research has shown, do not focus on "non-ability, non-attendance and non-compliance"[40] but help prisoners to use and develop their literacy practices as a way to sustain their social and individual identities within an institutional setting. Their strength lies in their ability to bridge the gap between the Learning Centre and the hall, between educational literacies and social literacies, between learning and living.

Limitations of the Project

This article considers reading groups only in the context of the literature on and practice of reading groups within prisons. Clearly, reading groups are a flourishing part of adult literacy and mental health[41] sectors. In both contexts they can offer participants' choice and control over their reading experience. In her *Practitioner Guide: Reading*, Maxine Burton emphasises that "having learners as 'democratic partners' in the learning process is of fundamental importance".[42] The institutionalised disempowerment of prisoners influences teaching practices and systems and it remains a challenge within prison education to give students meaningful learning choices. A question that could be explored in future research might therefore be: Can student choice and independence be encouraged, through reading groups, in prison education?

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Appendix 1: A Reading Group Session Outline

Students read short stories which had characters, settings or themes they would recognise, rather than ones that would make them confront their offending behaviour. In the first block the groups read mostly fiction, and some autobiographical pieces. Texts included Scottish fiction by Irvine Welsh, Alan Bissett, James Kelman, Bernard McLaverty and William McIllvanney; classic fiction by Jack London, Shirley Jackson and Roald Dahl and contemporary Anglo-American fiction by Michel Faber, Tobias Wolff, Stephen King and T Coraghessan Boyle. One group also read stories by contemporary African writers Helon Habila and Moses Isegawa. These choices reflected the interests of the group as well as their national identities. Themes that arose included drug abuse, sectarianism, crime and its consequences, superstition and faith, childhood, fatherhood and death.

I began each session by reading the opening paragraphs of the story. I then asked the person next to me to take over. Students were allowed to pass. They could stop reading when they wanted to, although I often asked them to pass the story on to the next person, so that everyone had a chance to read.

We often stopped mid-story, to check understanding and to predict what would happen next - a popular activity. After the story was finished, the group

40. Ibid p.193
41. A particular focus of, for example, the Reader Organisation's work in the community.
42. Burton, M, (2007) Reading, Developing Adult Teaching and Learning: Practitioner Guides. Leicester: NIACE. p.25

discussed their reading experience - both the act of reading out loud and the text itself. They also talked about personal experiences which the story prompted them to recall. I did not lead discussions in any particular direction but I did manage discussions so that everyone was included.

In the second block, the groups were transformed into book and film groups. We read/watched *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*, *Trainspotting*, *The Acid House*, *So Much Water so Far from Home/Jindabyne*, *3:10 to Yuma* and *Jesus' Son*. Students were given some choice of book/film and with a greater knowledge of the genre of film than literary fiction (familiar film stars and directors) plus the blurb on the back of the DVD box, they were able to make relatively informed decisions.

Appendix 2: The Confidence Scale

Key: Very Confident (VC) Confident (C) Not Confident (NC) Very unconfident (VU)

Situations	While at the Learning Centre	While in the hall	With family/friends
1. I am confident that I can write the things I want to write down.			
2. I am confident that I have something valuable to contribute.			
3. I am confident that I can ask the questions I want to ask.			
4. I am confident that I can read instructions.			
5. I am confident that I can talk to people in authority (officers/doctors/teachers etc).			
6. I am confident that I can defend my position in an argument.			
7. I am confident that I can make a complaint.			
8. I am confident that I can talk about the things I want to say in a group.			

Name: Date:

Appendix 3: Student Reflection Questionnaire

- What did you feel about the class today? (For example, too easy/hard, good discussion/not enough, boring/interesting…or something else?) Try to explain what you enjoyed and what you didn't enjoy.
- What did you do in the class? (For example, read, talk, listen, or were you preoccupied with your own thoughts… or something else?)
- What have you learned from the class? What helped you to learn? (For example, discussion, the story itself, writing, listening to others, something the teacher said… or something else?)
- What wasn't done that you would have liked?
- Did you do anything different this week because of what you did in class? (for example, write a letter, do the cross word, use the library, go to the gym, complain… or something else?)

Appendix 4: Written Exercise

Write a short description of the story they you've just read. Begin with the name of the story and the author. Explain what happens in the story and briefly describe the main characters.

Appendix 5: Confidence Scale Results

Scores are for 18 students combined. 4 points for Very Confident, 3 points for Confident, 2 points for Not Confident and 1 point for Unconfident. Over the 3 locations, a maximum score for each situation is 12. Over the 8 situations, a maximum score for each location is 32.

Change by situation

	At start	At End	Difference
1	110	132	+22
2	115	120	+5
3	124	134	+8
4	126	134	+8
5	124	136	+12
6	132	133	+4
7	117	137	+20
8	113	135	+22

1: I am confident that I can write the things I want to write down
2: I am confident that I have something valuable to contribute
3: I am confident that I can ask the questions I want to ask
4: I am confident that I can talk to people in authority
6: I am confident that I can defend my position in an argument
7: I am confident that I can make a complaint
8: I am confident that I can talk about the things I want to say in a group.

Change by location

Location	At Start	At End	Difference
1	334	360	+26
2	307	349	+42
3	323	351	+28

1: While at the Learning Centre
2: While in the hall
3: While with family/friends

The Cardigan
Author: **Chris Curley**
Signer: **Steve Gibson**
Warrington: New Leaf Books, 2008
Doncaster: DeafEducate, 2011
ISBN 978-1-905688-70-8
Price: £10

The Kit Kat
Author: **Charmaine Marrochia**
Signer: **Trishy Gibson**
Warrington: New Leaf Books, 2006
Doncaster: DeafEducate, 2011
ISBN 978-1-905688-71-5
Price: £10

Group review compiled by Julie Meredith

In 2010, DeafEducate and New Leaf Books started work on a joint venture, and the eBook versions of *The Cardigan* and *The Kit Kat* are the result. Someone purchasing an eBook receives an A5 paperback with a CD that includes a British Sign Language (BSL) translation.

How it Works
The CD is the element that makes these titles different from previous New Leaf titles and other bilingual books because it contains visual information rather than a written translation or audio recording. Once inserted into a computer, a virtual copy of the book appears on screen as shown in Figure 1. The reader turns pages by clicking the black arrows at the bottom.

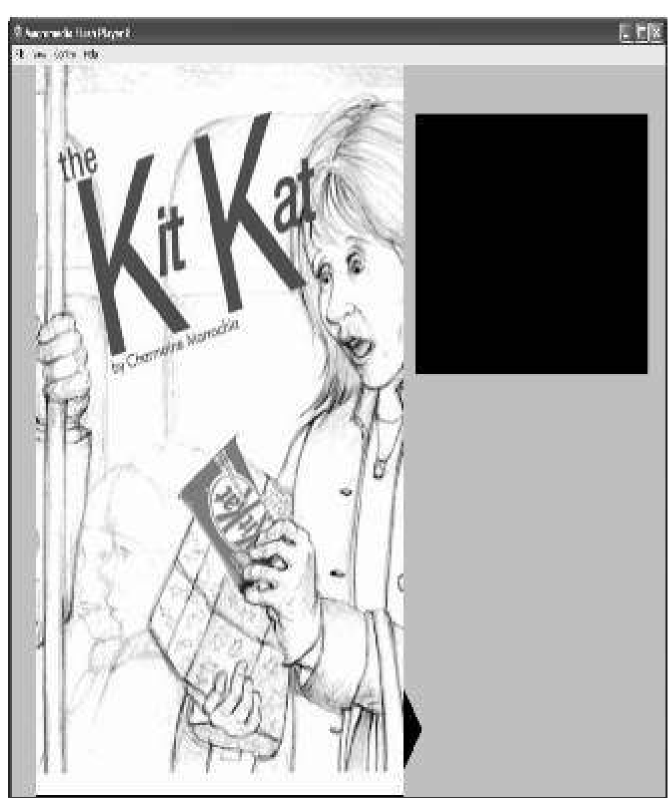

Figure 1

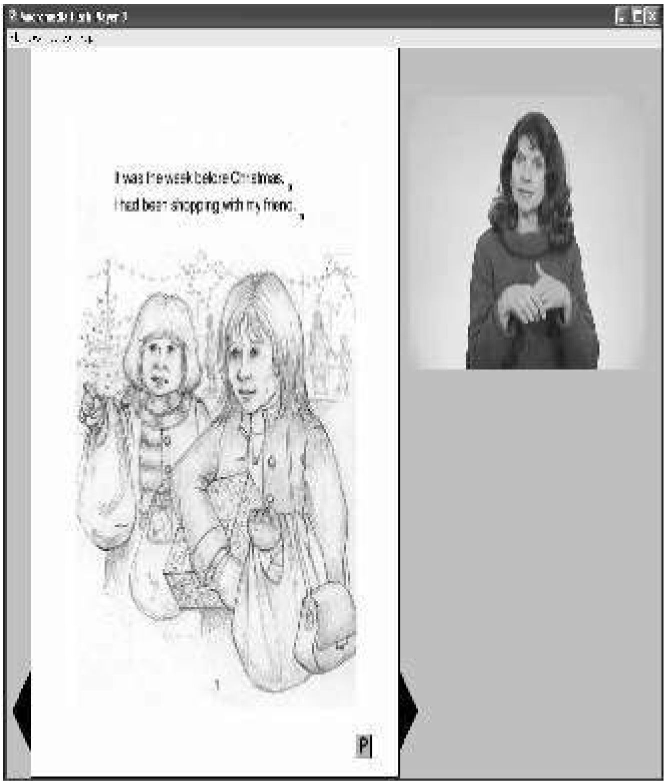

Figure 2

There are also blue markers at the end of sentences, as shown in Figure 2. When a blue marker is clicked, a BSL translation of that sentence is displayed in the video box on the right. A reader also has the option of viewing the BSL translation for the whole page by clicking the larger 'P' icon on the bottom right.

The text and the blue markers are set up to enable a Deaf user, or someone learning BSL, to recognise that the BSL translation is signed for that sentence to where the marker is inserted. The marker itself can be clicked repeatedly until the reader is ready to move on.

The eBook is set up to resemble a physical book in the way that the turning of pages is done and the English text is there to be read before and/or after the blue markers are clicked.

CD versus Download
The onscreen experience of reading this eBook is similar to downloads for eBook readers such as the Kindle. Although it does not include options like the Kindle's dictionary or annotation tools, arguably these are non-essential for the target audience. However, the ability to change elements such as the font and background colour would be a plus. Clearly, the CD does not have some of the flexibility of a download that can be used on different devices, but it does work with existing ICT equipment. The publishers are exploring the viability of different formats and keeping an eye on the use of eBook readers in libraries and colleges. To date, *Quick Reads* are the only titles for emerging readers that are sold as eBook downloads.

The Stories
Hearing adults in an Entry Level English class read the stories and shared their thoughts.

The Cardigan

> The story's wonderful and will appeal to everyone. I could relate to it and it made me laugh.

Michael Higgins

> The pictures connect to the words so they make you understand more even when words are long.

Gladys Apraku

> It's an uplifting and funny story.

Marion Smith

The Kit Kat

> I like the pencil drawings. The story goes with them and they tell everything. It's a simple text that is funny and enjoyable.

Babatunde Paul

> When I choose a book, I look at the cover, pictures and how much text. I put it down if there's a lot of text. This one was just right.

Michael Higgins

> There are not too many words so it is good for beginner readers.
> It is a true story and we liked talking about it.

Gladys Apraku

The eBooks
Deaf and hearing education professionals with knowledge of BSL viewed preview copies of the eBooks and expressed their opinions.

> I think they are a good idea for Deaf adults learning English as the stories are very visual and easy to relate to and, combined with the wonderful illustrations, they instantly engage the reader.
>
> If possible, it would be good for each page to be signed in one continuous shot because the way the signer 'flickers' where the sentences are cut together is a little distracting.
>
> The signed stories use lots of placement and role-shift shown at an even, steady pace, which is ideal for students of BSL to watch and emulate to improve their signing. You can replay clips at the touch of a button, so it's easy to practise a section as much as you want until you're ready to move on to the next one.

Michelle Bigden, Pupil Support Assistant with Level 2 BSL

The Kit Kat is very simple and probably appropriate for Deaf who are learning English. However, *The Cardigan* is a bit concerning as it contains English phrases that Deaf people would find difficult to understand as a way of expressing English terms.

Although the signing clips help, often Deaf people are unable to access the range of English terms used in everyday life. On the positive side, this would give Deaf people an idea of the richness of English. The issue is just being able to access these and understand the correlated meanings.

I do like the simplicity of the books and linked signed clips. The pacing is appropriate to suit young Deaf or adults who are struggling with English.

Paul Cable, BSL teacher and assessor, http://www.signlanguagetoday.com/

They are a good idea but I think they need to identify grammar (e.g. verbs, nouns) to help deaf adults at entry level learn about the structure of English.

I think they would be a useful tool for people learning any level of BSL. When I was doing Level 1, we had video tapes of stories in BSL and they were very useful for the structure of BSL, word order, vocabulary and hand shapes. The eBooks are the new and improved version. They are clear, with the written story on one side and BSL on the other.

Andrew Carroll, Learner Support Assistant with Level 2 BSL

The feedback DEX got on the books was excellent with respect to the innovative way deaf people can learn English.

They could also be useful for extending vocabulary for people learning BSL.

DeafEducate working in collaboration with New Leaf Books is an exciting venture as English resources for adult learners are very limited. I taught Deaf people English literacy for 17 years so know a little on this topic.

Jill Jones, Company Secretary and co-founder of the Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group (DEX) http://www.dex.org.uk/ plus Director and Founder of Deaf Quality http://www.deaf-quality.co.uk/

As a tutor, I value the fact that a Deaf learner could use an eBook independently at home or in class. Without a BSL video translation, the individual would need the assistance of a communication support assistant.

As a student learning BSL, I think they are a great resource because the signers are Deaf and the videos show fluent BSL rather than Sign Supported English. It's also lovely to see a whole story and have the chance to repeat clips.

All in all, I think they are a brilliant idea and I like the fact that DeafEducate matched the sex of the signer to each story's narrator.

Julie Meredith, Adult Literacy Tutor with Level 2 BSL

A sample demonstration of an eBook can be viewed on the internet at www.tinyurl.com/RaPal

Dan's Dinner
Margaret Adams
Warrington: Gatehouse Media Limited, 2010
ISBN 978-1-84231-064-9
£4.95

Reviewed by Aneila Sultan

Aneila is a student in London.

Dan's Dinner is the third book in the series called Supermarket Stories. It is about a young father who left Africa to come to England after something terrible happened. As sole survivor, he worked every day at a local supermarket to escape the pain he felt. Dan never worked in Africa but to bring money into the home he would sell things his mother and wife would grow or make. Five years had passed when a lovely surprise arrived at the supermarket.

I think this story has wide appeal. For people who have come to the UK, it shows them they can better their situation here. For people born here, it helps us have more appreciation and understanding of people moving here and realise how privileged we are. At first, I was not sure if it would have a happy ending or a gut-wrenching finish. I would recommend this book to others to read as I think Dan's story is a heart-warming story.

For slow or unconfident readers, something with long chapters is daunting. This book is not too long and overwhelming but is manageable because each chapter is only about three pages. As a dyslexic, I think the text is a nice size and the pictures by Ian Bobb help you see the difference between the two countries. The only change I would make is for Gatehouse to use off-white or cream paper rather than white.

Phonetics for Phonics: Underpinning knowledge for Adult Literacy Practitioners
Maxine Burton
Leicester: NIACE (2011)
ISBN 978-1-86201-453-4
£9.95

Reviewed by Irene Schwab

Irene has been a literacy practitioner for over 30 years and works as a teacher educator at the Institute of Education, University of London. She has a particular interest in the development of reading skills and is currently researching adult literacy learners' online reading practices.

This small book will be welcomed by those literacy practitioners who recognise they should be using phonics but aren't quite sure how to go about it systematically. It was noted in the recent NRDC study[1] that accurate phonics teaching was one of the techniques known through the literature to be effective, but rarely seen. Presumably the emphasis there was on the accuracy of the teaching rather than the teaching of phonics as such. As a teacher educator, visiting many literacy classes every year, I frequently observe phonics teaching, but it is, indeed, of variable quality. Most teachers certainly recognise the importance of teaching sound-symbol correspondences, but may not have the background linguistic knowledge to provide effective support in this area for learners. The aim of the book is to "demystify [phonics] as a subject, and relate this knowledge to what teachers need for phonics in the classroom".

Over the years, the use of phonics in the teaching of reading has been used as a political football, particularly in relation to children's learning, but it has also been a controversial topic with adult literacy teachers. Whilst most teachers would agree that some phonics tuition is necessary for successful literacy learning, there seems to be ongoing conflict between prioritising Text Level approaches and concentrating on Word Level. Burton[2] speaks of the necessity of "embedding phonics within a broad and rich literacy curriculum" and when reading this book, it is important to bear this in mind. Well-informed teachers are likely to be able to embed work on phonics sensitively and appropriately within a programme of work focusing on reading for meaning and writing for communication.

So this little book can be welcomed as providing a sound background in the phonetics needed to teaching reading and spelling to learners in literacy classes. Being quite small it is not too daunting for teachers to read (only 49 pages of text, together with a glossary, and appendices) and the writing style is friendly with personal asides by the author, giving it a human voice.

The book consists of 7 short chapters, the first four being quite theoretical, giving a rationale for the use of phonics, an explanation of the International Phonetic Alphabet and an introduction to phonetics; the following three chapters are about the practice of teaching using phonics, dealing respectively with spelling, reading and issues of language variety. There is much of value here for the teacher: the two chapters on using phonics to teach teaching spelling and reading cover the Word focus core curriculum elements at Entry Levels 1-3 (the curriculum does not cover phonics at Levels 1 and 2). It gives teachers information on what to teach at each curriculum level but what it does not do is tell them how to do it. It does not claim to be a 'how to teach phonics' book. However, at the end of each chapter, further resources are signposted and the references are usefully annotated to guide the reader. There is also a helpful glossary of terms and appendices giving the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols for the phonemes of English, the English Phonemic Alphabet (read the book to find out the difference!) and an invaluable list of phoneme-grapheme and grapheme-phoneme correspondences.

1. Brooks G, Burton M, Cole P and Szczerbinski M (2007) Effective Teaching and Learning: Reading London NRDC p.9
2. Burton M (2011) Phonetics for Phonics: Underpinning knowledge for Adult Literacy Practitioners Leicester NIACE p.7

Although this is not a large book, I did find it somewhat of a strain to read, not because of the content, which is well written and accessible, but because of the dark and dense print with very little white space around the text. This is broken up in places by task boxes with activities, but it still gives an overall impression of heaviness and density. As an organisation concerned with adult learners, it is surprising that NIACE did not organise better design.

However, that does not detract from what is essentially a readable and accessible introduction to phonetics for adult literacy teachers. Whether teachers are working on a systematic phonics programme with learners or dealing with it on an 'as-and-when' basis, this book will assist them to be more knowledgeable and effective in their use of phonics for teaching reading and spelling.

Teaching Adults
Alan Rogers & Naomi Horrocks
1986, 4th Edition 2010, Maidenhead: Open University Press
348 pages
£23.74

Reviewed by Naomi Sorge

Naomi Sorge specialises in teaching ESOL and Literacy to Adults. She teaches Trainer Skills, PTLLS and CTLLS to instructors and supervisors in the construction industry. She also teaches ESOL, Key Skills and Functional Skills to construction apprentices and adult construction workers.

First published in 1986 with the 4th edition published in 2010, *Teaching Adults* encourages Further Education teachers to re-examine their relationship with, and assumptions about their learners. Rogers and Horrocks call for a change from vertical learning, where the learner is seen as a kind of vessel into which the teacher pours his/her knowledge, to horizontal learning, where the teacher respects and acknowledges the wealth of knowledge and experience that adult learners bring with them to the educational context. Topics covered include the context of FE today and perceptions of adult learners and adult education, in addition to chapters on the 'nuts and bolts' of teaching, including teaching methods, aims and objectives and evaluation. Focusing on the importance of horizontal learning in this book, there are also chapters on group cohesion, the role of the teacher, learners' blocks to learning and the importance of participation as part of the process of adult learning.

This book seems to be aimed at all teachers of adults, especially those who teach as specialists in their vocation, for example an artist who also teaches art lessons at the local FE college or a tradesperson who chooses to get 'off the tools' and into a classroom. Such teachers may not always be familiar with the theory behind the practice, or may not be in the habit of reflecting on their practice, especially if they started teaching before September 2007 and are therefore not required by the IfL to complete PTLLS, CTLLS and DTLLS qualifications, with their inherent emphasis on learning theory and reflective practice. To this end, Rogers and Horrocks state throughout the book that it is not to be seen as the definitive work about teaching adults, but instead is to be used to *learn to teach* through critically reflecting and acting on those reflections. So that readers can act on this advice, there are activities throughout the book designed to encourage the reader to reflect on how best to incorporate the book's ideas into his/her own context and situation.

In emphasising horizontal learning, the authors explain that while children learn from scratch, as it were, due to their lack of life experience and prior learning/thinking skills, adults come to the classroom with an already-developed wealth of experience and skills, both formal and informal, which they draw upon during classes. There is interesting discussion of the teaching and use of higher-order thinking skills and the place (and indeed necessity) of independent study in the FE sector. This point of view is very important, especially for those FE teachers who have only experienced working for organisations where learners are spoon-fed material which may have no benefit other than keeping achievement rates high in the quest for continued funding.

Despite the book's usefulness for new or untrained teachers in FE, the writing style of the book is highly academic, and many might find the language impenetrable. When discussing the importance of a welcoming atmosphere in a college or classroom, for example, Rogers and Horrocks state that,

> *"A commitment to honor (sic) the contract to learn, clear indications that the student learners come first in every case... will form the 'hidden curriculum', the learning by subconscious assimilation that goes on inside every formalised learning programme." (p.239)*

This style of writing may be difficult reading for FE teachers who come from non-academic backgrounds. The CTLLS students I work with, for example, are expert in teaching their trades but often lack confidence in their academic ability, and for this reason I would not recommend the book to them. While the basic information and emphasis on reflection on one's own practice may be very useful for many, the academic style may alienate less reflective or less academic readers.

On the other hand, Rogers and Horrocks have put together an extensive bibliography and suggested titles for further reading at the end of each chapter, which are most helpful. This, combined with their general approach and attention to horizontal learning, will make the book a useful addition to many educators' libraries, and would particularly appeal to those who are looking for a more in-depth analysis of individual topics. The enhanced coverage of material in this 4th edition of the book is sure to stand the test of time.

Adult Basic Skills
Shona MacLeod and Suzanne Straw (Eds) (2010)
Reading: CfBT Education Trust
ISBN 978-1-907496-30-1

Download from
http://www.cfbt.com/evidenceforeducation/our_research/evidence_for_youth/advice_and_guidance/adult_basic_skills_development.aspx

Reviewed by Yvonne Spare

Yvonne Spare has taught adult literacy across the whole range of settings for many years, including teacher training, before moving on to work as a research fieldworker for the University of Sheffield, NRDC and the Institute of Education. Since then she has worked as an independent researcher and consultant for various educational organisations, including the National Literacy Trust and the Reading Agency. She continues to work as an independent consultant and is currently setting up a proofreading website to help small businesses and individuals.
Contact: yvonne.spare@virgin.net

In 2009, CfBT Education Trust commissioned the International Review Programme to investigate the evidence on themes related to adult basic skills. This publication comprises the findings of that review and is written and researched by the National Foundation for Educational Research, its purpose being to inform continuous improvements in the teaching and learning of adult basic skills.

The research programme reviewed the evidence on the main areas of delivery (family learning, workplace learning and flexible learning) and on the broader focus beyond basic literacy, numeracy and ICT (the impact on individuals and employers, the development of financial capability for adults and the development of employability skills).

The findings cover approaches to delivery, impacts on stakeholders and implications for policy. The authors state that the purpose of the review is to highlight what approaches are being, and have been, taken to improve adult basic skills, looking at what works well and what still needs to be done.

The review finds eight key features of effective practice, evidence for which can be found across all six chapters under the headings listed above. They are:

- Recruitment and retention strategies
- Embedded provision tailored to individual need
- Assessment and diagnosis of need
- Progression opportunities
- Inter-agency and stakeholder collaboration and coordination, including employers
- Qualified trainers with appropriate CPD opportunities
- Resources and funding
- Underpinning policy

This is a familiar list to those of us involved in adult basic skills over recent years and there have been many research projects which cite the factors that make practice effective (viz. for example the NRDC catalogue). The usefulness of this review is that it interrogates all this diverse evidence, both from the UK and internationally, and pulls it all together to investigate the reasons why these are the features that work. It enables us to see them as threads running through differently designed, funded and delivered projects and we can begin to build up an idea of why and how they are effective.

In the section (1.1) entitled "Effective approaches: what works", each of these key principles above is expanded in a few paragraphs outlining the strategies that the research has found to be effective, for example:

> *"Recruitment should be planned with publicity and strategies geared to the varied target audiences …… Hooks to encourage sign-up are important, including offering basic skills in the guise of other learning …….Retention can be improved by having an accessible and welcoming location ……."*
> *(para 1.1.1.)*
> *"Embedded training integrates or links basic skills learning into a broader curriculum, making it relevant to the real world and participants' everyday lives. The value of an embedded approach is cited across the chapters in this book……"*
> *(para 1.1.2.)*

This almost forms a checklist for good practice for anyone involved in funding and delivery, with signposting towards the chapters where greater detail is to be found.

So far I have focused on the key principles of effective practice, but the review encompasses the wider gains in terms of human and social capital, including personal and interpersonal skills; confidence and social wellbeing; attitudes towards learning including confidence and motivation; progression to other learning opportunities; increased enrolment, completion rates and qualifications gained; improved job skills and confidence; improved job security and promotion and increases in earnings. Evidence for each of these gains is clearly given and in each case multiple sources are quoted. Examples of the sources including quotations and case studies are presented in highlighted boxes, making it easy to skip straight to the evidence.

This is a comprehensive review, running to 300 pages, and as such will probably be most useful as a handbook for practitioners and providers to dip into the sections relating to their own area of interest. It uses the same methodological approach for each section and includes a selection of the literature reviewed in each chapter. The opening chapter lays out the evidence and outlines the findings, offering clear guidance about where to find further information in the publication and clearly citing the original research from which the findings are drawn. Each subsequent chapter ends with key messages for each of the interested parties, summing up the evidence that has been presented.

Remaking Adult Learning
Essays on adult education in honour of Alan Tuckett
Eds: Jay Derrick, Ursula Howard, John Field, Peter Lavender, Sue Meyer, Ekkehard Nuissl von Rein and Tom Schuller
2010, London: Institute of Education
ISBN 9780854738854
£23.95

Reviewed by Margaret Herrington

Margaret Herrington is an experienced adult educator, manager, researcher and published author based in the UK. She has worked in adult, further and higher education, specialising in dyslexia in higher education in recent years. As a visiting professor of education at the University of Wolverhampton, she has worked extensively with academic staff on writing for publication. She now describes herself as 'almost' retired. Contact: Mherrington1@aol.com

This collection of 27 pieces written in honour of Alan Tuckett by his colleagues and friends is something of a mixed (and uneven) bag and so I shall discuss it here with reference to three core questions:

- Does the book effectively explore the question stated on its blurb and in the Introduction (Howard): "What is to be done about the education of adults?"

- Does it make a serious contribution to the field?

- Does this work as a whole speak to the experience of RaPAL members who were/are field workers in research in practice?

What is to be done about the education of adults?
This feels like an old question. Questions about access, participation, inequities and costs have been around throughout my professional lifetime. The fact that it is discussed at length here suggests either that much still needs to be done to answer the question or that it is actually the wrong question.

The discernible thread running through this book seems to be that

1. Adult learning in all its forms and purposes is 'a good thing' (with economic, social, political, philosophical and 'well-being' benefits across the lifespan) and is increasingly seen as the norm within the world Polity (ch.9. Schemmann), as a human right. Bynner sensibly notes (p.71) that learning is not always experienced as entirely a good thing, and Field succinctly elucidates many of the weaknesses in the evidence for benefits, but in general the writers here believe that the case for adult learning is overwhelming.
2. Participation in adult education is less than this self-evident goodness would predict. It is still a minority activity (ch.2. Aldridge) and those who have had least education already continue to have fewest opportunities as adults, notwithstanding all the NIACE work on developing 'a continuum of opportunities' and given the vast array of programmes, activities, interventions and opportunities which have been available in the UK over many years.
3. When adult education is sufficiently flexible, close to learners, responsive to learner voices, "life wide and life deep" (ch.8 Walters), extending over learners' lifetimes, gender-sensitive, focused on principles of cooperation and involving "online communities aimed specifically at learning" (p.167), greater participation rates ensue. Examples of accessible opportunities – past and present – are identified in support (e.g. Jupp's summary of ILEA's record). Powerful models of association are retrieved from Cooperative history for consideration (ch.12 Yeo).
4. If we know what to do, why has more not been achieved? (ch.17, Stanistreet's interview with David Puttnam). Why do the inequities remain in take-up of opportunities? In chapter 23, Schuller uses an international prism to offer some answers: Adult Education lacks "political clout. It has no recognisable set of institutions or a defined professional corps. Responsibility for it is diffused across a number of bodies or sectors…the media profile …is low…the lack of agreed categories for building up a picture of what is actually happening", etc. He considers that "a key sign of progress will be when we can see a solid body of work that enables us to judge how well different forms of public and private investment do in making an impact" (p.241).
5. More of the same will not do. We need to re-think what adult education is for.

In eliciting this line of argument I was forcibly struck by the confusing inter-changeability of the terms 'adult learning' and 'adult education' throughout the book. The NIACE survey itself compounds the confusion by stating that, "Learning can also be called education and training" (p.15). Yet it is clearly important to distinguish between the two. In simple terms adult learning is a far bigger construct. Adults make decisions on a daily basis about why, what and how to learn as part of everyday life. Not all of this learning is 'desirable'; not all desirable learning is captured in the kind of surveys depicted here.

Further, only a proportion involves any form of adult education (opportunities, interventions, classes made by others, etc.). As far as I am aware there is no correct or desirable proportion at which we should be aiming. We have to face the fact that adults may choose not to act in their interests and undertake adult education, or they may make trade-offs between education and other activities as a matter of preference. Not all adults enjoy learning as such and 'educational activities' even less, and whilst most of us have experience of attempting to provide a quality of provision which makes learning enjoyable, we simply cannot assume that everyone can be reached. So what proportion would we think adequate and

why? If we want lifelong educational opportunities for all and feel that everyone could be reached by a particular format (ch.15 Paine), what would be lost as well as gained?

Some of the writers here see the importance of differentiation and disaggregation. For them it hardly makes practical sense to talk of adult education as a single umbrella construct, especially when it comes to the central problem of who pays for what. Field notes that, "None of the research on the benefits of learning identifies its costs" (p.226). Even if we want to think of adult education as a public good to be paid for out of a generally progressive taxation system (not a popular idea in England at the moment), negotiation is still necessary regarding who gets what. Resources always have to be allocated. With only the dregs of such a civic agreement in England we are left with the opportunities which governments, voluntary organisations, lottery providers and learners themselves are prepared to fund. And currently, the criteria governing what should be funded represent something of a moving feast. I suspect that it is in this kind of messiness that the answer to David Puttnam's question lies.

By the end of this confusingly titled book (I am afraid I still do not know what the term 're-making adult learning' means) the question, 'What is to be done about adult education?' emerged as too generic. The key recommendations in Learning Through Life (p.240) do not suggest a serious breakthrough; there may be some mileage in attempting to construct a set of learning entitlements across four stages of life, but otherwise the list is simply too general. And whilst Yeo's deeply reflective chapter about returning to education is about the "ordinary, concerned with how we should live together rather than with how we are sorted and graded, one from the other" (p.128), and the mutual improvement energy of the "associational movement of the late 19th and 20th centuries in Britain" (p.131), with cooperative trusts, is ostensibly about creating a new paradigm for AE, it is in danger of reading like a briefing note for current coalition policy in England.

Might it not have been more useful simply to ask what must be done about giving most to those who have had least? How can we ensure that those adults who have had fewest educational opportunities have most investment in identifying how the educational system taught them that they were stupid, in revealing how the educational dice were loaded against them, in uncovering and recognising the kind of learning they have already achieved, in creating the kind of educational opportunities they would want to take up and in identifying the pay-offs they might realise from them? Who should/can/will pay for this? Unfortunately, I do not see very many answers here.

A serious contribution to the field?
It is evident from the above that the book flags up important questions and invites new thinking. Individual chapters do provide examples of research reports and of interesting reflections about policy and practice. Hence, the emphasis on developing research-based policy (Reder, Bynner, Schuller) and on the mutually enriching dance between quantitative and qualitative methodologies is welcome, though the theoretical bases of qualitative evidence and the crucial role of such evidence in generating theory are surprisingly not explored. The continuing questions about who remains left out of provision are explored with some imagination and steel (McNair, McGiverny). And an example of the generation of new curricula in response to urgent needs (HIV and Aids in South Africa) is stunningly depicted by Walters. Her case study surely offers a perfect example for critical analysis within teacher training programmes. Finally, there are extended and interesting reflections on the international spread of Adult Learners' Weeks which had been initiated by NIACE.

Quite separately, I found the chapter on NIACE itself (ch.20, Fullick) a well-written and useful description of how such a body shifted its role over time and experienced the strengths and weaknesses of sitting closely with government (cf. the disappointing experience of BSA in this respect). It was not a 'critical' analysis but it was a very useful introductory explication.

Does the book speak to RAPAL members?
Insofar as RaPAL members see themselves primarily as adult educators, the more general questions will certainly be of interest. In particular, Schemmann's (ch.9) paper on how ideas become norms within international education policy will be of interest to literacy workers who consistently have to question the ever-prevailing norms about literacy and intelligence, and about literacy and power. And Bhola (ch.11) makes a preliminary note about the changes in the norms governing literacy priorities in international settings.

There are also several chapters with a more direct literacy reference. None break really new ground in terms of insights, but two strengthen the evidence base by bringing quantitative data to the table. Reder (ch.4) discusses relatively new survey work on adult perceptions about their basic skills and the relationships between such and basic skills provision, life history events etc. He found "systematic and pervasive connections between perceived changes in basic skills and participation in basic skills programmes" and that "key life history events….are also closely linked with perceived changes in reading, writing and maths abilities" (p.32). This supports the existing, tacit knowledge of literacy workers.

Similarly, Bynner (ch.6), within a context of mapping the wider benefits of learning (developing identity, human and social capital), examines basic skills within a cohort of learners over time and across generations (p.80). This work echoed and systematised the body of knowledge already in the field regarding intergenerational effects. Two further chapters dovetail well with the above; the first in emphasising the importance of the learner voice in developing opportunities (ch.16. Jude), and the

second in providing an example of intergenerational family literacy work in practice (ch.21 Benseman and Sutton).

However, there appears to be something of a vacuum in that the knowledge of literacy researcher-practitioners about adult learning is barely acknowledged. The literacy workers often knew most about those who did not perform well at school and who did not stay long in initial education. They were often well placed to know about the "trajectories of disadvantage" (p.75). Yet here they appear never to be seen as a source of evidence by adult educators regarding the central question of what adult education is for. The vast research-in-practice tradition within literacy provision, with its key findings about access, effective methods, literacy practices, etc., barely rates a mention. The advances beyond considering learner voices to adapting learner roles to include those of co-researchers with tutors are not mentioned. Even simple references to the literacy summer schools which preceded Adult Learners' Weeks are simply omitted. In many ways the book accurately reflects the chasm which often existed in practice in the UK between literacy practitioners and mainstream adult educators. Literacy and numeracy provision were often separated and marginalised.

Fortunately NIACE itself over time developed important bridges in this respect. Even before Alan's tenure, NIACE did not entirely neglect literacy research and practice. A personal example illustrates the point: in the 1980s whilst working on an ALBSU project on Distance Learning, NIACE gave me the chance to attend the World Distance Learning Conference in Oslo and give a paper on Distance Learning in Adult Basic Education. This was the kind of one-off, 'off the wall' opportunity which allowed me to locate the rural work in Leicestershire within a global distance learning context and alongside the cutting-edge work of the Open University staff (our concerns were surprisingly similar). This kind of creative, un-hierarchical approach has been a continuing feature of NIACE under Alan, and many literacy workers will welcome this tribute to him. And not only for his radicalism at the Friends' Centre in Brighton. Even when not directly involved in NIACE projects, many have been heartened by his still, persistent, reasoning voice in regular newspaper columns over the years, in response to public policy affecting adult learners. In a nutshell, as adult educators we could count on that voice.

Concluding Note

Tribute works are difficult to assess but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this is not a great book. There are lingering confusions throughout and the organisation of the material does not help speedy access to a coherent set of ideas. It is an odd mix in which I felt constantly aware of what was missing. Even so, it is a useful collection of individual papers, many of which will be of interest to RaPAL readers, and I would recommend selective visits.

Writing Guidelines

Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

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

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

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

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

- Writing should be readable avoiding jargon. Where acronyms are used these should be clearly explained.

- Ethical guidelines should be followed particularly when writing about individuals or groups. Permission must be gained from those being represented and they should be represented fairly.

- We are interested in linking research and practice; you may have something you wish to contribute but are not sure it will fit. If this is the case please contact the editors to discuss this.

- Writing should encourage debate and reflection, challenging dominant and taken for granted assumption about literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

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

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

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

Section 3. Research and Practice: Multi-disciplinary perspectives
This section is for more sustained analytical pieces about research, practice or policy. The pieces will be up to 6,000 words long including references and will have refereed journal status. Although articles in this section are more theoretically and analytically developed they should nevertheless be clearly written for a general readership. Both empirical work and theoretical perspectives should be accessible and clearly explained. Writing for this section should:

- **Relate to the practices** of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL.

- **Link to research** by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies.

- **Provide critical informed analysis** of the topic including reference to theoretical underpinning.

- **Write coherently and accessibly avoiding impenetrable language and assumed meanings.** The piece should have a clear structure and layout using the Harvard referencing system and notes where applicable. All Terminology should be explained, particularly for an international readership.

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

Submitting your work

1. Check the deadline dates and themes which are available in the journal and on the website.

2. All contributions should have the name of the author/s, a title and contact details which include postal address, email address and phone number. We would also like a short 2-3-line biography to accompany your piece. Sections, subsections, graphs or diagrams should be clearly indicated or labelled.

3. Send a copy to one of the journal co-ordinators

   Julie Meredith
   meredith_julie@yahoo.co.uk

   Sarah Freeman
   azdak@btopenworld.com

4. Your contribution should be word processed, in Arial size 12 font, double spaced on A4 paper with numbered pages.

What happens next

1. Editors and members of the Editorial Group review contributions for Section 1 and Section 2. Contributions for Section 3 are peer reviewed by a mixture of experienced academic, research and practice referees.

2. Feedback is provided by the editor/s within eight weeks of submission. This will include constructive comment and any suggestions for developing the piece if necessary.

3. You will be informed whether you piece has been accepted, subject to alterations, and if so the editor/s will work on a final editing process. Any final copy will be sent to authors prior to publishing.

4. Where work is not accepted the editor/s may suggest more relevant or alternative places for publication.

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

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Linda Pearce and Julie Meredith

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Clare Williams

SECTION 2: Developing Research and Practice

**In the Right Place at the Right Time?
An Evaluation of Learners' Experience of Skills for Life at Work**
Sarah Aynsley and Jacqui Shepherd

**The Literacy Working Group: Advocating Adult Literacy
in International Development**
Janine Eldred

SECTION 3: Research and Practice – Multidisciplinary Perspectives

Reading Groups in Prisons: Their Impact on Prisoners' Literacy Practices
Kate Hendry

REVIEWS

The Cardigan and The Kit Kat
Group review compiled by Julie Meredith

Dan's Dinner
Reviewed by Aneila Sultan

Phonetics for Phonics: Underpinning knowledge for Adult Literacy Practitioners
Reviewed by Irene Schwab

Teaching Adults
Reviewed by Naomi Sorge

Adult Basic Skills
Reviewed by Yvonne Spare

Remaking Adult Learning. Essays on adult education in honour of Alan Tuckett
Reviewed by Margaret Herrington