

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacies Network

Welcome

Research and Practice in Adult Literacies (RaPAL) is the only UK-wide organisation that focusses on the role of literacies in adult life. We promote effective and innovative practices in adult literacies teaching, learning and research; and support adult literacies practitioners and researchers. We enjoy engaging in debates that touch on English language and literacy, numeracy and digital skills across homes, communities and workplaces. Through our members, digital journals, conferences and fora, policy and advocacy work, we are active in Europe and have international links.

What we do

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

RaPAL Officers 2016 /2017

Chair	Tara Furlong
Secretary	Claire Collins
Treasurer	Sarah Freeman
Journal Co-ordinator	Yvonne Spare
Production Editor	Claire Collins
Reviews Editor	Sarah Freeman
Membership Secretary	Jo Byrne
Website Manager	Tara Furlong
Regional Advocate Coordinator	Sam Duncan

Editorial Information

The editorial group for 2016-2017 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers: Gwyneth Allatt, Claire Collins, Samantha Duncan, Sarah Freeman, Tara Furlong, Julie Furnivall, Sue Lownsbrough, Anne Reardon-James, Irene Schwab, Yvonne Spare, Brian Street and Rachel Stubbley.

RaPAL members are involved in the compilation of the journal as editors, reviewers and referees.

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. The journal is written by and for all learners, tutors/teachers 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 literacies work and to encourage debate.

Why not join us?

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

The RaPAL Journal is also available from various subscription services: EBSCO, LMInfo and Prenax. The RaPAL journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group. The RaPAL journal was designed by Image Printing Company, Lumsdale, Matlock, Derbyshire



RaPAL Membership form

Help us to double RaPAL's membership in 2016/2017!

We are always keen to attract new individual and institutional members. Please join us and consider passing this to friends, colleagues and libraries / resource centres and encouraging them to join RaPAL now!

Members' benefits

Membership brings:

- three RaPAL journals per year
- discounted attendance at RaPAL events
- participation in the RaPAL JISList

We are happy for our members to participate in the journals and conferences and the organisation and administration of RaPAL.

How to join

To join, please complete the form on our website (rapal.org.uk/join-us). You can also use the form below and email it to membership@rapal.org.uk or post to: RaPAL Membership, c/o Jo Byrne, 8 Phillip Drive, Glen Parva, Leicester, LE2 9US, UK. By joining, you confirm you sympathise with RaPAL's aims as stated in the Constitution.

Your details

Full name: _____

Email: _____

Please tick if you do NOT wish your email to be used in the RaPAL network

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To set up a standing order, please request a form from us to send to your bank Alternatively,

you may post a cheque for £ (see below for the appropriate fee)

Fees 2017/2018

Our membership year runs from August to July. Please tick the appropriate subscription rate:

Digital editions

Individual membership

£40 Full-time

£25 Low waged, unwaged or student

Institutional Membership

£90 per institution for up to 5 sites and up to 10,000 FTE people (staff and students)
50% discount per additional 5 sites or each additional 10,000 FTE people (staff and students)

Institutional membership allocates two votes at our AGM; and two member participation free or discount at events

Please tick here if you require an invoice

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Editorial

Welcome to this edition of the RaPAL journal, which has as its focus ***Adult Numeracy as Social Practice***.

Adult numeracy and mathematics, perhaps even more than adult literacy, is regularly the subject of a gloom-laden 'discourse of deficit' (Oughton 2007: 5). Anxieties about national rankings in international 'performance' tables (e.g. the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's PIAAC rankings) inform policy makers' deliberations, and can lead to more restricted and restricting curriculum and assessment regimes. With the increasing focus (at least in England and Wales) on GCSE 'school maths' in the post-compulsory education sector, contextualised, situated and collaborative approaches to teaching maths and numeracy can seem ever more marginalised. However, as the contributors to this edition of the RaPAL journal show, researchers and practitioners continue to argue that maths and numeracy learning needs to be rooted in learners' own lives, interests and purposes.

'Top-down' approaches to maths and numeracy

In this edition, several of our contributors argue for the importance of a 'top-down' approach to maths and numeracy, starting from a real world and/or relevant context (e.g. a vocational subject) and developing the mathematical understanding and processes required to undertake meaningful tasks and solve problems. In *'Developing Numeracy in Further Education'*, Graham Hall and Suzanne Slaney share insights from their numeracy work across the curriculum at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor in North Wales. They also provide a link to their wonderful book (of the same name as their article) as a free download in English or Welsh.

In his article *'Developing Mathematics in Prison Education'*, Michael Allcock presents his developing ideas for enhancing meaningful and contextualised numeracy learning at HMP Humber. Two other writers share their experiences of supporting 'top-down' or 'situated' numeracy learning in adult maths. In *'Making the Most of Measurement'*, Janet Bray recounts her experiences of embedding numeracy in a horticulture workplace setting in Sheffield. She encourages all numeracy tutors to 'have a go, it's fun!' Finally, in *'Crunching the Numbers'*, Sharon Murphy (who considers herself a literacy tutor) reflects on the challenge of trying to integrate numeracy learning into her classes in Co. Meath in Ireland. Sharon builds on her learners' interest in health and nutrition to incorporate the inherent maths involved.

Motivating numeracy learners

Taking a socially situated approach to mathematics teaching is likely to increase learner motivation, as it increases opportunities for collaborative and active engagement in the learning process. In his piece *'Harnessing Gaming Behaviour to Increase Resilience in Adults Learning Mathematics'* Paul Milner from National Numeracy suggests that gaming may provide a natural environment for learners to begin 'thinking like mathematicians'. Paul describes an app developed by National Numeracy which aims to engage young adults in an enjoyable game whilst building numeracy resilience. Gareth William's article *'Adult maths in college: the advantages of maturity'* considers the motivation of older adults returning to Maths in an FE college in Wales after a long break from formal learning. Gareth highlights the wealth of (particularly online) resources now available to

learners, and generously shares his own on-line (and bi-lingual) resources. He notes the added incentive for adult learners of inter-generational learning, when parents are able to help their own children with maths.

Challenges in a social practice approach to maths and numeracy

In our peer-reviewed section of the journal, Rebecca Woolley's article '*Assessment fast or slow?*' argues that a social practice approach to *teaching* maths requires a social practice approach to *assessment*, one that she calls 'connected assessment'. She critiques both the timed assessments of high stakes public accreditation (such as GCSE), and the atomised, discrete topics of continuously assessed portfolios. She suggests a new model, where learners are able to choose personally meaningful summative assessment tasks, and engage in authentic and valid mathematical assessment activities.

In our second peer-reviewed article, Mark Prendergast, Fiona Faulkner and Clare O'Hara's article '*Investigating the Impact of Literacy Skills in the Adult Mathematics Classroom*' examines the challenge of language and communication in the maths classroom. Their research with adult learners on an Access to Higher Education programme looks at how contextualising maths learning may present additional language and literacy barriers for some learners. They discuss their results data, as well as the thoughts and opinions of the learner participants themselves.

This edition also includes a *Recommended Resources* list selected by the editors, which we hope provides some inspiration and guidance for maths and numeracy practitioners, and our regular feature '*News from the Sector*'.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the RaPAL Journal!

Rachel Stubley, University of South Wales

Angela Cahill, Louth and Meath Education and Training Board

Reference

Oughton, Helen M. (2007) *Constructing the 'ideal learner': a critical discourse analysis of the adult numeracy core curriculum* University of Bolton Education: Journal Articles, Paper 15 Available at http://digitalcommons.bolton.ac.uk/ed_journals/15 (accessed 22 June 2017)