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RaPAL

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Journal

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.

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- 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

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Why not join us?

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

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Editorial

Sarah Freeman and Sandie Stratford

Welcome to our latest free RaPAL journal available in both hard copy and online. In this journal we treat you to some of our most brilliant articles, original and slogged over by conference presenters, academics, specialist literacy managers and directors, teachers, students and, of course, RaPAL editorial teams.

It is hard to put together a selection of 'best of' in any anthology, but what helped us to decide on the articles from RaPAL journals over the last three years was the very wide choice of different kinds of literacies that RaPAL authors are writing about. And this is a celebration indeed, since during the three years since our last taster journal was published, cuts in adult skills (19+) have reached 40% of the sum allocated pre-2010. This makes it a joy to discover how many of the literacy & ESOL agencies described in the articles are still in existence, and able to continue their constructive work in the communities.

We begin with Heather Shakespeare's account of the powerful effect of creative writing on women prisoners. Then we immediately visit the digital world via a video recording made of Sondra Cuban reporting on her recent research into the digital lives of domiciliary workers from the Philippines. You will need to paste a web address into your browser for this fascinating description of how women who have come to the UK to work in the care sector, are also continuing as best they can, through electronic communication, to fulfil the role of parent to the children left behind in their own country.

Jonathan Berry's article brings together community care and a sense of urgency about the need for health literacy provision to enable people to make sound health decisions. By improving people's access to health information, and their capacity to use it effectively, health literacy is critical to self-empowerment.

This is followed by an article about a different kind of liberation from Qasir Shah, an ESOL teacher who describes the inspiration he gained from studying PGCE and a Masters course at University College, London. He discovered Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which provided him with an analytical tool that he could use and which could help his students to become more 'critical and sceptical'.

Another perspective on extending literacy in society is offered in 'Outreach and detached: tapping youth literacies' by Shaw, Fuller and Furlong. They report through the article and video on the success of the Equipped 2 Go (E2G) bus developed by Brent Youth Services as an outreach tool – a multi-purpose vehicle, which among other features facilitates media and word processing equipment to encourage young people to produce their own magazines.

This leads neatly to the introduction of a citizen's curriculum, an article written by Alex Stevenson of the Learning and Work Institute, formally NIACE. Alex outlines a curriculum for adults which embraces maths, English and ESOL, but also dovetails these with 'wider capabilities'. The vision is a 'more flexible, creative and innovative model needed to engage and motivate learners'. The curriculum can be locally adapted with active learner involvement and tailored to the maths, English and ESOL required within the community.

The next three articles are exciting, each in its own way, and embrace ESOL, English and Maths as adapted to local needs, suggesting inspiring initiatives for those wanting to make basic skills more relevant and congenial to their students' lives. Judy Kirsh describes long standing projects in London that provide opportunities for ESOL students to become involved in voluntary work, befriending and creative activities in the community. In an additional project students were supported to run a campaign to prevent closure of a children's centre in Haringey. Attending council meetings, making videos and presentations and even appearing on Breakfast TV were some of the activities involved.

The Reading Agency article by Genevieve Clark heralded the change of name from Six Book Challenge to 'Reading Ahead'. This is now in partnership with the Quick Reads which has become a household name for literacy and language tutors, keen to get their students caught up with literature (doesn't have to be books). If you don't know about The Reading Agency's work in FE Colleges, prisons and workplaces nationwide the article fills you in and directs you to the website* where there is a host of useful advice and background information for tutors.

It is also a privilege to be able to include a numeracy article as this is an area we don't get so many articles about. Three teachers from the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) of Ireland provide a very good example of action research (research/reflection by teachers within their own practice). Tutors explored circumference, place value and using a measuring tape with more fun, hands-on approaches than usual, and made critical notes of their own teaching. The results are familiar but also necessary reminders about how to make maths meaningful and deliver any lessons without making presumptions.

In our last feature we have a story from RaPAL's compilation of 'Stories of Resilience', relating one of the many inspiring student auto-biographies, describing determination through education. This strong praise for adult education, leads us through a typically unique life journey from difficult schooling, intensive army years, prison through to family responsibilities. See more about Stories of Resilience on (back page) advert.

Finally we offer a book review which draws our attention to the global field of adult literacy learning. Yvonne Spare describes a work which brings to life literacies across the world in Professors Street and Rogers' 'Adult Literacy and Development: Stories from the field'. She makes several remarks about the similarities that can be found in literacy provision in developing countries and literacy classes in the UK, which again suggest a progress in joining up the dots in literacies experience in our 21st century global scope.

Our Taster Journal 2017 is a refreshing collection reminding us of a vision of success for all as described by Cope et al in *Multiliteracies* (2000): 'a vision that is not defined exclusively in economic terms' (13) but has been designed to lead to 'transformed practice'. 'With their students, teachers need to develop ways in which students can demonstrate how they can design and carry out, in a reflective manner, new practices embedded in their own goals and values' (35).

* [https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/?programme\[\]=ahead](https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/?programme[]=ahead)

Beyond Functionality: Writing for a Better Future

Heather Shakespeare

At the time of writing, Heather had been teaching in adult education and community learning for 15 years and was working in offender learning.

"Learning to write, even reasonably well, gives fluency to the rest of life." This statement would surely resonate with every literacy teacher, but was made by acclaimed writer and university professor Jeanette Winterson in an article on the value of creative writing courses in higher education.¹ Like Winterson, I teach creative writing, though in a decidedly less glamorous context and, alas, with very few of her credentials. Yet working in a women's prison, I encounter many people who desperately need fluency in their lives. I also see that this need might in part be met by learning to write, not just for functional purposes, but also creatively. In delivering both Functional Skills and creative writing courses, I have become aware that whilst one is considered to be of pivotal importance and fundamental to employability and rehabilitation, the other is more likely to be seen by those who determine policy or deliver services as softer, less serious, and very much an optional extra. This article examines the value of teaching creative writing in a custodial setting, its challenges and rewards, and what it has to offer that Functional Skills does not.

It is about 18 months since the creative writing course was introduced in the prison where I work. During that period, I have delivered the course seven times with minor adjustments at each stage. The target qualification is the Certificate in Developing Creative Writing Skills at either Level 1 or Level 2, which is awarded by the National Open College Network with a recommended length of 30 guided learning hours, though this has not always been strictly adhered to.

What, then, was the rationale for delivering such a course? Prison is a particularly fertile environment for writing. A student once asked me why I think people write more in prison. My answer focused on the confluence of factors which is, arguably, peculiar to this place: seemingly endless time, enforced solitude, personal crisis and emotional intensity, any of which could be a catalyst for writing. But I might also have talked of the disempowerment which goes hand in hand with incarceration, the divestment of virtually all responsibilities, and the common struggle to at once make sense of

what is often a fractured past and tentatively contemplate what shape the future might take. From this melting pot, immensely powerful writing can and does emerge. Yet it is not only the product which has significance. The process of writing can be equally powerful and has the potential, I believe, to make a significant difference to a prisoner's time inside.

Not least, writing can make life in prison more tolerable, even worthwhile. A number of my learners have described the release it gives, as through the creative process they begin to explore and externalise the mix and mess of their thinking and experience, and hopefully work towards greater understanding and more effective management of their emotions. One learner, who battled constantly with self-harm, said that the creative writing course had encouraged her to use writing "as a release for pent up emotions that I can't talk about". Another, who had struggled with addictive behaviours throughout her adult life, described the course as "a powerful therapeutic tool for me", in the context of detoxing from Subutex (a heroin substitute) and giving up smoking. For some, creative writing also brings an unexpected sense of liberation as they discover, within the confines of their circumstances, the unlimited scope of the imagination. One learner spoke of the course as "very liberating", an "out of prison experience".

It can also make prison a more productive place, providing a purposeful and fruitful activity not only in the classroom, but also for the hours the women spend alone "behind the door". On the back of this can come an enormous sense of achievement. Many times I have observed the palpable satisfaction as learners finish a piece of writing they have agonised over, particularly when they have an outlet through which to share it. They have something tangible to show for their efforts, something which did not exist the week before, something new and unique amidst the homogeneity of prison life. And, in a place where they have so little control, this can provide that genuine feeling of empowerment which is critical to effective rehabilitation and citizenship.

1. Winterson, J. (2012) *Jeanette Winterson: teaching creative writing*. Guardian News and Media Limited. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/may/18/jeanette-winterson-teaching-creative-writing> (accessed 1/5/13)



Illustration: Eleanor Shakespeare
<http://eleanorshakespeare.com/>

The learners' urge to pass on what they have written is often very strong and drives the text-sharing process which can play such a vital role in building and maintaining relationships, both within the prison and with those outside. I have often been asked for 'an extra copy' for a relative or friend, most poignantly perhaps by a young woman who had bravely written for the first time about the fatal stabbing of her younger brother several years before and then requested a copy to send home to her mother. But there is also the sharing of writing which goes on in the classroom as women evaluate one another's work and provide essential encouragement and validation. An asylum seeker who, during her first class, wrote tearfully about her horrendous experiences of war clearly derived great strength, as well as the confidence to continue writing, from the positive response of other learners.

Interestingly, this sharing process also occurs on the wings and elsewhere in the prison, where poems and stories are handed to other prisoners and even officers and civilian staff for comment. Meanwhile, in the writers' group we set up to provide progression for those completing the higher level course, a small group of women meet fortnightly and work together autonomously discussing ideas, critiquing first drafts and collaborating on writing projects.

2. <http://jobs.aol.com/articles/2009/01/26/top-10-soft-skills-for-job-hunters/>
 (accessed 13 April 2013)

In all of these contexts, these reading and writing communities, the writer's voice is heard, either audibly or in the reader's head, and this is hugely important in an environment where many feel that they have been silenced. Another related local initiative, Words Aloud, has taken this further by providing an open-mic forum in which women can read their work to a wider audience. The atmosphere at the first of these events, held last Christmas, was unforgettable as the women egged one another on, read poems for writers too nervous to read aloud and applauded each other's performances with unbridled enthusiasm. It felt unpredictable, risky even, but therein lay its value: it was spontaneous, organic and wholly democratic. Further afield, some have also had their writing recognised in national competitions, which has not only increased their confidence and motivation, but also fostered links with the world to which they will eventually return.

So how might creative writing help to secure a better future for prisoners, as well as improving their present experience? When one learner asked if the creative writing qualification would get her a job as a writer, I had to admit that it wouldn't. What I went on to explain, however, was that the skills she would develop through the course could enhance her wider employability prospects. This particular learner found it very difficult to consider others' views and perspectives; her need for affirmation and approval prevented her from accepting any feedback that was not altogether favourable. I suspect the issues underlying this were many and complex, certainly far more than any one course could resolve, but responding positively to constructive criticism is one of the criteria learners must demonstrate in their portfolio and, surely, an essential requirement for any employee. Interestingly, one American jobs website highlights the need for this type of skill, stating that, "Companies value soft skills because research suggests and experience shows that they can be just as important an indicator of job performance as hard skills."²

In terms of personal and social development, the process of writing and sharing writing with others can, I suggest, heighten sensitivity, develop emotional literacy and increase the capacity to empathise. It can be a potent force in changing our perception, both of ourselves and of whatever world we find ourselves in.

In their evaluation of the Writers in Prison Network,³ an organisation formerly funded by the Arts Council to place professional writers

3. <http://www.writersinprisonnetwork.org/>

alongside prisoners, researchers at Sheffield Hallam University cite the findings of a study from New Zealand, which explored the process of desistance from crime by ex-offenders.⁴ They noted "that the difference between those who were 'going straight' and those that were not, lay not in the circumstances of their lives, but rather in the way people interpreted their lives".⁵ Desistance was seen to be linked to cognitive rather than circumstantial change. So if, in the context of ongoing attempts to cut recidivism, creative writing can contribute to that perceptual and attitudinal shift, surely it should be given greater priority in offender learning programmes.

Delivering this type of course is not, however, always straightforward. To convince people, both prisoners and staff, of its value can be a challenge in itself. In spite of repeated and varied attempts to promote the course, recruitment has at times been a struggle, due in part to it being perceived by some as "a niche course", to use the phrase of one learner who was particularly keen to widen participation. Other obstacles have been a misunderstanding of what the course offers (one learner turned up expecting to learn calligraphy!), the view amongst those already writing poetry that it is unnecessary, and a fear of not being able to write well enough.

Another issue has been the difficulty of marrying its therapeutic possibilities with the need for tuition towards specified learning outcomes within a set timeframe. For the course to be viable, the completion of the learner's portfolio has to be the priority, but on occasions this has felt like a distraction from something more significant, and the imposed course end like a crude interruption to something which has only just begun.

Providing a safe, consistent and supportive environment in which people can write about their lives is also difficult, especially in a prison. The need to take on new learners once the course is underway in order to meet data requirements can shift the dynamic of a group and unsettle those who are beginning to forge a rapport with one another. At the opposite extreme, I have had to accommodate learners who could barely be in the same room together after a series of disputes on the wings, and whose animosity intensified when one allegedly stole the other's handwritten short story and destroyed it out of spite.

Yet these problems are far outweighed by the observed benefits. My intention here has been to highlight the 'soft skills' which the creative writing course builds, its therapeutic potential and its value in promoting writing beyond the classroom in a way Functional Skills in its utilitarianism never will.

But does the course have enough functionality to justify its existence in a climate in which budgets are squeezed and core skills given priority? Whilst not overtly prioritising areas like spelling, punctuation and grammar, it nonetheless seeks to develop other essential aspects of literacy. When asked in a course evaluation to identify what skills they had developed during the course, learners included such things as planning and structuring writing, consideration of audience, vocabulary extension, effective description and communicating meaning, all of which are vital to the writing process.

There is, in my view, so much more to literacy than functionality. I confess to finding the Functional Skills exams mildly depressing, focusing as they do on writing letters to the council about broken paving slabs or finding a pest control company to eliminate cockroaches, important though these things might be. What is so exciting about teaching creative writing is that, despite the need to meet set learning outcomes, it does not for the most part feel like merely an academic exercise designed to measure a learner's ability or increase their employability, however that may be interpreted.

Overwhelmingly, women come onto the creative writing course with something they want to say. Sometimes it takes them several weeks to work out what it is, and occasionally they say it before they are ready and then draw back because it is simply too raw. But whether it is a poem or an autobiographical piece thinly disguised as a short story, what they write is self-generated, a statement they wish to make which often has great personal significance. It is my privilege to help them do that.

4. Leibrich, J. (1993). *Straight to the Point: Angles on Giving Up Crime*. Dunedin: Otago University Press.

5. Albertson, K. and O'Keeffe, C. (2012) *The Good Days are Amazing - An Evaluation of the Writers in Prison Network*. Sheffield Hallam University

Juggling digital communication and exploding paperwork

Sondra Cuban

Professor Sondra Cuban is a professor and director of the Adult and Higher Education programme in Woodring College, with an interdisciplinary background in adult and higher education.

In her video keynote, Sondra highlights findings from her ESRC study and subsequent book, *Deskilling Migrant Women in the Global Care Industry*.



She focuses on the differing literacy practices the women take part in, interweaving the separate work and family literacy approaches they use. Highlighting what she describes as, “text-based tactics”, Sondra illustrates how a predominance of paper-based documents and a lack of digital literacies in the workplace are used to restrict migrant workers to subordinate spaces in the UK care industry. For example, she discusses the fact that highly skilled women were chosen for their professional skills as well as their experience for undertaking copious documentation. However, the paper-based workload though unnecessary, had to be manually duplicated, in essence as a means of social control by capturing every aspect of the women's work life. Conversely, her study highlights how “technological prowess and digital strategies” empowered this same group of migrant female workers to juxtapose with their professional lives, the management of their domestic, family and social lives in their countries of origin from their UK base. Sondra's study provides narratives from migrant women who communicate with children, parents, siblings and other family members through phones, internet and computers. Ranging from engaging with children through text messages on a daily basis, sometimes using single words to convey important messages, to liaising with teachers in schools and wider families members though internet mediums such as Skype.

You can access Sondra's Keynote [here](#). If you are reading on paper, you can type in the web address below.

bit.ly/Cuban14

An overview of health literacy for adult literacy practitioners

Jonathan Berry MA

Jonathan Berry was the Director of the Community Health and Learning Foundation (CHLF) at the time of writing and contributing to the RaPAL 2014 conference.

Introduction

This article aims to define health literacy in a manner which makes it accessible and meaningful for literacy practitioners. It outlines the impact that having lower levels of health literacy can have on people's health. It also discusses to what extent literacy practitioners can and do engage with the health literacy agenda and how they might do so in the future. It describes the national health literacy course, *Skilled for Health*, and examines how this might be of use to literacy practitioners.

This article is based on a workshop given by Jonathan Berry at the recent RAPAL annual conference held on the 5th April 2014 in Birmingham and on a guide to health literacy - a collaboration between the CHLF and NIACE. The latter will be published in the summer of 2014 and will cover the issues explored below in much greater detail.



What is health literacy?

According to Nutbeam (2008), health literacy research has traditionally been generated by the clinical care paradigm or the health promotion paradigm. In the former, it is a basic skill, the lack of which constitutes a risk to the ability to achieve and maintain good health. Nielsen-Bohlman et al (2004) sees health literacy as a basic skill:

The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

A wider view of health literacy is offered by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Here health literacy includes the ability to understand scientific concepts, content, and health research; skills in spoken, written, and online communication; critical interpretation of mass media messages; navigating complex systems of health care and governance; and knowledge and use of community capital and resources, as well as using cultural knowledge in health decision making. Within this construct, health literacy implies the achievement of a level of knowledge, personal skills and confidence to take action to improve personal and community health by changing personal lifestyles and living conditions. Thus, health literacy means more than being able to read pamphlets and make appointments. By improving people's access to health information, and their capacity to use it effectively, health literacy is critical to self-empowerment. In other words, health literacy facilitates sound health decisions in the context of everyday life: at home, in the community, at the workplace, in the health system, in the market place and in the political arena. This is significant for literacy practitioners because it means that health literacy sits very firmly in their domain (e.g. courses on healthy eating and other lifestyle and preventative measures) as well as in the medical domain (e.g. where patients are taught to self-manage a long term condition).

What do we know about health literacy?

Although there is little research into levels of health literacy skills in the UK, a recent study (unpublished) carried out by London South Bank University, identified that 43% of adults in England aged between 18 and 64 routinely do not understand health information. This figure rises to 61% when an element of numeracy is involved. We also know, from a WHO report (Kickbusch, I. 2013) that limited health literacy is prevalent.

Like general literacy, health literacy can be measured at the individual, organisational, community and population levels. The European Health Literacy Survey (2012) revealed that 12% of all respondents have inadequate general health literacy and 35% have problematic health literacy. Limited health literacy in Europe is thus not just a problem of a minority of the population. The WHO report also noted that specific vulnerable groups have much higher proportions of limited health literacy than the general population in Europe. These groups include people of lower social status (low self-assessed social status, low level of education, low income and people with problems in paying bills), people of worse health status (measured by self-perceived health, long-term illness and limitations in activities because of health problems) or people of relative old age.

Why does it matter?

From a health perspective it matters significantly. In a recent WHO report (2013:7), Kickbusch et al note that 'limited health literacy is associated with less participation in health-promoting and disease detection activities, riskier health choices (such as higher smoking rates), more work accidents, diminished management of chronic diseases (such as diabetes, HIV infection and asthma), poor adherence to medication, increased hospitalisation and rehospitalisation, increased morbidity (illness) and premature death.' Examples of the above have been provided by Williams et al (1998), who report that asthma sufferers with low health literacy were more likely on the one hand to have poorer knowledge of the correct use of inhalers and on the other hand make more use of emergency services. Garbers and Chiasson (2004), report that women with low levels of health literacy were less likely to have undergone cervical screening.

Health literacy is also important because it has a major impact on *health inequalities*, the term used in a number of countries to refer to those instances whereby the health of two demographic groups (not necessarily ethnic or racial groups) differs despite comparable access to health care services. Examples include higher rates of illness and premature mortality for those in lower occupational socio-economic groups. These differences were highlighted in the 2010 University College London *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* report (Marmot, 2010) on the relationship between health and poverty. They showed that the life expectancy of the poorest is seven years shorter than for the wealthiest, and that the poor are more likely to have a disability. It is also acknowledged that those people with the lowest levels of health literacy also experience significant health inequalities.

How can literacy practitioners improve health literacy?

Every time literacy tutors use the theme of health in a literacy class, they are increasing the health skills and knowledge of their learners. This in turn means those learners may make informed decisions about a whole range of choices regarding their health, such as deciding to increase physical activity, to drink more fluids, to eat more fruit, to drink less alcohol or to contemplate quitting smoking. However, it is likely that many literacy practitioners would never describe their work in these terms; rather they see it as part of their primary remit - improving literacy. On one level, of course, that doesn't particularly matter, after all, unintended beneficial consequences are a by-product of many activities, not just those of literacy practitioners.

There is a growing body of practitioners, in health as well as in learning, who think that literacy practitioners might be missing out on an opportunity to expose the full value of what they do. This is because it is becoming

widely understood that improved health literacy is seen as a prerequisite for addressing health inequalities. Literacy practitioners are contributing to this key government priority. There is no explicit acknowledgment that adult education is playing a role in promoting health literacy and there are also missed opportunities for literacy practitioners to work more closely with health practitioners.

The recent changes in the NHS have created an additional opportunity for this collaboration. These involved, in April 2013, the transfer from the NHS to local government of responsibility for many public health functions within its locality. This has been accompanied by the transfer of a significant number of Public Health staff into local authorities. This means that for the first time in over forty years, lead responsibility for public health and adult learning is vested in the same organisation. If those responsible for commissioning public health programmes which address health inequalities can see that their new colleagues make a significant contribution to this agenda, might this not be the start to a new mutually beneficial form of partnership working?

The key to these new partnerships will be how a shared mutual understanding develops between public health and adult learning personnel with regard to how each might contribute to the other's priorities. This clearly requires considerable thought from both sides. However, the focus here is on literacy practitioners and suggests that literacy practitioners will need to show how their work contributes to addressing health inequalities and improving health literacy. The joint CHLF/NIACE guidance (forthcoming) will address this in much greater detail.

Skilled for Health

One area where collaboration has already proved possible is shown by public health and literacy practitioners in delivering *Skilled for Health* (SfH). The SfH programme integrates the goals of reducing inequalities in health with those of improving the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults. The underlying premise is that by addressing both issues simultaneously, the impact on both sets of issues is greater than the impact of addressing them independently. It was developed by CHLF's predecessor organisation, *ContinuYou*, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. A booklet called *Skilled for Health; Making the Case* (Berry, 2009) accompanies the resources, and makes the case for this sort of joined-up work in much more detail.

Created with the model of co-delivery in mind, the *Skilled for Health* programme has been and continues to be delivered in various parts of England. In some places it has been a vehicle for enhanced collaboration between literacy and public health practitioners, but this has been sporadic. This is despite the fact that by delivering it in the manner described above it can improve learning and health outcomes. The evidence for this is an evaluation carried out by the Tavistock Institute (2009), which found, among other things, that the programme changes health behaviours, improves confidence, reduces isolation and re-engages people with learning. It can be argued that a joint programme of this nature offers a platform to build collaboration between health and literacy practitioners as well as a health literacy course which literacy practitioners could themselves offer to their learners.

Skilled for Health includes modules on healthy eating, the benefits of physical activity, sexual health, how to access NHS services and how to manage medication. It is designed to enable participants to increase their knowledge and thus make informed decisions about their own and their family's health. The resources can be downloaded from the CHLF website (see [Here*](#)).

* <http://www.chlffoundation.org.uk>

Conclusion

There seems little doubt that literacy practitioners can, and do, contribute to improving health literacy. This in turn assists in tackling health inequalities. However, many literacy practitioners may not be aware that they do this and will probably not describe their outcomes in health terms – certainly not in health terms that resonate with public health practitioners. Nonetheless there is great scope for collaboration and for helping public health practitioners to realise the significant contribution that literacy practitioners can make to health literacy and health improvement. The *Skilled for Health* programme is one possible platform to bring this about, as is the transfer of many public health functions into local authorities.

However, despite all these promising opportunities, there seems to be very patchy evidence that anything of this sort is yet happening systematically. Public health is still settling into its new role within local authorities and not yet really thinking about its relationship with adult learning. Is this an opportunity for literacy practitioners? The CHLF certainly thinks so and in the lead up to the next general election will be ensuring that all the key spokespeople in the main political parties are made aware of the role that literacy practitioners can play in addressing health literacy.

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A Teacher Reborn

Qasir Shah

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It was with a heavy heart and quite a lot of disgruntlement that I enrolled on a PGCE in January 2011. Why you may ask? Quite simply, I had completed my DTLLS (the generic teaching qualification) a year before, which had been quite a chore as I did not believe it would turn me into a 'better' teacher. I had already been teaching EFL/ESOL for 13 years and in addition I was qualified as an ESOL examiner, so was rather resentful at being forced to do DTLLS. However, I had little choice because it was the latest qualification requirement in the government's drive towards '*professionalising*' teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector.

The most dispiriting fact about DTLLS was that at my college only the generic diploma was offered, without the ESOL specialisation. Consequently I knew that afterwards I would still need to do an extra year to gain the specialist qualification, which was now an essential requirement to remaining gainfully employed, and so I plodded through the DTLLS, doing the minimum that was required to pass.

The PGCE

After two years of toil I was faced with the prospect of another year's study but was unable to enrol for the ESOL subject specialism at another college because of work scheduling issues. This forced me look for alternatives that would suit my working hours. The Institute of Education seemed an attractive proposition because of the possibility of converting the PGCE into a Masters in the second year, if I so wished. Little did I realise this step would change my life for ever.

I thought the PGCE would be a doddle because I presumed - wrongly - that it would be quite similar to the DTLLS, covering a lot of the same ground, and I expected my DTLLS assignments would come in handy. In fact, the PGCE was far more challenging, and opened up completely new areas of specialist study. Whilst doing the PGCE I would sometimes look back at what I had written (or should that be 'cobbled' together) to pass the DTLLS, and I felt quite ashamed... but then for the DTLLS, I was only interested in passing. Bar the lesson observations, the PGCE turned out to be an enjoyable experience - I enjoyed being a student again.

Discovery of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

During the PGCE I came across CDA, a theory which had great impact on my thinking both as a person and as a teacher.

What is CDA?

(It) "is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality." (Van Dijk, 2003).

How did CDA help me?

CDA made me reflect critically about the language of texts, how they may be formed socially and politically, and I began to think more about the following:

Question	Always question what you know, hear, see and are told
Reflection	Reflect critically about the lexis of texts - how they may be socially, politically and historically formed.
Reflexivity	How does the reflection impact upon your beliefs, assumptions, values, etc., and what you do, how you interpret things ...
Comparison	Comparing texts on the same topic - similarities, differences, inclusions omissions and their implications.
Language	How the text is formed grammatically i.e., active or passive voice, adjectives, tense and aspect, who the audience is, what does the language presuppose and what beliefs does the writer hold?

(Table amended from University of Strathclyde website)

This framework has helped me and my students in our discussions and the study of texts. Prior to the PGCE, I had already begun to impress upon my students the importance of being critical and sceptical, and not accepting received 'wisdom' at face value but to try to discover its source, and if necessary challenging what may have been regarded as *common sense*. CDA provided me with a framework to do this.

A recent example of my use of CDA concerned examining articles on food banks. I asked learners to look at two articles from the Mail and the Guardian and to reflect critically upon their social and political context; how this may or may not impact upon their own beliefs on the topic; the content and language of the two articles – the inclusions, omissions, and their implications; and lastly to think about the audience the articles were aimed at, and the beliefs of the writer. This was an extremely successful lesson because students realised that language/discourse is never neutral, and so they must question everything they see, hear or read. Thus for example the Guardian will write from a left-of-centre viewpoint and the Mail from right-of-centre.

The Masters

After completing the PGCE, I decided to do the Masters. This was another step up academically which opened my eyes further to the impact of philosophy on educational policy, and in particular to the history of the Lifelong Learning discourse and its current skills-based agenda.

Understanding Lifelong Learning Policy

Since the 1980s lifelong learning policies have seen important changes in many nations around the world. It has increasingly been conceived of in terms of an *economic imperative*, both in terms of policy and practice. The OECD (1997) and EU (Van der Pas, 2001) have been instrumental in achieving a change in the discourse of lifelong learning under the guise of the '*learning economy*'. This contrasts with pre-1980's policies which viewed lifelong learning as being "a personal good and as an inherent aspect of democratic life" (Biesta 2006:169).

Before the Masters, not knowing the history of lifelong learning or its purpose and philosophical underpinnings, I had bought into the idea of its skills-based learning economy agenda. However, having worked in both the private and public sectors teaching Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL, I know that successive

governments have failed in their drive to develop literacy and numeracy provision in this country. The Skills for Life field has impressive statistics for the number of qualifications obtained since its inception, but this has been mostly an exercise in providing people with certificates to validate their levels. Ever-declining budgets, and a result-obsessed culture have resulted in a perverse state whereby those who really need education are not given it, and those who do not need it may be provided with it. For example, in my current place of employment if a student is judged unlikely to pass their exam a second time they will most likely not be offered a place to repeat the course. However, the elephant in the room, and the root cause – namely structural inequality - is rarely addressed.

In this learning economy, teachers are seen not as creative or knowledgeable but as transmitters of skills, of proscribed curricula, and not as "transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988) who develop critically thinking citizens; instead teachers reproduce the ideologies of the hegemonic culture. The present skills-based agenda has less to do with mastery of the subject and more to do with economic 'functionality'. In case of ESOL learners, we provide them with the English that will help them to function as economic units as soon as possible, ignoring their pre-existing knowledge and experience. This aligns with the American pedagogue E.D. Hirsch's belief (1987) in the teaching of 'cultural literacy' - 'core knowledge' of facts, figures and phrases about historical events. A prime example of this would be the Citizenship Test which has become more a memory test of facts and figures than about the culture and values of this country. Hirsch's method perpetuates current hegemonic views of history and does not ask the student to be critical of facts and figures.

Education as Empowerment

CDA, and the writings of Foucault, and Gramsci, which heavily influenced CDA, have been instrumental in me becoming a more political teacher. Through Foucault one comes to recognise how the '[dominant] discourse constructs the topic, defining and producing the objects of our knowledge (cited in Hall 1997, p.72). Knowledge is power and assumes the authority of 'the truth' (cited *ibid* p.76). This aligns with Gramsci's idea that the hegemonic class project their thinking upon the subordinated - who come to believe this thinking as '*common sense*' and '*natural*'.

In both writers I found hope, because this hegemonic discourse can be contested. As Gramsci stated, such '*common sense* is not ... rigid and immobile but is continually transforming itself' (cited *ibid* p.73) (the changes in lifelong policies attest to this fact), and as such, affords opportunities for it to be resisted. But before that can take place, it is important, to recognise and question social norms – '*of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time*' (Foucault (1980) cited in Rabinow 1991, p.75).

A New Beginning

The Masters helped me understand that the role of Education/Literacy '*should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training consisting merely in the teaching of reading and writing*' (UNESCO (1965) cited in Eldred et al. 2007 p.7)

And now, as I embark on my PhD in the Philosophy of Education at the age of 44, it almost feels like a new beginning for me both as a person and as a teacher. I see all education now, not simply in terms of skills but in the Platonic/Aristotelian idea of fulfilment: in the forming of the body, mind and soul of a valued citizen, and that such learning should take place throughout one's life - all this I impress upon my learners. As for me, going back to education has rejuvenated and revitalized my being – mind, body and soul - I feel nourished, and as I enrol for yet another "qualification", positively grunted!

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Outreach and Detached: Tapping Youth Literacies

Jennifer Shaw, Shaun Fuller and Tara Furlong

Jennifer Shaw and Shaun Fuller are qualified youth and community workers. Tara Furlong is engaged with PG studies in education with UCL IoE.



The concept of the E2G (Equipped 2 Go) bus was developed by [Brent Youth Service](#) (BYS) to engage young people from local estates and to assist schools' work as an outreach tool. The E2G youth bus was purchased in 2002. It took almost a year for the ex-music tour bus to be renovated, and it was ready for use at the end of 2003 when it was timetabled across the borough. The two tier mobile unit was kitted out with a generator, Wi-Fi, a DJ mixing station, downstairs group table areas, and an upstairs circle of laptop consoles with a large screen to the front. One of its most significant engagement projects was to support young adults to create and publish their own periodical, including

journalistic content which appealed to their own readership. Literacies development has threaded through much of the work, though often not the focus of engagement activities, nor the specialism of providers.

The bus was originally funded by four agencies: Community Against Drugs, Transforming Youth Work, Brent Youth Service, and the Children's Fund, to target young people at risk. More specifically, these are young people who fall into a catchment area where there is no immediate provision and who would find it hard to travel to another area, and young people who choose not to access mainstream youth provisions. The Outreach and Detached Team works in consultation with young people (aged between 11 and 19 years old) by first identifying needs and what they want; then responding by providing related youth activities where young people wish for them to happen.

Areas where the Outreach and Detached Team has worked in the past five years include the wards of Kingsbury, Queensbury, Lynton Close Irish Traveller's site, Stonebridge, Willesden, Neasden, Dollis Hill, Cricklewood, Fryent, Harlesden, St Raphaels, Queens Park, Kilburn, Kensal Green, Church Road, Sudbury, Wembley, Westminster (Mozart Estate), Fiveways Estate, and Woodcock Park Kenton.

A lifewide diversity of engagement projects has been developed, including sports, personal development, ASB diversionary projects, prison visits, music production, showcases, dance, drama, arts and crafts, ICT activities, youth information days and events, trips, driving lessons, film showings and discussion groups, First Aid courses, Chlamydia screenings, gaming, DJing, and karaoke. Some of these have provided accreditations, e.g. First Aid, Duke of Edinburgh, Arts Award, and driving qualifications. In particular, the teams have invested in personal development resources to assist in their work with at risk groups e.g. life skills, careers, ASB, anger management programmes, working with gangs, and a streetwise gang resource pack. As well as educational resources, BYS have

invested in free merchandise that have been provided to young people with the message life means life without guns and knives to spread a positive message and de-glamourize gangs. These resources have been offered to Connexions workers, other youth workers and YOT workers for borrowing to deliver sessions.

The bus was integrated into the toolkit of street outreach, detached activities in schools, community centres and sports centres. The E2G bus launched an ideal high profile mobile attraction which the youth teams used to access the hearts of many of Brent's most troubled estates, troubled by gang, drug, gun and knife violence, high levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB), poverty and exclusion 'exactly where the young people felt safe and in their own environments'. You can watch a video about this project [here \(bit.ly/BrentE2G\)](http://bit.ly/BrentE2G).



The journalism initiative was a five month Friday and Saturday night project in South Kilburn (Brent) and Mozart Estates (Westminster) running a youth-led magazine with feature articles to assist in the diversion of serious youth violence mainly through 2011 and 2012. A primary aim was to generate positive collaboration between the warring sides; in parallel, the project aimed to reduce offending behaviour and ready young people to move from NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) by taking steps such as getting onto the waiting lists for college places, attending interviews, participating in volunteering and other work experience opportunities.

From the first session, young people were encouraged to work on the youth magazine themselves through creating articles, interviews and planning activities. Facilitators might, for example in week three, hand out cue cards with key words such 'money', 'education', 'south Kilburn', 'police' and ask participants to add a word that represented how the cue word made them feel. This enabled all parties to dialogue and compare differing values and experiences, and was followed up by a presentation on being successful in the mainstream, for example with positive messages about entrepreneurial routes into employment. There was then a discussion about 'riches' triggered by the question, "Where is the world's richest place?" which elicited responses such as Dubai or China. The suggestion that the graveyard was filled with the ideas of people led to discussion about the wealth generated by people who have good ideas and what forms of self-employment the participants were interested in. At around this point it was noticed that the young people found it difficult to concentrate for more than about fifteen minutes and two-song music breaks were scheduled in. This not only helped maintain higher levels of concentration; it helped open up discussions around content in the songs such as glamorised crime, violence and sexism. These discussions enabled the team to identify issues raised by young people which they could work around in future sessions.

By week five, many ideas about articles began to float to the surface and the team saw that the intervention had the beginnings of sowing the seeds of change, though in itself not enough to build the necessary bridges between young people in conflict from South Kilburn and the Mozart estates. The young people who attended worked one-to-one with staff and completed a mind-mapping exercise. For example, one young person completed a sheet for an article around gender and the influences females have on males as well as what is seen as appropriate conduct by females. Another young person completed the sheet for an article around reviewing artists, their styles and fashion trends, videos and music. Additional article ideas were developing around writing about trainers, music charts, empty properties in London and policing. Two older members of the clique were identified as ideal candidates to be interviewed for the magazine by young people if they could present themselves as mature enough to take on that responsibility. The team aimed to get some words of inspiration from them and demonstrate through the article that they have ambition to get off the street. Their input was thought to be positive for the young people who are already influenced by their presence on the estate.



In the end, three magazines were produced: Press On from the Press Road area, [Word](#) from South Kilburn and Mozart Estate's [Lesson Learned](#). While developing skills and giving invaluable experience, the projects gave participants the opportunity to discuss how they perceive and feel about aspects of their identity, their areas and environments, their aspirations for the future, or for example, the police. In parallel, it gave youth workers the opportunity to develop constructive relationships with their target audiences and the issues closest to their development. This in turn allowed them to follow-up contact outside the E2G provision. Connections workers were able to access target groups outside of normal office hours to open up avenues of education, employment and training.

Another broad literacy-based endeavour the team engaged in was a book launch for the semi-autobiographical London-based book *Prisoner to the Streets* by Robyn Travis to assist young people and adults in choosing alternative paths to street crime and gang culture. This was a follow-up to the teams' participation in the Coldingley diversionary programme, which involved organising and escorting young people on prison visits. The team focussed on inspiring young people to read the book and identify the lessons they could learn from it.

Other initiatives BYS is proud to have participated in include:

- Diversionary projects on estates
- An intergenerational community event called Mind the Gap to assist in bridging the gap between young people and adults
- The Summer Fun Bus
- Organising youth groups to walk the Not Another Drop Peace March for 2 years in a row and offering the youth bus for the after march event free of charge
- Attending Gay Pride for the first time back in 2001
- Save a Life courses in Stonebridge, South Kilburn, North Kilburn, Harlesden and Wembley
- Organising the Youth Services' presence at the annual Respect Festival at Roundwood Park and Glastonbury Festival at Gladstone Park

We have been approached by the press and other organisations such as Young People Now, Harrow Observer, Willesden and Brent Times, ECOTEC for the LDA and the Frank bus (Home Office). Other partners have included housing associations, Connexions, Vale Farm and Willesden Sports Centres, Kingsbury Primary school (hall use for 13 – 19 year olds), Crest Academy, College of North West London, the Metropolitan police, Willesden Library, Brent Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams, Not Another Drop Peace, Foundation 4 Life, Addaction, BrAVa, Ward working, North West London Hospitals NHS Trust, Westminster City Council, Victim Support, Catalyst Housing and other outside agencies that deliver a range of youth related provision.

Huge budget cuts to the borough mean an uncertain future for informal education and the flexible approach it takes to meet a range of needs. It really is a (multi-agency) team effort!

Towards a Citizens' Curriculum

Alex Stevenson

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The 2015 joint conference on adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL organised by NIACE, RaPAL, NRDC, UCU and NATECLA was an ideal opportunity to present our work on the development of a 'Citizens' Curriculum' to a practitioner audience and obtain participants' feedback to help us shape the next steps of the work. As at the conference workshop, this article explains the background and thinking behind the Citizens' Curriculum and reports on some of the pilots that have been undertaken. It then presents emerging evidence on the impact – for learners, practitioners and providers – and considers the opportunities for future development of the Citizens' Curriculum.

Adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL practitioners are well aware of the scale of the challenges we face in tackling basic skills needs in the UK. The 2011 Skills for Life Survey undertaken by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, 2012) in England found little change from the 2003 survey, with one in six adults having low levels of literacy skills and one in four low levels of numeracy skills. More recently, the Adult Skills Survey (OECD, 2013) found that the UK's literacy proficiency is around average for adults aged 16 – 65 and below average for numeracy. Young adults aged 16 – 24 are more disadvantaged relative to the overall population in both literacy and numeracy. The 2011 census reported that around 850,000 adults are 'non-proficient' in the English language.

We know that language, literacy and numeracy skills are essential in enabling adults to get on in life and at work. But in the 21st century, adults need a wider range of skills and capabilities to achieve their aspirations, particularly as technology plays a greater role at work and in accessing everyday public services. According to Go ON UK*, 23% of adults don't have the basic digital skills they need. One in five adults is unable to apply for a job online or check what day the bins are emptied on the council website. Other capabilities are important too. In 2013, the Money Advice Service reported that 18% of the UK population are over-indebted. In times of economic difficulty, and as new online financial products become readily available, adults' financial capability is more important than ever.

At the same time, data shows that adult (19+) participation in English, maths and ESOL provision is falling. Of course, this is due in part to reductions in the adult education budget, which is increasingly under pressure from the competing range of provision which it is expected to fund. Yet there is also a sense that in the context described above, the traditional discrete provision of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes and qualifications may no longer be sufficient to support adults with the full range of capabilities they need. And perhaps this offer is not always as relevant and engaging to all adults as it might be. At L&W, we believe that more flexible, creative and innovative models are needed to engage and motivate learners and meet the challenge of poor basic language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills in the context of rapid social change. The Citizens' Curriculum is our response.

Practitioners with longer memories might recall that the concept of a Citizens' Curriculum was a recommendation of Learning through Life (Schuller and Watson, 2009), the report of the NIACE Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning. Our task over the last two years has been to scope and pilot the development of the Citizens' Curriculum, taking it from a recommendation on the page and putting it into practice. Consultations with practitioners and other stakeholders suggested three underpinning principles in the delivery of adult learning provision which embodies a Citizens' Curriculum approach. Firstly, it is locally-led, responding to the needs of a particular community, cohort or set of circumstances. Secondly, it involves active learner participation in co-design of the curriculum content. Thirdly, it involves learning language, literacy and numeracy, interlinked with health, civic, digital and financial capabilities. We have used the term capabilities deliberately, given its more positive connotations with adults' agency and abilities, rather than a deficit 'skills' model.

* <https://local.go-on.co.uk/organisations/2/>

The work of our pilots has been crucial in helping us make the Citizens' Curriculum a reality. 'Proof of concept' piloting took place in 14/15 with 16 community learning providers and over 160 learners involved. In 15/16, we have extended the pilots with more of a focus on literacy and numeracy provision, with 13 pilots engaging over 230 learners. Each pilot has interpreted the Citizens' Curriculum to meet the needs of the learners it works with, but the underpinning principles and a Citizens' Curriculum 'health check' carried out by L&W at each site ensure that there is a commonality across the diversity of settings and learner cohorts involved.

At the joint conference workshop, we heard from two of the Citizens' Curriculum pilots. St. Mungo's Broadway, a charity working with homeless adults, described how the Citizens' Curriculum was used in their residential college in Clapham. A weekly timetable, including literacy and numeracy classes and a reading circle, digital sessions, and health and well-being sessions, was developed to support St. Mungo's clients to live independently. A weekly meeting, organised and run by the college residents, served a dual purpose of ensuring that the curriculum content was shaped with learner participation and to provide an opportunity to develop civic capabilities through the opportunity for learners to organise, run and participate in the meeting themselves.

English for Action, a charity working to provide participatory ESOL classes across London, reported on interlinking language with the wider Citizens' Curriculum capabilities. These were used to provide a theme, with participatory methods such as 'active listening' identifying a focus relevant to learners' needs. For example, the theme of health capability led to work on learners' experiences of emergency health services. As well as language and literacy to support accessing health services, learners developed civic capabilities through a better understanding of the different services available and how they are used. Learners also identified and carried out actions they could take to help improve services locally. Throughout the pilot, learning and reflections were shared on a class blog, supporting digital capability at the same time.

Overall, the findings from our 14/15 pilots and emerging evidence from the 15/16 pilots are extremely encouraging. Learners report that the approach is engaging them in literacy and numeracy learning, and they are more positive about progressing into further study and looking for work. They also reported increased confidence to participate in the community and access services, both in person and online. For practitioners, they found the approach helpful in linking the learning to learners' lives. And those who had experienced limited opportunities to adopt co-creation of the curriculum in their practice reported a greater appreciation of the value of doing so, and a keenness to develop this further in their work. For providers, the Citizens' Curriculum was felt to offer a more coherent approach to provision, particularly at Entry Level, which added value to the traditional language, literacy and numeracy offer.

The Citizens' Curriculum is showing great potential to address some of the big challenges we face in adult literacy and numeracy. L&W will be reporting in 2016 on the impact of the pilots in English and maths provision, and plans to conduct follow up research to assess the impact in the longer term. We're also exploring its value in new contexts, such as the workplace and in prisons. We aim to influence policy-makers to adopt the Citizens' Curriculum within the adult learning infrastructure. Recent developments in the sector, such as the move towards local commissioning of learning and skills provision, outcome-based success measures (rather than qualifications) and increased flexibilities over how the adult education budget can be used are all areas where the Citizens' Curriculum could have a role. We'd also like practitioners and providers to help us implement the Citizens' Curriculum across the sector, without waiting for the policy-makers. If you think that Citizens' Curriculum could work in your setting, please get in touch to find out more about opportunities to be involved.

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Integration for ESOL workshop

Judy Kirsh

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Introduction

In this article, I look at some of the ways in which three recent European Integration Fund (EIF) projects supported women ESOL learners to integrate into life in the UK. The projects were led by Learning Unlimited (LU) in collaboration with partner organisations. All three projects provided direct ESOL teaching and had a strong underpinning commitment to build bridges between the classroom and the local community, local organisations and other service providers. The LU team, partners and ESOL teachers sought to empower the TCN¹ women learners by building their self-esteem, confidence, knowledge and skills by encouraging their active participation in the range of activities on offer, both at and away from their centres.

Overview of LU's EIF projects

- Welcome to the UK (WUK) (2010-2013) was a wide-ranging, multi-strand, international three-year project delivered in association with Blackfriars Settlement, the British Council, the Institute of Education, Southwark Council and the UK Bangladesh Education Trust (UKBET).
- Active Citizenship and English (ACE) (2013-2015) built on the success of Welcome to the UK, supporting more than 150 women over two years. This multi-strand project was delivered in London in partnership with Blackfriars Settlement, Working Men's College and the Institute of Education.
- Parents' Integration through Partnership (PIP) (2014-2015) was an innovative, London-based multi-strand project designed to support the language learning and integration of 118 non-EU mothers of school children at partner primary schools and children's centres in the London boroughs of Haringey and Lambeth. It was delivered as part of the GLA's EIF project: English: the key to integration.

Key approaches

Involving the learners in activities and events outside their ESOL classes was crucial in promoting integration and empowerment. Approaches included:

- training and supporting ESOL learners to become befrienders
- supporting ESOL learners in finding and taking up volunteering opportunities
- enabling ESOL learners to take a proactive role in organising and running events
- supporting ESOL learners to become writers, researchers and film-makers.



All the projects provided opportunities for learners at all levels to get involved in something outside the classroom, e.g. going on an outing, having a befriender, attending an event, participating in a 'taster' or attending an additional short course such as baking or ICT.

1) Third Country National, i.e. someone from outside the European Union area

Volunteer befrienders



This was a key element of each of the projects. As well as training local volunteers to become befrienders, a significant number of former ESOL learners wanted to have this opportunity as they felt they had a huge amount to contribute: shared, common life experiences of moving and settling in the UK, barriers and challenges, opportunities, etc. This strand also gave the volunteer befrienders an opportunity to gain new skills, knowledge and experience, as well as make new friends, get free training and a DBS check, and valuable experience to add to, or kick-start, their CVs.

Volunteering strand



The ACE project introduced an explicit focus on volunteering to support higher-level learners into employment and to help them gain some work experience. Volunteering was also seen to present valuable opportunities for learners to build their self-esteem and confidence through building relationships and interacting with staff and/or the general public in a range of settings. We involved local volunteering agencies and encouraged the partner centres (especially the ESOL teachers) to integrate ‘volunteering’ into their curriculum.

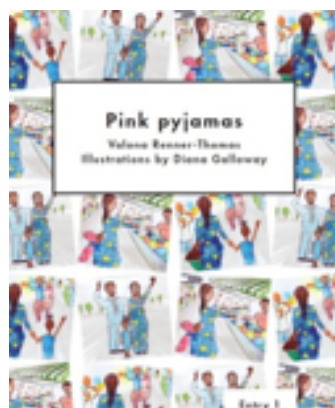
Opportunities arose for all learners to be involved in centre-based volunteering and off-centre volunteering. For example, at Working Men’s College learners supported some of the centre’s fundraising events such as World AIDS Day and International Women’s Day. At other centre-based events, learners helped by meeting and greeting attendees, running or helping with a stall or assisting with the centre’s AGM. High-level learners took responsibility for organising the Safety at home events at both Blackfriars Settlement and Working Men’s College. This involved liaising with many different people, organisations and service providers and included interpreting during the event for lower-level learners. Afterwards learners reported that, although challenging, this opportunity had enabled them to develop valuable skills and had significantly boosted their confidence and self-esteem.

Off-site, learners volunteered in a wide variety of ways such as being a guide at an English Heritage property, as a children’s centre support worker, as a ‘mother-tongue’ Saturday school teacher, as an IT teacher at a community organisation and several learners worked in charity shops. Some volunteering opportunities led to actual jobs such as teaching Bengali at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London and permanent employment as a children’s centre worker.

ACE literacy project strand

This strand involved the collaboration of befrienders, learners and the LU team in the production of a unique series of ‘easy readers’ for ESOL/literacy learners. Befrienders and learners who wanted to get involved worked together, supported by LU, to write stories about funny, personal aspects of everyday life in the UK. Each story

was then developed and graded at two levels (Entry 1 and Entry 2+) by the LU team. As well as meaning that authentic real life experiences were being used and shared, this also meant that mixed-level groups of learners could read the same story at different levels. The books have supporting activities which can be downloaded from the LU website; they are also available in some libraries as well as the British Library and the BBC.



ACE research strand

We offered befrienders the opportunity to train as practitioner researchers as part of the UCL Institute of Education's investigation into the impact of befriending on ESOL learners. 12 befrienders received training and undertook research with their learners, and their findings contributed to the final impact assessment report.

Participatory film makers

In the WUK project, learners and volunteers in both Bangladesh and the UK were involved in participatory video projects facilitated by InsightShare. This was an innovative process which provided an opportunity for participants to develop film-making skills and make their own films describing their personal feelings about migration and experiences of settling in the UK to a wider audience.



In the PIP project, one of the teachers was an experienced participatory teacher who wanted to ensure lessons reflected learners' real concerns. Her learners were very concerned about the imminent closure of a local children's centre so, as well as using this as the basis for language work in their ESOL classroom, they started attending and participating in public meetings and sending tweets. Supported by InsightShare, they made a participatory video about the importance of the centre for themselves and their children; they organised film screenings which were attended by other parents, centre staff, members of the public and local councillors. They issued press releases and as a result, a few were invited to make a presentation to the Haringey Council cabinet meeting and two learners were interviewed on Breakfast TV



Benefits to learners

Benefits to the learners in terms of language skills as well as self-esteem and confidence were astonishing. They discovered new interests and made new friends, surprising us as well as themselves with what they achieved.

In their final evaluations, learners commented positively on the life-changing impact the project had on them:

'Now I feel more confident, I can speak with other persons, I can do more for myself ... go to the hospital, doctor ... before I can't do it ... everything is new for me ... now I feel better ... everything in my life has changed because of this project' (ACE learner, Blackfriars Settlement)

'I wanted to get another job when I started this course. I knew I needed to improve my English to get a better job and get qualifications. This course has given me that ... opportunity to improve my speaking, reading, writing. I've made friends and had opportunity to volunteer and then I got a job. The course helped me integrate into British society ... learn about customs, society, history, culture, British life.' (ACE learner, Working Men's College)

'.. if you help someone to achieve a certain task in life which they are struggling with, it's a very rewarding thing to you, because you know you've taken somebody from one step to another, so ... I'm very proud to be a befriender in this project.' (WUK befriender, Blackfriars Settlement).

So, can you use any of these ideas/approaches to help your ESOL learners integrate more fully into life in the UK? Here are some suggestions:

- find free activities which learners organise themselves, e.g. trips to local markets, visits to museums and art galleries
- invite visitors to speak to the class, e.g. police, health professionals
- support learners in organising an event, e.g. 'Safety at home', 'Health fair', 'Rail safety' - the planning, pre- and post- event work can be done in class.

You can find out more about Learning Unlimited by visiting their website.

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Get reading ahead with Quick Reads

Genevieve Clarke

Genevieve Clark is Programme Manager of the Reading Agency. In this article she reports on the beneficial impact of reading for pleasure on adult learners.

When Ann Reeder heard about the Six Book Challenge she wasn't sure it was for her. 'At first it was daunting. Six books? I didn't think I could even read one!' A cleaner at De Montfort University in Leicester, she went on to complete the Reading Agency's Six Book Challenge five times with the support of her UNISON learning rep Andrew Jennison alongside various Skills for Life courses. 'Andrew explained I could read anything I liked to complete the challenge, and he introduced me to the Quick Reads series of books. I was nervous, but I picked one of them, and I found that it was really good and I couldn't put it down. I was like a sponge because I just wanted to read another and another. Every time a new Quick Reads title came into our workplace library I got it out.

'I never looked back. I've done the Six Book Challenge every year for five years now, and every time I complete it, I feel great. It gives me so much, not just the reading part, but also it helps you grow and learn - the more you read the more you want to find out. I have gone on to read bigger books, and I love meeting and talking to all the other people at work who are doing the Challenge, hearing them talking about what they are reading and how they have progressed as well.'

Reading Ahead programme

Ann's story epitomises how we aim to support the start of people's reading journey at The Reading Agency. Now called Reading Ahead, the Six Book Challenge is an annual incentive scheme that invites people to pick six reads and log, rate and review them in a diary in order to get a certificate. The programme has grown seven-fold since its launch in 2008, reaching 48,000 people in 2015 through public libraries working with local partners, FE and sixth form colleges, prisons and workplaces, mainly with the support of trade unions.

Our last impact evaluation showed that 92% of survey respondents felt more confident about reading after taking part in the programme, rising to 93% among 16 to 19 year olds and 96% among 20 to 24 year olds. There was also an increase in enjoyment of reading (from 82% to 95%) and an intention to use a library to borrow books more often (78%) and to buy more books (54%). Tutors report that the programme has benefits for writing, speaking and listening as well reading skills.

The new name for the programme, Reading Ahead, emphasises the fact that people can take part using all kinds of texts ranging from digital to print, magazine articles to books. The key criteria are that participants challenge themselves to try something new and to practise their developing skills.

We've also got a Reading Ahead website which enables participants to search for reading ideas in our Find a Read database and to create a profile to review their reads online – all ways of encouraging digital literacy alongside reading for pleasure.

Quick Reads

We've worked closely with the Quick Reads publishing initiative since the first titles were published in 2006. We knew that these short books, specially written by well-known writers, were desperately needed if we were to encourage less confident adult readers to develop a love of reading and improve their skills at the same time. So we're delighted that Quick Reads has now joined The Reading Agency and we can work together to get these books into the hands of those who will benefit most.

They've certainly fulfilled this potential, judging by surveys of practitioners carried out by NIACE. The most recent found that 95% said that Quick Reads were effective in improving learners' literacy skills and 97% reported that they were effective in improving learners' confidence to read and their attitudes towards reading.

The six new titles published in February 2016 promise to do the same, with books by Lucy Diamond, Ann Cleeves, Andy McNab, an abridged version of I Am Malala, short stories by Agatha Christie and an anthology called

The Anniversary to celebrate ten years of Quick Reads. Galaxy continues to sponsor the initiative and, as in previous years, there will be learning resources to support each title.

With 36% of adults not reading for pleasure, whether or not they find it difficult, Quick Reads are also ideal candidates for inclusion in World Book Night, our annual promotion to non-readers. There are two Quick Reads in the World Book Night list for 2016 so that they can be given away by individuals and organisations who have been successful in their application to be volunteers on 23 April.

Adding the 'why?' to the 'how?'

Learners may say that reading is 'not for them' but they often have a very fixed view of what being a 'reader' means. Once it's explained that reading embraces all kinds of text, whether print or online, and can lead them to enjoyment in addition to information essential for their everyday life, the prospect begins to look different. Individual stories, such as Ann's above, demonstrate the impact of increased confidence, skills and knowledge that reading can bring.

So how can tutors best weave reading for pleasure into their work with adult learners? It takes planning but also enthusiasm about the difference that reading of any kind can make. Libraries in the community, colleges, prisons and workplaces have a key role to play in offering not just appropriate books but expertise and encouragement. We've a range of case studies to show how public libraries are supporting ESOL and literacy learners in the community but also how college libraries are working with tutors across their institutions to find appealing reads for their students in courses ranging from functional skills to fashion studies. And with the rise in participation age to 18 and the drive for young people to gain at least Grade C in GCSE English, what better way to help them reinforce their skills and develop a love of reading that will stand them and their families in good stead for life?



Books published in February 2016.

Action learning with Irish numeracy tutors

Angela Cahill, Antoinette Delamere, Mary Bambrick, Daniel Sellers and Tina Byrne

Angela Cahill had worked (at the time of writing) as an adult literacy and numeracy tutor for the last nine years with Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) on the east coast of Ireland. She is currently working with the Community Education service within LMETB.

Antoinette Delamere works for The National Learning Network Arklow as a Resource Teacher. In her role she supports learners that have literacy and numeracy difficulties attain person-centred learning goals and QQI maths and communications qualifications.

Mary Bambrick is a literacy and numeracy tutor with the City of Dublin Education and Training Board. She has most recently undertaken tutoring a class in literacy and numeracy through the backdrop of history.

Daniel Sellers grew up in Leeds. He worked as a numeracy and literacy tutor in Liverpool and East Kilbride before taking on a secondment developing adult numeracy for the Scottish Government. He is now a freelance consultant and has lived and worked in England, Scotland, Ireland and Finland.

Tina Byrne is Research Officer at the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). She has extensive experience in the area of social research particularly adult literacy and numeracy. Her research work includes case studies on literacy and numeracy practice in Ireland, family literacy research, training needs analysis and ESOL

Background

In 2013, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) published a set of case studies describing numeracy practice in Ireland. The report, What really counts: case studies of numeracy practice in Ireland (<https://www.nala.ie/resources/numeracy-report-what-really-counts-case-studies-adult-numeracy-practice-ireland>) focused largely on the strategies employed by tutors to teach numeracy to adult learners. Following the launch of the report, NALA invited adult numeracy tutors to take part in an action learning project to measure the impact of What really counts by implementing the practice contained in the case studies.

Ten adult numeracy tutors from around Ireland took part in the action learning project. This article describes the experiences of three of these tutors in their own words. The tutors are:

- Angela Cahill, Louth Adult Learning Service, Louth and Meath Education and Training Board
- Antoinette Delamere, National Learning Network, Arklow
- Mary Bambrick, Colaiste Dhulaigh College of Further Education, Coolock, City of Dublin Education and Training Board

The Project

The project was designed to provide support to 'improve the quality of teaching and learning' (NALA, 2014) and to share learning from a set of case studies about numeracy practice. As part of the project the tutors examined the practice described in the case studies, took ideas and inspiration from them, and set about putting these ideas into practice. They were asked to report back on their findings and on what they had learned about themselves as practitioners.

Angela's experience

What I did: Activity 1- Measurement

I wanted to try out 'spaced learning', which aims to break up classroom sessions into short chunks by mixing thinking time with physical activity. The group had been working on the circumference and area of the circle using worksheets but some of the learners were struggling with the principles and calculations. I hoped that this exercise would make the theory more tangible. I asked the group to measure the diameter of their car tyres, downstairs in the car park. The learners brought the measurements back and used them to work out the wheel's circumference. They then went back and physically measured the circumference and compared the measured circumference to the calculated circumference.

What I learned about myself as a practitioner: Activity 1- Spaced learning

I really enjoyed the activity involved in the exercise and this reinforced for me the benefit of encouraging both physical movement and active learning where learners have to make decisions about their learning. For example, rather than provide a measuring instrument in this class, learners had to decide on what to use to measure the circumference: for example, a standard measuring tape, a piece of string or a paper tape available in pharmacies and used for waist measurement. Making mini-decisions such as these within the classroom encourages learners to become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients. Swan (2005) suggests that maths may be seen by learners as something that is 'done' to them. As tutors, we should strive to create an environment where learners are engaged to discuss and explain ideas, to challenge each other and to work collaboratively to share results. Listening to the group discussion (which I had recorded with learners' permission) led to some interesting observations on the accuracy of the measuring instrument, possible sources of error and the fallibility of the calculator. As a tutor it was enlightening to listen to my facilitation of the discussion and noticing that I tend to over-explain at times and to jump in with answers without giving the learners time to think through their ideas. Involvement in this project, gave me the opportunity to review my practice. I now try to resist the temptation to fill a silence in the classroom by supplying an answer. Often a prompt is all that is required to encourage learners to have a go and to arrive at understanding, often through discussion.

What I did: Activity 2 - Scale

The concept of scale had arisen in the classroom in relation to reading maps but the rather awkward scale used made it difficult for the group to grasp the maths involved. In order to make the concept more authentic I suggested we try to plan out the layout of a living room. Learners worked in pairs using one centimetre squared paper and had to choose a reasonable scale to represent the room and to furnish it with scaled representations of furniture chosen from an Argos catalogue.

What I learned about myself as a practitioner: Activity 2 - Collaborative learning

This exercise demonstrated the value of a quiet buzz of activity in the adult numeracy classroom. Having at least one activity per session where there is movement, group work, collaboration and active learning taking place, in my opinion, promotes learning on a deeper level. The learners stated that they enjoyed working in pairs and learning from each other. I asked the group how I could extend the exercise if I was doing it with another group and they came up with some great ideas, such as putting a budget on the furnishing, working out best value, adding in sale items with percentage discounts. Asking the group for their suggestions demonstrated that I valued their opinions and that learning in the classroom is a collaborative effort between tutor and group.

Overall, I found being involved in this action learning project very worthwhile. It provided me with a specific opportunity to reflect on my practice. Reflection may not necessarily be comforting, it may cause us to question our motivations and to re-frame our perspectives. However, this process may result in helping us to make sense of our experiences as tutors, giving us an enhanced confidence in our abilities and a strengthening of our convictions in our teaching methodologies.

Antoinette's experience

I work with learners who have learning difficulties. I tried out three activities from the original case studies.

What I did: Activity 1- Data Handling

From the case studies I took the idea of doing a project-based survey exercise to help students better understand how to display data and how to compile and read graphs. Students carried out a survey in the centre. They chose the survey topic (the use of social media), the questions and who they would interview. After the survey they came back into the classroom, collated the data and incorporated the information into a spreadsheet. Together they chose the best kind of chart to display their findings.

What I learned about myself as a practitioner: Activity 1- Constructivist approaches

Carrying out this activity, and reading the approaches to teaching in the NALA report, encouraged me to reflect critically about my approach to teaching maths. Now I always endeavour to adapt a constructivist approach. This encourages learners to ask questions and work collaboratively with the material, with each other and with the tutor. This data handling activity helped me remember that the more involved the students are, the greater the level of their understanding is likely to be. Now, while planning my lessons I reflect on student involvement, and ask myself, is there a possibility of creating a project-based learning experience? Or, can I include paired work? And, how can I get students to ask questions, especially of the maths? For example, which type of chart will display my findings best? Why do we do this? What if I change the number — what will happen to the answer?

What I did: Activity 2- Number Order

This was a new group of students who hadn't written down or worked with numbers since leaving school many years previously. The activity focused on place value and sequencing numbers. The students called out random numbers (from large whole numbers down to two decimal places) and the task was to write up the numbers on the white board with the correct place values, and then on paper in pairs to put them in ascending order.

What I learned about myself as a practitioner: Activity 2- Peer learning

Again, this activity highlighted to me the value of student involvement and peer work to increase the quality of the learning experience. Previous to this I may have chosen numbers for the students to order but from this exercise I have come to see how allowing the students get involved in creating the material greatly increases their interest and ultimately their learning. Where possible now I try to include an element in all my maths classes where students are involved in providing the material.

What I did: Activity 3- Measurement

I asked students to use a tape to measure a table and a sofa. Initially they didn't know how to hold the tape or where to start reading the measurements. I showed them how to hold and read a tape and how to measure the length, width and height of the furniture.

What I learned about myself as a practitioner: Activity 3 - Teachable moments

This activity helped me as a tutor to understand the idea of capturing 'teachable moments'. Although this initial activity was to learn to use a measuring tape correctly, during the class the students started to discuss the need to measure the doorway to make sure the sofa could fit through the space. We then went on to measure the sofa and the classroom doorway and used the Argos catalogue to pick out sofas we could and couldn't fit through. This showed me that, where appropriate, branching off from the main topic to answer students' practical questions can provide very meaningful learning experiences.

Mary's experience

What I did: Measurement and shape

I work with a learner one-to-one. He was interested in building a new kitchen, so we looked at measurement to show him how to use measuring tools effectively (a ruler and a measuring tape). We also looked at shapes, and learning these using everyday objects.

What I learned about myself as a practitioner:

I learned a number of valuable lessons:

- Not to make assumptions about what a learner does or does not know.
- While I use questioning in teaching spelling and reading, I had not been using it in numeracy lessons. I am now mindful to use this tool, especially when introducing a new topic.
- I have tended to focus on resources as a starting point in covering a topic rather than looking at the topic and what needs to be covered and in what depth, and working from there.
- There can be a fine line between the use of questioning and highlighting what a student does not know. It is important not to overwhelm a learner by highlighting their knowledge gaps, especially when introducing a new topic.
- There are spelling/reading opportunities in numeracy which should be built into the lesson plan.

Top tips for tutors

Antoinette and Mary created a 'top tips' handout to share with other tutors at NALA's national numeracy conference in June 2014. Here is a brief extract from the top tips. You can find the full version on NALA's website.

What Really Counts Numeracy Project: Tutor Tips

Use of Questioning:

Allow an appropriate pause after a question to allow time to think - don't jump in with a clue or answer

Measuring:

Use a catalogue to get learners design a room encompasses measurement, scale, problem solving skills (and money - if you ask them to cost or work within a budget)

Money:

Using leaflets for Broadband offers - to cost out the long term cost of changeover

Use of Technology:

Think about how you can use technology - as part of the curriculum, as a delivery mechanism, as a complement to instruction and as an instructional tool

As a tutor don't be afraid to ask colleagues for ideas!

To read the original case studies, see What really counts: Case studies of adult numeracy practice in Ireland (<https://www.nala.ie/resources/numeracy-report-what-really-counts-case-studies-adult-numeracy-practice-ireland>)

To read more detailed accounts of these tutors' and others' experiences, see What really counts next: Action learning project with numeracy tutors.

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This true story has been anonymised and is from 'Stories of Resilience', published by RaPAL in 2016.

My Life with Education

My name is D. I'm 26 years old. I have four children. I live in Bristol with my Nan and dad and I have a beautiful girlfriend.

When I was at school I hated it! I just found school boring. I was just not interested. I just couldn't wait to leave! I did stay at school to finish my GCSEs but had quite poor results. They were either poor or I failed them! At the age of sixteen, when I left school, I joined the Army. From the first day of joining I felt like I belonged. It was my passion! To top it all off, I didn't need any qualifications to join. I just needed to be fit. I loved it when I was in the Army, loved the fitness, the chance to explore, that you always have someone looking out for you and the chance to defend my country.

I joined the army in 2005. After three tours of Iraq, I started my tours of Afghanistan. On my sixth tour of Afghanistan (2009), I was captured as a prisoner of war. I was captured for fifty eight days before we escaped. After this, I was taken off active duty because I was suffering with post traumatic stress disorder. I was still in the Army though as a Recruitment Officer in Bristol. As a Recruitment Officer, it was my job to go around to year assemblies to inspire the young adults to join the Army when they finish school. After doing this for three years, I received an honourable discharge from the Army.

In 2013 I ended up stealing petrol as I couldn't afford to keep taking my disabled son to hospital, which was a two hundred mile round trip every day. As a consequence, I ended up coming to prison!!! After being in prison for six months, I decided that when I was released from prison, I wanted to go to college to study Auto Electrics. As education was free while I was in prison and I had time on my hands, I decided to take level 2 in Maths and English, as well as lots of level 2 courses in other subjects, so I could start on level 2 in Auto Electrics instead of starting on level 1. When I started doing Education again I was surprised to find that I really enjoyed it.

When I decided to start Education again, I found I had to overcome some things. I was at a lower level than what I thought I was and what I needed. I had to study harder than everyone in my class. I had to learn more than everyone but I only had the same time as everyone else. I needed to be highly motivated! I did have some blocks to overcome as well, like dyslexia. I found it hard to read anything that wasn't on a blue background. It was hard to complete work on time. I really had to work hard! The way I overcame my blocks was PURE DETERMINATION. I was determined to pass level 2 Maths and English, so I got my head down and studied.

I'm now an English Peer Mentor. I help students who are in a similar situation as I was in with their English studies. I help them to learn and be ready for their exams. It's a trusted position as I help the teacher with administration forms and I also do important administration work. I honestly believe education has changed my life. It has given me things to work towards and new goals in life. When I'm released from prison it's going to give me the chance to start on level 2 Auto Electrics instead of level 1. It has also given me the confidence to help my children with their home- work, instead of looking for an excuse not to!

All I can say to anyone who feels lost or who are not sure what to do with their lives, is to think about education. It can open doors, give you confidence, and you're never too old to learn. It also might save your life like it did mine. I am now 26 years old. I used to hate education but now I very much enjoy it. After my time in the Army, I thought my life was over. To be honest, with the help of education, I now realise my life is just starting over!

Reviews

***Adult Literacy and Development: Stories from the Field* by Alan Rogers and Brian Street**

Cost: £24.95

Publisher: NIACE, 2012

ISBN 978-1-86201-574-6 (print)

Pages: 185

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 developing a proofreading website to help small businesses and individuals.

This book is a collaboration by two very experienced practitioners in the field of adult literacy. In it they describe examples of their extensive work in different countries in the developing world and suggest lessons to be learned for our own practice. Alan Rogers has specialised in adult learning methodologies whereas Brian Street's main interest has been in ethnographic field research. It is therefore as much for policy makers and researchers as for practitioners, examining the theories, policies and practices of literacy provision in the wider context of international development.

The book is divided into three parts: the first, "Exploring literacy in the field", looks at some ethnographic studies and proposes a framework for analysis; the second, "Adult literacy learning programmes", looks in more detail at the content of a range of programmes; the third, "Some implications for policy and practice", attempts to reconsider policy and practice as it might relate both to further programmes in the developing world and also in the West.

Part One considers the view of literacy as social practice and how our thinking about literacy, learning and motivation has changed over time. The authors analyse the differences between formal and informal learning, recognising that we may use different languages or literacies (literacy practices) for different purposes. They understand that adults are sometimes more motivated by other types of learning than literacy learning, such as religious practice or work skills and ask (72), 'Who has the power to determine that one form of writing is literacy but other forms are not literacy?'

Part Two investigates the long-term failure of many, indeed, the authors claim, of most large-scale adult literacy programmes in the developing world. They believe that many of the attributed benefits of learning literacy could actually be the benefits of participating in any learning group. These programmes are rarely adequately funded; they are often text-book-based and make the assumption that the learners are all starting at the same level with no prior knowledge. The main failings, they say, are learner motivation, teaching methodology and the gap between classroom and everyday literacies. They offer as evidence the greater success demonstrated in the functional element of combined literacy and functional skills programmes.

In contrast, some of the success stories they describe include small-scale, non-text-book programmes, which may be linked to vocational training or health instruction, recognising that many learners will come with a specific task in mind, such as filling in a new form or reading a particular document. Sometimes these may be in workshop format, using learner-generated materials or items taken from the 'literacy environment' of a particular community. They cite (143) the example of a drop-in literacy shop in a market in Nigeria (effectively a stall with a sign above) which attracted 3,900 people in nine months, who could either be helped with some pressing literacy task or passed on to the nearest literacy class, succeeding in reaching a large number of people at very little cost.

The authors conclude this section by suggesting four main reasons for failure, which apply equally to our own work closer to home, the assumption:

- that provision leads to demand
- that texts need to be easy reading
- that new literacy users need reading but not writing
- that literacy is an activity to do alone, independently, not collaboratively

Part Three concludes with the implications of their findings for policy and practice. Firstly, that ethnographic research into existing literacy practices should always be carried out before developing a learning programme. Secondly, that there must be recognition that everyday literacy practices are usually different from forms of literacy being taught in many adult literacy learning programmes; and thirdly, that teaching adults is different from teaching children. Policies should start from the positive, explore existing practices, and include literacy and numeracy as part of a whole set of skills which will help to bring about changes in people's lives.

This is a densely packed book, full of examples and references to many other studies. It benefits from repeated readings. (I had to read it twice to extract examples that I could remember). The “stories from the field” are numerous but they are embedded in detailed analysis and references to other literature. Some examples, twelve in all, are highlighted in textboxes - I would have welcomed more of these. However, it is – as would be expected - a full account of over 40 years of experience. I enjoyed the photographs illustrating the descriptions of learners and classes – I read about the classes that took place at the side of the road because there was nowhere suitable, but it became much more meaningful when I saw the photograph on the following page of learners sitting in a row on the verge with traffic passing immediately behind 'with all the interruptions, noise and even jeering that result (123).' On the face of it, this looks like an example of a culture (in this case Uganda) that did not value adult learning and teaching, yet many of us probably have memories of teaching adult learners in unsuitable spaces when no classroom was available. So despite the examples being distant from the experience of most of us, there is much food for thought. Adult literacy learners come to classes in their own time, each with his or her own aims and motivation, which may or may not be the same as their neighbour's. As Street and Rogers conclude, the key to successfully achieving those aims is to identify and build on existing literacy practices, drawing together the everyday, informal literacies with the more formal classroom literacy.

Resilience: Stories of Adult Learning

publishing 8th September 2016

International Literacy Day

"This is a collection of learner stories, in their own words and with some helpful contributions by tutors along the way. It is testimony to the resilience of human lives, the critical role of lifelong learning, and how adult literacies weave through our journeys, visibly and invisibly."

Resilience: Stories of Adult Learning

A learner voice co-production

Edited by Tara Furlong and Keiko Yasukawa



Free e-resource available as e-book, pdf and web, from 8th Sept 2016,
<http://rapal.org.uk/resilience/>

Pre-listed on major e-book platforms, inc. Amazon, Kobo, iBooks and B&N
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UK book launch 3rd Nov, London, at RaPAL's Joint Conference 2016 with the Learning and Work Institute, UCL IoE Post-14 Centre, UCU and NATECLA. More information on <http://rapal.org.uk>

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. Our journal is now produced online and so we welcome articles, reviews, reports, commentaries, images or video 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 Ireland, 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.

We want to encourage new writers as well as those with experience and to cover a range of topics. We aim to have three different kinds of articles in the journal plus a reviews section; these are slightly different in length and focus. We welcome illustration and graphics for any of the sections and now have the facility to embed audio and video files into the journal. The journal has a different theme for each edition but we welcome general contributions too.

Below you will see more details about the different themes and topics:

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.

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.

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 4,000 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.

Reviews

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

Submitting your work

1. If you are responding to a call for articles via the RaPAL email list or directly by an editor you will have been given the email address of the editor(s) for submitting your work, together with a deadline date and the theme of the journal.
2. If you are submitting a piece of work that you would like RaPAL to consider for publication that has not been written as a result of a call for articles, please send it to journal@rapal.org.uk in the first instance. The journal coordinator will then let you know what the next steps will be.
3. All contributions should have the name of the author(s), a title and contact email address and telephone number. You should also include a short 2 to 3 line biography. Sections, sub-sections and any images should be clearly indicated or labelled (further guidance on image size is on the website www.rapal.org.uk).
4. All referencing should follow the Harvard system.
5. Articles should be word processed in a sans serif font, double-spaced with clearly numbered pages.
6. The article should be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk

What happens next?

1. Editors are appointed for each edition of the journal. They review all contributions and will offer feedback, constructive comment and suggestions for developing the piece as appropriate.
2. Articles submitted for the third category 'Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives' will be peer-reviewed by an experienced academic, research or practitioner in the field in addition to being edited.
3. The editor(s) will let you know whether your article has been accepted and will send you a final copy before publication.

If you have any questions, please contact the journal coordinator by emailing journal@rapal.org.uk

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